



LOVE @ SUNSHINE CAFÉ ☕

NATSU & ALEC

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alexia praks

☕ LOVE @
SUNSHINE CAFÉ



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& ALEC

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ALEC

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Natsu and Alec

Natsu

Brat. Imp. Runt. Punk. Threatening to whoop my ass. Spanking me on the butt. Manhandling me. These are some of the things Alec calls me and does to me. He's my trauma, and there is no way I will be enduring more of these silly torments from him.

Now that we are under the same roof, can't we just get along and live in harmony? The only thing is, when I offer a peace treaty, he does a one-eighty and tells me he *likes* me. Ha-ha! Yeah, right. Like I'm going to believe that shit. I just know it's another of his games, one I want no part in. But why is it that whenever he kisses me, my world bursts into bright neon color? Why can't I stop thinking about him? Or, heaven forbid, want him to do me? Am I really falling for Alec like his master plan? Fuck! I'm scared, and I don't know what to do.

Alec

Alec has never liked Natsu, the middle triplet everyone seems to adore. He thinks the brat is an airhead and a crybaby, and everything he does irritates him. Now that they are living together, that irritation becomes more prominent since the boy keeps climbing into his bed, butt naked no less.

Yes, he's fucking cute with a pretty face and a body any girl or gay man would want to chow down on, but Alec is not into boys like Natsu. Or is he? Because the mere sight of Natsu shirtless is turning him on, and when he realizes every one of his past girlfriends has a trace of Natsu, he knows he's been lying to himself all along. He *likes* Natsu and proving that to the minx is harder than he thought.

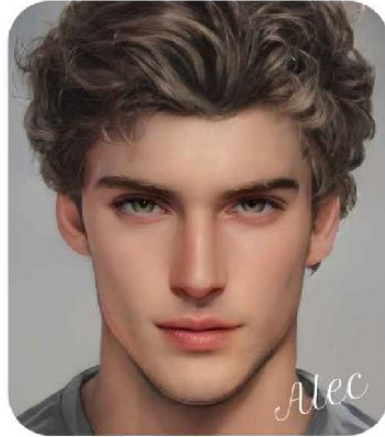
Natsu and Alec is a contemporary mm romance and contains bickering, light bullying, and steamy scenes.

Natsu and Alec is a standalone novel and is part of the Love at Sunshine Café Series.

Books in the Love @ Sunshine Café Series

- 1: Natsu and Alec
- 2: Aki and Edwin (coming soon)
- 3: Yuki and Landon (coming soon)







*Natsu*

“**M**y sons are really leaving the nest. I have nothing left to live for,” I heard Mom say as she sniffled.

Looked like it started again, the sniffing and moaning, as it had started six months ago when we—me and my triplet brothers Aki and Yuki—announced that we’d be attending Spring Valley University in America, *the* university Mom herself and Dad had attended and met all those years ago during their younger days.

“Mom, stop it. You’re going to break my ribs,” Yuki pleaded.

Glancing over my shoulder, I saw Mom, tall and robust and still in her pajamas, had her arms wrapped tight around both Aki and Yuki, squeezing the life out of them, as was her habit of showing affection.

I returned my attention to the luggage and got busy moving them from the hallway to the front door, doing it as inconspicuously as possible to avoid gaining Mom’s attention. I’d be damned if I’d let her drag me into her arms, squeezing

me until I could feel my lungs constricted, and sob all over me.

“Oh, please, Mom, don’t be so dramatic,” Hana said. “They’re just going to a university, not moving away permanently. Besides, isn’t America your home country anyway? You can visit anytime you want. It’s only one long-haul plane ride away.”

“I know, I know,” Mom said, still sniffing. “But... it won’t be the same not seeing my adorable sons every day. I won’t get to cook for them and feed them and...”

Aki patted Mom’s hand and said, “We’ll call and chat every day, so you won’t be lonely.”

Finally letting Yuki go and turning her attention solely on Aki, Mom said, “Really? You’ll call daily, Aki-chan?”

Aki nodded. “Of course.”

Typical of Aki, the gentle, understanding older brother—well, older than me by a mere ten minutes and Yuki by twenty.

“Then Mom will be waiting for your call,” she said, and we hadn’t even left the darn house yet.

Dad finally came down the stairs and said, “Ready, boys?”

“As ready as can be,” I said, set to scoot out the door before Mom could catch me. But I was too late. She was a damn gorilla when it came to hugging her kids.

I felt arms around me, and I was imprisoned with no way of escape. Mom said, “My boys are going to get eaten by big

American men, and I'm so worried."

I rolled my eyes. What a word to use. Eaten. Not beaten or bullied but *eaten*. She worded it in such a way as if to imply American men were a different sort of unknown, frightfully scary creature altogether.

Thanks, Mom, for freaking your sons out.

I said, "Mom, you're an American, you know that, right?" Complete with blond hair and blue eyes at that. "And we're not going to be bullied by anyone, be it big American men or not. Spring Valley is the safest town in America. You said so yourself; it was your hometown."

Of course, there were always bullies, but mostly it was during the teenage years in high school. People should grow out of that asinine phase by the time they attended university, right? Besides, I was sure my brothers and I could take care of ourselves. We had handled the bullies in high school like a champ, putting all those bastards in their places.

I felt a knuckle knock lightly on my head, and I knew the culprit behind the assault was Hana, the sister older than us triplets by five years. She said, "Mom is just worried about you. Be more aware of how you look."

And how exactly did us identical triplet brothers look?

"You elfin idiot," she finished off.

I turned to stare at Hana as I rubbed my head.

Ugh! How was it possible that the only daughter in the family was tall and drop-dead gorgeous that even supermodels

would be green with envy while all the sons were runts? Shouldn't it be the other way around? The height part I mean. Then again Dad was slender and petite, and I could never unravel the mystery of why Mom would fall for Dad and marry him to produce four children when his head barely reached her shoulder. Then again, love was a mystery to me.

I glanced at Aki who was smiling, his eyes bright and his cheeks crimson. Like Mom and Dad, love was certainly *not* a mystery to Aki because he knew about love. He was in love.

“Are you sure you'll be all right, Natsu-chan?” Mom asked, her eyes still filled with tears. “You won't, uh...”

Ugh! No matter how many times I had begged her, she could never drop adding the -chan suffix to us triplets' names, the Japanese way of showing affection. Besides us being too old for that, it was just embarrassing.

I waved her concern aside. “I won't faint. I'm an adult now. And I will eat properly, I promise. I'm not anxious or anything.”

The last bit was a lie. I was anxious. There was a thing between long-distance traveling and me. We didn't get along, especially when it involved flying and crossing the globe.

After a bit more sniffing and moaning loudly from Mom that'd likely stir the neighborhood awake from their slumber, since it was three in the morning, and me reminding everyone that the plane will leave without us if we delay much longer, Mom finally let us go and we jumped into the car. After saying farewell to a teary-eyed Dad at Narita International Airport,

we boarded the plane and got ourselves settled in, along with a few hundred other fellow passengers.

Yuki pulled on his sleep mask and said, “Wake me up when they start serving breakfast.” And he made himself comfortable, ready to snooze away the hours.

I turned to Aki and noted that he looked excited, starry-eyed, and not at all groggy and out of sorts like me, having worried myself into a nervous wreck for the past week packing and getting everything organized, and more so, *dreading*.

Well, I supposed it couldn't be helped where Aki's emotions were concerned. Anyone would be excited if they got to see the person they were in love with after a two-year absence, and this time it won't be for just a few days here and there like during the vacations, but a full year or maybe even two or three depending on how our studies went, and he had all that time to confess, to bare his heart.

Love. This was the reason why Aki wanted to attend Spring Valley University. It was because Edwin Hamilton was in Spring Valley, and what made it even better was that we'd be living with the man.

I guessed it'd be great for Aki, for he not only got to see his beloved every day for the next year, but live with him, too. As for me, sadly it won't be so great because of that annoying scoundrel.

Alec Hamilton was his name, the bastard who liked to bully me until I was in tears. He was my trauma, and I certainly was not looking forward to seeing him again.

Thank the heavens he was never around the last few times we were in Spring Valley for the family's biennial vacations, something about bad timing and such. And thank the heavens, too, that we didn't end up in a living arrangement with Uncle Michael, Mom's best friend, at the main house. This meant Alec would be residing there in his high and mighty form instead of with us at the café house with Edwin.

I sighed. I still couldn't believe I'd be attending Spring Valley University with Aki simply because he had asked.

The moment he did, mumbling about how he'd like to enroll in Mom and Dad's old university and that it'd be great if both Yuki and I could come with him, I knew why, and Yuki and I had agreed on the spot. We did it for moral support because we knew Aki needed it. Besides, Spring Valley University, despite it not being an Ivy League school, was still one of the best universities in America with great courses.

The flights and then shuttle and bus rides were uneventful despite being long and exhausting, and now finally, we were on the last leg of our travel two days after leaving Japan, and I eagerly descended the steps of the bus. We retrieved our luggage, as did the twenty others, and then we waited as people started leaving the station. And we waited and waited, the sun beating down on us mercilessly.

I glanced over at Yuki who was sitting on his luggage, looking chilled while reading a manga. He could really make anywhere comfortable.

I downed another gulp of water to cool myself. It didn't help. I was never good with heat. Not to mention my stomach felt awful. I hadn't eaten properly like I had promised Mom. I just couldn't keep anything down.

Wiping my mouth, I asked, "You sure you didn't send Uncle Michael the wrong date?"

"I sent him our flight info and travel itinerary," Aki said, staring into the distance like a hawk for any sign of Uncle Michael's car. "He was meant to pick us up from this bus station two hours ago. And we already chatted with Aunty Lena yesterday. She confirmed Uncle Michael will pick us up."

"Maybe give him another call?" I suggested. "And I'll try Aunty Lena."

"Mm-hmm." He nodded and then made the call.

I called Aunty Lena, too, and waited for the phone to be picked up, but it went to voicemail.

"He's not picking up. Maybe he's busy?" Aki said.

"Well, it is a Saturday," I said. "The café is probably damn busy. And Uncle Michael is notorious for forgetting things." I straightened and then stretched. "No point in waiting. Why don't we just walk to the nearest bus stop? Or the café itself? It's an average-sized town, so it can't be that far."

It would have been nice if the whole family were here, and Dad could rent a car and drive us like he usually did whenever we had our vacation, but he was damn busy with work as the

head of his department and Mom, too, was busy at the floral shop, her little business with her friends.

Yuki put his manga into his backpack and took out his phone. He did some searching and said, “According to the map, Sunshine Café isn’t that far from here, just a half-hour walk.”

“Sounds doable,” I said. “We can just surprise everyone and Edwin that we’re here.”

Aki cheeks turned bright red at the mention of Edwin’s name. He nodded. “Mm-hmm.”

With luggage rolling behind us, we hit the road and embarked on our short journey toward the café. I was quite pumped at the initial phase of the trip, but then I started feeling dreadful as it was already midafternoon, and it was so damn hot.

Beep! Beep! Beep!

Who the hell was honking. It was giving me a headache.

“Natsu, you okay?” Aki asked. “You don’t look so good.”

I waved his concern aside. “I’m fine,” I said, despite feeling a bit light-headed. *Drink*, I told myself, needing to keep hydrated.

“Aki, I feel like that car is following us,” Yuki said. “Oh, wait, it stopped.” He tilted his head to one side. “And that’s a guy coming out and stalking toward us like he wants to murder us. Mom did say this town is safe, right? No American gang or mafia or anything like that, right? We’re not going to get our

asses whooped, or worse, kidnapped, on our first day in this town, right?”

I wasn't listening to him as I downed more water while Aki fussed over me, continuing to ask me questions about how I was feeling. Wiping the perspiration from my head, I thought, this was what you get from jet lag and no proper meals. My stomach could never handle food when I got nervous or anxious and traveling made me both. The long-distance travel was especially a bitch. Not to mention I had driven myself insane with dread at the thought of seeing Alec again, too.

Speaking of, was that him I was seeing? But he was so tall and big, more so than the last time I saw him years ago, like hunky big with a face that looked like him but at the same time didn't.

I shook my head. I must be so dehydrated that I was hallucinating. *Drink more water. Drink more water.*

With a shaky hand, I unscrewed the lid of the water bottle again as I continued to stare at the figure walking—or rather *stalking* like Yuki said—toward us. He was frowning darkly, just like Alec.

Boy, oh boy, was I looking forward to crashing on a sofa at the café house, downing a good ice-cold drink, getting rid of this hallucination and...

“Natsu!” I heard Aki shout my name in terror.

“The road! He's going to fall into the road!” Yuki yelled.

Huh! What was going on? Why was the world spinning?

The next thing I knew, darkness invaded me as a hunk of a face loomed inches from me, and then I blacked out.

2



Alec

It was bustling and filled with customers on a Saturday at Sunshine Café along the esplanade, and the staff of the beloved eatery was on their feet since opening hour at ten in the morning. Apart from the regulars living close to the neighborhood and tourists, which Spring Valley was notoriously famous for attracting, most of the customers were young women desperate to not only catch a view of the beautiful sandy beach and sparkling blue ocean beyond the windows of the restaurant, but the sight of the locally famous gorgeous guys working there, too.

With plates filled with mouthwatering pasta expertly on hands, Alec smoothly glided between the crowded tables all the while very aware of the many eyes on him, the gazes either glued to his hunky, tall, lean frame, his gorgeous face that belonged in a high-end fashion magazine, or his sexy ass.

Apparently, he had an ass that women loved and wanted to touch and spank, so he had been told by his last few girlfriends.

And now he was single yet again because he was breaking their fragile hearts by working in his father's café and parading himself for all the other women to feast on like a stripper.

Fuck his ex-girlfriends! One moment they were all sweet like apple pie and the next they turned bitchy and whined and moaned and called him unreasonable for doing what he loved doing most, helping his family make a living. Was it really his fault that seventy percent of the customers that came to the

restaurant were young women? Was it his fault that they simply like to ogle at him, Edwin, Landon, Colton, Scott, or Luke?

Placing the plates on the table, he said, a smile on his face, “Enjoy, ladies.”

The four young women sighed dreamily as they stared at him instead of Edwin’s masterpieces on the plates. Alec was used to that, and turning on his heel, he headed to the next table to take the order, once again feeling the intense heat of gazes on his firm ass that was snugly hugged by his jeans.

After giving the coffee orders to Landon, he headed into the kitchen and shouted the mains to Edwin, Colton, and his father, Michael.

“Damn busy Saturday,” Scott said as he carried in a load of dishes.

Colton chuckled. “Just wait until the university starts and the students return.”

“Then we’ll be in hell,” Scott said. To the owner of the café, he asked, “When are those new staff you promised coming, Michael?”

“Soon,” Michael said, busy tossing some fettuccini into a hot pan with the creamy sauce simmering away.

“Just how soon is soon?” Scott asked, hoping for specifics. “Today. Tomorrow. Next week? Next month? Next year?”

“Soon,” Michael said, and Alec burst out laughing.

After expertly transferring pasta from the pan into a plate and putting that on the counter, Edwin turned to Michael, his adopted father, and said, “Aki and his brothers should have arrived this morning already. Shouldn’t you be picking them up? Or if you’re busy, I’ll go instead.”

Alec’s ears perked at hearing this. He didn’t know the triplets were arriving today, just that they’d be setting foot on America’s soil soon. Of course, he had never asked for specifics since he wanted absolutely nothing to do with them.

Michael continued to cook, showing no sign of having heard Edwin’s questions.

“Dad?” Edwin said, louder this time.

As she picked up the pasta dishes from the countertop, Zara said, “Dad goes deaf when he’s in his zone,” before swiftly taking them away to be served.

Michael finally lifted his head, his eyes wide. “Huh? What?”

Edwin, knowing Michael was notoriously forgetful of anything that was not related to work and the café, said, “The boys. They should have arrived already. Aren’t you picking them up?”

Michael paused what he was doing for a moment, and that was when Lena came bustling in, carrying more dishes. When she spotted her husband in the kitchen, she asked in outrage, “Michael! Why are you still here? You were supposed to pick

up Aki and his brothers over an hour ago. I reminded you last night, remember?”

Michael widened his eyes, and both Scott and Alec burst out laughing.

Colton said, “Typical of the boss. He even forgot to pick up his nephews who just arrived from Japan.”

Nephews in name only, Alec thought. Those brats had no blood relation whatsoever with his family. They were sons of Melissa, his father’s best friend since elementary school.

“Ah, fuck!” Michael swore under his breath. “I still have a ton to do,” he said, staring at the dockets of orders. He turned his eyes to Alec, who felt his stomach sinking instantly, his mirth dying a sudden death. “Alec, pick the boys up.”

“Me? You want me to pick up those brats during a busy hour like this? They can wait until the rush is over.”

“I can go,” Edwin offered. “Shouldn’t take too long.”

“With this many dishes needing to be made and the customers waiting? I think not,” Michael said.

“Dad’s right,” Edwin said. “We can’t leave the customers waiting. We’re behind as it is. Alec, be a champ and take one for the team.”

“Seriously? They can wait,” Alec said.

“Alec!” Michael said. “Go pick up the boys. They’re young and new to America.”

Alec snorted. “What’s young and new to America have to do with anything?”

“Are you telling me if you’re young and new to Japan, you wouldn’t be scared stiff when no one picks you up and—”

Alec growled. “I got it! I got it!” he said as he untied the server apron from his waist. “No need for a lecture.”

As if he’d be scared stiff if he was young and new to a country he had never been to before. He wasn’t those brats, and they had been here before, several times with their family on vacations.

“I’ll take care of your tables for you, Alec, and your tips,” Scott said, winking.

“If you take my tips, I’ll whoop your ass,” Alec said, grinning in irritation, his eyes glinting.

“Whoa, dude, I was joking,” Scott said, chuckling.

Alec was just heading out the door of the kitchen when he paused, and popping his head back in, he asked, “At the bus station, right?”

“Bus station,” Michael said.

He was walking toward the back door when Lena came rushing over and said, “While you’re at it, pick up the order from Sean’s place, too.” She patted him on his firm, muscular chest. “Oh, and no matter how cute and adorable Natsu is, no more teasing him until he’s in tears this time. Making him cry is bullying. You’re a grown man now.” She kissed him on the

cheek, and turning on her heel, she headed back into the front of the café.

Standing there, Alec was more than a little dumbfounded by his mother's words.

Bully? He snorted at the outrageous accusation as he headed out the door. When had he ever bullied those three brats, especially the one named Natsu? All he remembered was three imps with the same face, and one with a particular nasty attitude that drove him up the wall. Bully, his fucking ass.

On the road, Alec simply couldn't stop picturing that detestable elf-like face with large teary eyes that always glared up at him, and it riled him up, for no apparent reason than that it irritated him. He snapped and then decided, yep, he'd get the coffee beans first before picking up those brats, and he'd take his sweet time doing it, thank you very much. They could wait for another hour for all he cared.

Fifteen minutes later, he leisurely waltzed into Sean's Coffee Shop, his sexy hips swaying and drawing the attention of the pretty receptionist.

"Hello," he said, a dashing smile playing about his face.

"Hi," she said. "You're, uh, Alec, right?"

He was surprised she knew his name. Probably because she had been at the café.

Alec nodded. "I'm here to pick up our coffee."

"Uh, yes," she said. "We have them ready for you."

She showed him to the back of the shop where the heavy loads were. Alec leisurely worked carrying one bag at a time to put into the trunk of the car, taking it slow and using as much time as he could, and all the while chatting the woman up. She was only too obliged to flirt with him. When he was done with the job, he bid her good day, leaving her disappointed that there was no further invitation of an interlude, and Alec slid into the car, thinking how wonderful it was that the brats must be suffering in this heat, still waiting to be picked up.

What spoiled imps they were. If it was him, he'd be either walking or taking the bus to the café. He wondered if they were crying their eyeballs out, thinking they had been abandoned, those bunch of snowflakes.

He finally arrived at the bus station, and the moment he saw not a single soul around, he knew he had fucked up. The three had left, he realized, probably on foot, which meant more work for him because he now had to hunt them down. If he didn't return with the trio in tow, he'd be getting an earful from not only his mother, the woman who doted on and showered the brats with love and affection, but his Dad, not to mention Zara and Marisa, too, his sisters who adored the trio to the bones. As for Edwin, well, he would be the worst of the lot, giving him the disappointed look that said he expected better from him, as he usually did when Alec had made Natsu cry.

“Fuck!” he swore under his breath and reversed the car out of the parking lot.

Since the triplets didn't know the town well, Alec reasoned it was most likely they'd follow the map's direction on the phone, and he knew the route. It was five awful minutes later when he found them. They were hard to miss, three runts pulling luggage behind them as they walked at a snail's pace along the side of the street next to the park.

Alec beeped hard as he followed them, desperate to catch their attention, but those airheads didn't seem to notice a darn thing, which didn't surprise him, and it vexed him. When they stopped, he pulled the car to the side of the street, switched off the engine, and got out. Slamming the door shut, he made his way toward the boys who looked like lost little lambs.

The one at the head was talking and looking his way while the other one was downing some water, and the last kept looking at the one downing the water with a concerned expression. Then the one downing the water turned to look his way, and the moment he did, Alec knew which brother was which. That one at the head was Yuki; the one to the left was Aki, and the one staring at him with a water bottle in his hand was, yep, Natsu, the brat with the nasty attitude.

The closer he went, the more peeved off Alec got, and he thought, look at him, swaying around like he was about to...

"Fuck!" he swore and hit the road, sprinting before the boy could collapse on the ground and injure himself. He made it in the nick of time, Natsu falling into his arms, while the other two hovered over them.

3



Alec

“I knew this was going to happen,” Aki said.

What a nuisance, Alec thought as he picked the boy up and carried him to the grass area under a shaded tree. There, he laid the boy on the ground and said, “I’m calling an ambulance.”

Aki said, “It’s okay. He’ll wake up soon. He’s always like this when we travel.”

Always like this when they travel. What the heck does that mean?

Aki answered the question Alec hadn’t spoken aloud. He said, “He gets anxious and nervous, and he can’t keep food down. He throws up when he eats. He gets really sick. He faints every time when we fly over to America.”

Alec raised a brow, stunned at the new information. Did this explain why every time he saw the boy when they had been younger, Natsu had always been in tears and clinging to his mother, because he was anxious and nervous and just felt sick?

“The heat doesn’t help. He’s not good with it,” Yuki said as he took out his manga and started using that to fan over Natsu’s face. Meanwhile, Aki unbuttoned the boy’s shirt to reveal a toned torso.

It seemed Natsu had been working out? Now this, too, was new, Alec thought, his eyes lingering on the skin as pale as milk and the pair of nipples as pink as a rose bud.

Taking out a hanky, Aki poured water on it from his drink bottle, then he twisted it to wring out the excess and used that to wipe on Natsu's body. Alec watched, fascinated, and he couldn't take his eyes away from the torso that was now glistening with tiny beads of water droplets. When Aki started wiping on Natsu's face, he said, "Are you sure he's going to be all right not going to the emergency department?"

Aki nodded. "He's fine, and Natsu hates the hospital."

He hates the hospital, eh? Alec thought as he stared at the unconscious brat.

Ah, nope, not unconscious anymore because those long, thick, dark lashes that any girl, especially his ex-girlfriends, would be envious of, were fluttering about, and within moments, brown eyes were looking up and about. Alec stared at those almond-shaped eyes, a mole right under the left side.

"How are you feeling, Natsu?" Aki asked.

"You fainted," Yuki updated his brother.

"I don't feel so good," Natsu said weakly and helplessly. "I think I saw..." The boy turned Alec's way, and the moment he saw the man, he widened his eyes. "I'm still in my nightmare."

Nightmare? Alec was outraged. So, seeing his face was a nightmare to this brat, eh? Fuck, this imp.

Having wasted enough time, he said, "Since you're up, let's get going." He moved and put one arm under Natsu's knees and the other under his back and then roughly pulled him close

until the boy collided and squished against him, with shirt disheveled and falling off his body.

“What are you doing?” Natsu asked.

Fuck, just look at those eyes. Did he think he was going to hurt him or something? Alec managed to keep his cool and said, “What am I doing? Picking you guys up is what I’m doing, brat.”

“Brat?” Natsu said.

“Are you by any chance Alec?” Aki asked.

Alec said, “Of course it’s me, who else could I be?”

Yuki said, “You’re so big and tall now... Like big American men Mom said would eat us.”

Aki nodded. “As big and tall as Edwin.”

Him? Big American men who will eat boys like them? And this came from dear Melissa?

Alec worked on keeping his cool, yet again, and forcing a grin, he said, “Well, it has been what? Five years since we last saw each other. I’m twenty-three now, in my prime.”

Yep, prime for girlfriends and prime for sex and so much more. Unlike these imps, with dicks the size of a gherkin, no doubt.

As he turned on his heel and headed toward the car, he continued. “You three brats are still runts. You haven’t grown even an inch since I last saw you.”

“We grew,” Natsu said defensively. “We’re five foot, six point five inches now.”

He made it sound like the height was very impressive, and Alec wanted to snort. As if it was anywhere near his own six foot two. Since the brat looked so displeased to be in his arms, when Alec had gone through the effort of carrying his sorry ass, he decided to torment him by giving the boy a little shuffle and threatening to spill him to the ground.

Natsu’s reaction was to freak the hell out and quickly wrap his arms around Alec’s neck, their faces inches apart.

Alec smirked, pleased with the result.

“Put me down, I can walk,” the boy demanded feebly.

“So you can fall flat on your face again?” Alec retorted.

“He didn’t fall flat on his face,” Yuki said behind them, dragging both his and Natsu’s luggage. “You caught him in time.”

Alec turned to the youngest of the trio. He said, “If I wasn’t here, he would have fallen flat on his face. Same difference.” He left it at that and said, “Aki, open the back door.”

Aki rushed to bid the command, and Alec all but nearly tossed Natsu in, who landed on the seat in a heap, his open and disheveled shirt falling off him and his pants slipping down to the point that just another tug would reveal his pride and joy.

Alec thought the image looked quite amusing and his eyes lingered on the boy for longer than necessary, rather enjoying the view, and oddly enough, the scent caressing his nostrils.

The boy didn't stink of sweat like he should be in this heat. Rather, he had a unique smell that intrigued as well as warmed Alec's insides and made him want to bury his face against the boy's neck and just sniff.

"Let's put the luggage in the trunk," Aki said behind him, which drew Alec's attention away from the brat who was working on making himself comfortable and presentable, but to no avail. It looked like the imp had zero energy to even put that little effort in.

Shutting the door, Alec turned on his heel and helped the other two with putting the luggage in the trunk, shuffling the bags of roasted ground coffee beans about, and after Aki slid in at the back next to Natsu and Yuki in the front, he started the engine.

"Can we turn on the air-conditioning?" Yuki asked. "It'll help cool Natsu."

Alec was about to do exactly that, but the fact that Yuki asked before he could perform the action annoyed the hell out of him. Or was it the fact that it was to cool down Natsu that was annoying him? He said, "No air-conditioning. It's broken."

"You're kidding me," Yuki said.

Alec caught Natsu's gaze via the rearview mirror, and he felt this sense of delight rushing through him when he saw the glint, the flare of irritation and anger, in the boy's eyes.

During the drive, Natsu surprised him by managing to exert himself enough to push the button to lower the automatic window, and his brothers followed suit, causing the interior of the car to blast with cool air and Natsu's open shirt to flutter about, attracting Alec's unwanted attention to the boy's naked torso that refused to look anything less than...

"Fucking!" Alec blurted out. *Enticing!*

If he was into men, he'd be chowing down that torso and those nipples with his lips and tongue.

Just as he thought that he growled. Fuck! Why was he thinking those sorts of erotic things here and together with that brat at that? He must be that pent-up, having only broken up with his last girlfriend a month ago, and he hadn't had a proper fucking during that time, and now he was sexually frustrated.

Natsu said, "If you didn't want to pick us up in the first place, why did you even bother at all?"

Alec glanced at the boy through the rearview mirror yet again, and said, "What was that, brat?"

"I'm not a brat," Natsu said. "The name's Natsu, and you've known it since forever."

This punk! He still managed to rile him up despite being so feeble.

"Natsu, don't," Aki said.

"So does that mean you did it on purpose?" Yuki asked. "Making us wait for like two hours?"

Alec took in a deep breath and said, “Look here, trio brats, leaving you stranded for two hours isn’t on purpose, all right? Dad forgot, simple as that, and the café is fucking busy. He told me last minute to pick you guys up. Honestly, I didn’t even know when you lot would be arriving, just that you’d be here before the first semester the university starts.”

Because frankly, he didn’t care. He had a shitload going on in his life after all.

“I guess it’s normal for Uncle Michael to forget about anything that’s not work related,” Aki said. “But I would have thought that at least Edwin would have remembered.”

Alec said, “It was Edwin who reminded him.”

Aki brightened a little and said, “Really?”

Alec raised a brow. Really now, the oldest hadn’t changed one bit where Edwin was concerned. Anyone mentioning the name would make his ears perk up like a puppy. If he had a tail, it’d be wagging vigorously, no doubt.

They arrived at the café ten minutes later, and Alec parked the car in the driveway. Natsu was getting out, and Alec, noting the boy looked as though he’d fall, scooted around and roughly wrapped his arms around him and lifted him up. To his surprise, Natsu didn’t make a fuss, and even rested his head on Alec’s broad shoulder as he closed his eyes.

“I feel sick,” he said.

“You’ll feel better soon,” Alec said, his voice soft and gentle, much to his own surprise.

At the front door, he nudged it open, and the moment he entered, he was greeted with barking and meowing from two small pets trotting over to him. “Muffin, Cheesecake, make way, we have people moving into the house.”

Muffin, a small ball of beige fluff, kept barking hyperactively while Cheesecake, a poof of black, kept rubbing his head against Alec’s legs and meowing.

“Oh wow, a puppy and a kitten,” Yuki said.

“And they are so cute,” Aki said.

“The puppy is Muffin, and the kitten is Cheesecake,” Alec explained.

The pets ditched him the moment they saw the newcomers, and they eagerly went to greet them, flaunting their cuteness. Alec was amused and damn surprised by their behavior.

He headed into the lounge where he then laid Natsu on the luxurious sofa. After making the boy comfortable, he turned the air-conditioning on full blast while Aki went about looking after Natsu and Yuki took care of the luggage and backpacks. As for Muffin and Cheesecake, they both climbed onto the sofa and made themselves comfortable, Muffin licking on Natsu’s hand while Cheesecake curled up near the boy’s head.

What the heck? The pair never got along with any dates he, Edwin, or Landon brought around. Muffin would bark at them threateningly and then bite them while Cheesecake would hiss and scratch them. He had lost count the many of their dates these two had already scared away. If they brought them

around for a good time, they'd have to either lock the pair of lovable ones up in one of the rooms upstairs or transfer them to the main Hamilton house a few streets down the neighborhood. Yet, here they were, smitten the moment these three brats entered the door. Seriously?

“You guys want something to drink?” he asked.

“Yes, please,” Yuki said. “And something to eat. We haven't had anything since breakfast.”

And it was already well past two in the afternoon, so naturally, they'd be starving.

“Natsu hadn't had a proper meal since we left Japan two days ago,” Aki said. “He's low in glucose.”

Which was why he fainted, Alec thought.

“I'll ask the kitchen staff to make something for you guys,” he said as he placed three glasses of Coke on the coffee table.

“Thank you,” Yuki said.

Aki nudged Natsu up and said, “Drink this.”

Alec watched as Natsu managed to sit up and half sip, half lick the drink like a kitten, and he wanted to burst out laughing. He managed to keep himself in check, however, and headed back into the kitchen. When he returned, he placed a bowl of fruit on the coffee table.

“Fruit. Nice,” Yuki said.

Alec sat down next to Natsu, took a banana, peeled it, and then presented the fruit near the boy's lips. “Eat,” he said.

Natsu glared at him and pulled a disgusted face.

Alec said, "I'm not having you fainting again from low glucose. Open your mouth and eat, brat."

"You gotta eat, Natsu," Aki said.

Natsu sighed and then opened his mouth and obediently wrapped his lips around the banana. Their eyes met, and fuck, did that glare irk him. Alec couldn't help himself and thrust the banana in a bit farther, commanding him to eat, causing Natsu to react by thumping his palm on Alec's chest at the sudden deep invasion of his mouth as his eyes widened.

Alec's imagination went a bit wild at the sight. Fuck! He thought. Now where the hell did that come from.

Natsu slammed his hand on Alec's chest again, demanding for him to take the banana out, but Alec refused to even budge. Natsu finally gave in and took a bite, hard.

Chomp! And Alec felt his dick twitch.

After chewing and swallowing, Natsu said, "Happy now?" He snagged the banana from him. "I can hold it myself."

Alec snorted and then got up. He said, "Make yourself at home. Your bedrooms are upstairs. Mom decorated the doors with nameplates, so I don't need to show you which is yours."

"Thanks, Alec," Aki said.

That's a thanks each from both Aki and Yuki. Still nothing from the brat with the ultimate attitude, enticing torso with skin as pale as milk, nipples as pink as a rose bud, and lips...

Turning on his heel, he headed out the door via the back, crossed the courtyard, and entered the café. In the kitchen, he announced, “I’m back.”

Marisa, the Hamilton’s youngest, ambushed him the moment she saw him and asked, “Where are Aki, Natsu, and Yuki?” She poked her head around him, eagerly looking for the trio, as if Alec was hiding them behind his back like some sort of presents.

“At the house,” he said. To their father, he asked, “Dad? Can you make something for the brats to eat? Apparently, they hadn’t had anything since breakfast.”

“I’ll take care of it after this lot.” Edwin volunteered over his shoulder.

“Thanks,” Alec said and then he returned to work serving the customers, with the café still as busy as when he had left an hour ago. When Edwin called out that the food was ready, he was about to take care of that and deliver the fare to the triplets when Marisa jumped in.

“I’ll do that,” she said. “Be back in a bit. Take care of my tables while I’m gone, please.” She took the tray packed with three large pizzas and off she went, leaving Alec to grumble under his breath before turning back to serving customers.

4



Natsu

Marisa, Uncle Michael and Aunty Lena's sixteen-year-old daughter who we considered our little sister, was a ball of energy when she came up to the house, delivering us the much-needed food. It was pizza, made by Edwin, she announced, which made Aki smile with delight. She made a big fuss when she found out I had fainted and swore to make Alec take responsibility for being so careless. I wasn't sure how me fainting for not eating properly had anything to do with Alec, but sure.

After filling my now settled stomach for the first time since we left Japan, we headed upstairs to check out our rooms. I found mine at the end of the hallway, with the cute nameplate on the door. The room itself was quite big, with a queen-sized bed, a sleek study desk with a chair, and a chill area with cushions and a beanbag. Aunty Lena really thought of our comfort, eh? There was a large closet, too, to store my clothes and other stuff.

Marisa came into my room, having already been in Aki's and Yuki's, and she said, "You like it? Zara and I helped Mom set everything up. Alec and Edwin, too. They put together the beds."

"It's very nice. I like it," I said. "Thanks, Marisa."

"No worries," she said, hugging me from behind.

Standing like this next to her, we were the same height. I couldn't believe she had grown so much since I last saw her.

Yuki brought my luggage up for me because he said I was in no condition to carry the heavy load after fainting, and I started unpacking.

“Gotta go back to work,” Marisa said. “But I’ll be back for dinner. Mom is making roast and chocolate cake, so it’s gonna be real nice tonight. See ya.” Then she was gone.

After neatly arranging my clothing and other belongings in the closet, I headed into Aki’s room to see him busy unpacking as well. I said, “I’m going to take a shower and then have a nap.”

Aki nodded. “Mm-hmm.”

The cold shower was so damn nice, cooling down my hot body, and after putting on a pair of shorts and T-shirt, I headed back toward my room, noticing a door with no nameplate before reaching mine. A spare room? Or was it Edwin’s? But I had heard Marisa telling Aki that Edwin’s was downstairs on the first floor.

I shrugged my shoulders and then headed into mine. I shut the door and drew the curtains halfway closed, leaving the other half open to allow daylight in. Then I eagerly climbed onto the luxurious bed.

Ah, that felt so good, and the mattress was soft and comfortable. I closed my eyes, and before I knew it, I was in deep, snoozing away. When I woke sometime later, I noticed that it was dark, with the sound of waves crashing onto shore, which reminded me that the café, and hence this house, was

right in front of the beach. It was a nice sound, one that I'd soon get used to, for sure.

Still slightly groggy and tired, I got out of bed, wondering where everyone was. I went out the door and poked my head inside both Aki's and then Yuki's room, only to see both places empty. Downstairs?

Yawning, I stumbled down the stairs, hearing the hums of chatters and laughter. It sounded like a lot of people.

When I went into the open-plan kitchen-dining area, I was greeted with the whole Hamilton family—Uncle Michael, his wife Aunty Lena, and their children Alec, Zara, and Marisa as well as their adopted son, Aki's beloved Edwin. There were three other men I didn't know, and of course, Aki and Yuki, who looked like they hadn't taken any nap like I had done.

"Natsu, you're up," Aunty Lena said, sailing over to me. Within an instant, I was in her arms, my face squeezed against her well-endowed bosom. "You're still as cute and adorable as ever." When she moved back, she cupped my face and pinched my cheeks, placing small kisses here and there.

I said, "Aunty Lena, long time no see."

"Damn right, long time no see," she said. Then I was being hugged and kissed and pinched on the cheeks by twenty-two-year-old Zara, too, before being introduced to the men I didn't know, which were Scott, Alec's buddy and a staff member at the café, and two hunks, also staff at the café, one named Landon and the other, Colton. They appeared to be in their mid to late twenties, like Edwin.

I joined everyone, still lightly dressed in my shorts and T-shirt, drinking Coke while the adults drank wine, and we started a hearty dinner. During all this, I didn't miss the fact that Aki was grinning like an idiot, his eyes on Edwin who was sitting next to him. What made Aki happy made both me and Yuki happy, so naturally, I, too, was grinning like an idiot, that was until I felt the undeniably intense gaze on me.

Finding that I could no longer ignore it, I turned to Alec who didn't even bother to hide his hostility toward me. The way he stared and scrutinized me with those half-masked eyes of his and the lazy, bored expression irritated me.

Not one to back down from a challenge, I stabbed a piece of roasted potato with my fork, popped that into my mouth, and started chewing all while giving him my death-ray glare that was sure to make him retreat. He didn't, and instead smirked like he was amused or something before bringing his wineglass up to his lips for a sip.

“So, Natsu,” Colton said, drawing my attention.

I turned to the man. “Hmm?”

“I heard you're not good with the heat,” he said.

I nodded. “I'm not.”

“And his names mean summer,” Yuki said, chuckling. “What a contradiction.”

I retorted, “And your name means snow in winter and you're not good with cold weather. You get the worst flu ever and you can't sleep alone in winter.”

“We should have swapped names,” Yuki said.

Marisa said, “Aren’t all your names in reference to the seasons?”

Aki nodded. “Our birth month is September, so Mom decided to name me Aki, meaning fall in Japanese, and then Natsu, summer, and Yuki, snow in winter.”

“I would have thought it’d be fall, winter, and then spring and summer?” Zara said.

Aki shrugged. “Mom’s logic is a bit strange.”

“No spring, eh?” Landon said.

“Our older sister’s name is Hana, meaning flower in Japanese, kind of like spring,” Yuki said.

“Hana is supermodel-material hot,” Zara supplied proudly. “If only she had chosen to pursue a career in the modeling industry, she would have been a hit.”

Alec snorted. “Unlike the three runts with height that barely passes for a high schooler, Hana is indeed supermodel-material.”

He had his eyes on me when he uttered that statement, and I knew he was japing at my sore spot. I said, “Hana is indeed supermodel-material and guys as ugly as you are, Alec, are not in her league. She wouldn’t glance your way even if you stood right in front of her.”

At hearing that, Edwin, Landon, Colton, and Scott burst out laughing. Marisa and Zara, too. Scott even slapped his hand on

Alec's shoulder. He couldn't seem to control his mirth. As for Alec, well, he looked like he wanted to strangle me.

"Oh my gosh! Cute! So damn cute! Natsu thinks Alec is ugly. That's a first," Zara said, wiping tears from her eyes.

I guessed Alec wasn't going to back down, and he said, "Then we're in the same boat since no girl would ever look at an eighteen-year-old the size of a peanut with zero charm and sex appeal. I just bet you've never had a girlfriend before, right, brat."

I felt my face burning hot, and I couldn't think of a comeback as I continued to glare at him.

Aunty Lena said, "All right, no more *teasing* Natsu, Alec, like I told you before, or else I'm confiscating your tip money. And let's have dessert."

"Actually," Yuki said. "I don't know about charm and sex appeal, but Natsu gets lots of love letters from the girls in high school."

Alec, looking damn annoyed, turned to Yuki and said, "Is that so?"

"Really?" Marisa asked, her eyes bright, looking as excited as could be. "Tell us more."

Yuki said, "Natsu is the champ of the school. He won't stand for bullying and would beat the crap out of most of them, with our help, of course."

Alec snorted. "You imps beating up bullies at school? I'd love to see how that went."

“With lots of bruises and pains,” Yuki said. “We were a mess most of the time, but the beating, though sometimes we didn’t win, does prove that we won’t stand for it, and apparently, the girls love it, the underdogs like us standing up and stuff like that.”

“Sounds romantic,” Marisa said dreamily.

I suspected she might have been watching too much anime and was probably picturing boys at the back of the schoolyard fighting each other under the cherry blossom trees while the girls watched, awed. Actually, now that I thought about it, what had happened wasn’t far from that, strangely enough.

Aunty Lena brought out a nice big-ass chocolate cake, and more eating ensued, and after that, casually drinking and just chatting and catching up. Thankfully, Alec didn’t bother to pick on me, for now, and I managed to relax and just chill, enjoying the night. It was ten when Aki and Yuki looked like they were about to fall flat on their faces on the table, their eyes droopy. That was what happened when you didn’t take a nap after long-distance travel.

Edwin chuckled, his eyes on Aki, and he said, “I think the boys needs their sleep.” Hence, Aki, Yuki, and I headed upstairs.

Since I wasn’t so tired after already having a nap, I checked my phone, only to be assaulted with numerous messages from Mom, a few from Dad, and one from Hana. Mom’s ones were mostly asking how I was feeling, with each new one sounding

more anxious than the previous and the last few stating that Aki had phoned and updated her about my condition.

I supposed I should reply, so I phoned her, since it was still in the afternoon one day ahead back in Japan, and we chatted for a bit. She calmed down, naturally, after hearing my voice. An hour later, I hung up, and since I knew I'd be thirsty when I wake because it was so hot, I headed downstairs to get a glass of water.

The dining room was still loud with chatter. I thought everyone had already left, but not so because I went around to see Edwin still up and Landon and Alec still around. When were those two going to leave? It was already quite late.

“Natsu,” Edwin said. “Did you want something?”

“Uh, just getting a glass of water,” I said. “I get thirsty when it's hot at night.”

Edwin got up and headed into the kitchen, and I followed him. He opened the fridge door and took out a bottle of water for me. “Here. Just take one whenever you want.”

I took it gratefully and said, “Thanks, Edwin. You're awesome.”

A snort came from the other side, followed by, “So Edwin is awesome for just handing you a bottle of water, and me catching you before you fell to the ground and hurt yourself when you fainted and then carrying your sorry ass into the car and then into the house doesn't get one?”

He caught me when I fainted? I thought it had been either Aki or Yuki.

Landon chuckled. “Sounds like someone is feeling salty for not receiving a thank-you.”

Alec said, “No one is feeling salty. Just some acknowledgment and appreciation would be nice.”

I toyed with the water bottle in my hands, and with my face heating up, I stammered, “Thank... thank you for... helping me.”

I was about to rush out the door when Alec said, “Who are you thanking? There are three people here.”

Edwin sighed in exasperation. “Alec, that’s enough. Natsu, you’re tired, aren’t you? Go to bed.”

I nodded. “Mm-hmm.” But before I left, I wanted to make it clear that I was not an ungrateful brat like bastard Alec implied. I went to stand right in front of him, looked at him in the eyes, and with my face burning hot with embarrassment, I said, “Thanks, Alec, for helping me. I’m grateful for what you did for me.” Then I turned on my heel and all but rushed out the door.

Still feeling damn embarrassed, I put the water bottle on the bedside table and then climbed into bed.

All right, that should do it. I thanked him, so he shouldn’t be that pissy with me anymore, right? I turned over, switched off the bedside lamp, and then went to sleep.

5



Alec

With the image of Natsu's face flushing with embarrassment and his eyes staring straight into his while he softly and sincerely uttered those words of thanks still playing in his mind, Alec couldn't help but feel this sense of satisfaction rushing through him, more so when the boy had looked so damn demure. He admitted that Natsu had looked cute.

"Feeling less salty now?" Landon asked, smirking.

Alec said, "Nobody was feeling salty in the first place." With that, he downed the last bit of his wine and stood. "Now, it's about time I hit the hay."

"Good night," Landon said.

"Good night, Alec," Edwin said. "And *please* get along with Natsu while he's living with us."

"I'll try," Alec said and headed out the door and then up the stairs.

All was quietness on the second floor, so the brats must be deep in their slumber, and Natsu especially. He remembered that the brat was a deep sleeper. Nothing could ever wake him, not even the loud sound of a shrieking alarm. He'd usually wake up when he wakes up, according to his body clock.

With lots of bruises and pains. Hah! He would really like to see that brat covered in bruises and feel a shitload of pains, that milky smooth skin tainted with reds here and there, his

face flushed from the heat of the fight, and his eyes brimming with tears.

Oh yes, he'd really like to see that. He chuckled as he got into the shower a few moments later. He was busy washing himself when he noticed that his dick was growing harder. Yep, he really needed a good fucking. This beast demanded it, so much so that even the thought of a brat like Natsu would bring it to life, pulsating hot and hard.

He wrapped his hand around the penis and then started stroking, imagining a pretty girl with dark hair, large brown eyes, and the cutest little tits ever with rose bud-colored nipples. He imagined himself kissing her sensual lips while he toyed with her nipples, teasing until they were perky. Then he saw himself kissing, licking, and sucking those nipples with his lips and tongue while he was toying her ass with his fingers.

Yes, Alec had a thing for ass. The firmer and paler, the better, which he could easily leave spanking marks, and the cuter and pinker the hole, the better. What made him come was when he imagined those sensual lips wrapping around his engorged cock and he thrust into her mouth, deep. As she took him in, she was gazing up at him, her eyes begging for more and more, and then he felt the release, a hot sense of pleasure rushing through him as he rested back against the marble wall of the shower cubicle.

He chuckled, feeling fucking good. He admitted that that was a good one. Quite the release, too.

A bit later, he climbed into his luxurious bed.

“What a day,” he said, closing his eyes. Then there’s tomorrow when he’d have to see that imp of a face again, he thought sourly as he fell asleep, though he didn’t know that he was smiling.

Sometime later, he was woken up with some irritating noises, and it took him a moment to remember that the trio were now living under the same roof as him, and on the same floor at that, which made him realize he could no longer bring girls around for a one-night stand. Because there was no fucking way he’d be pounding his dick into a pussy or an ass and making sexy, hot noises while knowing those three were a mere stone’s throw away.

He heard the toilet flushing and realized that one of them must be using *his* bathroom on this side of the floor. He reached out for his phone and noted that it was three in the morning—a while yet until his official wake-up time. Turning over, he went back to snoozing. Suddenly, he heard the shower running, and thought there could only be one brat who’d be so weak to heat that he’d had to blast himself with a cold shower even at this time of the night. Natsu!

Alec snorted and thought how typical. He was just about to doze off into his slumber when there were more irritating sounds with a door shutting and feet tapping on floor. Crash! Yep, more doors opening and then closing, but why did this one sound so damn close? he thought, working on falling back

to sleep. Suddenly, he felt something move at the end of his bed. He flipped over to see a dark figure curled up near his leg.

What the fuck?

He reached over and switched on the bedside lamp, and the moment the room was flooded with light, he saw Natsu there, snoozing away, butt naked no less, and with skin still wet with beads of water droplets. He didn't even bother to dry himself, let alone get dressed. Holy fuck! This brat.

To say Alec was stunned was an understatement. The boy must have been disoriented and returned to the wrong room after his adventure to the bathroom.

He sighed, shaking his head in exasperation. He leaned forward and tapped on him. "Hey, wake up. You're in the wrong room, idiot." He tapped again, but the boy refused to budge. Alec sighed, yet again, in annoyance. There was no damn way he'd be sleeping while this brat was curled up like a pup on his bed.

He got out of bed and pulled the boy by the arm, attempting to lift him off the bed. Only his hand slipped from the wet skin, and Natsu went sprawling back on the bed, this time on his back, revealing the most amazing sight Alec wished he hadn't had the pleasure of seeing.

There lay Natsu, arms wide out, pretty face to the side, his legs lazily lolled about to show off his slender toned body of milky skin, perky nipples, and a cute cock, indeed the size of a gherkin and the color soft pink as a rose bud.

Alec couldn't take his eyes away for a few moments, and when he managed somehow, he went out the door and returned a few moments later with a towel. He threw it on top of the boy and then started patting him dry.

“What a nuisance brat,” he said under his breath. Even in sleep the boy managed to still cause him trouble and rile him up. He should be dragging this brat back to his room so he could resume his precious sleep. Work was going to be damn busy tomorrow, and he couldn't afford to be groggy while serving customers.

Wrapping the towel around Natsu's waist, he lifted the boy up into his arms and carried him out the door. This was the third time he had to carry this brat. What had his life come to?

Nudging his shoulder on Natsu's bedroom door to open it, he walked in and dropped the boy on the bed where the boy went rolling over onto his front, leaving the towel behind and parading his milky firm ass in the air. He even lifted it slightly to tease Alec, his cute asshole making Alec's dick respond in the most inappropriate way.

Now, he thought, that was an ass he'd appreciate, an ass he'd touch and squeeze and spank and kiss anytime of the day.

Holy fuck! Alec thought as he raked his fingers through his hair while taking in a deep, shaky breath. Where the hell did that come from? But it was the brat's fault. It had to be because he had never had this line of thoughts before, even with the girls he had dated. That boy was really pushing his limits, wasn't he? And he didn't even know he was doing it.

Should he just leave him as he was? he wondered, lolling there in the nude, his ass in the air for the world to enjoy. But the thought that his sisters might just come barging into the room in the morning and see *this* turned his stomach sour. After all, they had the habit of doing that every time the triplets visited. There was no way in hell he'd let his sisters see such an uncalled for, erotic sight. It'd scar them for life.

He thought about pulling the blanket over the brat but knew it'd just be kicked away in this heat. He opened the closet and searched for a pair of underpants. He found some, and climbing on the bed, he pulled at Natsu's legs to put it on for him. Still deep in his sleep, Natsu responded by slamming his feet on Alec's chest, nearly throwing the man to the floor in the process.

Alec gritted his teeth. Pissed as hell, he tugged and pulled, and then managed to slip the underpants on, and he thought that yes, the job was done and now he could get back to snoozing. No such luck, however, as he suddenly felt the boy start grinding against him.

Alec went still, feeling the stiffness against him, rubbing up and down.

Oh, for fuck's sake!

Nope! Just nope! He all but tossed the minx back on the bed, climbed out, and started for the door.

Back in his room, he collapsed onto the bed, determined to get back to sleep. But the stiffness of his cock was hard to

ignore, and aggravated, he wrapped his hand around it and started rubbing, just to get it over and done with.

Fuck, he couldn't believe he was turned on just because he had seen that brat naked.

His pride and joy refused to come so easily and grew even harder and hotter, and as he continued to stroke himself, the image of Natsu came into his head. When he imagined himself sucking that cute cock and then pounding his own thick beast into that tight-looking asshole, he came, hard and hot, and Alec had the feeling that he was so damn fucked.

6



Alec

Alec slept fitfully and when he woke the next morning, he felt like shit. After a quick change and a cup of coffee, he hit the gym located in the basement of the house. He was sweating profusely on the treadmill when Edwin came in, chuckling. “You’re up early.”

“Morning,” Alec greeted.

“Morning,” Edwin replied.

The two were quiet as Alec continued with his workout and Edwin started his. When Alec was done and left an hour later, he headed upstairs to see Aki coming out of his room, clothing in his arms. The boy jumped at the sight of him and said, “Alec, what are you doing here so early?”

Why these triplets. If it wasn’t one, it was the other irritating him. He said, “I live here.”

“You live here?” the boy asked, looking both shocked and confused. “I thought you lived at the main house.”

“I moved here three years ago, brat,” he said.

“Oh, I see. I didn’t know,” Aki said. “So, we’re like roommates.”

“Yes, we are,” Alec said. “Landon lives here, too. His room is downstairs, so don’t go into his private sanctuary thinking it’s Edwin.”

Aki’s cheeks turned crimson at the statement, and he stammered, “What made... you think I’d go... into Edwin’s

room?”

“Because you always do,” Alec said. He pointed to the left. “You triplets can use that bathroom on the other side of the floor. This one here,” he pointed to the one next to his room on the right, “is mine. Got it?”

Aki nodded. “Got it. We use that one anyway.”

“Good to know,” Alec said, turning on his heel. Although the brat Natsu had used *his* bathroom last night and he had to clean up the mess early this morning, too.

In his bathroom, Alec stripped himself naked and then headed into the shower and started washing himself. It wasn't long before he heard knocking on the door, followed by shouting. “Aki-nii? Is that you in there?”

“Yeah, it's me. I'm taking a shower,” Alec heard Aki reply.

He gritted his teeth. For fuck's sake, why were they so damn loud in the morning.

“Can I come in? I really need to use the toilet.”

That voice was clearly Natsu's. Even the sound of that brat's voice was irritating him.

“All right,” Aki replied.

He heard the door opening and then shutting, and he thought it felt too close and sounded too loud for his liking. Sure, the sound of the shower going muffled some of the noise, but he could clearly hear someone pissing into the toilet bowl on the other side, although he couldn't see because the shower

cubicle was flanked by a thick wall that separated where he was from the toilet, basin, and bathtub. Alec rested his head against the wall and sighed, exasperated.

The toilet flushed, and then, Natsu said, “Aki, I’m gonna jump into the shower with you. I’m damn stuffy and hot.”

Fuck, no! But it was too late as the shower door opened and there stood Natsu, stark naked, staring down at Alec’s lower half.

“Aki-nii, what have you done to yourself. Why is your penis so big?”

Alec growled and said, “I’m not your Aki-nii, you rascal.”

Natsu lifted his head, and the moment their gazes met, he widened his eyes in shock. “Alec! What are you doing here?”

“I live here,” Alec snapped. “Now get out of my bathroom.”

“You live here?” the boy asked. “No, you don’t. You live at the main house. Only Edwin, Aki, Yuki, and I live here.”

Alec felt like his head was about to explode with annoyance. He leaned in as he grabbed the boy’s chin in his hand. Their faces inches apart, he said, “Listen here, brat, I just about have had enough of you. Get the hell out before I whoop your ass.”

“All right. All right. But please let go of my face,” Natsu said. “You’re hurting me.”

Alec released him, and Natsu, his cheeks flushed red, turned around. He was about to leave when Alec saw the cute, firm

ass. The urge was just too damn strong, and he leaned forward, his hand swinging through the air. His palm landed smack-dab on the cheek, leaving a bright-red mark on the milky flesh.

Natsu jumped and rotated around, his eyes tearing up. “What did you do that for?” he demanded.

“Teaching a brat a lesson,” Alec said, a smirk on his face. Fuck, but that felt absolutely satisfying.

Natsu touched his butt cheek, rubbing it. “You’re the worst,” he said and then scurried out, slamming the bathroom door shut behind him.

When Alec got out of the shower a moment later, he saw dark underwear on the floor. That brat, he ran out naked.

Going down the stairs about fifteen minutes later, wearing a pair of dark jeans and a T-shirt, Alec met Landon who said, “What was with all the noise so early in the morning?”

Alec said, “The three brats. Don’t expect any more peace and quiet in this house now that they’re living here.”

After a quick breakfast, he left earlier than usual, simply because he didn’t want to see the brat’s face. He started setting up the front of the café, and soon, his father came in and started work in the kitchen, followed by Edwin and then Colton. Landon came in an hour later to start preparing the coffee machine, and when Scott and his mother and sisters turned up, it was officially opening time.

The café was busy, as usual, and Alec was on the go, serving customers. It was well into the lunch hour when it got

very noisy, and the girls at the tables outside and those along the open windows started giggling and taking photos on their phones. Had they spotted something interesting along the beach? he wondered. Some of them even rushed outside, too. Alec shook his head, leaning an elbow on the countertop.

Landon said, “Looks like something interesting going on outside.”

“They probably spotted a seal,” Alec said. There were a few along the beach now and again.

“Oh my gosh, did you see them?” a girl said. “They’re so beautiful. I can’t even tell the three of them apart.”

Alec frowned.

“I know, right?” the other said. “I’ve never seen them before. Are they tourists?”

“But they have a kitten and a puppy with them, so they can’t be tourists,” yet another girl said. “And the kitten is on a leash. That’s so cute.”

Alec turned to Landon who looked at him, and then Landon burst out laughing. “Three of them. A kitten on a leash.”

Alec had the feeling who the girls were talking about, and despite having no desire to prove himself right, his curiosity got the better of him.

He headed out the door and walked across the esplanade to look down at the beach. He saw the triplets below, with Yuki and Natsu chasing after Muffin and Aki with Cheesecake on a leash. They were laughing and having the time of their lives.

Along the edge of the esplanade were young women watching them with too much enthusiasm and interest for Alec's liking. Even Marisa was squeezing herself next to him to watch.

"Oh my gosh, it's Aki, Natsu, and Yuki," she said in delight. "They're drawing so much attention."

Yuki must have noticed Marisa because he waved as he laughed. The other girls close to them suddenly shrieked, with some waving back at Yuki while yet others started taking more photos on their phones. Seriously, did these girls think the triplets were some famous people or something?

"Are they idols?" he heard one of the younger girls ask her friend. "They look like one of those idols from East Asia."

Alec knew what an idol was, but not when it came specifically from East Asia, and he was about to turn on his heel when Marisa said, "Everyone thinks the triplets are idols." She looked up at him and asked, "Do you know what an idol is, Alec?"

Alec was about to tell her that he doesn't give a damn when Marisa said, "They're pop stars. They're very popular, you know. I can't believe people thinks the triplets are idols." She looked so excited, her eyes sparkling. And the brat Yuki seemed to love the attention, too, now waving with both hands in the air. Most of the girls on this side were waving back enthusiastically, along with shrieking and cheering, no less.

Alec left the crowd and got back to work, and an hour later, Scott said, amused, "Is it just me or is the crowd growing?"

“Where’s Marisa?” Landon asked.

Both Alec and Scott turned to see Landon looking frustrated as hell. Alec asked, “What’s wrong?”

“Everything is wrong,” Landon said. “I have a fifty-drink order for one table.”

“Do we have a table with fifty people?” Scott asked. “I’m sure the most is fifteen. Unless Marisa joined two or three together?”

“We don’t have a party that big,” Alec said. “I’d know if we did. They’d have to book in advance.”

Marisa came in, skipping and humming, and Landon said, “What’s with the fifty drinks for a table?”

“Oh, those are for Aki, Natsu, and Yuki,” she said, pointing outside to where the big crowd was.

Alec, Landon, and Scott looked in that direction, but all they could see was a thick crowd of girls.

“Don’t tell me those brats ordered all those drinks for those people,” Alec said. “They better have the money to pay for it, plus tips.”

Marisa said, “They didn’t make any order. Those girls are buying the drinks for them.”

Edwin came out of the kitchen, causing a stir from the customers.

“Oh, look, he came out,” one whispered. “He’s so hot.”

“I come here just to get a glimpse of him every weekend,” another said.

“Marisa,” Edwin said. “What’s with the fifteen orders of pizza for a table?”

“It’s for Aki, Natsu, and Yuki,” Marisa said, grinning.

“They ordered fifteen large pizzas?” Edwin was flabbergasted.

“Nope,” Marisa shook her head. “Those girls outside are buying them for the triplets.” Once again, she pointed outside. “Aren’t they great? They’ve only just gotten here, and already, they have people buying them food and drinks.”

Edwin looked in that direction, and the moment he saw the flock of females, his face darkened. “Where are the triplets?” he asked.

“In the middle, surrounded by those people,” Marisa said.

“Retake the order,” Edwin said. “I’m not making fifteen pizzas for three people.”

“And I’m not making fifty drinks for three people either,” Landon said.

“What? But we’ll make a boatload of money, and I’ll be getting a humongous tip.”

“Retake the order, Marisa,” Edwin said firmly.

“I’m not going to,” Marisa said. “I’m not going to lose my tip money.” She turned on her heel and all but scooted away.

Edwin sighed and then headed outside.

Landon said, "Alec, help Edwin sort it out."

Alec, a dark frown on his face, headed outside, too, as he mumbled, "Those brats. They've only been here a day and they're already causing problems."

With the Hamilton brothers together, a stir of interest was inevitable, and even more so when they came to the triplet's table. The moment Aki saw Edwin, he eagerly stood with Cheesecake in his arms. Face flushing and eyes sparkling, the boy said, "Edwin."

Edwin, out of habit, put his hand on Aki's head and ruffled his hair, causing noises of delight to echo around them from the girls witnessing the unexpected sight.

"You came for lunch," Edwin said.

Aki nodded. "Mm-hmm. Are we causing trouble? Because there are so many people here. We didn't know the café is so popular."

"Yeah," Yuki said. "Like *so* many people here, and they're all so nice and friendly." He waved at everyone again, grinning. "Is it normal for people to buy you food and drinks in America?"

No, of course not, Alec thought as his gaze drifted to Natsu sitting there stroking Muffin on his lap. He said, "No pets allowed in the café."

Natsu said, "We're not in the café. We're outside, alfresco style."

Alec leaned in until their faces were inches apart and said, "Take Muffin and Cheesecake home."

Natsu turned to stare at him then and said, "No. We're on an outing."

Gritting his teeth, Alec said, "If you don't, I'm going to whoop your ass."

Natsu glared at him, his cheeks turning crimson.

"Oh my gosh, their faces are so close," a girl whispered to her friend. "Do they know each other?"

"And the other hotty is patting the other cutie's head," another girl whispered to her friend. "I think they know each other."

"So are we getting lunch or not, Edwin?" Yuki asked. "Cause I'm starving."

"You're getting lunch," Edwin said. "We just need to sort out your order."

"But our order was already put in," Yuki said.

Alec straightened and said, "There's way too much food and too many drinks for three people. We're canceling the previous order and making a new one. What do you guys want?"

"What?" Yuki said. "But these ladies are so nice and ordered them for us and everything."

"Uh, excuse me," a young woman said. "Why is the last order canceled?"

Alec sighed. "Because there are too many drinks and too much food for just three people."

"But really, what's the problem?" she asked. "I want to buy drinks for these cuties, and I'm paying for them."

"Yeah, me, too," another said. "What's the problem?"

Alec said, "The problem is, ladies, that they won't be able to finish all the food and drinks, and it'd be a waste." Turning to Natsu, he demanded, "What do you want for lunch?"

"Such a grumpy waiter," Natsu said. "Where's Marisa? I'm not giving my order until I get Marisa back."

Alec worked on cooling his irritation, and turning on his heel, he headed back inside, looking for Marisa. Edwin, too, and as he was canceling the previous order, Marisa came skipping in, placing the next one for the triplets. This time, there were only three pizzas and no drinks. Alec would have thought those brats would have at least order a drink each, but nope.

"Excuse me, a bottle of Coke, please," a girl asked.

"Sure," Landon said, reaching out for one. "What table would you like the tab on?"

"That one," she said, pointing to one near the windows. "And do you have a permanent marker?"

"A marker?" Landon asked.

"Yes, a marker," the girl said.

"We do," Alec said.

“Can I borrow it?” she asked.

“Sure.” Alec took one out of the drawer, and he glimpsed her writing a name and phone number on the side of the bottle. Once done, she headed out the door. Alec thought nothing of it until more came in, bought more drinks, and also requested to use the marker.

“I’m getting a headache from this,” Landon said. “They clearly have found a loophole.”

When Alec took some pasta dishes to a table outside, he saw that the crowd around the triplets had somewhat dispersed a little, and on the tables were about thirty or so bottles of various kinds of soft drinks and juices, all marked with names and phone numbers.

These boys had just gotten here, and they were already receiving a ton of phone numbers from girls? Sure, he, Landon, Scott, and even Edwin, Colton, and Luke who worked in the kitchen, had received phone numbers on napkins from the female customers who fancied them, but none had received *this* many in one day. What the hell had the world come to?

Alec shook his head and returned inside, more irritated than ever, and that irritation grew ever more every time he glimpsed Natsu smiling happily at the girls who were fawning over him and his brothers.

7



Natsu

The word *shock* was an understatement to describe how I felt when I found out Alec was living with us at the café house, more so when it was directly from him. In the shower. With both of us in the nude.

I tried not to let him get to me since I was determined to lead a peaceful, uneventful university life. So, I started avoiding him as much as possible, but why was it so damn hard? We seemed to be bumping into each other every minute or two, and it was even worse now that Aki, Yuki, and I had started working at the café. It had been a week and he hadn't stop nitpicking at me for almost everything I do, and it was driving me crazy.

I was never going to go down without a fight. I had worked in restaurants before, ones just as busy as this if not more, and I had a ton of experience. So far, despite his nasty tactics, making me do the most unsavory chores, I still managed a bright smile on my face in front of the customers, which seemed to irritate him and, naturally, pleased me so damn much.

"Here's your pizza," I said, laying the board containing the large mozzarella cheese pizza on the table. "And yours."

"Oh, wow," the girl said. "Looks divine."

"Enjoy." I was about to leave the group of five young women to it when one grabbed my wrist, surprising the bejesus out of me.

“Wait!”

I turned, a bright grin on my face. “Yes?”

The girl glanced at her friends and then me and said, “Can we, uh, take pictures with you?”

“With me? Oh, you mean holding the pizza and stuff?”

Once again, the girls looked at each other and one said, “Yes! Yes, with the pizza.”

“Okay,” I said.

Another said, “Can we have your brothers in the pictures, too?”

“Aki and Yuki?” I said, wondering if they wanted the waiters in their photos so they could post them on social media.

Young women liked to do that, didn't they? To show their friends and followers where they went to dine and what they ordered, and I guessed, the staff was part of the props. Then I thought, if they post those photos on social media, wouldn't it be good for the café? Kind of like indirect advertising.

“It'll only be for a few minutes tops,” she said. “Please?”

“Okay,” I said. Anything for the customers. And free indirect advertising.

I called for Aki, who was just finishing with his table, and then Yuki, and the two came over. The girls started giggling, and they looked excited, their eyes on us.

“Oh my gosh, they look so cute together,” one said.

Another said, “We can’t tell you guys apart at all.”

Yuki chuckled. “Yeah, not many can tell us apart.”

That was true. Almost all the customers that came here got us confused, despite us wearing different-colored shirts. Aki wore blue, me red, and Yuki yellow—the three primary colors for easy spotting—with our names on them in big bold letters, too. Even Uncle Michael and Aunty Lena sometimes got us mixed up, especially if we dressed in similar clothing. Then again, Alec never seemed to have trouble telling me from my brothers, even when we mingled close like this and wore the same clothing, which we often did because we had the same taste.

I glanced over to the other side of the restaurant, and noted that, yep, he had his gaze zeroed in on me yet again.

Was I a walking flashing neon light to him or something, for him to just spot me so easily? Oh, wait. I was wearing a red shirt with my name on it; of course I was a walking neon light to him.

One of the girls started directing us on where to stand and how to pose, me holding a pizza in the middle while Aki and Yuki, between the other girls, held plates of pasta each, and behind us was the featured wall with the name Sunshine Café graffiti. Then she asked a woman at the next table to take the photos. We grinned and said, “Cheese,” and when we were done, my gaze happened to collide with Alec’s on the other side.

Damn, had he been watching this whole time? I felt like I was going to get another earful from him after this.

Once the fuss with the photos was done, we got back to work, and I rushed into the kitchen to avoid running into Alec.

Yes, I was running away. It was human instinct to save one's hide from danger, and yes, I considered being reprimanded and nitpicked on by Alec as dangerous to my self-worth. But blast that Alec! He had the knack of finding me, and I jumped when he said, "Get back to the front, brat." This was followed by a spank to my butt.

I turned to glare at him as I rubbed the sore spot.

Colton placed two plates on the countertop and said, "Table five."

I picked them up, said, "Thanks, Colton," and then rushed out the door.

I swore I'd get back at him for the spank, or rather *spanks* because he had the habit of giving me one almost every day since the incident in the bathroom.

The café continued to be damn busy, with every seat filled and the noise deafening. I was exhausted by closing time at four, and we started with the cleaning.

"You guys are so efficient," Zara said.

"Japanese work ethic," Aki said. "On the go until we're out the door."

I was just finished with a table when I felt this intense gaze on me. Ugh! Must be Alec watching me again. I dared not look his way and continued with the next one and then the next. When the cleaning was done and the front of the house was spick-and-span, we left, and I made sure Alec wasn't watching when we did so.

At the café house, I sprinted upstairs to my room and then collapsed on the bed, facedown. "I'm dying," I said, groaning.

The door burst opened, and Yuki came trotting in and then jumped onto the bed. "Let's watch anime."

I rolled onto my back and said, "Okay. Get Aki-nii."

Yuki jumped off the bed again and whisked out the door, calling, "Aki-nii! Let's watch anime."

While he was doing that, I reached for my laptop, turned it on, and then went into the anime app we subscribed to. The summer season had some very good ones, the fantasy and action and adventure with superpowers that we liked. Most of them were an adaptation of best-selling manga and light novels, and despite that we had already read those, watching the anime alternative was still awesome. Anime brought more life to the stories, in my opinion, especially when the characters had the right voice actors attached to them.

Yuki returned, with Aki in tow who had Muffin in his arms, and they climbed on the bed. We watched about four episodes, each around twenty minutes in length, when there was a rap at the door. When it was opened, Edwin popped his head in, and the moment he did, Aki's face flushed red.

When was he going to get used to seeing Edwin every day? I wondered. More so, when was he going to get used to the fact that Edwin would be popping into our bedrooms every so often to call us for dinner or check up on us.

Edwin leaned his hunky frame against the side of the door and asked, “What are you guys watching? I can hear the noise all the way downstairs.”

Yuki said, “Anime. You should watch it with us sometime, Edwin. It’s very cool.”

“Anime, eh?” he said as he straightened, his eyes on Aki. “Right. Time for dinner.”

We got up from the bed, and as we followed him downstairs, I asked, “What’s for dinner.”

“Not pizza or pasta, I hope,” Yuki said. “I’m sick of pizza and pasta. I even have nightmares of them.” He shivered.

I was tired of having pizza and pasta, too. Working in a café where most of the items in the menu were pizza and pasta did that to you. Of course, there were other choices like French toast, eggs Benedict, fish and chips, grilled sandwiches, and burgers, too, but apparently, Sunshine Café was famed for their pasta and pizza. Probably because Uncle Michael had originally opened the place as an Italian restaurant, but that didn’t quite work out and he changed it to a café with a range on the menu instead.

“Grill salmon with stir-fry noodles,” Edwin said.

“Sounds delicious,” Aki said.

Everything Edwin cooked was delicious since he was a chef, and a very creative one, too. I had heard him mention something about when he had enough experience with running a restaurant, he'd open one himself, a fine dining one.

We went into the open-plan kitchen-dining room, and the moment we did, I felt Alec's gaze on me.

8



Natsu

I scooted around to the other side of the table, the farthest away from him, and took my seat.

I thought I was safe, but he got up to help Edwin and Aki bring things over, and he just had to come to my side and lean over me. I had to duck my head as he placed the bowl of noodles on the table. Then he took the seat right next to me, and I gritted my teeth, working on my patience. I was about to change seats and hop over to the other side when Landon took the chair I had my eye on, and I sighed.

Aki, Yuki, and I ate the noodles with chopsticks while Edwin, Landon, and Alec used knives and forks. It was noodles. You gotta eat noodles with chopsticks.

I popped a thick bunch of noodles into my mouth, making noises, and I didn't lift my head until half of the bowl was gone.

Alec said, "Have some table manners, brat."

"It's normal to make noises when you eat noodles," Yuki said. "It's part of the Japanese culture. It tells the chef that the food is delicious."

"Is that so?" Landon said. "Is that why I saw some people slurping their noodles?"

Yuki nodded. "I slurp mine, especially when it's ramen." He demonstrated by slurping the noodles, making noises in the process.

Landon said, "Looks like you're sucking them in."

Yuki said, "We're really good at sucking in our noodles. You do it like a vacuum." Then he sucked and slurped some more.

"Aki-nii, you want my salmon skin?" I asked since I knew he liked it.

He nodded, and I passed it to him.

"You don't like salmon skin, Natsu?" Edwin asked.

"I like it," I said. "But Aki-nii likes it more."

Aki nodded. "I love it, especially when it's crispy like this."

"I see," Edwin said, his eyes on Aki.

"Why do you add the -nii to Aki's name?" Landon asked.

Yuki said, "Nii means older brother. It's like we're calling Aki bro, or something like that."

Aki said, "Mom still adds the -chan to the end of our names even though we're this old. Adding a -chan usually refers to children or close friends or lovers."

"I see," Landon said. "So technically speaking, Edwin should be calling you Aki-chan, right?"

I burst out laughing because it just sounded so wrong. Aki, on the other hand, blushed hot on the face. He said, "No, that's not it. It'd be Aki-kun, referring to a younger male."

"Sounds complicated," Landon said.

“What’s brat in Japanese?” Alec asked, his eyes on me, his torso turned my way, one arm flanked over the back of my chair.

Ha! As if I was going to tell him. I said, “There’s no such thing as a brat in Japanese. As for a person with a demon-like personality, yes, there is one; it’s called oni.” I nodded my head. “Yep, you’re an oni, Alec.”

Landon burst out laughing. When he managed to calm down, he said, “You have been quite an *oni* recently, Alec. It’s amusing to watch.”

Alec said easily, “If I’ve been an oni, it’s only because there’s a trigger.” He stared at me, hard.

I glared back at him as I ate, munching on noodles.

After dinner, Yuki went to invade Landon’s room, who kept telling him to stop being so noisy and nosy while Aki and I helped Edwin with the dishes. Now and again, I’d glance over my shoulder to see Edwin and Aki next to each other, and Aki flushing hot on the face. His eyes were bright, and he looked so damn happy. Ah, love.

Sneakily leaving the two alone, I went upstairs, humming. I was just coming onto the landing when I saw Alec coming out of *his* bathroom.

He was naked, with only a towel wrapped around his waist, and I admit he was a very gorgeous hunk, disgustingly so. I couldn’t help myself and drifted my gaze over him from head

to toe. Damn, just look at those muscles and abs. His body was just so damn chiseled.

“Like what you see?” he said, smirking as he ran his fingers through his wet hair.

Yes, I liked what I saw. Who didn't? He had the body of a war god in any action fantasy manga. But I wasn't going to tell him that. It'd only stroke his already big ego, and he'd most likely use it against me in future.

I didn't reply and headed toward my room. I was about to open the door when in a flash, he was in front of me, blocking me. His eyes on me, he said, “You didn't reply.”

I sarcastically said, “What do you want me to say? Oh, I *love* how gorgeous you look and I *love* your hunky body and I envy you?” Just after I blurted that out, I gasped, my eyes wide. Fuck!

Alec brought his hand up to cup my chin, his eyes glinting and a smirk on his lips, and he said, “Be envious all you want, brat, because you'll never look anything like this. You're a shrimp.”

I pushed his hand away. “Some girls like shrimps, you know.”

He raised one brow, and then suddenly, he burst out laughing. Holy shit! I just made Alec laugh, and it sounded... quite nice. It was deep and kind of... sexy, like one of my top favorite Japanese voice actors.

When he stopped, he shook his head. He pinched the tip of my nose and said, “You can be quite amusing, brat.” Then he moved back and turned on his heel.

Wow! He wasn’t going to bully me this time. Or even spank me? Then again, he had already done that earlier today.

I watched him strolling toward his room, and I couldn’t help but gaze at his swaying hips and butt.

Do men usually walk like that? It looked kind of... sexy. I wondered if I should try walking like that. What about the legs? What did the gait look like? I couldn’t quite see clearly because of the damn towel.

Before I knew what the heck I was thinking or even doing, I marched forward, and with my hand about the towel, I yanked it away, pulling it toward me.

The towel unraveled, and I stared at Alec’s naked butt, firm and... Wow! Very nice.

Alec turned to look at me over his shoulder, and the moment I felt his gaze, I shifted my own to his face. His eyes were dark and glinting.

Oh fuck! I took a step back, freaking the hell out. Before he could do to me what I knew he was going to do, I made my escape by dashing toward my room where I opened the door, rushed in, and then closed it again.

I heard stomping feet and then the door handle wiggling. “Natsu, open the door.”

I tried to lock it, but the door handle kept moving, and then the door crashed open. I staggered back, still with the towel in my hand.

Alec came marching in, stark naked, and I tried not to look, but oh my heaven, his *thing* looked amazing! It was huge and majestic... and... I felt my knees weak.

No. No. My knees were weak *not* because of the sight of that powerful-looking weapon, but because I had done something so stupid as to yank the towel, and now, the owner of that towel and that mighty sword, was pissed, I knew I was going to be punished for it.

To appease him, I offered the towel back as I said, “Here.”

Feet apart, he signaled with a finger for me to come over to him. I furiously shook my head. “I’m sorry, Alec. Please take back the towel. I honestly didn’t mean—” A yelp escaped my mouth as a hand wrapped tight around my arm, and I felt myself being pulled forward against my will.

His face inches from me, his gaze blazing on mine, he said darkly, “Put it back where it belongs.”

I asked meekly, “Where exactly does it belong? In the laundry basket, perhaps?”

“My waist,” he snapped.

I sighed. “Ugh! Fine. I’ll put it back on your waist. Just let me go first.”

He released me. I grumbled as I wrapped the towel around his waist, trying not to look at his hunky body in the process,

or touch him for that matter. But, of course, that was impossible. There was bound to be touches here and there, and I found that his body felt damn hard and his skin smooth.

Finished, I took a step back and said, “All done, your majesty.”

He said, “Now it’s my turn.”

I blinked. “Excuse me?”

“Since you’ve seen me naked, it’s only fair I see yours,” he said. “Now strip.”

Was he being serious right now?

“Strip, brat,” he said.

He wasn’t going to leave me alone until he got what he wanted, was he? Which was to see me naked?

I said, “I didn’t even get to see that clearly, so technically, I didn’t see anything at all, and I’m sorry, okay? Please let me off this time.”

“You didn’t see clearly? When you literally ran your gaze from the top of my head down to the tip of my toes and your eyes were fixed on my penis.”

I felt heat rush to my face and I stammered, “Well, you do have... a very big one and, uh, as another man, I was bound to be... curious.”

Suddenly, he burst out laughing again, and I was rather shocked because I managed to not only make Alec laugh once, but twice in a span of a mere few minutes.

When he stopped, he leaned in close and said, “I’ll let you off this time, but next time...”

He left the sentence unfinished and hanging. Next time what? Would he be doubling the punishment the next time I happened to pull the towel away from his waist?

He turned on his heel then and walked out the door. I rushed over to lock it and then sighed. Never again, I thought, would I ever pull a man’s towel away from his waist, and Alec’s especially. I didn’t want to receive whatever punishment he intended to bestow upon me as a reward.

9



Alec

In his bedroom, Alec pulled away the towel and then put on a pair of boxer briefs and sleeping pants, a smirk playing about his lips.

The brat thought he was a hunk, eh?

The sound of a cell phone ringing drew his attention. Seeing the name Jaxon on the screen, he picked it up, and said, “Back from your summer vacation already?”

“Yep,” the voice on the other side said. “Dinner Monday night?”

“Sure,” Alec said. “How was Italy?”

“Boring as hell,” Jaxon said.

Alec chuckled. Everything was boring as hell to Jaxon. Must be nice to be the son of a multimillionaire. Summer vacations meant traveling to Europe and staying in fancy villas. As for him, being one of the offspring of Michael Hamilton meant one had to work, the man’s way of teaching his children that money didn’t come easy and that it was a tool that needed to be respected.

If Jaxon was back, that also meant it was nearly the end of summer and fall was just around the corner, which meant university would be starting soon.

“I’ll get the clan together,” Jaxon said. “I need some entertainment, and girls.”

“Didn’t get laid in Italy?” Alec said. “Italian girls are hot.”

“Oh, I got laid,” Jaxon said. “Yeah, they’re hot.”

“Sounds like you had a fine time, then,” Alec said, chuckling.

When Alec ended the call a few moments later, he spent some time surfing the net and catching up with his other friends on social media. By eleven, he was in bed, snoozing away. It was three in the morning when he opened his eyes and raised on his elbow. Moments later, he heard doors opening and closing, as he had expected, followed by rustling and toilet flushing and then the shower going.

Every single night, that brat never failed to use his bathroom and then barge into his room, butt naked, and climb onto his bed. That first night had been irritating and a shock. The second night, surprising. The third, annoying. The fourth, yep, there he was again, and now, Alec had gotten used to it and had the towel ready and the routine worked out.

Crack! He watched as the door opened and a silhouette stumbled in and onto the bed, curled up like a pup near his feet.

He reached over and switched on the light. This time, he saw that Natsu was facing him, and he couldn’t help but gaze at that pretty face that looked so damn innocent and cute during sleep. He wondered why, as he had wondered several times, the brat could so easily get under his skin.

He got out of bed, grabbed for the towel, and dropped it on the boy. After drying him, doing so as quickly and as

mechanically as possible, he wrapped it around Natsu like a burrito, picked him up, and then carried him out the door.

In Natsu's room, he laid the Natsu burrito on the bed, found a pair of underwear, slipped that on the boy, lightly slapped the cute butt cheek as a job well done, laid the blanket over him, and then headed out the door. Routine over, he went back to sleep, feeling rather pleased with himself.



The café was hectic the next morning, with the seats and tables filling up quickly as soon as the place was opened.

“I swear we're getting busier,” Landon said. “And today looks like it's going to be crazy.”

Alec watched as Natsu served the customers the brunch dishes they had ordered, and then him grinning like an idiot as the girls took photos. He bet the brat was enjoying it, being fawned over by those girls.

“Did you see? Did you see?” Marisa asked excitedly.

“See what?” Scott asked.

“On social media,” Marisa said and showed them her phone. “Tada!”

Alec leaned in to look, as well as Scott and Landon. There on the screen was a post with a photo of five young women and the triplets. It was the one he had seen them taking yesterday.

“See, so many views and likes and comments,” Marisa said, looking so damn proud.

Alec did notice that yes, there were about six hundred thousand views and around twenty thousand likes and thousands of comments, mostly about the triplets and some the food and the café. He had to shake his head.

Scott said, “That explains the recent popularity.”

Marisa said, “Most of the comments said they swore these cuties are idols.” Then she dashed off to where the thick crowd was, the triplets in the middle where more photos were taken. Had Sunshine Café turned into a fan meeting place or something? Alec wondered.

Scott shook his head. “I swear I still get those three mixed up sometimes. They’re so identical. If they didn’t wear different-colored shirt with their names on it, I would call Aki Natsu, or Natsu Yuki, or Yuki Aki.”

“It’s not that difficult telling them apart,” Alec said. He had never had any trouble. He just knew which brother was which by instinct, and his eyes seemed to always stray toward Natsu, irritatingly enough.

“I used to resort to the hair color,” Landon said. “Their shades are different. Aki has dark-brown hair, Natsu black, and Yuki light-brown. Now, it’s easy to spot which is which even from this distance, mostly from their personalities and behaviors. Aki is quiet and reserved, Natsu easygoing, and Yuki is cheerful. He’s like a little rabbit that hops around. He’s cute.” He chuckled, his eyes on the boy busy serving a table

with six young women who couldn't seem to take their eyes off him.

“Last resort would be spotting the mole.”

The three men turned to see Zara, who had her arms folded across her chest while she leaned back against the countertop.

She continued, “Aki has a mole on his cheek, Natsu under his eye, and Yuki near his lower lip. That’s how most people talking to them decipher which brother is which.” She sighed, shaking her head. “I wish I had one of those moles on my face. But alas, I’m not lucky enough to have acquired one during my conception. On the triplets, they make them look even prettier, more so than most pretty girls I’ve met and seen. I suppose those types of moles are called beauty marks for a reason.” Then she was off to serve the customers again.

Alec returned to his work, too, his thoughts on beauty marks, especially one under the eye.

By lunchtime, the café became maddening, the crowd thick, so much so that some had to wait outside in line for a seat. It appeared also that some customers—those teenage girls—were getting rather hands on with the triplets, too, and it was starting to irk Alec. Every time he glanced up, he saw Natsu in the midst of females who’d be touching his hands, ruffling his hair, and some even stroking his cheeks. The boy didn’t seem to mind in the least, which peeved him off. Sure, it may look innocent, but if male customers were to do that to female staff, it would be viewed differently.

“Excuse me,” a young woman said.

“Yes?” Landon said.

“I would like to buy a drink for my waiter, please,” she said.
“His name is Natsu, that cute one over there.”

Another one? Alec glanced over to the fridges, noting that they were running low on fizzy drinks and juices, and they were only halfway through the day. He flicked his eyes to the other fridge with two compartments dedicated to the triplets’ drinks they received from the customers, with each and every bottle marked with names and phone numbers.

Landon said, “Unfortunately, we’re running low on drinks.”

“What? You mean I can’t buy the cutie a drink?” the girl said.

Alec said, “If you want to reward your waiter for his good work, why not double his tip?”

She widened her eyes as if she hadn’t thought of that. “Oh, yeah, that’s a good idea.” Then she was off.

Landon said, “I hope the era of customers buying the triplets drinks has come to an end.”

Alec burst out laughing, and that laughter died just as instantly when he saw a girl purposely brushing her lips against Natsu’s cheek as the boy leaned in to put a plate of pasta in front of her. Natsu, the oblivious imp, gave her a dashing smile, which made the girl giggle in delight and Alec see red.

“That brat!” he growled under his breath.

“Natsu is really quite innocent, isn’t he?” Landon said.

A few minutes later, Alec went into the kitchen to see the boy standing there, waiting for his next batch of dishes to be delivered, humming. The boy looked too damn jovial for Alec’s liking, and Alec, standing behind him, leaned forward and asked, “What are you so happy about, brat?”

Natsu went stiff and said, “Nothing?”

“Then get to work,” he said as he stepped back and spanked the boy’s behind.

Natsu jolted and then turned to glare at him.

The sight of the boy looking pissed off and that glare made Alec feel this sense of satisfaction, and he smirked. He raised a brow as a challenge. “What?”

Natsu opened his mouth and was about to say something—some nasty thing no doubt—when Edwin said, “Table six,” and the boy jolted.

“Thanks, Edwin,” he said, took the dishes, and then headed out the door, with Alec’s gaze trailing after him.

Colton said, “You’re teasing him too much, Alec. Tone it down.”

Alec shrugged his shoulders. “He can handle it.” He took the dishes Colton placed on the countertop and then left.

The café continued its frantic pace until closing time, and by then, most of the staff looked beat, especially the triplets.

When Alec went to the front of house, he saw Marisa with the trio.

“It’s gonna be fun,” she said. “There’ll be lots of food.”

“I can’t wait for the barbecue,” Yuki said.

Was Marisa telling them about the upcoming barbecue their mother had planned and invited half the neighborhood over? he wondered.

“Oh, Alec,” Marisa called for him the moment she spotted him. “Did you know that Aki’s, Natsu’s, and Yuki’s tips doubled today? Like wow! I’ve never made that much before in tips, even during a busy day.”

“Great for them,” he said, his eyes on Natsu who was clearly working on avoiding him. “You guys finished cleaning?”

“Spick-and-span,” Yuki said. Turning to Marisa, he asked, “So it’s today, right? When the staff gets to go out and eat together and the boss pays?”

“Yep,” Marisa said. “It’s kind of the end of the month type thing.”

Yuki did a fist pump. “Yes!”

Aki said, “Can we shower and change first? We can’t wear this to a restaurant.” He looked down at his blue shirt and dark jeans that were quite dirty.

“And we stink,” Natsu said.

Alec rounded to the boy and then sniffed him. No, he didn't stink. All Alec could smell was that nice scent that seemed to always intrigue him. But, of course, he said, "Yes, you stink to high heaven," which rewarded him with another cute glare that Alec had gotten used to and came to enjoy receiving.

10



Alec

At the café house, Alec took his time showering, and once he was done, donning on a pair of jeans and button-down shirt with the sleeves rolled up to his forearms, looking hunky and gorgeous as usual, he headed downstairs.

In the living room, he saw Natsu still hadn't showered and changed, sitting on the sofa with Muffin on his lap and Cheesecake beside him. The boy was watching a show that looked like a cartoon but had more violent and unique art to it.

He went to sit next to the boy, crossing one leg over the other while spreading one arm across the seat behind Natsu's back. He said, "Why don't you get your ass moving and shower already? We're leaving soon."

"I'm waiting for the bathroom to be free," the boy said. "I'm last. I lost in rock paper scissors."

Alec chuckled. "You suck at rock paper scissors?"

"I don't," Natsu said. "But I lost this one on purpose because Aki-nii needs his time getting ready."

Alec raised a brow. Why would Aki need his time getting ready?

His eyes on the large flat screen on the other side, he said, "You're still a kid, watching cartoons."

"It's not a cartoon," Natsu said. "It's anime. It's a form of animation that aims at both young adults and adults telling stories with some very mature themes. If you don't know it,

don't dis it. There are millions of people into anime, thank you very much."

"Is that so?" Alec said, his eyes on the boy, his gaze zeroing in on the beauty mark under his eye. "And you're one of those millions?"

"Yep," he said.

Edwin came into the living room then. "Natsu, you still haven't showered?"

"I'm waiting for the bathroom," the boy replied.

"You can use the one in my en suite," Edwin said.

Natsu shook his head. "No, that's all right."

A few minutes later, both Aki and Yuki came down the stairs and into the living room, and Alec understood why Natsu mentioned Aki needed time to get ready. He was dressed quite stylishly, in a pair of dark jeans and button-down shirt. Yuki, too, and he thought both looked damn... beautiful. A word not usually used to describe boys, but there it was. He had no doubt they were going to cause a stir at the restaurant tonight just as they had been at the café. It looked like Edwin would have to keep his eyes on them from unwanted attention.

Aki was flushing hot on the face when Edwin complimented him, and Alec thought the oldest triplet was always so easy to please, especially when it came from Edwin. That boy really wore his emotions on his sleeve. Edwin had to be blind to not see just how much Aki liked him.

"Natsu, we're done," Yuki said.

Natsu transferred Muffin to him, which pleasantly surprised Alec, and then headed up the stairs. When the boy came back down about ten minutes later, he looked flushed, so he must have rushed the showering. He didn't wear anything stylish like his brothers, just a pair of dark jeans and a T-shirt, with the hem tucked in. Alec couldn't stop his gaze from drifting to the boy's cute, firm ass that was snugly hugged by the tight jeans.

"Let's get going," he said, putting Muffin on the sofa.

Outside, Landon said, "I'll take my motorbike."

"You have a motorbike?" Yuki said, his eyes bright. "Can I ride with you? Please?"

Landon chuckled. "All right. Let's get you a helmet."

"Awesome," Yuki said, and the two headed off into the garage.

Natsu was just following Aki toward Edwin's car when Alec caught him by the arm, drawing the boy back against him. Natsu turned and asked, "What?"

"You're riding with me," he said.

Pulling his arm free from Alec's grasp, Natsu said, "No, thank you."

"I thought you'd want them alone together," Alec said, nodding toward Edwin and Aki. "Or am I wrong?"

Natsu turned to see Edwin opening the front passenger door for Aki, who was grinning. He said loudly, "I'm riding with

Alec.”

From the other side, Aki looked both nervous and pleased as he nodded, and Edwin said, “Are you sure?”

Natsu said, “Yeah, I’m sure.” Turning to Alec, he demanded, “Unlock the door.”

“At your command,” Alec said, amused, and with the door unlocked, he opened it for the boy.

Natsu hopped in, and Alec, feeling quite delightful, got into the driver’s seat. Once they were on the road, Natsu leaned forward and fiddled with the air-conditioning, and when it came on, he turned an accusative stare at Alec. “You lied!”

Alec burst out laughing.

They arrived at the restaurant and met up with everyone else, the other Hamilton family members as well as Colton and Scott, and Luke, another chef at the café who had just returned from his vacation and would be back to work the next week.

Once Michael had introduced the triplets to Luke, they placed their orders. Alec enjoyed the meal, his gaze now and again drifting to Natsu, who looked tired. He didn’t miss the hot gazes from the young women on him, Edwin, Colton, Landon, Scott, and Luke, clearly trying to hit on them, which he, as well as the others, were so used to. They were a bunch of hunks after all. He was also aware that some were eyeing the triplets, too, whispering and giggling to each other, as he had expected and, frankly, didn’t quite mind.

What bothered him was the fact that some of the young men, especially a group of sleazy-looking ones a few tables across had their interest on the boys as well, which annoyed the hell out of not only him, but Edwin, too. When Natsu got up and headed toward the bathroom, Alec saw their gazes lingering on the boy as he walked past. When one of them slid out of his seat and headed toward the bathroom moments later, Alec knew what the bastard's intention was.

"Fuck," he said under his breath as he got out of his seat.

"Don't cause any unnecessary scene, Alec," Edwin said.

"I'll try," he said.

Zara said, "Those men are annoying the hell out of me."

"Why are you annoyed with them?" Yuki asked. "They're sitting all the way over there."

Landon ruffled the boy's hair. "You're clueless." Then he shot those men a hard stare, which made them jolt, and they embarrassingly turned away.

Alec went into the bathroom and heard Natsu say in outrage, "Are you deaf? Stop asking me if I want to go with you. Why would I want to go with you? I have my own place to go back to. And move out of the way." He gasped. "Hey, don't touch me!"

That last sentence got Alec charging around the corner, and he saw Natsu trapped against the wall. In a flash, he was behind the man, his hand tight around the bastard's arm as he

rotated him around. A smash of his fist landed on the jerk's face, sending him reeling to the side.

“What the hell?” an accusative shout came out of the mouth that was currently bleeding. “You hit me.”

“And I'll do it again,” Alec said, glowering menacingly, which suddenly made the man stiffen in terror. “Now, fuck off.”

Head nodding furiously, he scurried off, leaving Alec to turn his attention to Natsu, who said, “I don't know what the heck that bastard wanted. He was very annoying and persistent.”

Alec grabbed the boy by the arm, a dark frown on his face. “You're clueless. You were about to be eaten and didn't even know it.”

Natsu widened his eyes, looking surprisingly shocked. “Eaten? You mean...”

“Why else did you think he followed you in here?”

“Yeah...” Natsu said, nodding his head as if it all made sense. “Now that I think about it, they like to do that in the bathroom, don't they? I thought they grew out of that phase after high school, but clearly, I was wrong. America is so different. I mean, I didn't even do anything to provoke him, and we don't even know each other.”

Alec hadn't a clue what the imp was talking about. What was so different between the States and Japan where a guy hitting on another guy for a one-night stand was concerned?

He said, “You needn’t do anything to provoke the likes of him. Just your looks alone set him off.”

“Really?” Natsu said, touching his face. “I have a face that makes big American men want to bully me? Mom is right.”

Again, Alec hadn’t a clue what the brat was talking about, and he shook his head in exasperation. “You look tired.”

“I am. Can we go home? I need an early night.”

“Yeah, sure,” he said.

After a few quick words to the rest of the family, Alec led Natsu out, his hand firm around the boy’s wrist, leaving Landon to say, his head shaking, “I can’t understand Alec. One minute he picks on Natsu and the next, he’s overprotective.”

Lena chuckled and said, “He has always been like that since they were young. He’d get absolutely pouty when Natsu didn’t pay him attention.”

Zara said, “Now that you mention it, Mom, I remember they used to be very close. They even slept in Alec’s bed together whenever the Nakamuras were here for a vacation, and Alec would never let anyone else takes Natsu away from him, even for just a few minutes. They were stuck together like glue. Alec would make a fuss and throw a tantrum if Natsu wasn’t with him. He even told everyone he’d marry Natsu when they grow up.”

“Me, too. Me, too. I remember a little,” Marisa said. “We used to play wedding. Alec was the groom. Natsu was the

bride who wore Zara's princess dress, and I was the flower girl."

Zara burst out laughing, while Yuki said, "I was the priest and Aki was the father who gave away Natsu. That was fun."

Aki nodded. "I can't believe I was the father of the bride... Or rather groom number two."

Edwin chuckled. "I remember that, and Alec did throw quite a tantrum when he was young, especially when it came to Natsu."

Aki said, "I remember that, too, Alec throwing a nasty tantrum when Natsu wasn't with him. He said his bride needs to always be by his side and that they have to sleep in the same bed."

"Me, too," Yuki said. "But that was before we turned nine, and then he became a demon and would make Natsu cry every time. He switched just like that."

Zara chuckled. "I think that was when he was fourteen and had his first girlfriend. I think her name was like Lucy or something, and he brought her around to the house quite often, especially that summer."

"What? Because he hit puberty and had his first girlfriend, he turned into an oni and bullied Natsu?" Yuki said, making a sour face. "That's just wrong. We hit puberty and we didn't bully anyone."

Landon chuckled. "You sure you hit puberty correctly, Yuki? Or is hitting puberty for a Japanese boy different from

the American ones?”

“It’s the Asian gene, we grow and age slower,” Yuki said proudly. “You just wait and see. We’ll still look like we’re in our twenties when we’re in our thirties, I swear it.”

Lena nodded and said, “I have to agree with that. Your father Hiroto is in his fifties, yet he looks like he’s in his early forties. Unlike your Uncle Michael who looks like he’s a decade older than he is.”

Michael snorted. “I look old because I’m overworked, not because of some genes.”

Lena raised a brow and said sarcastically, “So you do know you’re overworked, you workaholic who forgets to pick up his beloved nephews.” And everyone burst out laughing.



Alec glanced over at Natsu, who had fallen asleep during the short drive, and he had to shake his head. Had he really overworked the brat to that degree? he wondered, then he felt a little guilty. Damn, he really should tone down on harassing the boy, too, he supposed. But strangely enough, he damn well couldn’t help himself whenever it came to Natsu. The urge to bully—no, tease—was so fucking strong.

Once they arrived at the house, he didn’t bother to wake Natsu up. He simply gathered him in his arms and carried him inside and upstairs into the boy’s room. There, he laid him on the bed, took off his shoes, and then pulled the blanket over him. He was about to leave when Natsu groaned softly as he

wrapped his arms around Alec's waist, preventing him from leaving.

Alec sighed, gazing at the boy long and hard. He couldn't tear his eyes away from that pretty face that always drew his undivided attention. He didn't know what the hell came over him, and frankly, he didn't care, as he leaned down and planted his lips on the boy's forehead, kissing him. Then he couldn't help himself and trailed his lips to the spot under the eye where the beauty mark sat and kissed the boy there, too. When he was about to lift his head, he just couldn't control the urge and kissed the boy on the lips. When he was finally done, he had this ridiculously strange feelings about his chest, a feeling he had never had before.

“What the fuck am I doing?” he said under his breath.

Removing Natsu's arms from around his waist, he got up and left. In his own room, he paced, his mind racing as he raked his fingers through his hair.

“What the fuck am I thinking?” he grumbled.

He slept fitfully that night, and when three o'clock ticked around, he automatically opened his eyes and waited for the usual din to start, but no sound came, nor did his door open. He continued to wait for the next hour, but Natsu did not turn up, and he swore under his breath.

“You've gone crazy, Alec,” he said. That brat was probably dead to the world in his sleep. The fact that it was cool tonight meant he wouldn't be getting up to take a cold shower. In fact, it'd be getting cooler now that the season had changed. He

guessed he should be over the moon that the brat wouldn't be troubling him with his night misadventure. But why did he feel so... disappointed?

He closed his eyes, pissed as hell with himself for bothering to wake up at all and waiting on the brat. What the fuck had he been thinking? His life did not revolve around that imp, for fuck's sake. He decided then that he needed to get back to his old life which Natsu was not a part of—a life where he had a ton of fun with his friends and a cute girlfriend who adored him and let him fuck her every which way he desired.

Yep, he needed a new girlfriend. More so, he needed a good fucking, that was for sure.

11



Natsu

I had no idea what had gotten into Alec, but he had been in quite a foul mood for the past few weeks. So much so that even catching a mere sight of me would set him off, blasting me with the glare. Yeah, he had always stared at me, but these recent ones that irritating aura blazing at me was more intense than usual. And here I was in the Hamiltons' main house, a two-story mansion, once again receiving the gaze that simply screamed that I was an annoying pest he was unfortunate enough to have encountered yet again.

“Are you following me, brat?” he demanded.

I snorted. “As if I'd follow you. Can you please move? I need to use the bathroom.”

Instead of shifting away and leaving, he leaned his *disgustingly* hunky frame against the side of the door and folded his arms across his chest like a damn soldier guarding a palace.

He wasn't going to move, was he?

“Why are you like this?” I asked in exasperation. Honestly, I had thought things was moving up and getting better after that dinner at the restaurant because he had been rather nice, driving me home early and even carrying me to my bed while I had been asleep, but clearly, I was wrong.

“Why am I like what?” he retorted, raising a brow.

I sighed, knowing it was simply impossible to get through to him. I turned on my heel and started back down the hallway.

“Don’t need to use the bathroom anymore?” he said. “Won’t you wet your pants like you used to?”

I whipped around and marched back, teeth gritting and eyes glaring.

Standing inches from him, I raised on my tippy-toes and said, “Yes, I had wetted my pants, *once*, but that was a *very* long time ago, so please don’t bring it up. I was nine and I was busting, and *you* wouldn’t let me use the bathroom, so technically, it was *your* fault back then. It was *you* who was to blame, and now you’re doing it again.” Standing on my feet fully, I turned around and started heading down the hallway for the second time.

Alec said, “You’re welcome to use the bathroom.”

I looked over my shoulder at him. Despite his offer, he still hadn’t moved an inch from the door. “We’re adults now.” He signaled with a nod of his head for me to go right in.

Ha-ha! Yeah, like I’d fall for that.

I continued down the hallway as I said over my shoulder, “I’ll use the upstairs one, thank you very much.”

I was just about to turn the corner and climb the stairs when I heard thumping of feet, and then suddenly, I felt a pair of sturdy arms around my waist.

Huh? What the heck? I felt myself being lifted into the air and then dumped over a broad shoulder.

“Alec! What the heck are you doing?” I demanded.

Spank! And I felt the pain on my butt cheek.

Again! He spanked my butt *again*. I had no idea how many times it had been since we started living and working together.

I huffed out, “Why are you spanking me again?”

He turned and then started down the hallway the other way toward the bathroom. “I’m being nice and offering you to use the bathroom, yet you throw my kindness back at my face, you ungrateful brat. The spank is to teach you to be nice.”

“That is so unreasonable,” I said. “It’s only a bathroom. Why are you making such a big deal out of it? The ones back at the café house, too. Do you have a thing with bathrooms or something?”

Another spank came, and I jolted.

“I do not have a thing with bathrooms,” he said. “But apparently, you do, and showering in the middle of the night and climbing into other people’s beds, too.”

I hadn’t a clue what the heck he was going on about, and frankly, I didn’t care. I started wiggling and making as much fuss as I could so he’d put me down. He did, inside the bathroom, and with the door firmly shut at that.

The moment I landed on my feet, I pushed him back so that he was pressed against the door. Then, because I was just damn pissed and wanted to get back at him, I slammed both my palms on the wall on either side of him, trapping him. *This* was my show of dominance.

I said, “I have had it with you, Alec. It’s time I pay back what you did to me, the spankings.”

I wasn’t going to let my midget height stop me from doing what I was going to do next. This would be my retaliation. This would be my stand. This would be me telling him that I was not to be pushed around according to his whim.

I stood on tiptoe again, and with my face close to his shoulder, I opened my mouth and attacked him, sinking my teeth into his flesh, biting him, hard.

I felt him go tense against me, and I pressed myself against him further as I continued to bite until I could taste his blood in my mouth. I heard him growl in pain, naturally.

“How was that? Now you know I mean business. Now you know—”

Powerful arms wrapped tight around my waist, and before I knew it, I was spun around and backed up against the door, with Alec pressing on me, imprisoning me and squishing me.

I demanded, “Let me go!”

Alec lifted me until my feet were off the floor, my crotch squashed against his belly, and I knew I was fucked.

“I can play this game all day, brat,” he said. “You know that hurt, right? Are you a vampire or what? Biting people like that?” He ran his thumb across my lips, wiping the blood from my flesh. Sticking his tongue out, he licked. “Mm. Salty.”

I stared, dumbfounded. Why the hell would he do that?

He leaned in so damn close that his forehead was touching mine, and he said, “It’s my turn,” and I widened my eyes.

I braced myself, tensing up and closing my eyes, expecting him to bite me in return. I was sorely mistaken, however, because the next thing I knew, instead of the sharp biting pain, I felt lips crushed against mine along with a hand about my face, holding me still.

I widened my eyes in shock surprised. What the—!

I felt his hot tongue pressing in between my lips, nudging them to open. A soft groan involuntarily escaped my mouth, and the moment my lips parted, Alec plunged his tongue in, making me so damn breathless.

His tongue was big and slick, toying with mine and pouncing every turn I tried to make until I was exhausted. He went so far as to suck at my tongue as if he was about to eat me, and that was when I realized what was happening.

Eat! Alec was eating me, wasn’t he? Clearly, this was their way of bullying. Holy fuck! Sure, us triplets were half-American, but we had lived all our lives in Japan, so this was alien and new to us. To me! I was culturally shocked!

I couldn’t fight him anymore. I just... couldn’t. I was being eaten. This style of bullying, this style of torment, this style of fighting, I had never encountered before. It was new to me, and I just didn’t know how to fight back. The kicking and the bashing, I could fight back. But this? Fighting with lips and tongue?

Oh, fucking hell, he was sucking at my tongue again, his arm tight around me, squishing me between him and the door.

I felt myself go limp, weak and hot, and my head felt dazed as he continued to lick and suck at my lips, and then he plunged his tongue into my mouth again, prodding and thrusting until I felt that damn thing at the back of my throat. Then he licked and sucked my lips yet again, and then my tongue, and then my lips. When he finally did stop and moved back by a mere inch, I was so breathless I was heaving.

His warm breath fanning my face, he said, “You’re just a sight; it’s fucking hard to hold back. Since you left a mark on me, I’m returning the favor.”

What? He was still going to bite me even after all that bruising my lips and tormenting my tongue. After all that eating me?

I tensed when I felt his mouth, hot and raw, on the side of my shoulder. I didn’t know what the hell he was doing, but that surely wasn’t biting, not how I had done it to him, because he was sucking at my flesh as he squeezed me, and I found myself reacting, my body squirming and shaking against his steel-like one.

When he was done, I felt out of sorts. I glared at him and said, “You’re a beast, Alec. Yep, you’re a beast, and I hate you.”

He chuckled, his eyes dark as he stared at me. “You hate me?”

“I hate you. I hate you. I hate you.” I repeated. “I ha—”

His lips crushed against mine again, silencing me. This time, he even ate my lower lip, sucking at the flesh, and I whimpered against him. When he moved back, he said, “If you say those words again, I will continue to kiss you until you stop.”

Kiss? He called that kissing. That was *not* kissing. That was *eating* me!

I was about to spout out the words again, but stopped myself in time, clamping my lips shut.

Alec rested his forehead against mine, and with his nose touching mine, he said, “You don’t hate me, Natsu, you got it? You like me. Got it?”

What was with this bastard? Putting words in my mouth.

I shook my head, my lips still clamped shut.

“Is that a shaking of the head?” he asked, hoisting me up farther and pressing himself against me even more. Damn, but he was hard everywhere. Was he built out of iron or something?

“Natsu?” he said my name softly, gently. He had never done that before, saying my name in that tone of voice, sweet like liquid chocolate yet with an undertone of warning. “Stop clamping your lips. You’ll bite yourself.”

I shook my head, refusing to unclamp my lips because I just knew he’d *eat* me there again if I did.

He said, “I won’t kiss you again, I promise.”

“Really?” I mumbled without opening my mouth.

“Really,” he said.

Cautiously, I unclamped my lips and then said, “Can you please stop being mean to me?”

He stared at me long and hard and then said, “I can’t guarantee that.”

I widened my eyes. “Why the hell not?”

“Because holding myself back is impossible and you’re just so fucking good at pushing my buttons,” he said. “So, I can’t guarantee that.”

“But could you please at least *try*?” I asked.

“That depends on you,” he said.

“Me? How the hell does that depends on me?” I was flabbergasted. Then I widened my eyes as I understood what he meant. I remembered him mentioning before, back in the bathroom at that restaurant, that I had a face that set men off and wanted to *eat*—bully—me. But what was it about me that triggered them? Or Alec for that matter?

I sighed, giving up altogether. I said, “All right. Look, I know you don’t like me, and my mere presence annoys the hell out of you.”

He nodded. “Damn right. Now we understand each other. You’re pretty smart.”

Clearly, that was sarcasm, but at least we were getting somewhere.

I said, “Then I’ll put all my effort into sorting that out.”

He raised a brow. “You will?”

“Mm-hmm. Now, can you please put me down and let me go?” I asked politely. “And I *promise you* from now on, you will never be annoyed with me again.”

He snorted. “How is that going to be possible?”

I gave him the sweetest smile, sore lips and all, one I usually used on Mom or Hana to please them. “It will be possible,” I said, my hands stroking his shoulders to appease him, the annoyance and irritation and whatever else there was that I managed to irk.

Alec continued to stare at me, and then finally, oh goodness finally, he put me down and released me.

My legs felt like jelly, and I very nearly collapsed onto the floor, but I managed to hold myself together.

“Thank you,” I said. “Now if you don’t mind, I really need to use the toilet.”

Instead of leaving like I requested, he leaned forward again, hand near the side of my face, palm against the wall, his body close to mine, and his great height looming over me. His nose and lips near mine, he said, “I’ll wait and see how you’re going to go about making me dislike you less and ease this fucking irritation you manage to stir in me whenever I see you.”

I grinned at him and then did a thumbs-up. “Just leave it to me.”

He snorted and then grabbed for the door handle. I eagerly stepped aside, allowing him to open the door and walk out.

The moment I was alone, I quickly shut the door again and locked it with a firm click. Then I collapsed to the floor and internally cursed.

Touching my sore lips, I cursed him some more. A few moments later, after using the toilet, I washed my hands and stared at myself in the mirror.

I looked horrid, with red eyes and lips. I washed my face thoroughly. I checked the spot where he had bitten me, and damn, the dark-red bruise was prominent. Ugh! It'd take at least a week to heal.

Yep, from now on, I'd be sticking around where there were a lot of people so Alec could never eat me again. Surely, he could never eat me when there were others around?

12



Natsu

When I return to where everyone was at the back of the house, Marisa caught me by the arm and said, “Let’s play in the pool.”

“Uh, okay,” I said as I stumbled after her. “But I didn’t bring any swim shorts.”

“You’re wearing shorts now, aren’t you? Just take your shirt off. It’s just us family.”

Nope. Not taking my shirt off, thank you very much. That bite mark was too prominent, and I had no desire to parade it about in front of other people.

Just us family, my ass. That was what she had said when she told us about the barbeque. *It’s just us family.* When we had turned up, we were bombarded with a ton of people we didn’t know.

It was a Monday, the one day of the week the café was closed, and Aunty Lena had decided to throw a barbeque and invited all their friends and neighbors. Lunch was especially nice and thank goodness almost all the people unknown to me have already left now that the meal was over.

It was hot, so yeah, playing in the pool sounded marvelous, and I eagerly followed Marisa out. When she jumped into the pool to join Zara, Aki, and Yuki, I hopped in as well, laughing in delight. The water felt cool and so good against my skin.

Marisa threw me a beach ball, and I caught it, then threw it back to her, which she caught.

“Over here!” Yuki shouted, and Marisa threw it to him. Yuki was about to jump to catch it in the air when Landon, who had just gotten into the water, still in his shorts and T-shirt, caught it over Yuki’s head, and Yuki looked around and widened his eyes at Landon.

“Hey! No fair,” he said.

“What’s no fair?” Landon asked, chuckling. “Shrimp.”

“I’m not a shrimp. And give it back!” Yuki demanded and jumped up and down in the water, his hands in the air trying to grab the ball back. No matter how hard he tried, however, the ball was out of his reach with Landon hovering it above him.

Colton, sitting on the side with his legs in the pool, was laughing away merrily. When he managed to stop, he said, “Try harder, Yuki.”

“You can do it, Yuki,” Luke encouraged from the side.

Aki came to help Yuki and started jumping up and down, trying to get the ball, too.

“Oh my gosh, adults bullying kids,” Zara said, shaking her head. “You guys, there are more beach balls here.”

“Landon is a bully,” Yuki said, wrapping his arms around the man’s muscular upper arm and trying to pull it down with his weight. It didn’t work, which caused Landon to burst out laughing.

On the other side, Scott said, “I’ll help.” He jumped in and then swam toward the group. Since he was tall, I would have thought he’d grab the ball from Landon, but instead he

wrapped his hands about Aki's waist, lifted him up, and then plopped him on his shoulders. Aki shrieked and laughed.

"Yeah! Get the ball, Aki! Get the ball!" Yuki shouted.

In the air, Aki worked on grabbing the ball, but Landon teased him by moving it away here and there while Yuki stilled worked on pulling Landon's arm down with his weight. I couldn't stop laughing and wanted to join in, too.

"Colton! Colton!" I called out. "Get in the pool and let me ride on your shoulders."

"Sure," he said, hopping in. He lifted me up, and I found myself riding his shoulders. I then started working on getting the ball, too, but Landon kept running away, laughing. Yuki probably had enough and managed to climb onto Landon's shoulders like a monkey, straddled him, and caught the ball.

"Yeah! I got the ball," he shouted in excitement.

"Throw it here! Throw it here!" Aki shouted.

Yuki threw it to Aki, who nudged for Scott to get moving in the right direction. Scott did, and Aki caught it in the air. Aki said, "Natsu!" Then he threw it to me. I was about to catch it when Yuki caught it instead.

"Hey," I uttered, outraged.

"Ha-ha!" He threw it to Marisa, who was apparently on Uncle Michael's shoulders.

"Four against four," Marisa said.

“And we’re not going to lose,” Yuki said. He leaned down to look at Landon below. “Isn’t that right, partner?”

“Get off me, shrimp,” Landon said. “I didn’t give you permission to sit on my shoulders.”

“Too late. We’re partners now.” His head up, he shouted, “Let’s play.”

“I’m not losing,” I said. “Colton, we can’t lose, okay?”

He burst out laughing. “You triplets are competitive, aren’t you?”

“Of course,” I said. “Now get moving.” I nudged him by tapping on his shoulder.

Colton wrapped his hands around my legs and off we went, with Aki and Scott on our side. The ball went flying back and forth and here and there, but there was no clear goal, except for Zara kept giving us silly points every time one of us lost the ball, like minus twenty or even one hundred or one million, or plus two or fifty or two million for catching it while Luke kept shouting words of encouragement.

“Edwin! Alec! Jaxon! Jump in and join us,” Marisa called.

I tensed at hearing Alec’s name, and despite not wanting to, I couldn’t help myself and turned to see him staring at me, his gaze intense and dark, looking pissed off as hell. How long had he been there? I wondered, and why was he glaring at me like he wanted to eat and bite me again?

Don’t look at him. Don’t look at him. I shifted my gaze to Jaxon, another of Alec’s buddies, who appeared amused at the

sight of us in the pool.

“Looks fun,” he said and then jumped right in.

Edwin, his eyes on Aki on top of Scott, said, “Sure,” as he got into the pool, too, still in his shorts and T-shirt. No one was getting changed into proper swim gear, were they? Except for Zara and Marisa in their cute swimsuits.

“I’ll take over, Scott,” Edwin said.

“Please, my shoulders are hurting,” Scott said. He dipped under the water as he let Aki go and then escaped to sit beside Luke on the side of the pool.

When Edwin grabbed Aki by the arm, I saw Aki’s face grow red, and his body stiffen while his hands were shaking. He looked nervous as hell as he climbed onto Edwin’s shoulders. Yuki and I caught each other’s eyes, and Yuki winked at me while I did a thumbs-up.

We were about to continue with the game when Marisa said, “Three against three. Jaxon, you’re with Aki’s team, and Alec, you’re with us.”

“Yeah, three against three,” Yuki said.

“I feel like the bottom people aren’t getting any appreciation here,” Landon said.

“It’s okay, Landon, I appreciate you,” Yuki said, ruffling the man’s hair. “I’ll give you a bottle of the Coke we got from all those nice ladies. But it’s strange how they all have names and numbers scribbled over the bottles. America is so cool. Customers can buy waiters drinks.”

I said, “They wrote names on them, so we know who gave them to us. It’s common courtesy.”

Zara suddenly burst out laughing, so much so that she was in tears, and Scott, too. Zara said, “Oh boy, but they’re so innocent, it’s cute.”

Alec, taking his shirt off, jumped into the pool. I drifted my gaze to his chiseled body, and the bite mark I had left on him, dark red and prominent against his tanned skin under the sunlight.

I couldn’t help myself and ran my gaze over him again, wishing I could look like that, muscles toned everywhere and a six-pack abs.

It looked like me, Aki, and Yuki needed to work harder at the gym if we wanted to look anything close to *that*. Maybe we could ask Edwin or Landon, or even Colton or Scott, to guide us since they were so damn ripped as well. Luke, he was toned, but was more slenderly built compared to the others. Not to mention he was only a head taller than us triplets, unlike the others who made me feel like I was standing next to a pine tree. As for Uncle Michael, well, we’d just forget about him because he had a nice potbelly to go with the flaps.

As he passed me and Colton, I felt Alec’s gaze on me, hot and dark, and especially... I flicked my eyes downward to look at myself. I frowned. Was he staring at my chest? Sure, I wore a flimsy white T-shirt since it was hot, and sure the shirt was wet and sticking to my skin and showing my nipples, but so were the other men in the pool.

Zara pulled down her sunglasses as she stared at Alec and said, “A hickey? You got yourself a new girlfriend, Alec?”

“None of your business, Zara,” he retorted.

“Probably just a one-night stand,” Scott said, chuckling. “If he has one, I’d know. But that one-night stand must be feisty.” He made a claw hand in the air as he growled, a weird-sounding one that was kind of like a wildcat but not really.

“Let’s play ball,” Marisa shouted, and *the war* began.

13



Natsu

Bam! The ball hit my chest, bouncing off me onto the water. I glared at Alec. He did that on purpose, striking me with the ball.

Colton said, "Play nice, Alec. You're hurting my partner." To me, he asked, "You okay, Natsu?"

"Uh, yeah, I'm fine," I said.

Scott grabbed the ball and then started striking back, and then it began to bounce back and forth repeatedly, with Uncle Michael trying to keep up with the game, panting as Marisa shrieked and commanded him this way and that. He looked out of sorts. And then the ball flew my way again, and I shifted, evading it in the nick of time, the ball grazing the side of my body as it went flying to land on the other side of the garden.

"Here's another ball," Zara said, throwing me one.

I caught it, and then because I was pissed and wanted to get back at Alec, I threw it toward him with all my might. *Ha-ha, you're so going to pay for it*, I thought, but nope, he easily caught it in the air and said, "What a pathetic throw."

Ugh! I could never get back at him, could I?

The game continued, and Alec finally stopped targeting me, and in the end, the other team won because Alec was just so good at it and Jaxon seemed like he couldn't be bothered half the time. As for Edwin, he couldn't seem to concentrate at all, and Aki looked dazed ever since he had gotten on Edwin's

shoulders, so of course, he wasn't paying attention to the game.

Sliding down Colton's back, I said, "Damn, we lost."

"Too bad, eh?" Colton said.

"Had enough?" Aunty Lena asked from the side of the pool.

"I have had enough," Uncle Michael said, climbing out and panting. "Damn, I need to get back into shape."

"You look fine as you are," Aunty Lena said, giving him a spank on the side of his butt. "But getting into shape is a good idea. For your health, darling."

"Eww! Please stop it, Mom," Zara said. "Don't flirt in front of your kids."

"And spanking butt, no less," Marisa said.

Uncle Michael did a dance, shaking his ass at Aunty Lena, and then headed into the house. Still chuckling away, Aunty Lena turned to us. She said, "Why don't you boys take a shower?"

Yuki said, "We didn't bring any change of clothes."

"You can wear mine or Zara's," Marisa said. "We're about the same size."

"We're not wearing girls' clothing," Yuki said, pulling a face.

"Then it'll have to be Alec's or Edwin's," Aunty Lena said. "Since they still have their old clothes here."

“I’m fine with Marisa’s,” I said. There was no way I was going to wear Alec’s. Besides that it’d be way too big on me, I didn’t want him to get all pissy that I was touching his belongings.

“Then Marisa’s it is,” Aunty Lena said. “You can take turns showering in the spare bathrooms.”

Aki got out of the pool as he said, “I’m taking the shower first,” and then rushed into the house after Aunty Lena.

Colton said, “Looks like I’d have to borrow your clothes again, Edwin.”

“Same here,” Landon said.

“And I’ll borrow yours, Alec,” Scott said.

“Me, too,” Jaxon said.

Raking his fingers through his wet hair, Alec said, “Raid the closet all you want.” Then he got out of the pool and headed into the house.

When it was my turn to take a shower, Aunty Lena handed me some folded clothing, pink in color, along with a pair of underpants, and said, “The underwear’s new. I got them just in case something like this would happen.”

I was thankful that there was underwear. When she was about to take her leave, I said, “Uh, Aunty Lena?”

She turned. “Hmm?”

“I was wondering if it’s possible for me to, uh, move into the house?”

She tilted her head to one side. “You mean this house?”

I nodded.

“Why? Is Alec being nasty to you again?” she demanded to know. “That boy. I swear I’ll have to whoop his ass.”

“I really don’t want troubles in the family,” I said. “He’s just annoyed with me every time he sees me, so I was thinking that if he sees less of me... I mean he told me he just can’t stand being around me.”

“That’s it?” she said. “He’s annoyed with you every time he sees you?”

I nodded, and she sighed, looking exasperated. “Have you told your brothers you want to move here?”

I shook my head. “I’ll tell them tonight. They’ll understand. Besides, we’ll hang out every day and stuff, not to mention we’ll be going to classes together, too.”

“All right. You can move in tomorrow. I’ll fix up a room for you.”

I smiled, pleased and relieved. “Thanks, Aunty.”

“No worries. I promised your parents we’ll take good care of you while you boys are here,” she said. “Now take a shower.” Then she was gone, and I hurriedly headed into the bathroom.

When I was done about ten minutes later, I looked at myself in the mirror and thought, damn, I shouldn’t have showered

last. Aki and Yuki must have gotten first and second choices to pick the color of their matching sweatpants and T-shirts.

This last one was pink, and it even had the picture of a cute puppy on it, and love hearts, too. So damn girly, but these belonged to Marisa, so I wasn't surprised. Well, I shouldn't complain. Just thankful that I wasn't walking around in wet clothes until they dried out. Of course, I could always walk the couple of blocks down the neighborhood to the café house to get changed, but...

I shrugged my shoulders, and after putting my wet clothing in the laundry basket, I headed out the door. I was just going toward the living room when I encountered Alec in the hallway, and I came to a halt. Shit! What happened to sticking in big groups of people so as not to get eaten and bitten?

Hands in the pocket of his sweatpants, he stood there as he lazily drifted his gaze over me from head to toe. Then he smirked at the sight of me in a pink girly outfit no doubt, and said, "Suits you. You should start wearing pink more often."

I said, "You did that on purpose, didn't you?"

He tilted his head to one side. "Did what?"

"Striking the ball at me during the game," I said. "I just know you did it on purpose. You didn't throw it that hard at Aki or Jaxon, but—"

Within a flash, he was right in front of me and had his hand cupping my chin, his face inches from me. He said, his tone

soft and gentle, contrary to his words, “You are so fucking irritating.”

Was he going to eat me again? I tensed as I stared at him.

“Alec?” It was Uncle Michael’s voice from somewhere back there.

“Yeah?” he answered, his eyes still on me, his hand still tight on my chin.

“Come with me to buy dinner,” Uncle Michael said. “We’re having takeout. Your mom’s not cooking after the barbeque.”

He sighed and then said, “Sure.” Then he released me and turned on his heel.

I rubbed my sore chin, aggravated. Why did he always do that? Grabbing my chin and squeezing my face? Was it my face that irritated him? Then again, both Aki’s and Yuki’s faces were the same as mine, except for some small difference here and there, and he had never, ever seemed to get irritated at the sight of them. So why me? He was damn hard to understand.

I was turning the corner when a deep voice came. “So... it’s you, eh?”

I turned to see Jaxon, his head tilted to one side as he gazed at me, a smirk on his face.

“Pardon?” I asked.

He closed the distance between us and said, “You know men have their type, and some rooted from a single person

they want but can't have."

What the heck was he going on about?

"Pardon?" I said again.

He chuckled. "I guess now I know where Alec's rooted from." He ruffled my hair. "You have a similar feel to my brother."

"You have a brother?" I asked.

He nodded. "Finn's his name. He starts university this semester, too. You guys take Economics, don't you?"

I nodded.

"He does, too, so if you see him, befriend him, will you? He's an introvert. Oh, and he looks nothing like me. He's around your height, blond hair, blue eyes, and..." His expression changed to something I couldn't quite describe, and his eyes darkened. "Beautiful."

"We'll befriend him if we meet him," I said.

"Thanks," he said. "That eases my mind a little." Then he headed into the living room, and I followed him to join the others.

14



Alec

“Classes are already starting again tomorrow,” Scott said, his head resting back against the sofa. “Summer feels so damn short. I want summer to extend to at least the end of next month.”

Alec, a bottle of beer in hand, said, “It does feel short.”

Scott continued with his complaints. “Now I have to start working my ass off studying again. Dad threatens to disown me if I don’t graduate, and that means I won’t be able to work as much at the café, which will suck because... phone numbers on napkins, man.”

Alec chuckled while Jaxon rolled his eyes.

Scott said, “I saw that, bastard. You think phone numbers on napkins is a joke?”

“When did I say that?” Jaxon asked.

“You didn’t, but you implied it with your expression,” Scott said. “Yeah, us lesser creatures have to rely on being super pleasant and likable and phone numbers on napkins to get laid, not like a god like you who’s the son of a multimillionaire. You only need to look at them for them to come running over.”

“What about phone numbers on Coke bottles?” Jaxon asked. “I heard the triplets get a ton of those. Did you get any?”

Scott huffed. “You comparing me to those brats now? Are phone numbers on Coke bottles the next step up or something?” He sighed. “Ugh! They get a shitload daily. Plus,

a shitload more tips on top of that, double the normal percentage you'd get in the hospitality industry. I don't know how they do it."

Jaxon said, "Probably because of the looks? Girls like cute guys. Most girls are simply not into a gorilla like you, Scott."

Alec snorted. "Cute, my ass."

Scott growled. "I'm not a gorilla."

Ignoring Scott, Jaxon said, "Natsu is cute. I don't mind getting to know him better."

Alec, knowing what Jaxon was implying, said, "I know you swing both ways, Jaxon, but Natsu, or Aki or Yuki for that matter, are off-limits."

"I don't see a reason why Natsu is off-limits," Jaxon said. "I like the boy."

"I hope it's not just because he has a similar feel to Finn?" Alec asked.

Jaxon shrugged his shoulders and retorted, "I hope it's not just because he's your non-blood-related cousin?"

"He's not my cousin," Alec said. "And you know it."

"He calls Michael uncle and Lena aunty, so, yeah, he's their nephew and a cousin to you," Jaxon said.

"It's just a courtesy thing to the brat and his brothers, calling my parents aunty and uncle," Alec said.

The two stared at each other for a moment, and Scott said, "Hey now, cool it, both of you. And, Jaxon, Natsu *is* off-limits.

Alec and Edwin will beat the crap out of you if you so much as lay a hand on him.”

Alec smirked then and said, “Only I can lay my hands on that brat.”

Jaxon burst out laughing. “You’re admitting it? That you *like* the boy.”

Alec snorted. “I believe your definition of like and mine where Natsu is concerned are very different.”

“He has the looks of all your previous girlfriends,” Jaxon said. He tilted his head to one side. “Or is it the other way around?”

Alec frowned darkly at Jaxon’s words.

The sudden loud noise drew the three friends’ attention, and Alec turned to see a bunch of their friends come into the private, exclusive club lounge, along with a group of women they didn’t know who must have been invited by Jaxon. Soon, the place became a party den with alcohol flowing endlessly.

Alec’s mind was still on what Jaxon’s words could have meant; hence, he didn’t enjoy the party as much as he’d like, and rather than finding being hit on by numerous girls flattering, he found it irritating.

He flicked his eyes to see an attractive petite brunette walking over to him. When she took a seat next to him and he saw the bright brownness of her eyes, his irritation finally dissipated and he thought, yes, just my type. His drifted his

gaze over her, noting her chest weren't prominent. *Yep, definitely my type.*

“Hey,” she said, her eyes on him, her cheeks blushing crimson as she ran her hand down his arm intimately, suggestively.

“Hey,” he replied softly.

Next to him, Jaxon snorted, which drew Alec's attention. Jaxon gave him *that* look, the *I knew it* or *I told you so* look, and then said, “I'll leave you guys to it.” Then he headed toward the blond beauty on the other side of the room.

Still perplexed regarding the look Jaxon gave him, Alec returned his attention to the woman, who took the opportunity now that they were left alone and leaned in and planted her lips on his.

There was no slow flirting or anything like that for this one, eh? Though honestly, Alec didn't care. He wanted it urgently, too—a good, mindless fucking. He needed it. Badly. Which this beauty would certainly provide.

He responded to the kiss, thrusting his tongue into her mouth while their lips locked. Their kiss was deep, and Alec savored the moment, loving it.

She was a good kisser; there was no doubt where her experience was concerned. She knew exactly what to do, intertwining her tongue with his coyly, toying and teasing him seductively.

This woman, Alec thought, she was nothing like that brat who couldn't kiss to save his life. His body had been stiff and tense, unlike this one who was soft, willing, and melting against him. And he hadn't responded to his demanding kiss, but rather, he had fought desperately.

Alec remembered the way the boy had battled with him, his tongue thrashing at his wildly while their lips locked. It had been outrageous, and quite frankly, exhilarating and delightful, now that he thought about it. That sucking of the boy's tongue, too, had been especially delicious, and those lips were fucking soft and...

Alec released the woman's lips and drew back, his eyes on her as she stared up at him, looking pleased and ready to go further.

As Alec gazed at her in return, what he saw in his mind's eye wasn't the beauty in front of him, but rather a familiar pretty face of a boy with large brown eyes glistening with tears, glaring at him, cheeks blushing crimson, and lips bruised red from a kiss. The breathless panting after the sensual assault of a smooch added to the alluring effect, and Alec felt himself getting turned on, his blood tingling hot with the need to tease and to...

He felt arms wrapping around his neck, followed by a soft voice saying, "Your place or mine?"

The sound of the voice and the words brought Alec out of his reverie, and once the woman's face swam into focus, he went stiff at the realization of what went through his head.

Holy fuck! He couldn't believe he was thinking of that brat when he was down having a good time with a pretty woman. What the heck had gotten into him?

The brunette tilted her head to one side and rolled her eyes. "Ugh! I thought you were interested."

Alec raised a brow. "Excuse me?"

She pushed him back as she said, "I'm not into a jerk kissing me while thinking about someone else."

Alec was lost for words. Yes, he had been thinking about someone else, more specifically, that brat, but... Seriously, why? Why was he thinking about Natsu?

She patted his chest as she said sarcastically, "She must be someone special." Then she shoved him back and moved from the sofa and stalked off.

Alone, Alec raked his fingers through his hair, still at a loss as to what had just happened. A merry chuckle came his way, and Alec raised his gaze to see Jaxon standing before him, a blondie clinging to him by the arm.

Jaxon said, "Got dumped already?"

"Shut up," Alec said.

"Want me to hook you up with a friend of mine?" the blondie asked, all smiling. "She's keen for a foursome."

Jaxon turned to her and said, "You're having a foursome."

She said, "You, me, the hunk," she pointed to Alec, "and my friend."

Jaxon said, "My friends and I don't share women."

She raised a brow. "Is that so? That's unfortunate."

Alec stood and said, "Damn right, we don't share women, and I'm going home."

"Already?" Jaxon asked. Then he smirked. "Or you miss seeing someone? Your cute cousin, perhaps?"

Alec didn't response to the teasing and headed for the door.

Jaxon said, "See you at class tomorrow."

"Yeah," Alec said.

"Say hi to Natsu for me," Jaxon said, giving it another jab.

"Go to hell, Jaxon," Alec growled over his shoulder which caused Jaxon to burst out laughing and the blondie to stare at Jaxon, wondering what that was about.

Alec arrived home half an hour later, and after parking the car in the driveway, he headed into the house, still pondering why the image of Natsu that day popped up in his head during a sexy time with a girl, of all things. And why he had compared the brat's kiss with the woman's, he had no damn clue.

In the open-plan living room, he saw Edwin and Landon chatting and drinking beer. Usually, the triplets would join them, with Aki sitting next to Edwin and listening to the conversation quietly while Yuki would be all over Landon like a baby monkey straddling on the man's back and pulling at his hair, but none of them were here tonight.

He grabbed himself a bottle of beer and took a sip. He glanced around the place and then his gaze strayed to the stairs, wondering if the trio were upstairs watching anime, but he couldn't hear anything. Those brats usually turned the sound on damn loud and made silly noises, especially Natsu and Yuki.

He said, "It's quiet."

Edwin raised a brow while Landon smirked. When neither provided the answer, Alec reluctantly asked, "Where are they?"

"Who?" Landon asked, still smirking.

Alec sighed. "The brats."

"At the main house," Edwin said.

Alec pulled a chair out and took a seat. Another sip of the beer followed, his mind on Natsu, wondering what he was doing at the moment. Probably enjoying watching an anime with his brothers and Marisa.

"Thought you were going to stay out late," Edwin said.

"Or all night." Landon chuckled.

"I got bored," Alec said.

"You? Bored while out partying?" Landon asked. "That's a first. Were none of the girls Jaxon invited to your taste? No petite brunette?"

Alec sighed. "Please, Landon, don't torture me."

Landon tilted his head to one side. “Me, torturing you? Now, why would I do that? And I’m asking because I’m curious. Jaxon knows exactly the type of girls you like, at least in the physical traits sense, so he wouldn’t *not* invite a few pretty brunettes.”

Alec took another sip of the beer, looking deflated. “You’re killing me right now, Landon.”

Landon raised a brow. “Don’t tell me you’re still hung up about your ex? It’s been well over two months.”

Alec snorted. “Hell, no.” He downed the rest of the beer and then put the empty bottle on the table. He stood and said, “I’m turning in early. Good night.”

“Good night,” Edwin said.

“Night,” Landon said.

Up on the second floor along the hallway, his gaze strayed to Natsu’s bedroom door. Of course, he knew the boy wasn’t in there, but the urge to go in and...

And what? Why the heck did he want to go into the brat’s room?

Alec shook his head, irritated, and then marched into his own room.

Despite wanting desperately to fall asleep, Alec found himself wide awake until two in the morning, listening, hopeful for the sound of din, signs of the triplets returning. Were they staying overnight at the main house? he wondered.

Why hadn't Edwin or Landon told him? He hadn't asked, but...

He turned over and finally fell into a fitful slumber. When he woke the next morning, he was tired and irritable, but skipping a workout session was out of the question. Hence, he spent the next hour and a half in the gym located in the basement of the house, and after a shower, he felt much better.

"Didn't get much sleep last night?" Edwin asked, eyeing him across the countertop.

"I got enough," he lied and then downed a glass of protein shake.

"What's your schedule for the day?"

"Lectures and then I'll be at the café in the afternoon to help out."

Edwin said, "Don't overdo it. The other staff are back, so we'll manage."

"I won't overdo it," Alec said. "I like working at the café. Change of pace."

The front door opened, along with the familiar loud noises, causing Alec's heart to skip a beat and his gaze to eagerly fly toward the entrance.

"Hurry! Or Zara's gonna leave without us," Aki said.

"I know. I know," Yuki replied.

Alec saw the two scurry into the room, and Yuki flew up the stairs while Aki picked up Muffin. With the pup in his arms,

he came toward Edwin, a bright smile on his face.

“Morning,” the boy said.

“Morning,” Edwin replied. “In a rush?”

Aki nodded. “Yuki forgot some stuff for classes.”

Alec, his gaze still lingering at the entrance, wondered where the heck Natsu was. After all, weren't the triplets joined together by the hip, figuratively speaking? So where was he?

“Zara was nice enough to drop us off for today since we woke up late,” Aki said.

Alec remembered the triplets had discussed transportation to the university a few weeks back. He, however, hadn't bothered to ask if they needed a ride since Natsu mentioned they'd take the bus. Now they decided on riding with Zara instead, and Natsu must be waiting in the car.

“I'll be glad to drop you guys off if I can,” Edwin said.

“No, it's fine,” Aki said. “You have work, and taking the bus is fine with us. We're used to taking public transport. Our old high school was way out of the neighborhood where we live, and taking the train is the only option. Well, it's Tokyo, so of course, the train is the only option.”

“Are you talking about the train?” Yuki returned, his backpack over a shoulder. “Yeah, we got groped by the ass.”

That got both Edwin's and Alec's attention. Edwin said, “You guys got groped?”

“Well, yeah,” Yuki said. “There are disgusting bastards out there, even in Japan. We beat them up to teach them a lesson though and even reported a few to the police, too. Mom would even threaten them if they ever so much as came near us again. She’s a gorilla, like Natsu said.” He did a thumbs-up. “So no worries. We can look after ourselves.” To Aki, he said, “Aki-nii, let’s go.”

Aki nodded, and after putting Muffin back down on the floor, they left. The house quiet once more, Edwin said darkly, “The boys got groped.”

“Yeah,” Alec said. “If I were there, I’d break those bastards’ fingers.”

“I’d break their arms,” Edwin said.

Alec chuckled. “You’re overprotective when it comes to the triplets.”

Edwin snorted. “And you’d break a man’s fingers just because he gropes them? That’s not overprotective?”

Alec said, “I’m their non-blood-related cousin, and groping is fucking sexual harassment.”

“And spanking Natsu in the butt isn’t?” Edwin asked, his brows raised.

“I never spanked him that hard,” Alec defended himself. “And I was only teasing him. I can’t help myself. He has an ass I just want to—” He stopped short, a mix of emotions stirring within him.

“Want to what?” Edwin asked. “Please, no more teasing him, all right? What if he thinks you’re just one of those bastards who groped him in the train or bullied him at school? Would you want that as his non-blood-related cousin?”

No, Alec didn’t want that. It wasn’t like he cared what Natsu thought of him, but he definitely didn’t want the brat to view him as one of those bastards.

He raked his fingers through his hair. “Fine, I’ll stop spanking him.” With that, he headed upstairs, having yet to realize he was lying through his teeth both to Edwin and himself. Indeed, he’d be spanking Natsu’s butt countless more times, and eating him and biting him no less, but while the boy was in his birthday suit—beautiful and sexy—and begging him to *do it harder and faster*.

15



Natsu

Despite the orientation a week back and visiting the university a couple of times after that to get the course registration and student ID sorted out, I still felt like a fish out of water, especially now that it was jam-packed with people everywhere.

“I think it’s this one here,” Yuki said, pointing toward a fancy structure of a building. “That’s the St. James Building. Our lecture theater is in there.”

“I hope we’re not late,” Aki said. “I don’t want to be late to our first class.”

“Nope, we’re right on time,” Yuki said.

There was a thick crowd of students along the corridor, some sitting on ottoman benches and sofas located here and there.

“Wow! So many people,” I said. “I didn’t know Economics was so popular.”

“This university specializes in international business and commerce,” Aki said.

“Yeah, I know,” I said. “But, wow, still so many people.”

The door opened, and people started pouring out. Once the line thinned, the ones waiting filed in, and we joined them. Inside, the lecture theater was massive and the ceiling high, with seating for five hundred. Having only ever been in a high school classroom with around thirty students, this was

definitely a big change. It was kind of overwhelming, and I couldn't stop looking around, feeling giddy.

“Let's go to the back,” Yuki said.

“Too far from the front,” Aki said. “Let's sit in the middle.”

We followed Aki to the middle while other students found their chosen spots, too. Soon, almost all the seats were filled.

“Is this seat taken?”

I look up to see a guy with pale-blond hair and the bluest eyes looking at me. Wow! To say he was gorgeous was an understatement. I've never met anyone like him before.

“No, it's not taken,” I said. “Go ahead.”

“Thanks,” he said, removing his backpack from his shoulder and then taking the seat.

Was it just me or were the people around us, especially the girls, staring at us with far too much interest? There was some giggling and whispering, too.

Yuki leaned over me and said, “Hi, you local or from out of town?”

The guy stared at Yuki for a moment, glanced at me, then shifted his gaze to Aki, and right back to Yuki. He said, “I'm seeing triple.”

Yuki burst out laughing, and Aki said, “We're identical triplets.”

“Wow! And I'm local. I hope you guys don't have names starting with the same letter, or ones with similar sound,

because that'd be confusing.”

“We have names that reflect the seasons in Japanese. Fall, summer, and winter,” I said.

“Aki.” Aki pointed at himself. “Fall, and I’m the oldest.”

“Yuki,” Yuki said, waving. “Snow in winter, and I’m the youngest.”

“And Natsu, summer,” I said. “The middle one.”

“Your names sound so cool. I’m Finn.”

Finn? I asked, “Just wondering, you don’t happen to be Finn Goodwin and know a guy name Jaxon Goodwin, do you?”

Finn said, “Does he happen to be tall and lean with dark hair and has an arrogant, standoffish attitude?”

“Yeah, that sounds about right,” Yuki said. “The Jaxon we know is friends with Alec Hamilton and Scott Miller who work at Sunshine Café.”

“Yes! Jaxon is friends with Alec and Scott,” Finn said. “They came around to the house often when they were in high school. I’m Finn Goodwin. Jaxon is my brother.”

Aki said, “What a small world.”

I said, “I didn’t expect to meet you so soon.”

“What does that mean?” Finn asked.

“Yeah,” Yuki said.

I chuckled. “Jaxon told me to watch out for you because we’d be taking the same classes and stuff.”

“Is that so?” Finn said, his cheeks turning a light shade of red. “Typical of him.”

Yuki said, “Jaxon and you look totally different, like on the opposite spectrum.”

Finn chuckled. “Yeah, well, I was adopted.”

“No wonder,” Aki said.

Yuki tapped a tune on his desk. “So, you wanna hang out after?”

Finn nodded and said, “Yeah, sure.”

A middle-aged man, Professor Donaldson, strolled into the hall then, and the lecture started. It was the first lesson so there wasn’t much, just an introduction and overview of what was to come. When it ended forty-five minutes later, Finn and us brothers headed toward the Link, a fancy indoor open space filled with sofas, armchairs, bench seats, and tables and chairs connecting the lecture theaters with the cafeteria and the library. There was a ton of people here, too, and it was damn noisy.

“Looks like we have the same schedules,” Finn said after comparing ours.

“Yep. You’re stuck with us whether you like it or not,” Yuki said.

Finn chuckled. "I don't mind being stuck with you guys. I was nervous this morning since I don't know anyone doing the same course as me, but now..." He sighed. "I'm relieved."

"Yeah, now you have us," Yuki said. "We'll be sticking together like glue."

"Yeah," Finn said. "So, do you guys work at Sunshine Café, too?"

Aki nodded. "Yep."

"I'm not good with people," Finn said. "I can't imagine myself serving customers. I mean, dealing with people is not my forte."

"You'll get used to it," I said. "We sucked, too, when we first started."

"We started our first waitering job back when we were like fifteen," Yuki said. "Dealing with people is second nature to us now."

"To you," Aki said. "I still find it a little hard, especially here in America."

"Wait," Finn said. "You guys aren't American? But you have an American accent, specifically this region."

"We're half-American, half-Japanese," I said. "We've lived all our lives in Japan though. The accent comes from Mom who's from this town. She made sure we spoke both languages back at home."

"I see," Finn said. "That explains it."

“It’s nice to see you guys are already acquainted,” a voice said.

Finn jolted, his cheeks blushing red, and I turned to see Jaxon. My eyes drifted to the figure standing slightly behind Jaxon and I saw Alec. Our gazes collided, and I swore internally.

Ugh! I had worked so hard on avoiding him, as promised, by moving into the main house yesterday, with the help of Edwin, Aki, and Yuki while the culprit for the said move was out. But now what? It hadn’t been a day yet, and here he was.

Alec took the seat next to me and picked up the paper containing my schedule from the table. Skimming over it, he said, “Looks like you’re going to be busy. You sure you can handle all the classes, brat?”

I snagged the paper back and said, “I’ll manage, thank you very much.”

Jaxon took the seat next to Finn as he said, “Alec’s an honor student with straight As. I advise you torture him with questions if you don’t understand anything, Natsu.” He winked at me.

I said, “I’d rather ask you or Scott.”

Jaxon spread his hands out and said, “You’re welcome to ask me, but it’ll cost you.”

I snickered. “You won’t charge Finn anything, will you? Because he’s your brother. We’ll ask him to ask you for us.”

He leaned back against his chair, and his eyes on Finn, he said, “I charge Finn double, and he knows it.”

“Sounds like you’re a horrible brother, Jaxon,” Yuki said. “I bet you bullied him when you were younger.”

Jaxon reached out and ruffled Finn’s hair. “Bully is a strong word. I do keep him in line though.”

I said, “Is that why he’s so timid around you?”

Finn’s face grew a darker shade of red. He said, “I’m not... timid.”

Jaxon chuckled. “Finn’s right. He’s not timid. He’s just shy and knows how to please his brother.” He wrapped his arm around Finn’s shoulders and pulled him close. Their faces inches apart, he said, “Isn’t that right?”

It appeared Finn’s brain might have just fried because he looked absolutely dazed and his body went stiff. He was acting quite strange, and I wondered if he wasn’t feeling well. But I didn’t know him that well, so maybe this was just his normal.

To us, Jaxon said, “I’m having a party in a couple of weeks, you boys want to come along?”

“Is that like one of those frat parties?” I asked. “Or is it like a mixer?”

Alec asked, “What is a mixer?”

Yuki said, “Mixer, or goukon, is like a blind date for young adults. It’s when students from different colleges get together

for a party. Mostly it's to eat and drink and, uh, you know, hook up, or just hang out and stuff."

Alec said, "There is no other university in this town, airhead, so how can it be this *goukon* thing."

I was surprised he could pronounce the word correctly. I bet he was good with languages.

I said, "I know there's no other university in this city. I'm just asking because I don't know what type of party Jaxon is throwing and what we should expect."

Jaxon said, "It's not a frat party, nor is it a mixer. Or is it a sort of a mixer? Both? Most who came to my parties usually got laid, like Alec here, or ended up in a relationship, alas a short-term one, again, like Alec here." He shrugged his shoulders. "It's an exclusive one I throw now and again."

"And we're invited?" Yuki asked, looking pleased as punch. "Awesome."

Aki said, "Is there like a dress code?"

16



Natsu

Jaxon smirked. “Yeah, there’s a dress code. I’ll send you the details later.” He pulled out his phone. “Give me your numbers, all three of you.”

“You know,” Yuki said as he took the phone Jaxon handed to him. “Alec still doesn’t have our numbers.”

Jaxon snorted. “And he calls himself your cousin.”

“Are you actually cousins?” Finn asked. “You did mention your mom was from here.”

“We’re not cousins,” I said.

“You call Alec’s parents aunty and uncle,” Jaxon said.

“We call all our mom and dad’s close friends aunty and uncle,” I said.

Yuki handed the phone back to Jaxon as he said, “I’ve put in all of ours.” He turned to Alec next, his hand in the air.

Alec raised a brow. “What?”

“Give it here. Your phone,” Yuki said.

Alec sighed and pulled out his. With our numbers in, he said to me specifically, “Do not bombard me with your text messages.”

I flashed him a grin and then said, “Why would I even consider doing that when I don’t even have your number?”

“Brat,” he muttered under his breath as he stood. “Let’s go, Jaxon. We have a lecture.”

Jaxon stood, and after ruffling Finn's hair, he and Alec headed away. I saw Finn watching them go, this strange longing sort of look on his face, the type I occasionally saw Aki express when he looked at Edwin.

We had class, too, and started packing up.

It was lunchtime when my phone dinged, along with a message that said: *My number, brat. Now you have it. Don't ever delete it because if I message you and get a who's this reply, I will whoop your ass.*

I rolled my eyes. He was giving me his number when he found me irritating and didn't want to see my face. How contradictory. I added him to my contact list and under the name section I typed in *Overbearing Oni*.

Yuki leaned in and when he saw the name, he burst out laughing. "Overbearing Oni," he said, wiping tears from his eyes.

Finn asked, "What's an oni?"

"It's a Japanese word meaning demon," Aki said.

"Who's an overbearing demon," Finn asked.

"Who else but stupid Alec," I said.

He raised a brow. "You don't like him?"

"It's clear we don't like each other," I said. "He's annoying as hell and picks on me like there's no tomorrow."

Finn seemed surprised and said, "If he doesn't like you, why did he sit next to you? If I dislike somebody, I'd sit as far

away from them as possible. I wouldn't want to see their face, let alone interact with them."

Yuki nodded. "Me, too."

"Me, three," Aki said.

I opened my mouth to speak, but my brain seemed to have deserted me. Come to think of it... Yeah, why would Alec choose to sit next to me whenever he got the chance when he didn't even like me?

I said, "Well, it's because he wants to annoy me, right?"

Yes, it was because he wanted to irritate me, knowing I didn't like him. That must be it.

"Besides, Alec is very nice," Finn said. "I like him."

Ah, so Finn liked Alec, eh?

Putting the phone down, I picked up my knife and fork and dug into my steak and fries, my mind still on Alec, wondering why his actions toward me seemed to always contradict the words he spouted at me.

I lifted my head, my eyes wide.

Holy shit! Finn liked Alec! Was that why he was looking at him with that strange longing expression? He did say Alec and Scott went to their house often back when Alec was still in high school, right? Didn't that mean they were quite... close?

So, Finn liked Alec in that way?

Aki leaned into Finn and whispered something in his ear. I noted Finn widened his eyes and nodded his head, and I

wondered what Aki was telling him. Clearly, it was about me because Finn was looking at me.

I said, “Aki-nii, stop whispering to Finn about me in front of me. It’s rude.” To Finn, I asked, “What is he telling you?”

Finn chuckled. “Uh, nothing?”

“It’s not nothing,” I said.

Yuki rested his elbow on the tabletop and his chin on his hand as he said, “Clearly, it’s about how you used to cling to Alec when you were little, isn’t it?”

Aki widened his eyes and said, “How’d you know?”

Yuki snorted. “Obviously because we’re triplets.”

I narrowed my eyes. “I’m your triplet, too, so why hadn’t I guessed? Anyway, what’s this about me clinging to Alec? That never happened.”

Yuki snickered. “Really? That never happened. When you two used to sleep together in his bed every time we came over for a vacation.”

I frowned. “That’s... not true. I don’t remember that.”

Aki said, “Back then, it was always Alec this and Alec that.”

Yuki nodded and said, as he made air quotes, “It’s *Alec is my number one* and *I love Alec the most in this world*. It was so cringey.”

“Not true,” I said adamantly, feeling my face growing hot with embarrassment. Because if it were, I would have

remembered. They were teasing me; I just knew it.

“Then that summer when we were nine, Alec, who was fourteen at the time, brought home his first girlfriend and spent most of his time with her, and you, Natsu, threw a nasty tantrum.”

Yuki nodded. “That’s right. Remember when Alec told you to go away and leave him and his girlfriend alone, you jumped on him and clawed at his face and pulled at his hair and called him a cheater and that you and him are over and that you never want to see him again, ever?”

I widened my eyes. Holy shit, but these bros of mine were going too far. I said, “Stop it. Just... I get it. Okay, you’re teasing. Fine. But that’s enough now.” To Finn, I said, “Don’t listen to them. They’re just making fun of me.”

Though they had never gone so far as to paint such a nasty picture of me before.

“And now, I’m going to make fun of you in front of Finn, too,” I said, pointing at Aki. “You latched on to Edwin like an obsessed, lovesick pup whenever we’re over here for a vacation. You cried and complained to us that Edwin didn’t like you anymore when Edwin didn’t play with you or pay you attention. You’d crawl into his bed and—”

At lightning speed, Aki was over the table and clamped my mouth shut as he said, his face flushing rosy with embarrassment, “All right, stop it. No more revealing each other’s dirty secrets from when we were young.”

Yuki leaned back against his seat and said, “Luckily, I have no dirty secrets from my younger days. I’m so clean and pure, I’m practically an angel.”

Finn burst out laughing. When he managed to stop, he said, “You guys are hilarious.” He sighed. “I wish I had brothers like you.”

Finally removing his hand from my mouth, Aki said, “You have Jaxon.”

Finn said, “He’s... different. I mean he’s not that type of brother... Like I mean... You know, real brother. For Jaxon, I... love him, but...” He sighed. “It’s complicated.”

“You mean you want brothers you can hang out with and share secrets with?” Yuki said.

Finn nodded. “Yeah, that.”

I said, “Well, I admit Jaxon doesn’t look the type you can share your secrets with, like who your crush is, asking for advice and stuff like that.”

Yeah, like telling Jaxon you like Alec in that way, I added in my head.

Out loud, I continued, “Obviously, he’s too full of himself, just like Alec, and he’s hard to get close to. It’s like there’s this invisible wall around him.”

Finn nodded. “Yeah.” He sighed and then changed the subject. “So, how are you guys getting home?”

“Bus,” Aki said.

“I have a car,” Finn said. “You want me to drop you guys off?”

Yuki did a thumbs-up. “Sounds good. And uh, maybe pick us up in the morning, too?” He was obviously egging for any easy way to get to uni, and I supported him in that.

“That’s no problem,” Finn said. “Provided I don’t need to drive all the way out to the other side of the city to do that. What part of town do you live in?”

“St. Clair,” Aki said. “We’re right along the beach.”

“Oh, really?” Finn said. “That’s where I live, too. Well, I’m still living with my parents. I did want to move out, but they were adamant I live at home during my freshmen year to get used to things.”

Yuki nodded. “Yeah, our parents are the same, except they don’t live here. That’s why it’s at the café house where the Hamiltons can keep an eye on us. Also, we don’t have to worry about rent and stuff.”

Aki said, “We’ll help you pay for gas.”

“Sure, thanks. And parking is free around campus,” Finn said. “So we’re good with that one.”

Aki checked his phone and said, “Looks like it’s time to get going.”

“Ugh! Another lecture. My brain is so going to fry after,” Yuki said.

“Me, too,” Aki said. “I swear I need to watch anime to rejuvenate.”

“Definitely,” I said.

“What’s anime?” Finn asked.

I wasn’t surprised Finn didn’t know what anime was. Though it was pretty popular, most in America still didn’t know what it was. Or manga and webcomic for that matter.

Aki said, “It’s animations from Japan. It’s hard to explain, so it’s best to show them to you.”

I said, “We can do that when we get home. Unless you’re in a hurry to go home, too?”

Finn shook his head. “I’m not. No one is home most of the time since both my parents are busy.”

“Cool,” Yuki said. “You can stay for dinner, too, then.”

“Awesome,” Finn said, and with the plan made, we headed over to our next lecture.

17



Alec

Papers and notebook went plummeting and landed on the floor with a thud, drawing not only Alec's attention, but Scott's and Jaxon's as well as those sitting close by in the Link, which was busy and loud as usual.

Alec sighed and swore softly under his breath. "Fuck!" Apparently, his elbow was the culprit.

Beside him, Jaxon said, with a raised brow, "You seem off as of late."

Alec bent over, and as he picked up the mess from the floor, he said, "Am I?"

Opposite Alec on the other side of the table, Scott said, "Yeah, you're really off this week. It's weird."

Putting the papers and notebook back on the table, he said, "I'm just... tired."

Jaxon snorted. "Tired, my ass. You don't get tired, Alec. What's troubling you?"

Alec shrugged his broad shoulders. "Nothing. Although..." He sighed. "These assignments, and three from Donaldson alone. Why are we getting so many this early into the semester?"

"Because Donaldson is an ass," Jaxon said.

"You're right," Scott said. "He is an ass, even to the freshmen."

Alec, knowing Donaldson taught first year Economics, asked, “What did he do?”

“Horrible stuff,” Scott said. “Even worse than what he did to us when we were freshmen.”

Alec shuddered at the thought of their first year with the professor.

“I heard he wouldn’t answer some very basic questions this year, when he did the previous and with us three years prior to that, claiming the students should consult the textbook he wrote, or else buy the private course booklets he produced.”

Jaxon said, “He just wants them to buy his stuff, the asshat.”

Scott said, “The triplets won’t stop bothering me with questions whenever we happen to be on the same shift at the café.”

Alec snorted. “I just knew those brats couldn’t handle it.” Although it pissed him off Donaldson was being so strict on the freshmen. God only knew the hell he and his friends had gone through under the old man’s hand.

Scott’s phone dinged, and he picked it up to check. He chuckled and said, “You speak too soon, Alec. They can totally handle it.” And bam, the screen of the phone was in front of Alec’s face.

Alec read the message, which was from Natsu. It said: *Got our assignment back. All As.*

Jaxon received a message on his phone, too, and he chuckled. “Looks like you’re not the only one receiving the

good news.” He showed it to Scott, who did a thumbs-up, and then Alec, who looked like he had been sucking on a lemon. He eyed the name of the messenger and asked, “Who the hell is Bunny2?” Although he had a vague feeling who that was.

“Natsu,” Jaxon said. “He’s Bunny2.”

“Who’s Bunny1 then?” Scott asked. “And why bunny?”

“Aki, he’s the oldest of the triplets,” Jaxon said. “Because they remind me of Finn’s pet bunny he had when we were little.”

“The triplets are bunnies to you, eh?” Scott said.

“They are,” Jaxon said. “And there’s going to be four of them.”

Alec hadn’t a clue what Jaxon was talking about, and honestly, he didn’t care. He glanced at his phone and then returned his attention to read one of the four assignments they received that week. It hadn’t been a few minutes when he glanced at his phone again. Of course, there was no message notification.

So, he was the only one missing out on receiving the good news? That brat! Come to think of it, he had not received even one message from Natsu since he had given the boy his number over a week back.

Smirking, Jaxon asked, “Waiting for a message?”

“Nope,” Alec said. “I was checking the time. Looks like I need to get going.”

“You have a shift at the café today?” Scott asked.

Alec nodded. “Yeah.” He packed up, and moments later, he left.

He arrived at the café thirty-five minutes later, and as he walked in, a stir erupted. Alec, oblivious to the many interested gazes on him, headed around behind the counter.

“Hello,” Landon said.

“Hey,” Alec replied. “Looks like it’s busy as usual.”

“Yep.”

Alec retrieved a server apron and tied it around his waist as he scanned the place, noting Yuki and three other waitstaff, but once again there was no presence of Natsu. He should feel wonderful that he didn’t have to see the brat, more especially since it had been ten days in a row, but why the heck did he feel so irritated?

He started work, mostly helping Landon behind the counter and serving drinks and receiving payment, and despite his efficiency, his snappy mood showed through enough that it got Landon’s attention.

“You okay?” the man asked.

“Yeah,” Alec answered. “Why?”

“Because you don’t look okay,” Landon said. “If you’re too stressed out about studies, lessen your work shifts.”

Alec waved Landon’s concern aside.

“I can handle studies,” Alec said. “It’s... something else.”

Damn, yes! Something else had been bothering him, and for the life of Alec, he hadn't a fucking clue what it was.

Yuki came bouncing over, and leaning himself against the countertop, he said, "So, guess what, Landon? I got an A for my first assignment. Same for Finn and my bros. Me and them are celebrating, and that means I can't hang out with you tonight."

Landon raised a brow. "Oh? Congratulations. And thank the heavens for that."

Yuki looked a little surprised at hearing the last unexpected comment. "Hey! What does *that* mean? Are you saying I've been annoying you?"

Landon smirked. "You finally realize?"

Yuki frowned. "You're mean, Landon. Fine, let's quit hanging out. See if I care. And just so you know, me and my bros will be dining at Finn's flashy mansion with his filthy rich parents. Jealous much?" He harrumphed, turned on his heel, and went off to serve more customers.

Landon shook his head in exasperation. "That brat!" he growled lowly.

"You sound like me when I'm dealing with Natsu," Alec said, chuckling in amusement. Just as instantly, that amusement died and he thought, now why the hell would he be smiling when he thought about that brat?

Landon chuckled. "I admit, he's adorable, but damn, he's irritating. Is it a Japanese thing to barge into other people's

rooms without knocking and just whenever?”

Alec shrugged. “I doubt it. It’s probably a Yuki thing.” He glanced at Landon and asked, “Did he catch you having your private moment again?”

“Of course not!” Landon said.

“Well, thank God for that,” Alec said, chuckling.

Landon continued. “But he did catch me and my date about to get started on our third base. She was half-naked and the brat still had the nerve to ask if he could come in and hang out. Infuriatingly enough, she agreed, and the two ended up playing video games until midnight. She never returned my call after she left, and yesterday, Yuki gleefully told me she messaged him, inviting him to some party, just to rub it in my face. Although he said he declined because I wasn’t invited.”

Alec couldn’t help himself and burst out laughing. When he managed to stop, he shook his head and said, “You’ve been screwed over by a mere brat, Landon.”

“I agree,” Landon said. “I don’t know why women find him irresistible. I mean sure, he’s fucking pretty, but he’s short and scrawny and he talks too much and eats too much, and he never stops asking questions, most of them silly and nonsensical. I’m sure he’s a virgin, as are both his brothers.” Landon shrugged his shoulders. “So, there’s no way he could please any woman in bed. And yet...” He gazed at Yuki on the other side of the café who was being fawned over by a bunch of young women he was serving. “It’s a mystery.”

Alec nodded. “Yep, a mystery,” he said, thinking about Natsu and why so many women were attracted to him when there was absolutely nothing about the brat he found likable. Sure, he was gorgeous, but he was foulmouthed and quick to temper. Basically, everything about that brat irritated him.

Landon said, “I think I’ll be calling one of the numbers given to me this morning. I need it.”

Alec chuckled. “Have fun, then.”

As he headed toward the kitchen, Alec wondered if he too needed to call one of the many numbers written on napkins given to him. He admitted he had been pent-up and desperately needed a good fucking.

The kitchen was hectic, as usual, and Edwin, Colton, and Luke were on the go, pans tossing and pasta flipping while pizzas were cooking in the oven. He started helping with the serving, cleaning the dishes, and clearing the countertop, all the while wondering why he hadn’t seen Natsu either at home or the café. Then again, he had told the boy to not show his face in front of him, didn’t he? So, what did he expect now that Natsu was doing exactly that?

Alec wondered how hard the brat must have worked to avoid him. Considering they were living under the same roof, that would be damn difficult, more especially when their rooms were in front of each other.

Suddenly, Natsu’s face appeared in his mind’s eye, along with *that* particular expression—eyes teary as they glared at

Alec, lips bruised red from being ravished, and face flushing hot—and Alec felt himself going stiff.

Fuck! He tossed the tea towel onto the countertop with a flap, drawing Edwin's attention, who asked, "Alec, something the matter?"

Alec turned to his adopted brother and said, "Uh, no. It's nothing. All good." He headed out the door again, only to nearly collide with Yuki who was coming toward the kitchen.

"Whoa! Hold your horses, Alec. Don't smash into me. Aunty Lena will give us an earful if these dishes are destroyed."

Alec ruffled the boy's hair and said, "I won't smash into you, stupid. I have great reflexes and speed control."

Yuki snorted. "You make it sound like you're a robot or something."

Because he couldn't help himself, Alec asked, "What's your brother been doing these days? He's pretty good at avoiding me."

Yuki raised a brow. "Which brother? Aki or Natsu?"

Alec sighed. "Natsu. I saw Aki. He hasn't been avoiding me."

"Ah," Yuki expressed and then chuckled uncomfortably. "Uh, yeah, he's doing a great job at that, isn't he? But you asked for it. Hold out your hands, please."

Alec did as requested. “That I did because he’s annoying as hell.”

Yuki dumped the pile of dishes onto the pair of hands in the air as he said, “And you two used to be inseparable when you were younger. Now, you both are like a divorced couple with a grudge against each other.” He turned on his heel and then headed back to the front of the café.

Alec stared at the dishes in his hands, his eyes wide.

He and Natsu? Used to be inseparable? When had they ever been inseparable? Alec sure did not remember that. All he had ever remembered was Natsu jumping at him and clawing at his face, bashing his chest, and pulling at his hair while sobbing like his pet had just died, accusing him of some stupid things.

Indeed, the brat had given him the fright of his life for the first time, right in front of his first girlfriend at that. It had been one hell of an embarrassment, a childhood trauma he had never forgotten.

He remembered after that day he had tried to do everything to avoid the brat, but the imp had the habit of hitting him and jolting him awake for no apparent reason in the morning when he had been in bed snoozing away. Alec had finally had enough of the harassment after three days and retaliated by smacking the brat on the butt and sometimes pinching his cheeks and nose when he had the opportunity. Hence, the cries and the glare. That had been how they treated each other during those vacation days for years until Alec had decided he

no longer wanted to be around the brat and went to summer camp with Scott and Jaxon.

Yep. Those memories were his childhood with the brat. It was unpleasant, to say the least.

Alec headed back into the kitchen and dropped off the dishes. He was about to leave when he asked Edwin, “Have you seen Natsu lately?”

Edwin raised a brow. “Yeah? Why?”

“I have a feeling he’s been avoiding me,” Alec said, knowing damn well the boy was.

Edwin chuckled. “It’s obvious, isn’t it?”

“I see,” Alec said. Oddly enough, the confirmation from a third party’s viewpoint felt like a punch to his stomach.

It was closing hour when he received a message from Drew, one of his many friends from the university. It said: *Yo! Keen to hang out? We’re partying tonight. Hot girls invited.*

Hot girls, eh? Alec didn’t need another invitation, nor any encouragement. He replied with a quick *sure*, which was followed by Drew sending him the time and place.

He was just sliding his phone into the back pocket of his jeans when Yuki came sailing over to where he and Landon were behind the counter.

“So, I’m done and off now.”

Landon said, “Have fun at Finn’s place.”

“We will,” Yuki said. “Don’t feel too lonely tonight.”

Landon snorted. “I sure won’t. Oh, and please stay out as late as you want. Actually, please stay out until very late. I beg you.”

Yuki looked flabbergasted. “Landon, you’re mean. Fine, I’ll stay out late, and we’ll see how lonely you’ll get without me around.” With that, he all but marched out the door, huffing and puffing.

Landon sighed. “Thank the heavens,” and Alec chuckled.

By the time he finished cleaning up with the other staff, and he, Edwin, and Landon got to the house, it was well after six. They were just walking in through the back door into the living room when Alec glimpsed Yuki and Aki dashing out the front door. He shifted his gaze across to the window, but he didn’t see Natsu, just the other two climbing into Finn’s car.

Edwin said, “It’s nice of Finn to always pick the boys up.”

Alec noticed Edwin looking at him, and he said, “It’s not like the brats want to ride in my car to uni. The last time I chauffeured them, they bitched and moaned. By the way, I’ll be out tonight. A friend’s party.” With that, he left and went up the stairs to get ready.

18



Alec

Freshly showered and changed into a button-up shirt and another pair of dark jeans, Alec ran his fingers through his hair as he stared at himself through the mirror. Yep, he looked damn fine, enough to make women's knees weak at the sight, and turning on his heel, he left, pumped for a party and pumped for a hot chick to spend the night with.

He arrived at Drew's place twenty minutes later, and the moment he walked in through the door of the two-story house filled with students already half-drunk and going all out partying, Alec looked around for Drew. He spotted his friend in the living room, and Drew came over. They bumped fists in greeting, and Drew said, "Alec, my man."

"Nice party," Alec said.

"Let's have some fun," Drew said as he offered him a bottle of beer.

Alec took it, and twisting the lid open, he downed a mouthful. It wasn't long before he was into the party, too, and surrounded by a bunch of hot women dressed in skimpy clothing. One caught his attention, and naturally, she was his type.

So fucking my type, he thought. Black hair in a pixie cut, large brown eyes, soft features, petite, and small chest. Fuck! He felt like he could really throw her on her back right here, right now and just...

He took in a deep breath and told himself to calm down. The night was long, and he had all that time to satisfy his craving.

“Hey,” he said.

Smiling up at him, she said, “Hey.”

They flirted while chatting, drinking, and eating, and it wasn't long after that when they headed upstairs into one of the bedrooms. After closing the door with a firm click, Alec went to sit on the bed where the young woman, Tara, was watching him.

He asked, “You sure you want this?” Verbal consent was a must between him and his bed partner after all.

Yet, why on earth he had forcefully kissed Natsu that day without so much as a warning to the boy was beyond him. Not that he had ever been into boys like Natsu, but... Why had he been so pissed and irritated and did *that* to Natsu?

Gazing at him, her face flushing hot, Tara nodded eagerly and then leaned into him. “I want you so bad right now,” she said seductively.

“Yeah, me, too,” Alec said and moved in to take her lips for a kiss.

She was sweet and demanding, and as she plunged her tongue into his mouth, she gently pushed him down, pressing the whole length of herself against him intimately, letting him feel all of her.

She was a good kisser with experience, Alec realized, and despite being impressed, it was strange that he felt as though something was... missing.

He deepened the kiss, and while their lips locked and tongues intertwined intimately, teasing and toying with each other, Tara's hand trailed downward and cupped Alec's cock.

She started stroking him through his jeans, and Alec liked that. She groaned and chuckled, eager. Alec chuckled, too, and despite his zeal for the next step, to simply fuck her mindlessly, strangely enough, his little brother down there decided to stay absolutely limp between his legs.

Tara, thinking she hadn't worked hard enough in pleasing and arousing him, became more aggressive and kissed Alec harder, plunging her tongue deeper, and she slipped her hand into his jeans and touched him bare.

Alec felt the heat and the pleasure, yet he had the inkling that *something* was still missing. But what? What was missing? And why wasn't his cock hard? It should have been damn stiff already. So fucking stiff and rock hard that it'd be painful.

He responded to the kiss and dug his hand into her pixie cut hair, wanting, demanding his cock to get hard. Yet it stayed limp, refusing to get aroused, even just a little.

Alec closed his eyes, wondering why he wasn't hard, why he wasn't turned on. What was he missing? Then suddenly, without even himself being aware of it, the image of a face flashed into his mind's eye.

Pixie cut black hair, large brown eyes glistening with tears glaring at him, cheek flushing rosy, lips bruised red from an intense kiss, and that beauty mark under the left eyes.

Alec felt his heart skip a beat, and he flashed his eyes open to see Tara had drawn herself back from him, staring at him.

“What’s the matter?” she asked. “Are you not into this? Am I not doing a good enough job?”

Alec closed his eyes again, and instantly, Natsu’s face appeared.

What the fuck! Confused and more than a little frightened as to what this could all mean, Alec swore under his breath.

“Sorry, I...” He sighed. “It’s not you. It’s me... I just can’t get into it tonight.”

What the fuck was wrong with him? And what was he even saying? Seriously? He wasn’t into this? When he had been feeling so fucking pent-up all month?

Tara raised a brow. “You can’t get into it tonight?” She looked flabbergasted. “Then why did you even bother to waste my time?” Exasperated, she tidied herself, got up, and then stalked out of the room.

Alone, Alec raked his fingers through his hair. A moment later, he got up, left the room, and headed downstairs, his mind a mess.

Yep. Alec was scared. He was fucking terrified and felt slightly sick in the stomach.

He left the party. In the car, he switched on the engine and then drove out, the window down and the breeze cooling his heated skin. Twenty minutes later, he slowed the car to a stop on the side of an isolated stretch of road that ran along the beach. Resting his head back against the seat, the word “Fuck!” softly came out of his mouth.

His eyes closed, he once again saw Natsu’s face, and Alec let his mind wander. Then he saw Natsu in the nude, lying on the bed, his milky skin glistening against the light and his nipple rosy and perky while his face—oh fuck—but that face was just so fucking beautiful and...

Alec took in a shuddering breath as he felt himself going hard, so fucking hard that it was painful.

He slipped his hand into his pants, and feeling the engorged cock—hot and hard—he started rubbing while he thought about Natsu, kissing every inch of him—his forehead, the tip of his nose, the beauty mark under his eye, and his sensual, enticing lips and mouth that seemed to always make Alec’s cock twitch at the sight, especially after the banana feeding incident, and even more so, the kiss in the bathroom.

Alec allowed himself to go further, imagining himself kissing Natsu’s throat and then chest, and then... Cute rosebud-colored nipples, erect and ready to be savored. They were beautiful, and Alec wanted them.

He imagined himself sucking, teasing, and licking the enticing flesh, and all the while, his cock twitched, trembling and begging to be released.

Alec visualized them making out further, throwing any inhibition to the wind because this was his imagination, and in his imagination, he could do whatever he fucking desired with Natsu.

He trailed his lips down Natsu's slender, toned body, and once he was at that spot, he took Natsu's cute penis—as rock hard as his—into his mouth and devoured him, sucking as they gazed into each other's eyes.

He heard Natsu crying out his name softly in his head, and he envisioned the boy squirming in ecstasy before him, and when he came, spurting his cum into his mouth, Alec felt himself come, too, hard, his body tense, his own vision darkening, and then the release, and he felt so fucking good.

He groaned in pleasure and then sighed in exasperation, wondering why the fuck it had to be that brat. Why was his body doing this to him? Why was he so attracted to Natsu?

There! He admitted it. He was attracted to Natsu. Instinctively, he wanted Natsu.

Alec chuckled sadly. He had been straight all his life, and the moment that brat nonchalantly waltzed in, he suddenly turned gay for him.

Switching on the engine, he moved the car out of the parking spot. Going back to the café house was out of the question. Natsu would be there, and at the moment, he didn't want to see the culprit who was responsible for making him hard with just his imagination. He'd feel guilty as fuck. In fact, he just didn't know what he'd do to the boy. Would he jump

on him and take him to ease his attraction and sexual frustration? Or would he take it out on the boy because of the fear and uncertainty of his own sexuality?

Fuck! Alec didn't know. Natsu had turned his world upside down, that was for sure. But despite his complex feelings toward the boy, he knew one thing was for certain. He didn't want to hurt Natsu.

He arrived at the main house fifteen minutes later, having decided he'd crash here for the night. He was walking into the open-plan living room when he saw his mother sitting on the sofa and watching a show on the television.

"Hey, Mom," he greeted.

Lena turned her attention to him, her brows raised. "Alec, what are you doing here?"

Alec snorted as he went to give her a peck on the cheek. "Can't your son come home and crash for the night now and again?"

She chuckled. "Of course, you can." She patted the space next to her on the sofa. "Sit."

Alec sat and then sighed.

"You sound like your father when he's stressed," Lena said.

"Maybe I am?" Alec said.

Lena wrapped her arm around his broad shoulders and said, "I'm all ears. Now, tell your mother what's bothering you."

Yeah, like hell he'd tell her. He removed her arm from around him and said, "I'm a little tired. And it's just uni stuff."

Lena pursed her lips. "Uni stuff, eh? Well, I can't help. You're on your own with that one."

Alec chuckled. "Yep. I'm on my own." Meaning his issue with Natsu, and not the university stuff. With those, he could deal, and he'd do a great job at it, but with Natsu... Well, that was a whole different story.

He headed up the stairs, thinking how nice it'd be just to collapse onto his old bed and sleep and not think about Natsu. Apparently, his head was full of that brat nowadays.

He was just on the landing and walking past Marisa's room when he saw a door that had a nameplate he didn't expect to see. Surely, he wasn't seeing things because he had been thinking about that brat, right? Because the name on that clearly said Natsu.

He frowned darkly, then he paced toward it, turned the door handle, and opened the door.

19



Alec

Inside the room, it was neat and tidy, with the bed made and the study desk with piles of textbooks and notebooks.

Alec walked in, and after scanning the room once more, he inspected the study desk, noting the accounting and economic textbooks. He touched one of the notebooks that had the name Natsu Nakamura on it, and then flipped it open. There were notes in beautiful, neat handwriting, and highlights here and there.

So, Natsu had beautiful handwriting, eh? Compared to his scribble that at times was illegible.

Shutting the book, he sat down on the bed, closed his eyes, and inhaled deeply. He could smell Natsu's scent. It was clear the boy had been living here for a little while.

Alec chuckled, realizing he had fucked up.

Heading back downstairs, he wondered why no one had told him Natsu had moved out. Then again, why would they? He had made it abundantly clear he didn't like the boy, wanted absolutely nothing to do with him, and had taken every opportunity he could to bully him.

No, it wasn't bullying; Alec was adamant about that. He had been teasing Natsu. Yes, teasing.

With the spanking? Fuck! Of course, it wasn't teasing.

"Back down already?" Lena asked when she saw him.
"Can't get to sleep?"

Alec ran his fingers through his hair. “Mom, when did Natsu move here?”

Lena raised a brow. “Oh, you saw his room. About a week and a half ago.”

Alec plopped himself on the sofa next to her for the second time. “He hates me,” he said.

Lena chuckled. “Now, how’d you come to that conclusion?”

“He moved out,” Alec said, knowing full well he had been asking for it—indirectly.

Lena pulled a face. “Hate is a strong word. I don’t ever think Natsu hates you.”

“He dislikes me then,” Alec said.

“Well, dislike...” Lena said. “I don’t think he dislikes you either.” She wrapped her arm around his shoulders. “You two used to be so tight, the best of buddies.”

Alec snorted. “When was that? In your dreams, perhaps?”

Lena gave him a *really now* look. Then she got up and headed toward the door.

“Where are you going?” Alec asked.

“To get something,” Lena said. “And while I’m at it, make me a cup of hot cocoa.”

“Sure,” Alec said.

Once Lena left the room, Alec headed over to the open-plan kitchen and made two mugs of hot cocoa. He hadn’t had it for a while, and it brought back memories, pleasant ones of when

he was younger. He remembered they'd usually had this when...

He frowned. Did he usually share his mug of hot cocoa with somebody? They'd swap turns taking sips and giggle and...

"Here it is," Lena sang out.

Alec turned to see his mother holding up an old thick photo album. "Oh my God!" he said.

Lena made herself comfortable on the sofa, and Alec went around with the hot cocoa. He placed both mugs on the coffee table as Lena flipped open the cover. Alec noted that the page was filled with photos of him, Edwin, and his sisters when they were young.

"You were so cute back then," Lena said.

Alec admitted that he was. In fact, so were both his sisters and Edwin.

"Here's you and Edwin," Lena said. "I had wanted children so badly that having failed twice, we just had to adopt. Edwin was so cute and adorable and such a nice boy, we just had to take him in. Then miraculously, you came along three years later, and then Zara and Marisa."

She flipped through more pages, showing more photos of the family doing silly things. And then, Alec saw them, the Nakamuras.

"The first time they came to America," Lena said. "The triplets were just four, and you took to Natsu immediately. You could tell them apart when us adults had so much trouble."

She flipped the page again, and Alec saw photos of his younger self with Natsu, hugging the boy and just being together and having a ton of fun playing.

As she flipped through more pages, they grew as well, and there were photos of Natsu in bed with Alec, which surprised the bejesus out of him. He was even hugging the boy in his arms, too.

“Natsu had the habit of crawling into your bed at night,” Lena said. “It didn’t seem to matter where you both were, as long as you were close by, he’d crawl in and snuggle next to you. Even when we were out camping and you were sleeping in a different tent, he’d find you and crawl into your sleeping bag.” She chuckled. “Remember that time when we were out in the woods near the lake? The Nakamuras were screaming and searching frantically for Natsu at dawn. Everyone was in a panic, looking everywhere for him, only to find him with you in your sleeping bag.”

Alec frowned, and oddly enough, he vaguely remembered that.

Lena said, “Whenever it was time for them to leave, Natsu would cry his eyes out. Well, not just Natsu, but Aki, too. Aki didn’t want to leave Edwin, and Natsu didn’t want to leave you.” She chuckled again. “He’s grown out of that now though.”

Alec raised a brow. “Out of what?”

“Crawling into your bed,” Lena said. “Natsu, I mean.”

Alec stared at her for a moment and then chuckled softly, knowing otherwise. So, was that why the brat had stumbled into his room? Not because he had been disorientated during sleep, but...

Alec smirked. He couldn't believe *this* was the reason why. Because instinctively, Natsu had always been attracted to him. He had always wanted to be by his side.

"Mom, can I take this?" Alec asked.

Lena closed the album. "Take it. But bring it back. They're memories of the families."

After giving her a kiss on the cheek, Alec stood. He was just heading toward the door when Lena asked, "Not crashing here for the night anymore?"

"Nope," he said. "I don't want the brat to think I'm here disturbing his peace." Then he was out the door.

Back at the café house, he met Edwin in the living room, browsing through the net on his phone while sipping coffee.

"Hey," Edwin said. "You're back early."

"Yeah," Alec said.

Edwin saw the album in Alec's hand and said, "Where'd you find that?"

Alec looked at the album. "Mom. I thought I'd just... look through our childhood stuff."

Edwin said, "Childhood stuff. You and Natsu were a pair of lovebirds back then."

He and Natsu, lovebirds, eh?

Changing the subject, he asked, "Landon?"

A deep voice said, sounding rather sarcastic, "I'm right here."

Alec looked over to see Landon leaning himself against the frame of the door on the other side, a mug of coffee in one hand. He asked, "What happened to your date?"

Landon straightened and walked over. "Got ditched."

Alec burst out laughing.

"Not funny," Landon said, plopping himself on the cozy armchair. "I'm drowning in boredom and loneliness here." He took another sip of the coffee and then growled. "Why is the house so fucking dull and quiet tonight?"

Edwin, busy scrolling on his phone screen, said, "Because the triplets aren't here."

Landon stared into space and said, "Yeah, the triplets aren't here. How did we used to live in such a dull house?"

Edwin snorted. "You used to like it, the quietness I mean."

Yeah, Alec thought, how did they used to live in such a house before? The triplets' presence had definitely changed the atmosphere. They made everything lively and bright, and without them around...

"I'm turning in for the night," Alec said.

"Good night," Landon said unenthusiastically.

"Good night," Edwin said.

As Alec walked up the stairs, he heard Landon muttering, “When the hell are Aki and Yuki back?”

“Late,” Edwin said.

Despite sounding nonchalant about it all, Alec knew Edwin was waiting impatiently for the brothers to return home. No, he was specifically waiting for Aki. Alec wondered when those two would stop dancing around each other and confess their feelings already. But Alec knew that’d take a while because Edwin was a stubborn goat who had gotten the idea into his head that Aki was his darling little brother and he should always treat him as such and Aki was too fucking diffident.

In his room, Alec left the album on his bed and then headed into the bathroom next door to shower and change. When he was done a few minutes later, he came out and was about to head back into his room when he paused and shifted his gaze to Natsu’s bedroom’s door.

The urges got the better of him and he opened the door and headed inside. It was empty, as expected, the bed stripped bare and the study desk and chair looking lonely and desolated. Alec wondered why he had never suspected that Natsu had moved out. Perhaps he had, but instinctively hadn’t wanted to dig into it. Because to do so would mean he was admitting to himself he liked Natsu and cared about the boy. And that would hurt his overinflated ego.

Yes, Alec did have quite an overinflated ego.

He returned to his room, and plopping on the bed, he picked up the photo album and spent the next few hours flipping through, reminiscing about his childhood, especially the memories of Natsu. By the time he closed the thick book, Alec came to accept that he had liked Natsu since forever, and now that they were adults, he was sexually attracted to him without even realizing it.

When he fell asleep, with the album next to him, he was smiling and thinking about the brat who had always glared at him with teary eyes.

20



Natsu

My university life as a student had started off smoothly, and now that a few weeks had passed, I had gotten used to things. As a bonus, my shift at the café was different from Alec, too, thanks to Aunty Lena.

“Natsu? Are you in?”

It was Yuki’s voice from somewhere downstairs. He did text that he and Aki were coming over so we could get ready for that party Jaxon was throwing tonight.

Putting my pen down and closing the textbook, I headed out the door and down the stairs. “I’m here,” I said as I went into the living room.

“You’re never going to believe what we have to wear to the party,” Yuki said, throwing a fancy shopping bag onto the sofa. “Like, seriously. Jaxon dropped by the café and gave them to me and said that’s what we have to wear to the party.” He pointed to the bag.

“I can’t believe we have to wear something like that,” Aki said, looking slightly sick. “I swear people are going to laugh at us.”

Laugh at us? Why? Was it something silly?

Curious, I checked what was inside the bag and took things out. There were white shirts with frills about the sleeves and collars. Okay, fine. Normal enough, I guessed, for a costume. Then I took out the pants, black in color. Again, normal

enough, I thought, until I saw what was at the back. It had this white cotton thing attached to it at the butt.

“What is this?” I asked.

Yuki took something out of the bag and said, “What do you think?”

I stared at the headband with rabbit ears in his hand, and I said, “You’re kidding me!”

“Nope,” Aki said. “We’re wearing bunny tuxedos to the party, apparently.”

“Text Finn and ask him if we are really wearing *that*,” I said. “Like I mean if that’s the actual attire for the party. Or is Jaxon just pranking us?”

“I already did that,” Yuki said. “And Finn texted back. He received a gift bag of a bunny tux from Jaxon, too.”

“Then it’s not a prank. That means it’s no problem, right?” I said. “Because everyone will be wearing a bunny tux at the party.”

Suddenly, I thought about Alec wearing one, too, and I shook my head, unable to imagine him in anything like that.

I frowned. Why was I even thinking about him? And the fact that I’d be seeing him at the party should annoy me, but clearly, I wasn’t.

“Let’s get ready,” Yuki said. “And Finn is coming over soon.”

I nodded, and we headed upstairs to my room.

Finn arrived half an hour later, freshly showered and looking gorgeous as usual. He hadn't yet put on his bunny tux because he said it was too embarrassing wearing it alone. I guessed wearing it as a group made it less so?

After a shower and with a towel around my waist, I came back out of the en suite to see Aki and Yuki finally in their bunny tuxedos, and Finn was just pulling on the flamboyant vest.

"I look ridiculous," Aki said.

"No, you don't," Yuki said. "Let me take some pictures." He raised his smartphone and then... snap, snap.

"Don't!" Aki said.

"Too late." Yuki chuckled. "And I'm sending this one to Edwin." He started typing furiously on his phone.

"You wouldn't," Aki said, his face growing red. When he saw Yuki giving him a cheeky look, he begged, "Please don't."

"Again, too late." Yuki shrugged his shoulders. "Sorry, Aki-nii, it's already sent. Can't undo it."

Aki looked so upset, I burst out laughing. As I pulled on the trousers, I said, "I think you look cute in the bunny tux, Aki-nii, don't you think so, Finn?"

Finn nodded. "Yeah, you look really cute. I mean all three of you do."

"I'm cute with just the pants on and a towel over it?" I asked with a raised brow.

Finn said, “You look cute *and* ridiculous.”

“Do I really look cute?” Yuki spun around and posed, his butt sticking out and wiggling, showing off his cotton bunny tail attached to his formfitting trousers. “This shirt is really something, like those fancy historical costumes. Adding the vest, we kind of look like a bocchan.”

“What’s a bocchan?” Finn asked.

“Young master,” Yuki said. “You know, Ciel Phantomhive in Black Butler, he’s a bocchan.”

Finn widened his eyes. “Ah, one of the anime series you showed me. That protagonist. Sebastian always calls him bocchan.”

Yuki nodded. “We kind of look like that; it’s just the bunny ears and tails that are different. Don’t worry, Aki-nii, I think you’re cute like a bocchan and you don’t have to worry about Edwin seeing you looking like that. He’s gonna think you’re cute and not at all weird.”

“I’m not worried about that,” Aki mumbled, though we knew otherwise. He was always worried about what Edwin thought of him.

I put on the shirt and then vest, and I admit, I looked kind of eye-catching. And these were made of fine material, which meant the suit must be quite expensive. I wondered if these were rentals or if Jaxon had actually bought them.

Yuki put the bunny headband on my head and said, “Voila, bocchan bunny number four.”

“Just curious, how did Jaxon know our sizes?” I asked.

“He has always known my size,” Finn said. “He buys me clothes regularly.”

“He texted me,” Yuki said.

“Ah,” I expressed.

“And speaking of texts...” Yuki held up his phone, a cheeky grin on his face. “Edwin texted back. He said Marisa and Zara want to see us in person wearing our bunny tuxedos, and they’re begging us to come over to the café.”

“We’re not going to the café,” Aki said, his face still red. “There’d be so many people and...”

And Edwin would see him in *that* in person, I thought.

“Too late,” Yuki said. “I already confirmed we’re coming.”

“Yuki, you didn’t,” Aki moaned.

“Whether I did or didn’t, it’s, again, too late,” Yuki said. “So, let’s go. They’re waiting.”

“Am I coming, too?” Finn asked.

“Of course, you are,” Yuki said. “How else are we going to get there without you driving us? We’re not going to be walking down the neighborhood in these.”

“Definitely not,” Aki said.

“And you already know Aunty Lena and Uncle Michael and Marisa and Zara and everyone else,” Yuki said. “So no need to be shy.”

“I’m not... shy,” Finn said. “It’s just...” He flushed hot on the face.

Just because Alec would be there maybe? I thought. And he didn’t want Alec to see him looking like that. Then again, they’d see each other at the party anyway. But seriously, I had no damn clue which part of Alec Finn seemed to like so much. I found everything about that man annoying.

We arrived at the café half an hour later, after Aki and Finn took a good ten minutes each in the bathroom, dragging their feet.

Zara and Marisa shrieked in delight the moment we walked through the door, and the customers, a small group of them still here even ten minutes to closing time, started making a lot of noises and taking out their phones and begged us if they could take some pictures.

Again? And we weren’t even working and holding any iconic Sunshine Café food dishes in our hands.

With Yuki giving them a thumbs-up as an approval, we were suddenly surrounded, and Finn looked dazed.

“You guys look amazing,” one girl said. “What’s the occasion?”

Yuki said, “We’re off to a cool party.” He spun around and posed, showing off his bunny tux. “What do you think?”

A chorus of excited screaming echoed loudly, and a series of snapping photos followed, with some of the girls doing selfies with us. Finn looked even more dazed as the women

swamped around him, bombarding him with questions such as: What's your name? Are you the triplets' friend? How come you're so gorgeous? What product do you use for your hair? Do you have a facial routine?

Meanwhile, Aki's gaze kept straying to the door of the kitchen.

On cue, Edwin came out, along with Colton and Luke.

"I see the boys are stirring up the café again," Colton said, shaking his head, a smirk on his face.

"Yep, four cute bunnies have invaded Sunshine Café," Landon said from behind the counter. "Look at him, hopping around." His eyes were on Yuki. "He's going to get eaten looking like that."

Having heard him, I said, "No one is going to bully my brother, I'll make sure of that."

Landon raised a brow. "Bully?"

In front of me, Edwin looked at Aki from the top of his bunny ears down to the tips of his shoes, which made Aki flush red in the face.

"Don't laugh. I know I look ridiculous."

Smiling gently, Edwin said, "I'm not laughing, and you look... adorable."

Aki widened his eyes, and he couldn't seem to hide the smile that started spreading across his face. "Really?"

Edwin said, “Makes me wonder if it’s safe to let you go to that party packed with horny men.”

I said, “You mean horny women? I agree, girls are so going to jump on Aki-nii. Won’t you come along to protect him?”

“Natsu, stop with the nonsense,” Aki said.

“Great idea,” a voice said.

21



Natsu

I turned around to see Jaxon, who was in a classy outfit—not a bunny tux—with his arm wrapped around Finn’s shoulders, who was flushed red in the face and looked even more dazed than before. Damn, but the girls must have *really* overwhelmed him that he needed Jaxon for support.

“Jaxon, how come you’re here?” I asked.

“I was here for a while,” he said.

“Ah, I see. You’re waiting to get ready with Alec and Scott,” I said. Because, of course, wearing a bunny tux alone was weird. You gotta wear a costume with a group of friends.

“No, I just came here now and again for a change in scenery,” he said. “And drop off those.” He nodded toward me, meaning the tux.

“If you’re here, who’s taking care of getting the party ready?” I asked.

“I have people doing that for me,” he said, shrugging his shoulders. To Edwin, he said, “You’re welcome to join the party, Edwin.”

Aki widened his eyes. “Is... Edwin invited?”

“Yeah, everyone at Sunshine Café over the age of eighteen is invited.” To Marisa, he said. “Sorry, Marisa.”

Marisa snorted. “Like I’d want to go to *your* party. It’s full of gorillas like you, Alec, and Scott.”

Jaxon burst out laughing. “You’re right. We are a bunch of gorillas, aren’t we?”

“I’ll pass, thanks,” Zara said. “I have my own girls’ night out.”

“I thought it was only for the students,” I said. “And Edwin won’t have time to get himself a bunny tux.”

From behind the counter, Landon said, “I’m coming. The café’s closed tomorrow, so I’m keen to drink myself silly tonight.”

“And nurse the hangover on Monday,” Scott said, who had just come out of the kitchen. “Good plan, since I have no class.”

Behind him, I saw Alec, who had his gaze on me, intense and dark, which didn’t surprise me. Yep, we hadn’t seen each other for two weeks, and the moment he saw me, he just had to glare, didn’t he?

“Landon! You’re coming to the party?” Yuki asked.

“Yep,” Landon said.

“Then can I ride with you on your motorbike?”

“I’m going to be drinking, so I won’t be taking my motorbike,” Landon said.

Yuki’s face fell. “Well, that sucks.” And Landon burst out laughing.

Despite the café closing, the customers seemed to be taking their time leaving, and when the opening sign outside was

brought in and the one at the door turned over, the staff could finally start cleaning up. As for us in bunny tuxedos, we headed out the door, and me not without feeling that stare, undoubtedly from Alec, burning a hole on my back.

We arrived at Jaxon's fancy penthouse atop a twenty-story apartment complex half an hour later. Damn, I couldn't believe his parents bought him a penthouse just because he graduated high school, so Finn had said. What's next? A grand hotel when he graduated college? Multimillionaires did do things differently.

The street was already packed with cars, and Jaxon, who had parked his in his designated parking lot underground of the building, waited for us at the front of the building.

Staring around the luxurious foyer, Yuki said, "Whoa! This place is awesome."

"You ain't seen nothing yet," Jaxon said, nonchalantly wrapping his arm around Finn's shoulders. He liked doing that, it seemed. Aki, Yuki, and I were close, but we were never that touchy-feely.

We took the elevator up to the top floor, then Jaxon said, "Come on in, boys," leading us into the penthouse.

Inside, it was flashy, as expected, and there were people in black-and-white uniforms here and there. They must be the staff Jaxon had hired for the party.

We went into the open-plan lounge, and Jaxon said, "Want something to drink?"

“Coke,” Yuki said, putting his hand up.

Jaxon chuckled. “We’re not in class, Yuki. You don’t need to raise your hand.”

“Me, too,” Aki said.

“I’ll have apple juice,” I said.

Yuki turned to me. “Why apple juice?”

I shrugged. “Just because.”

Since we were early, we chilled, and Finn showed us around the penthouse. He was familiar with the place, which was not unexpected since he must have been here often. The fact there were five spare bedrooms fully furnished and only one occupied master got me thinking, and I turned to ask, “Why didn’t you move in with Jaxon after high school? It’s pretty close to the university.”

Finn frowned and then said, “Well... he never asked me to, uh, move in with him.”

“Doesn’t that mean he doesn’t want you around?” Yuki voiced his opinion.

When I saw the gloomy expression on Finn’s face, I nudged Yuki on the shoulder. He chuckled uncomfortably and said, “Uh... Okay, I did not mean to make it sound like that... you know, that Jaxon doesn’t want you around... Sorry.”

“What are you sorry about?” Finn said. “Maybe he really doesn’t want me around.” He turned on his heel and headed toward the stairs.

“Did I just ruin the mood?” Yuki asked.

Aki shrugged his shoulders. “Maybe Finn and Jaxon have a complicated relationship. Finn was adopted.”

Yuki nodded. “Yeah.”

People started arriving, and soon, the place was packed, and as it got dark, Edwin and Landon turned up. Scott and a bunch of his friends had already presented themselves half an hour before, and they were as loud as always. I was shocked, not because there were so many people but the fact that no one else apart from Finn, Aki, Yuki, and I were in bunny tuxedos.

Jaxon played a prank on us!

“You’re a horrible person,” I said. “I can’t believe you pranked us into wearing these weird costumes.”

Smirking, Jaxon said, “But you boys look so damn cute. And everyone, especially the girls, adores you and your brothers.” He nodded to the other side where Aki and Yuki were surrounded by a thick crowd of women, seniors from the university.

Then I saw Alec make his fashionably late grand entrance, with a hot chick in his arms at that, and instantly, I felt this *irritation* bursting inside me.

Ugh! I had thought I wouldn’t get pissed seeing him, but clearly, I was wrong. Then again, I wasn’t annoyed with him at the café a few hours back. So, what gives?

I turned on my heel and was about to leave when Jaxon said, “You look like a jealous boyfriend, Natsu.”

I spun around and asked, "Excuse me?"

He smirked and then shrugged. Grabbing my arm, he said, "Let me introduce you to some women from the university. You're into older women, right?"

"I'm not," I said.

"Then what's your type?"

I said, "I don't have a type. I don't think I ever have." I glanced to the other side of the room, my gaze on Alec who now had a glass of bubbly in one hand. As for the hot chick? She was all over him and gazing at him like a lovesick pup. I felt a little sick to the stomach at the sight, which was... weird.

"You don't have a type, eh?" Jaxon said. "You sure you're not asexual."

"I could be," I said, bringing the glass of apple juice to my lips and taking a sip. The sweet taste helped moisten my rather dry throat.

Moments later, Jaxon introduced me to a group of women, all very pretty, and I was soon whisked away, ending up outside near the pool. We chatted and ate the mountains of delicious fare on offer, and I found my irritation with Alec dissipating. I really did start to enjoy myself, that was until I glimpsed Alec and the chick on the other side, and immediately, that sickening feeling in the pit of my stomach returned.

What the hell? Why was I feeling like this just because of Alec?

“Oh my gosh,” one of the women surrounding me said. “She’s so clinging to him.”

Since they were gazing in Alec’s direction, I assumed they were talking about the chick with him.

“I heard a few of them tried, you know,” another said. “But they failed. Tara managed to get him into a bedroom, but that was as far as it went. I saw her running out looking embarrassed the other night at Drew’s party. It was clear Alec rejected her.”

“I heard he’s still hung up on his ex,” another said. “Brenda.”

“Yeah, Brenda,” another said. “She got greedy and demanded he stop working at his father’s café because too many girls go there just to see him. She was totally insecure.”

“Isn’t that like giving him an ultimatum?” another said. “That was stupid of her.”

“Yep,” the first said. “And then she cried her heart out after he broke it off.”

Sitting there listening, I wondered if this was how women gossiped. And why were they doing it with me around?

“She’s a blonde,” one said. “I thought he was always into dark hair.”

Another nodded. “Short dark hair, petite, and flat chest.”

So that was Alec’s type? I would have thought a hunk like him would preferred a tall blonde with a great figure and an

even greater bust, like the one currently next to him. Clearly, I was wrong.

My gaze followed the pair as they walked along the side of the pool, and I thought, *wow, don't they just look great together*. Then that weird nauseating feeling rushed up the pit of my stomach again.

Had I eaten something wrong?

Alec turned my way, and our gazes met. My heart skipped, and heat rushing to my face, I swiftly shifted my eyes away.

Wait! Why was I avoiding his gaze? It wasn't like...

Like what?

"I wonder if they're going to go upstairs," the woman sitting next to me said. "What do you think, Natsu?"

I widened my eyes. "Uh, you're asking me? And why upstairs? There are only bedrooms there."

"Exactly," she said, chuckling. "That's what bedrooms are for."

"Oh my gosh," the woman sitting opposite me said. "He's so innocent, it's cute."

The one to my left said, "I can guarantee you there'll be a lot of hot action going on upstairs tonight."

That was when I got their meaning. So, all those spare bedrooms were...

I felt my face growing hot at the thought, and the women burst out laughing.

I managed to escape the group sometime later. They were nice, but I'd rather not sit there listening to them gossip about this and that, which I had no interest in and clearly no clue what it was all about.

Back in the lounge, I saw Aki sitting next to Edwin, who had his arm around him. Edwin was chatting with Luke and Colton and some other guys around their ages while Aki sat there quietly, listening. Had Aki even left Edwin's side since the man turned up hours ago? Then I wondered where Yuki and Finn were.

I headed into the living room next door to see Yuki dancing with a bunch of girls along with some K-pop music, wagging his bunny tail. Meanwhile, on the other side and sitting on the sofa was Jaxon, with Finn next to him. Jaxon had his arm around Finn, and the picture reminded me of Edwin and Aki.

I headed into the bathroom, and as I was washing my hands, I wondered if Jaxon was a brocon, short for brother complex, a term used in Japan when a sibling had a strong attachment and obsession to their brother. He sure acted like one when it came to Finn. Yep, their relationship was complicated, all right.

I headed out, humming, thinking of getting Yuki to get more food together. I was just rounding the corner when I came to a halt. Before me in the distance was Alec and the hot chick, who was still clinging to him. They were making their way up the stairs, and I realized what that meant.

This overwhelming, sickening feeling came again.

What the fuck? What the heck was wrong with me?

I spun around, turning my back on the pair.

Stop it! I told myself. It was none of my business what Alec was up to.

I marched down the hall toward the living room, repeating to myself, “None of my business. None of my business.”

22



Alec

“Oh my gosh! Aki, Natsu, Yuki, and Finn are coming over in their bunny tuxedos,” Marisa squealed. “I’m so excited. I can’t wait to see them.”

Sitting beside Alec, Jaxon said, chuckling in amusement, “They’re eager to get into it, aren’t they?”

Knowing Jaxon had played a prank on the triplets, Alec snorted and said, “I can’t believe you’d go that far for a prank. Those tuxes aren’t cheap.”

Jaxon said, “Aren’t you curious to see what Natsu looks like with bunny ears and a tail?”

As he got up, Alec said, “You have the weirdest kink.” He returned to work in the kitchen and refused to head back to the front, knowing Natsu would be arriving soon. After realizing his attraction toward the boy, he wasn’t yet emotionally prepared to face him. Seeing him now would only stir up unwanted yearning.

It wasn’t long before loud noises came echoing, and Alec knew the triplets had made their grand entrance.

Colton said, “Looks like the triplets are here.”

Edwin headed out the door, and Colton and Luke followed him, leaving Scott and Alec to continue clearing things away. As he was wiping down the countertop, Alec heard a lot of oohs and aahs and how adorable the triplets and Finn were in their tuxes.

“Man, I can’t wait for tonight,” Scott said. “Free drinks and hot girls. Let’s go, Alec. I want to finish up early so we can leave for the party.” And he was out the door.

Alec stood rooted in his spot, determined to hide away until Natsu left. The alluring sound of the boy’s voice, however, was too enticing, and he found himself walking out the door before he even realized it.

He saw a bunch of young women, among them Zara and Marisa, surrounding the triplets, Finn, Jaxon, Edwin, and Colton while Landon, Luke, and Scott were behind the counter. His gaze instinctively strayed to Natsu, and instantly, his heart skipped a beat and the hankering for the boy overwhelmed him, making him a little breathless.

Fuck! He wondered if his feelings for Natsu had always been this strong. Perhaps, and he hadn’t noticed it until now.

Damn. He took in how adorable he was in that tux and those bunny ears on his head. When he turned and headed out the door, Alec saw the cotton tail on Natsu’s shapely butt, and he felt his dick twitch and harden.

Holy fuck! He was turned on at just the sight of Natsu with a bunny tail?

He headed back into the kitchen to calm down. He managed by working vigorously, chanting to himself, *I am not into a boy like Natsu; I am not into a boy wearing a bunny tux.* But deep down, he knew otherwise.

“Fuck you, Jaxon!” he swore softly under his breath. It was that bastard’s fault. Now he had a thing for Natsu in a bunny tux. No, more specifically, he had a thing for Natsu with a bunny tail and ears.

After work, he took his time getting ready, and once Edwin and Landon left, he debated on whether to show up at the party at all. Because clearly, seeing Natsu was just too much for him to handle.

“Fuck!” he growled loudly in frustration. Jaxon was never going to stop bitching at him if he didn’t make his expected appearance. It was a thing between them. Whenever Jaxon threw a party, whether it was small or big, Alec and Scott would always be there. They were a tight trio, and everyone knew it.

He reluctantly stomped out of the house and drove off. Arriving fashionably late, Alec got out of the car and was just locking it when a female voice said, “Hey, Alec.”

Alec turned to see a pretty young woman. He remembered that she was in a different department at the university, but their circle of friends was connected.

“Hey,” he greeted. “Debora, right?”

“Yeah, Debora,” she said, smiling at him. “It’s been a while since we last saw each other. You’re going to Jaxon’s party, right?”

Alec nodded. “Yeah.”

“I don’t really know anyone there,” she said. “Mind if I stick with you?”

She looked so nervous, and Alec couldn’t help but nod. “Sure.”

They walked side by side to the apartment building, into the foyer, and then toward the elevator. Once the door dinged open at the top floor, Debora slipped her arms around his arm. “I’m quite excited.”

Alec didn’t pay much attention to Debora gleefully clinging to him. He was used to women clinging to him and was quite oblivious to it. He said, “Are you?” In his head, he thought, I’m not. It looked like he’d have to avoid running into Natsu if he didn’t want the overwhelming urge to be with the boy to resurface.

They walked in through the door, and the moment they did, the loud noises greeted them—chatter and music playing in the background.

“Welcome, sir, madam,” a young man in a black-and-white uniform said. “Drinks?” He extended the tray in his hand which had glasses filled with champagne.

“Thanks,” Alec said, taking one.

Debora did, too, and then said, “It’s so fancy.”

They were just going down the few steps into the lounge when Alex’s gaze, irritatingly enough, strayed to the other side of the room and spotted Natsu, looking as adorable as ever in his bunny tux.

He sighed, vexed. In a room filled with people, he sure did not have trouble spotting the boy. What was it with him? To be able to find Natsu so easily? Was it because of their attraction toward each other? His mother had mentioned that, too, didn't she? That they each had the knack of knowing where the other was.

Jaxon was beside Natsu, and they were chatting. When Natsu looked a little peeved off, Alec knew Jaxon was teasing the boy again. Then they left, heading outside to the terrace where the pool was.

Alec's gaze followed Natsu until the boy disappeared from his view, and he was about to step forward so he could catch sight of the boy again, when Scott appeared in front of him.

“Hey, you made it. What took you so damn long?”

“Hey, yeah,” Alec said, distracted.

Scott turned his attention to Debora and said, “Hey, Debora. Did you two come together?”

Alec knew Scott was fishing for information on whether they were together. Debora blushed rosy on the cheeks and was just opening her mouth to reply when Alec said, “No. We met outside at the street.”

Scott nodded. “Ah. Right. Okay. Come on then, let's drink and have some fun.” He pulled Alec by the arm, dragging Debora along, leading them into the living room where the drinks and food were located.

Alec was instantly surrounded by women he didn't know who eagerly introduced themselves to him. As for Debora, she was consistently by his side, her arms tight around his. But Alec was too preoccupied with the thoughts of Natsu that he wasn't even aware of her presence.

When he went outside onto the terrace an hour later, naturally Debora along with him, he saw Natsu with a group of young women. Once again, it was as if they each knew where the other was, and their gazes collided. Alec went stiff instantly, staring at the boy with far too much interest that it caught Debora's attention. When Alec saw Natsu swiftly shifting his eyes away, looking utterly shy and embarrassed, he had this sense of adoration bursting within him.

Cute! So fucking cute! he thought, wanting to leap across the pool to the boy's side and take him into his arms and smooch the life out of him. But, of course, he couldn't, not when he felt Debora tightening her arms around his, which drew his attention.

She was still clinging to him, Alec realized. It looked like he needed to make it clear he was not interested. After all, his heart had already been captured by another.

His eyes drifted to the other side once again, seeing Natsu still flushing hot on the face, and now and again, glancing his way.

Reluctantly, Alec headed back into the lounge, Debora with him. Despite wanting to find the right time to gently reject her,

preferably when they were alone and out of eyes and earshot, he found no opportunity until late into the night.

They were in the hallway on the second floor of the penthouse, and noting that no one was around, he turned to Debora and was about to start the unsavory business when Debora opened a door and eagerly headed inside, pulling him in along with her.

In the bedroom, Alec stood rooted to his spot, stunned. Now, this I did not expect, he thought, as Debora wrapped her arms around his neck and planted her lips against his, pressing with her tongue, demanding to invade his mouth.

Still with lips clamped shut, Alec calmly, gently touched Debora's arms and then drew her back.

Debora, finally feeling Alec's resistance, released his lips. Her eyes large, she asked, "Am I going too fast?" Her voice was shaky, nervous, and Alec knew this was going to be a hard one.

He said, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to lead you on." Not that he had, of course. "I'm... not interested. I already have another I'm interested in."

Debora stared at him for a moment and then said, "Oh, you mean Brenda, your ex." She chuckled tensely. "Yeah, I heard about that. It's like a rumor around campus. Like you're still hung up on her and stuff. But she's already moved on. Don't waste your time—"

“It’s not Brenda,” he said. “The person I like, the one I’m in love with is... another.”

“It’s not Brenda?” Debora asked. “And it’s not...” She pointed at herself.

Alec shook his head.

“Then... who is it?” She was persistent.

Alec raked his fingers through his hair and said, “Whoever I like, it’s not really any of your business.”

Debora took a step back, and Alec thought that’d be the end of it. He was about to turn on his heel and leave when Debora said, her voice tight and high-pitched, “So, you’re actually not into anyone. You’re just lying so you don’t have to sleep with me? Come on, it’s not like I really want you *that* much. You’re not all that. It was just going to be a one-night stand.”

Alec sighed and then said bluntly, “It’s a no, Debora.” Cutting the conversation short, since this was taking longer than he had wanted it to, he said. “Are we done?”

Debora stared at him for a moment, and when tears were suddenly brewing in her eyes, Alec swore under his breath. He hated it when they brought out tears after the rejection.

“You’re the worst!” she shouted and slapped him on the cheek, hard.

Alec was, obviously, stunned as she shoved him to the side, opened the door, and then stalked out.

He touched the sore spot on his cheek as he moved to sit on the bed. Now that he thought about it, he had never really had any luck with women. Sure, they drooled over him and chased after him, since he was such a hunk, and they'd lined up just to get a chance to date him. But even before the dating started, there'd be problems—nuisance ones.

The girls he rejected would make a scene and then stalk and harass him. They'd begged him, telling him that they were meant to be together and that he had made a mistake by rejecting them. They'd soon leave him alone, however, once he dated another woman.

And speaking of dating. That'd start a whole other problem altogether. Once it commenced, the relationship never lasted for more than six months before his dates would show their jealousy side and make his life complicated. He'd be bombarded with text messages and insistent phone calls. He'd even be monitored when he worked at the café, too, so much so that it would become irritating for the customers as well as the staff. And Brenda, his latest ex, had been the worst of the lot.

In terms of dating, the longest he had ever been in a relationship with a girl had been his first with Lucy, which had been a year. They had broken it off that summer when the Nakamuras visited and Lucy witnessed that nasty incident with Natsu jumping at him.

Natsu, eh? It seemed his mind would always come back to the boy.

The door burst open, and to Alec's surprise, there standing before him and staring at him was the very person he was thinking about.

23



Alec

No. Not staring. Glaring. The brat was glaring at him and heaving. He looked like he had his feathers ruffled, that was for sure.

The boy marched in, shoved the door shut with his foot, and demanded, “You did to her what you did to me, didn’t you? You were eating her, weren’t you? You were bullying her! I knew it! You’re the worst!”

He? The worst? Twice he was accused of that this evening.

Enough was enough, Alec thought, and he stood.

He took two steps toward the brat, towering over him, trapping him against the door.

“Say that again, brat?” he demanded. “What did I do? And to who?”

“You ate her,” Natsu said. “That hot chick who just ran out. You bullied her, didn’t you?”

“Bullied her, did I?” Alec said, one brow raised. “And how the fuck did I bully her?”

“You ate her,” Natsu said. “Like you did me.”

Alec snorted. “I ate you?”

The boy nodded furiously.

“And when was that?” Alec asked.

“Back at the house,” Natsu said. “The day of the barbeque.”

Alec leaned forward until their faces were inches apart, his palms resting on the doorframe, trapping Natsu against him. “The day of the barbeque. I see. And what did I do then, hmm?”

Natsu licked his lip, and Alec couldn't help but stare at that luscious flesh. Fuck, it looked so fucking tempting.

“You...” Natsu started. “You were, uh, eating me.”

“I was eating you?” Alec said softly. “I don't remember that.”

Lies. Of course, he remembered, too fucking clearly.

Natsu put his hand on Alec's chest and pressed against him, working on pushing him back. “You're too close,” he said, his face flushing red.

Alec refused to budge, and in fact, he inched closer until they were nose to nose and lips to lips. He said, “You have some balls barging in here accusing me of bullying someone, brat.”

Natsu said, “Well, she did run out in tears. So what was I supposed to think? Only people who get bullied run out looking like that.”

“You know what? You're so fucking confusing. One second you accuse me of bullying Debora, and the next, I'm eating her. Make up your freakin' mind, won't you?”

Natsu stared at him for a moment and then said, “Aren't they the same thing? Eating is bullying.”

Was the brat serious? Alec wondered. When he saw the boy's resolute expression, he burst out laughing. He couldn't help himself.

"What's so funny?" Natsu asked.

When he managed to stop, Alec said, "Eating someone is *not* the same as bullying them."

Natsu widened his eyes. "It's... not?"

"Bullying is intentionally hurting someone," Alec said. "While eating..." He drifted his gaze down to the boy's lips again. Ah, fuck, but the desire was strong. "Now, eating is kissing and more, *so much more*."

Natsu, conscious of Alec's eyes on him, covered his hand over his lips, and his face grew even redder as his eyes widened as if in realization. He said, "So... that day..."

"That was... me eating you, yes," Alec said.

"But..." Natsu said, still with his mouth covered. "You hate me."

Alec sighed. "Hate is a strong word. I don't particularly hate you."

"Dislike me then," Natsu said. "You dislike me."

Alec pursed his lips. "I wouldn't say I dislike you either."

"Then what?" Natsu said, finally removing his hand from his mouth. "You spanked me. You did nasty things to me. If it's not because you dislike me, then I don't know what it is."

“I just...” He sighed. “I just find you irritating. You so easily get under my skin, it’s annoying and it’s eating at me, and recently, I found out why. Recently, I finally understood why.”

“Oh...” Natsu frowned for a moment and then said, “But that hot chick, what did you do to her to make her run out like that? Did you eat her like you did me?”

Clearly, their conversation was going around in circle. And why was the brat back on the subject of Debora again?

He said, “No, I did not *eat* her like I did you. Rather, it was she who wanted to eat me, and I rejected her.”

Natsu stared at him, his eyes wide, looking confused and rather shocked. “You... rejected her? But she’s hot.”

“I don’t just sleep with any random woman who offers herself to me,” Alec said. “And you keep going on and on about how hot she is; do you actually want her for yourself?”

It was Natsu who pursed his lips this time. “No, of course not. I’m not attracted to her.” He changed the subject. “Why did you reject her?”

Alec shrugged. “Because I have someone else I like.”

Natsu snorted. “Of course, you do. She must be a petite beauty with short black hair, brown eyes, and flat chest.” Just as he said that, his expression changed from that of a little sarcastic to one that was dumbfounded.

Alec gently cupped the boy’s chin and said, “Yep. Black hair, large brown eyes that always glare at me, flat chest, and

short. So fucking short, and has a nasty attitude and the foulest mouth.” He nudged the boy’s face up until their eyes met. “I like you, Natsu. Hell, I don’t fucking understand it myself, but I really like you.”

Natsu simply stood there, staring at him, looking flabbergasted. He blinked, twice, thrice, and then said, chuckling, “Ha-ha, very funny. Yeah, I’m not going to fall for that. You’re playing a prank on me, aren’t you? Wait! Is this part of you bullying me?”

Well, what did Alec expect. For the brat to go weak in the knees and swoon now that he had confessed his feelings? Of course not! Not when he had done nothing but make the boy’s life as uncomfortable as possible.

“It’s not a prank or me bullying you, Natsu,” he said. “I’m fucking serious here. I know this is sudden, considering our history together. I know I’ve been horrible to you, but think back. We used to be best buddies, weren’t we? We even got married at one point.”

Natsu snapped his head up at hearing that and demanded, “When? When did we get married?”

Alec shrugged. “I’m not sure. Some years back.”

Natsu looked dazed and then said, “You... like me?”

Alec nodded. “A lot, apparently.”

“But I don’t like you very much,” Natsu said. “You’ve been quite mean to me and I don’t like it. I even had to move out and stuff.”

“I know, and I sincerely apologize for that,” Alec said.

Natsu nodded, looking quite pleased. “I’m a kind person who doesn’t hold grudges, so apology accepted.” He added, “Just so you know, I don’t trust one word you said about liking me, okay?”

Alec said, “I know, and I understand.”

“Good,” Natsu said, nodding his head again, causing his rabbit ears to flop forward, which Alec found so damn cute.

“Which is why,” Alec said. “I’m going to work hard on showing you just how much I like you.”

Natsu raised a brow. “Come again?”

Alec said, “I’m going to show you just how much—”

“Yes, I understand that, but... how are you going to do that?” the boy asked. “Ah, by being nice. Got it. Well, we’ll see then. But I doubt you can when every time you see me, you glare at me like I’m a pest.”

Alec chuckled. “Do I?”

“Do you what?”

“Glare at you?”

“Yeah, you glare,” Natsu said. “Like I’m an annoying pest.”

“Before, I admit, yes,” Alec said. “But now... It’s a different story.” He leaned closer. “So, can I?”

“Can you... what?”

“Show you how much I like you,” Alec said.

Natsu chewed on his lip for a moment, clearly in thought, and then said, “I don’t mind you being nice to me and stuff. It’d be a welcome change, that’s for sure. It’s horrid having to deal with your glare and your spansks.”

“I’m sorry I spanked you,” Alec said. “But I really like your butt. It’s cute, and I can’t help myself.”

Natsu looked stumped. “You... like my butt?”

Alec nodded. Especially when it was naked and with the supple cheeks spread out, showcasing a beauty of a rosebud-colored hole. But he would never voice that out loud. He’d be classified as a pervert if he did.

“I like it... a lot,” he said.

“Oh...” Once again, the boy looked dazed.

“So, can I?” Alec asked again.

“Can you... what?” Natsu replied.

“Show you how much I like you,” Alec said.

Natsu tsked. “I said that I wouldn’t mind. I said that it’d be a welcome change and—”

“That’d make me very happy,” Alec said, his lips inches from the boy’s. “From now on, I’ll show you just how much I like you. I’ll be nice and gentle, I promise.”

“Good,” Natsu said. “Nice and gentle is goo—”

Natsu widened his eyes as he stood there, frozen, Alec kissing him without so much as a warning, surprising the bejesus out of him.

Having claimed Natsu's lips, Alec cupped the boy's face with both his hands and deepened the kiss, his own lips pressing gently against the boy's, his tongue seductively licking and tasting him, toying erotically.

Mmmm... Natsu tasted of apple juice, he thought, and he was so fucking adorable standing there like a statue, red in the face, eyes wide, and looking dazed and bewildered. When he drew back, he said, "How's that? Am I being gentle enough?"

Natsu stared at him and uttered, his words broken, "You... ki... kissed me. Wh... Why?"

Alec chuckled, amused. "It's because I like you. Have I not made that clear enough for you?"

"Yes!" the boy said. "I mean... You said it and..." He looked flummoxed now. "You really do like me?"

"Yep," Alec said and then took the boy's lips for the second time, gently and softly kissing him. When he inched back, he whispered, "You taste like apple juice."

"It's because I've been drinking apple juice," Natsu said. "Are we... done kissing?"

Alec wasn't sure, but it appeared the boy looked a little disappointed. He teased. "Do you want it to end?"

Natsu covered the back of his hand over his mouth and said, "I knew it! You're toying with me." He shoved Alec back, turned, and then opened the door. "I swear I'm going to get back at you; you just wait and see." Then he ran out.

Alec thought about grabbing the brat back but decided against it and resigned himself to watching Natsu rush down the hallway.

Drat! What was he going to do now? Was it even possible to get Natsu to like him again like they had liked each other when they had been younger? But no matter how much he had to work to prove his feelings for the brat, he'd kept at it. Alec was never going to give up on getting Natsu into his life and bed once again.

24



Natsu

*H*oly fuck! Holy fuck! What the heck just happened? I kept chanting in my head as I ran down the stairs, my face hot and my heart racing.

Feeling dazed and flustered and just... weird, I scanned around the room filled with people chatting and laughing and dancing. Why the hell was the music so damn loud? Shit, my head was spinning.

I slipped my way through the throng of people and headed out the door of the penthouse, my mind a mess.

A mess that was all about stupid Alec.

Outside in the corridor, I went to the corner and rested my back against the wall as I slid down to sit on the floor.

Holy fuck! Alec kissed me. He really, really kissed me. And he said he liked me. When the heck did that start?

I shook my head.

No. No. No. He didn't like me. He disliked me. This was just another of his pranks. I just knew it. I won't fall for it. *I will not fall for it!*

I shut my eyes, and instantly, the image of the bastard's handsome face looming close to me came again, and I remembered the feel of his lips—warm and soft—against mine.

I suddenly felt this undeniable heat and delightful sensation rushing through me, and I groaned.

No, fuck, no... I realized I liked Alec kissing me. Another man had kissed me.

Sure, I had had no expectations when it came to kisses, but I did expect it to be a girl, not a hunk of a man who kept spouting how much he found me irritating. More so, I did not expect it to be so... erotic and... and... sensual... and... just nice and wonderful and...

I wanted more. I wanted to be kissed again. By Alec.

“Stupid Alec!” I growled. “You bastard! Why did you kiss me?”

Because I like you. Wasn't that what he had said?

So, he really liked me, then?

Nope! Nope! Nope! I shook my head furiously. He did not like me. He was playing a prank on me; I just knew it.

Damn, but I felt out of sorts. I felt...

Hard. Shit! I was hard.

I glanced down at the bulge between my legs and cursed under my breath.

Now what?

Calm down, stupid dick. You shouldn't get hard just because Alec kissed me. Now go back down and stop raising your head.

But nope, that penis of mine got even harder, and I had no choice but to...

To what? What was I supposed to do? Obviously, I couldn't start masturbating right here, right now in the corridor where anyone could appear at any time.

I sighed. If this little shithead was so determined to be vigorously rubbed and have its release, then I had no choice but to sneak into the bathroom on the second floor.

I slipped back into the penthouse, damn glad no one noticed my bulge. But it wasn't prominent since it was a puny thing, a thing that would never please any woman in bed, that much I knew.

I made it to the second floor without drawing attention to myself, thank goodness. Probably because most were already far too drunk. I marched along the hallway, my eyes on my target at the end, which was the bathroom. I was near my destination, my sanctuary, my haven when a voice that belonged to the bastard who had caused all *this* called out, "Natsu? Where are you going?"

I pretended I didn't hear him, and increased my pace, my head down as I charged like a bull toward the bathroom. I was a mere few steps away when, suddenly, I felt a firm hand around my arm, and I swore internally.

I was spun around and came face-to-face with Alec, who said, "Where are you going? And didn't you hear me calling you?"

Of course, I heard you, I wanted to snap at him, but the urgency of my dick distracted me. I worked on pulling my arm free, but Alec only tightened his hold.

“Natsu?”

“Yes! I heard you, okay?” I snapped out, frustrated. “Can you please let me go? I need to, uh, use the bathroom.”

Alec glanced to the room ahead of me and then said, “Ah, I see.” He let go of my arm, and I was about to make my escape, to finally take care of my now *very* hard dick—probably because of the sight and presence of bastard Alec, the culprit who was responsible for this to begin with—when Alec caught my arm again.

I sighed. “What?”

I felt his gaze drifting downward to my...

“You have a hard-on.”

I felt heat rush to my face, and I felt so fucking embarrassed, I swore I could die. More than a little peeved off, I blurted, “Well, whose fault do you think it is?” I poke a finger on his chest. “You! It’s because you kissed me, and now, my dick is hard. Now, I have to take care of this during a party. This is the worst!”

I kind of expected him to say sorry, or something along those lines, but what I got from him instead was, “You got hard from just me kissing you? I see.” He looked so damn pleased about it, too, grinning widely.

I glared and said, “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I need to take care of this little shithead who refuses to listen to me.” I worked on freeing my arm for the second time, but Alec still wouldn’t let me go.

He said, “I have a better idea. How about I help you with that?”

I snorted. “Ha-ha! Yeah. No, thanks. I can take care of it myself.” I managed to free my arm this time and then turned on my heel and marched toward the bathroom door. I grabbed the handle and drew it open with determined force and then...

“Fuck, you’re so fucking hot and sexy...” Groaning and humping and moaning and...

I stared, shocked, my eyes wide as there before me was the hot chick, the one who had been with Alec, the one Alec had rejected, currently being, uh, banged by a dude, one of the party guests.

Alec must have seen the two people enthusiastically going at it as well, because he leaned in close behind me and whispered softly, the warmth of his breath fanning on my skin, “Still want to take care of that in the bathroom?”

I slammed the door shut. Turning to look at him, I said, “Take me home.”

Alec smirked. “Sure, but it’ll cost you.”

I frowned. “Fine, since you’re so stingy, I’ll take a taxi instead.”

I stepped to the side and started down the hallway. I hadn’t taken two steps yet when I felt Alec’s hand around my arm, stopping me in my tracks.

“All right. All right. I won’t charge,” he said. “But don’t you need to take care of that anymore?” He meant my cock.

I said, "It went limp after seeing that inside the bathroom."

Alec burst out laughing. When he managed to stop, he said, "That easy, eh?"

Of course, it wasn't that easy. I was still damn hard.

"Are you gonna take me home or not?" I asked.

He closed the small gap between us and wrapped his arm around my shoulders, ruffling my hair. The intimate action caused heat to rush through my body again, and I swore my dick became even more aroused.

Not good.

"I'll take you home," he said. "But first, you need to take care of that. People will think you're a pervert if they see you walking around with a hard-on."

"I'm not a pervert," I snapped. "I'll take care of it." I looked around. "But the bathroom is preoccupied."

Alec sighed. He grabbed my wrist and then led me down the hallway and around the corner. There was a set of stairs, which I did not know about, and he led me up to the top. On the landing, there was a door. Alec opened it and said, "Go in and take care of it."

Curious, I poked my head inside to see that it was a bedroom, fully furnished and super grand, just like the rest of the place.

"I didn't know there was another bedroom up here," I said.

“Just hurry up, brat,” he said, nudging me with his hand between my shoulder blades.

I stumbled in and then turned to give him a good glare. “Go wait downstairs.”

He folded his arms across his chest and leaned against the wall. “I’ll wait right here.”

I knew no matter how much I demanded it, he wouldn’t budge from the spot, so I shut the door in his face. Then I paced to sit on the bed.

“Hurry up, brat. I don’t have all day to wait.”

I rolled my eyes. I said, “Shut up, I’m concentrating.”

He snorted. “You need to concentrate to masturbate?”

Of course! The mood just had to be right.

I was about to unzip my pants and get started, but I paused. Fuck! I just couldn’t. Not with Alec on the other side of the door.

I got up, stomped forward, and opened the door. “Can you please just go and wait somewhere else. I can’t get into the mood with you standing there.”

With an aggravated sigh, his arms unfolded, and Alec straightened. He growled, “You’re such a nuisance.”

“I’m not a nuisance. Whose fault do you think it is that I have to deal with *this*”—I pointed at my rock-hard cock—“at a party?”

I thought he was going to leave as I demanded, but nope, he grabbed my arm and pulled me back into the room.

25



Natsu

Confused, and more so stunned, I found myself sitting on his lap on the bed.

“This would have been over and done with already if you were to let me help you,” he said. “Now, do you want my help or not?”

Just having him this close made my head more than a little dazed and my body heat up in a way I had never felt before. And the fact that I was sitting on his lap, feeling his hard body against mine and...

Fuck! I was done for, wasn't I? And my stupid dick was paying way too much attention, growing harder and hotter down there.

I muttered, “Are you... any good at... uh, doing it?”

“You're questioning my ability now, brat?” he asked. “Do you want my help or not?”

“Fine! Just do it! Use your lousy technique on me,” I said. “But I'm sure it's not going to work.”

He squeezed my chin with his hand. “Your way of a consent is fucking irritating. Is a simple *yes, please* so hard to verbalize?”

I glared. “I thought you're going to be nice and gentle with me.”

He took in a deep breath and sighed in aggravation, *again*. “Do you have any idea how hard I'm working to keep myself

cool where you're concerned? Do you even know how much you're triggering me right now?"

I clamped my mouth shut to prevent unpleasant words from coming out of my mouth that were guaranteed to irritate him. Yes, I knew that I was irritating him, which I shouldn't when I clearly needed his help with this stupid dick of mine.

I said, "I'm sorry. Please help, uh, with... make... my dick..."

"Help? Make your dick?" he asked.

I felt mortified. Fuck, I sounded so stupid.

I shook my head. "No, I mean... Uh, please help me... masturbate... Make me... co... come."

He stared at me long and hard, and I could feel his body stiffen against mine. "Fuck, Natsu. How am I going to deal with you from now on?"

I opened my mouth and was about to tell him that I hadn't a clue either because I wasn't him, but then he inched closer and planted his lips against mine, shutting me up.

His kiss was soft and gentle, much to my surprise, and I just melted against him, like chocolate and ice cream on a hot summer day.

Not in a gazillion years would I have ever thought I'd like Alec kissing me, that I'd want him to kiss me. Now, after I had experienced it, felt his soft, warm lips against mine, I did. I liked him kissing me. So much so that it made me breathless. I

wanted him to kiss me more, again and again. It was weird, and it... scared me.

Alec ran his tongue across my lips, and I shuddered, pleasure coursing through my body from head to toe. My head felt dazed and I clung to him. Then he just had to go and plunge his tongue into my mouth, and I sucked in my breath, my body quivering at the sudden invasion.

Wow! This was... new. So fucking new and erotic and...

I groaned deep in my throat, just feeling the pleasure.

I felt Alec's tongue stroke and caress, intertwining with my inexperienced one, teasing and toying with me, and I loved it. I wanted more of it as I squirmed and heaved.

When he released my lips and moved back, I was so dazed I swore I couldn't see or think straight. Then I felt his hand trailing down my throat to my chest and then lower, and I knew where the destination was. My dick twitched in anticipation, waiting to be touched, and once Alec groped me there, I squirmed in pleasure, my body jumping in joy.

Alec chuckled. "Oh, my fuck! You're growing harder at my touch."

"I'm not like that," I said, my head in a mess. "I've never been like that. Uh, that hard and that... excited."

I saw Alec smiling, a dark sort of grin that made me weak in the knees and my insides shudder in ecstasy. Holy fuck! Wasn't that the sort of smirk that made girls swoon?

His voice low, he said, "I'm glad my touch turns you on." He unzipped my pants and then pulled down my underpants. My hard dick sprang out, rather too eagerly for my liking, and Alec stared at it for a moment.

I had never had anyone look at my dick like that before, like *really* look at it. My body trembled, in excitement apparently, that Alec was paying so much attention to my cock. Weird! Yep, I had a weird body.

"Stop looking at it like that," I said.

Alec raised a brow. "Like what?"

"Like..." I couldn't find a proper word and blurted out, "Like you want to eat it."

A dark smile broke out and spread across his face, and I swore I nearly came there and then. What the hell?

"How'd you know I want to eat it?" he asked.

I widened my eyes, flabbergasted. "Are you... teasing me?"

"I'm not," he said, wrapping his hand around my cock and beginning to rub it. "I do want to eat you, all of you, Natsu, but today is not the day. We're not even dating yet."

Waves of pleasure coursed through me, making my head daze, and I squirmed and shuddered. Ah, fuck...

"Are you feeling it?" Alec asked.

I couldn't answer him as I clung to him. Damn, but he was good. So fucking good at stroking me and making me feel it.

I shut my eyes, and just... felt it.

We're not even dating yet. What did he mean by that? Was he being serious about liking me? Did he actually...

I flashed my eyes open, and there was Alec's handsome face, inches from mine, his eyes fixed on me.

Had he been staring at me this whole time?

"Can I kiss you?" he asked softly.

He was toying with my cock, wasn't he? What's with a little kiss? Did he even need my permission for that when we've already gone this far?

I flung my arms around his neck and drew him close. Then I said, "You don't have to ask every time, you know. Just kiss me already." I lifted my head and touched my lips to his, even poked my tongue out, ready to insert into his mouth, too. My first time ever invading another person's mouth, that was for sure.

Alec locked his lips against mine intimately, and his tongue, wow, it went wild against mine, intertwining and stroking and caressing. I became breathless in an instant, and when I thought he was about to let me go, instead he surprised the heck out of me by sucking at my tongue at the same time he squeezed the life out of my cock with his hand.

I squirmed and tensed up, and then I came, hot and hard, shuddering and trembling like I never had before. It was insane, with wave after wave of ecstasy rushing through me. Breathless, I collapsed back on the bed and stared at Alec in a stupor.

With his hand cupping my face, he asked, “Feeling better?”

It took me a little while to come back to my senses, and it was only then that I was fully aware that Alec was on top of me. Rather than feeling creepy about it, this felt... natural and comfortable. It was strange, but it felt like we belonged together like this. Furthermore, I felt like we had done this before, too, many times. Not the hot, sexy stuff, but just being this close and being this nice to each other and...

I felt my heart skip and then race, and I felt something—*this something* warm and nice spread across my chest. Then suddenly, I had no idea what came over me. Perhaps I was just a little crazy, but I couldn't help myself. I cupped Alec's face and boldly claimed his lips, kissing him hard, my tongue out and ready for a greeting with his.

I felt Alec stiffen against me for a moment, and then he relaxed and responded to my kiss, his tongue playfully teasing and toying with mine.

Ah, damn, but this kissing was so nice. I think I was getting addicted to this, to kissing Alec. It was just so sweet and wonderful and delightful.

When it ended and Alec moved back, I gazed at him and then... I returned to reality, my eyes wide in shock, and this sense of panic rushed through me.

Shit! I had just brazenly kissed Alec. Confused, and more so, scared, I pushed Alec back, my body shaking.

“What's wrong?” he asked.

What's wrong? Everything was wrong! Us kissing was wrong. Him touching my cock and stroking me and making me come was wrong. We were supposed to be like adversaries. Well, kind of. We were supposed to dislike each other. We were supposed to find each other irritating. Not feeling comfortable in each other's arms and kissing and...

I didn't answer him as I quickly tidied myself up and then ran out the door, my head a mess.

Fuck, what had I been doing? Kissing Alec and...

Those feelings... The warmth and the gentleness and delightfulness. What the fuck were those? Why did my heart feel all gooey and fluffy like...?

Like I was in love? Holy fuck!

I rushed out of the penthouse, slipping through the throng of guests, and then I took the elevator down. I had no idea why I ran out like that, but I just had to.

Outside on the street, I paced about, my head still with the thought of Alec and us doing that sexy stuff. I felt heat rush through me again, and I groaned.

"Natsu!" It was Edwin's voice, and I turned to see not only him, but Aki as well. They must have seen me run out.

"Edwin," I said. "Aki."

The two came close and Edwin asked, his hand on my head, "Are you all right?"

“What’s wrong? You’re flushing red. Are you not well?” Aki asked.

“Uh, I’m okay,” I said, trying to clear my head, trying to get rid of the images of Alec from my mind. But that bastard refused to leave me in peace. Now, I saw him wearing that dark, sexy look as he gazed at me. Fuck!

“Natsu?” Aki called out.

I shifted my attention to Aki and said, “I want to go home.”

“Then I’ll take you home,” Edwin said.

“I’ll go with,” Aki said.

I found myself sitting in the back seat of Edwin’s car a few moments later, my mind once again on Alec. Hell, why couldn’t I stop thinking about him?

Edwin said, “If Alec didn’t tell us, we wouldn’t know you left the party. Why didn’t you tell me you wanted to leave? It’s dangerous for you come out alone like that. It’s late, and there are still sleazy guys around.”

“Sorry,” I said since I didn’t know what else to say.

So, Alec had been the one who told them? Instead of him coming after me himself? That bastard!

Wait! Did I actually want Alec to come running after me? Like in some romantic drama? Weird.

When Edwin’s car came to a stop outside the house twenty minutes later, I got out and said, “Thanks for dropping me off.”

“You sure you’re okay?” Aki asked. “Want me to come in with you?”

I shook my head. “I’m fine. I just need a good night’s sleep, that’s all. Good night, Aki-nii.” I turned to Edwin. “Night, Edwin.”

“Good night, Natsu,” Edwin said. “Tell Mom if you need anything.”

I nodded. “I sure will.”

“Call me if you’re not well,” Aki said.

I chuckled. “Don’t be such a worrywart, Aki-nii,” I said. “I’m fine.” With that, I turned on my heel and headed into the house.

26



Natsu

I slept fitfully that night, my mind a mess, continually straying to Alec, seeing the images of his face and remembering his kisses and his hot, sensual touches on my skin. When I went down the stairs for breakfast, sporting a pair of panda eyes and a pale complexion, Aunty Lena said, chuckling, “Oh my, looks like somebody had a blast partying last night.”

Zara said, “You look horrid, Natsu.”

I slumped on the chair and groaned, “I’ve never been to any party like that before.”

“How was it?” Marisa asked, her eyes large and sparkling. “Did you have fun? Did you meet lots of pretty girls? Did you drink?”

“Apple juice,” I said. “I drank apple juice. And yes, there were a lot of pretty girls, but they’re scary.” I shuddered, thinking about the hot chick Alec rejected. Was it normal for American girls to nonchalantly go and get banged by the next guy after a rejection by the one she originally had her heart set on?

Speaking of the one she had her heart set on, images of Alec flashed in my mind’s eye, and I groaned.

Zara petted my head like I was a sad puppy that needed some love and attention. “You must be shocked. American women can be like wolves sometimes. My poor, innocent

Japanese boy. You must have been cornered, snapped up, and eaten.”

Yep. She got that right. I had been cornered, snapped up, and eaten. Except it wasn't by any American woman, but a big American hunk of a guy who was also her brother, and the fact that I had willingly accepted it. I had willingly participated in it, wanted to be the rabbit that got eaten by the wolf. Even now, I still wanted to be eaten by that big, bad wolf that was Alec Hamilton.

I widened my eyes. Fuck! I was still thinking about him.

I finished breakfast and then rushed out the door, just in time to see Finn's car coming to a stop in front of the driveway. I slid in next to Yuki in the back seat, and the moment I was comfortable and had my seat belt on, Aki said, “You look awfully pale, Natsu. You really are sick.”

I yawned and then said, “I'm fine. Just lack of sleep, is all.”

“What happened?” Yuki asked. “Aki told me you left early.”

It wasn't early. It had already been around eleven by then. I said, “I, uh, got a bit tired so I left.”

“It's probably because it's your first party,” Finn said as he smoothly maneuvered the car onto the road. “Parties in America can be quite wild.”

“It was definitely wild,” Yuki said. “Almost everyone was drunk.”

Aki asked, “Have you been to many?”

Finn shook his head. “No. This was my first time, too. Although, I did have to pick up Jaxon plenty of times when he went to one. He got really drunk and I had to be the one to take care of him.”

“You’re such a good brother, Finn,” Aki said.

“And Jaxon is an ass,” Yuki said. “He pranked us! No one except us wore bunny tuxes.”

Finn chuckled. “Yeah, he got us good.”

For the rest of the day, my brain cells went into two modes, either *I don’t give a fuck about the lecture and I need sleep mode*, or *Alec mode*. And when it was Alec, my dick would pay attention, raising its head. I had never been this sensitive before, but now...

I sighed and slumped my head on the table, the side of my face resting on my notebooks.

“You’ve been out of it all day,” Yuki said. “I went to bed really late, and I’m fine.”

Yeah, of course you’re fine because you weren’t up all night tossing and turning, thinking about a man kissing you and how much you like it, I thought sourly.

I lifted my head suddenly as realization hit me hard in the face.

Was I... gay? I mean I had never really thought about my sexuality before since I had never really liked anyone, even in high school. In fact, I had never found anyone I was attracted to sexually, not until Alec. At least not until he kissed me.

Then again, Aki was gay. After all, he had been in love with Edwin since forever. He even told me and Yuki about his sexual preference, and later Mom and Dad and Hana, which they totally supported him. So perhaps it wouldn't be too surprising that I was gay, too? I mean that sort of thing wasn't genetic or anything, but...

I opened my mouth and was about to blurt out and nonchalantly ask Yuki, since he was the only one with me at the moment, what he thought if I was gay when my phone dinged, drawing my attention. I saw a message notification. It was from *Overbearing Oni*, and I felt myself tense up instantly.

"What's with you?" Yuki said. "You look like you've just received a text from a ghost."

"An oni just texted me," I said.

"Oh, Alec," Yuki said. "He was asking about you, by the way."

"Was he?" I asked. Why the heck did I feel so damn happy about that? "Uh, what did he ask about me?" Ugh! The question just sounded so wrong, didn't it?

Yuki said, "Just that he hasn't seen you for a while and that if you're doing okay and stuff. He knows you're avoiding him."

"He asked for it in the first place," I said. Reading the message, it stated: *Can we meet and talk?*

So blunt. I texted back with a firm *NO*.

Putting the phone down, I resolved to not think about him and his damn kiss and his stupid hand on my dick, or his tongue intertwining with mine and his soft warm lips against mine, when the phone dinged again. I snapped it up to see another message notification. It stated: *Why not?*

I replied: *Because.*

Another ding and another message: *Because is not a valid answer.*

I typed and sent: *Because is a valid answer. It's short for because I don't want to. Read between the lines, Einstein.*

Tense, I waited for another ding, but there was none. So, he wasn't going to reply after all, and I sighed, a little disappointed.

Yuki said, "Do you have something going on with Alec or something?"

I shook my head. "Nope. What made you think that?"

"Because he asked me about you and stuff," Yuki said. "And now he's texting you."

Again, I shook my head. "Nope. Nothing like that. Nothing is going on betwe—"

Loud ringing came from my phone, surprising the bejesus out of me. I snapped it up to see Overbearing Oni as the caller ID. Shit! My heart skipped and then raced, and this delightfulness coursed through me.

Fuck! Why was I feeling so damn happy that he was phoning me?

Yuki leaned over and said, “Yep, that’s him. Something is definitely going on between you two.”

I frowned at him and said, “Stop being so intuitive. You’re scaring me.”

He grinned. “We’re triplets. It’s a thing. And aren’t you going to take that? Your Overbearing Oni is blowing up your phone.”

I said, “Be quiet.” Then I stood, and with the phone in my hand, I rushed down the stairs and headed to a corner where there were less people and less noise. I answered, “You’re so persistent. I said I don’t want to meet up and talk.”

“Is it because you’re still thinking about me and our kisses last night and seeing me now, again so soon, is too awkward for you?” came the deep voice, and instantly, I felt my spine tingle and this beautiful sensation rushed through me. I had heard his voice so many times before, but why was it different now? Why the mere sound of his voice through the phone was turning me on was beyond me.

“I haven’t been thinking about you or your stupid kisses,” I lied through my teeth.

“Oh really?” he said. “Then I assumed you would have had a good night’s sleep? Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed and not at all...”

“Not at all what?” I asked.

“Pale as a ghost and sporting a pair of panda eyes?”

I spun around, knowing he was watching me from somewhere in the Link. But there were so many people around that I couldn't find him anywhere.

“Ten o'clock. Outside.”

27



Natsu

I turned and looked out the double glass doors, and there he was, tall and lean and just a damn hunk, waving at me with a handsome grin on his face. My heart skipped and then raced at the mere sight of him, and I groaned. It was meant to be a vexing type of groan, but what came out instead was... something else, something I did not want Alec to hear. But he heard it over the phone.

“Oh my, that sounds rather erotic,” he said.

I gritted my teeth, as I opened the door and marched toward him, I said, “Stop pestering me. I don’t want to meet up and talk. Is that so hard to understand?” I came to a stop in front of him on the courtyard and glared up at him.

He smirked, and then ending the call and pulling the phone away from his ear, he said, “And yet, here you are.”

I pulled the phone away from my ear and canceled the call, too, and then said, “Fine, since we’re here already, let’s get it sorted out.”

“I agree,” he said. Then he leaned close and gently touched my face. “You’re awfully pale. I’m a bit worried. Did you even get a wink of sleep at all?”

“Of course not,” I said. “And it’s all your fault.”

He smirked. “You *were* thinking about me and our kisses last night.”

I couldn't deny that, nor could I lie again, not especially in front of his face. I said, "I'm serious here, Alec. Please tell me you're really not pranking me or bullying me by doing this, pretending to like me and stuff."

He cupped my face with both his hands, which felt warm against my skin, and he said, "I'm serious here, too, Natsu. No, this is not me bullying you or playing a prank on you. Hell, when have I ever played a prank on you? Treating you a bit harshly, sure, because I did find you irritating at the time, but now, it's different. I like you, a lot. I could say that I'm in love with you."

I blinked at hearing that last sentence. "Come again?"

He half sighed, half growled and said, "Dammit! I'm in love with you, brat."

"You are?" I asked, dumbfounded.

He chuckled in amusement. "Of course, I am. Why else would I even kiss you if I wasn't in love with you? I don't kiss just anybody. I only kiss the one I'm in love with. Even my exes complained I don't kiss them *kiss them*."

I raised a brow. "What, you never kissed the women you dated?"

"Of course, I kissed them when we were dating," he said. "It's just not the same as when I kissed you."

"Oh..." I frowned. "So, you do really *like* me?"

"I think I've made that quite clear," he said. "Verbally and with action." He leaned in and planted his lips on mine, with

us right here in the middle of the university and with people around at that.

My face grew hot, and although I was over the moon that he was kissing me and I wanted him to go further and plunge his tongue into my mouth and ravish me like he did last night, I was conscious of the many eyes on us. I placed my hands on his chest and gently pushed him back. “Not here. It’s embarrassing.”

He snorted. “What’s embarrassing about two people in love kissing? Couples do it all the time.”

“Alec?” I started, feeling my head going slightly dazed.

“Hmm?”

“I still don’t fully trust you or your words yet,” I said.

“You’re a stubborn little bunny,” he said. “But a fucking cute one.” He pinched my nose teasingly. “I told you, haven’t I? I’ll be nice and gentle with you until you can believe me and my words. And once you believe me and trust me, we’ll date, how about that?”

I nodded. “It’d take a long time though.” Because if this was indeed a prank, he’d get tired of it by then.

“Just as long as it takes,” he said. “But not too long, please. I do have my limits, too. And while we’re on this testing period, how about letting me drive you to uni? It’s impossible to see you now that you’re living in another house.”

“And whose fault do you think that is?” I asked.

“Yep, my fault,” he said, flashing me such a damn handsome smile that my heart decided to make a big fuss and do a disco dance in my chest.

“Then how about you move back?” he asked.

I thought about this for a moment and then said, “Well, I do want to move back. I want to be with Aki and Yuki. Spending the evening without them is weird.

“And...” Alec ruffled my hair. “Let me take you out now and again.”

I raised my brow. “Like a... date?”

He nodded. “Mm-hmm.”

I felt heat rush to my face. Holy shit! Alec wanted to take me out on a date. Like seriously? I nodded my head. “Okay.”

Looking pleased, he said, “Now that we’ve sorted it out, how about I drop you off and help you pack up and move?”

I asked, “Now?”

“If not now, then when? I’m only free today. I’ll be busy the rest of the week.”

“What about the weekend?” I asked.

“I’ll be taking you out on the weekend besides work at the café, and I have assignments I need to finish up,” he said. “So, yeah, now.”

Right. Of course, he was super busy. This was his final year after all. I said, “All right. Let me get my things first.”

He nodded, and we headed into the Link and then up the stairs.

“I see you guys have made up?” Yuki said the moment he saw us.

He made it sound like we had been close before, which we never had. Bickering and glaring at each other had been our history, not best buddies.

Alec reached out and ruffled Yuki’s hair. “You’re an Einstein compared to your airhead brother.”

I said, “Am I the airhead you’re talking about?”

“You are an airhead, Natsu,” Yuki said. “And where are you going, packing up already?”

I said, “Alec is helping me move back to the café house.”

“Is that so?” Yuki said. “Cool. Then we can spend the evening together again, watching anime.” He turned to Alec. “You’re welcome to join us, Alec.”

Ha! Yeah, Alec joining us watching anime? I doubt that will ever happen.

“Sure,” Alec said, surprising the hell out of me.

I said, “Tell Aki and Finn I’m leaving with Alec, okay?”

Yuki nodded. “Will do. They should be back soon anyway.”

Alec and I left, and we arrived at the house twenty minutes later. Aunty Lena, who was tending to the immaculate garden—her thing—saw us together and said, “What a wonderful sight I’m seeing.”

“Aunty Lena, I’m going to be moving back to the café house,” I said.

“And I’m helping him move,” Alec said, placing his arm around my shoulders and ruffling my hair.

“You two have made up, I see,” she said, standing up and brushing dirt from her pants. “That’s wonderful. Marisa will be a bit sad, but it’s what you want.”

I nodded. “I miss being with Aki and Yuki.”

“And I miss seeing him,” Alec said, squeezing me in his embrace.

Aunty Lena snorted. “Not miss picking on him?”

Alec grunted. “That is ancient history, Mom. And would you please rearrange the roster so Natsu and I can work the same shift? I know you’ve been shuffling the staff around.”

Aunty Lena chuckled. “So, you know about that, eh?”

“I’m your son, woman,” Alec said. “Of course, I’d find out you’ve been messing with the roster.”

“I do it to help Natsu,” Aunty Lena said. “You were being nasty to him.”

“Well, I’m not anymore. So, no more messing with the staff roster.” To me, he said, “Let’s go,” as he nudged me toward the door.

Behind us, Aunty Lena said, “Call me if you need any help.”

“We’ll be fine,” Alec said.

28



Alec

With the last notebook in place, Natsu sighed and then said, “Phew! That’s the last of it. Thanks for helping.”

Alec snorted and leaned forward. His hand ruffling the boy’s hair, he said, “You’re a neat freak.”

“I know,” Natsu said.

The chatter of voices reached their ears, and Alec suspected Edwin and Landon had finished work at the café.

“I’m starved. Wonder what’s for dinner,” Natsu said.

“Maybe we can ask Edwin to cook something fancy since you’re back,” Alec said as he headed downstairs.

“Yeah,” Natsu said.

In the open-plan living room, both Edwin and Landon came to a stop at the door and stared, stunned to see Natsu and Alec together, with Alec’s arm around Natsu’s shoulders.

Alec rolled his eyes and said, “Hell, stop it with that look.”

“Hi, Edwin. Landon,” Natsu said. “What’s for dinner?”

Edwin said, “What are you doing here, Natsu?”

“Alec is not bullying you, right?” Landon asked.

Grinning, Natsu said, “Nope. He’s not. I’ve moved back. Got my stuff in my room already. Alec helped.”

Edwin flicked his gaze to Alec and said, “So you two...”

“Yeah, we’ve made up,” Alec said.

Landon chuckled. "I'm guessing we won't be getting any more bickering between you two, and no more spanking?"

"No more bickering and certainly no more spanking," Alec said. To Edwin, he suggested, "How about something nice tonight to welcome Natsu back?"

Edwin chuckled. "Yeah. Sure."

The house was loud and rowdy during dinner, with Finn joining in after having been welcomed by Edwin when he dropped Aki and Yuki off, and Jaxon invited himself after a few text messages with Alec. It was short ribs with black barley and mushrooms served with creamy mashed potatoes, steamed vegetables, and side salads. A delicious, hearty dinner and a winner for Alec, especially when he saw Natsu gobbling it up with gusto.

He couldn't help himself and stroked the boy's hair as he said, "You do eat a lot, don't you?"

Landon said, "The triplets have bottomless pit for stomachs. Each one eats twice as much as me, and I'm twice as big as them."

Yuki said, "Must be our fast metabolism."

After taking a sip of his wine, Jaxon said, "So you two are best buddies now." He was eyeing Alec and Natsu.

"You wouldn't know it with them acting like a divorced couple with a grudge against each other, but they've been best buddies since they were babies," Yuki said.

Jaxon and Landon burst out laughing at hearing Yuki's description of the two's relationship, and Natsu said, his expression sour, "How can we be best buddies since we were babies when we're five years apart. And I don't ever remember visiting America until we were like seven or eight."

"Four, actually," Edwin said. "Your parents brought you around to the States when you triplets were four."

"Wow!" Aki said. "We were so young."

"Four." Jaxon whistled. "I hadn't even met Finn yet when he was four." He turned to Finn beside him. "Eight. That was when we first met, right?"

Finn nodded. "Mm-hmm."

Natsu said, "I don't remember anything from that time."

"Childhood amnesia," Aki said. "I heard it's a thing."

Once dinner was over and Jaxon and Finn left, Alec volunteered to clean up, roping Natsu into it with him. Of course, he just wanted to spend time with the boy. Natsu was rinsing off the plates when Alec stood behind him and leaned in close, his hands over the boy's, helping him do the job, not that he needed any.

He felt Natsu stiffen and look up at him, his face flushing red. Grinning cheekily, he said, "You're doing a fine job."

"Thanks," Natsu muttered lowly.

Alec was resting his chin against the boy's head, liking the feeling of his soft hair against his skin when Natsu said,

“Move back. You’re squishing me here.”

“Am I?” Alec asked.

“Yes, you are,” Natsu said.

Alec sighed. “Fine.” He relented and moved back an inch, no more, no less, and continued to flank the boy while helping him rinse the dishes, unknowingly driving Natsu quite hot and bothered in the process.

With the kitchen done, Natsu all but sprinted up the stairs and into his room, leaving Alec to ponder if he had gone too far and being *too* nice that it bothered the brat.

After a good, hot shower, he got started with his studying and continued that until well past midnight. Finally closing notebooks and textbooks and powering off the laptop, he did a bit of a stretch, then got between the sheets. He fell asleep just as soon as his head hit the pillow, and he snoozed away until the sound of the unexpected din woke him up.

He reached for his phone and noted that it was barely four in the morning. Then he remembered Natsu had moved back, and it was probably him making his way to the bathroom. The boy did have a habit of using the toilet during this time of the night.

He was just rolling over and about to close his eyes again when the door cracked open, and a slight figure came stumbling in. Alec stared with wide eyes as Natsu climbed onto his bed and curled into a ball by his feet.

Holy shit! Alec had forgotten about that. He chuckled, and a burst of delight coursed through him.

He sat up as he said, “Mom’s right. You do have the habit of finding me and climbing into my bed.” He gently grabbed Natsu by the arm and drew him close. Then he pulled the duvet out from under Natsu, moved him into his arm, and then let the duvet go, covering them both.

Now that he had Natsu in his embrace, Alec kissed the brat on the forehead and then closed his eyes, peacefully resuming his sleep. When he next woke up, it was to feel a warm body against his, although he admitted that delightful frame felt rather a bit tense.

He opened his eyes to see Natsu staring at him, and he flashed the boy a lovely smile and said, “Morning.”

Natsu greeted him with, “Why am I in your bed?”

Alec snorted. “Maybe you sleepwalk into my bed?”

“But I don’t sleepwalk.”

Alec was surprised Natsu hadn’t screamed in shock to find himself in his bed the moment he woke, but rather looked quite calm, albeit stiff.

“Now, how do you know you don’t?” Alec asked teasingly.

“Because I don’t,” Natsu said. “Sleepwalk, I mean. But I’m serious, how did I end up in your bed?”

“You came into my bed,” Alec said. “In fact, this isn’t the first time.”

Natsu widened his eyes. “It... isn’t?”

Alec nodded. “You have the habit of coming into my room and climbing onto my bed since you moved in a few months back.”

Natsu looked flabbergasted. “Seriously?”

Chuckling, Alec said, “Seriously. In fact...” He trailed off as he shifted and then hopped out of the bed. “You’ve been doing it since we were young.” He reached for the photo album sitting on his study desk and returned to bed where he gathered Natsu into his arms once again. He flipped the cover open and then flipped the pages and pointed. “There.”

Natsu stared at the photo, astonished to see that it was of them when they had been young, and a five- or six-year-old Natsu was in a bed and in a ten- or eleven-year-old Alec’s arms. “Oh, my heavens!” he said. “I... We...”

Alec burst out laughing. “Yep. And we even got married.” He flipped more pages and there were pictures of them during a pretend wedding ceremony, little Alec in his tuxedo and tiny Natsu in Zara’s princess dress, and Alec kissing Natsu on the forehead.

“Holy fuck!” Natsu said, looking both dazed and dumbfounded. “We really did get married. I thought Aki and Yuki were teasing me.”

“Yep, you were my bride,” Alec said.

Natsu covered his face with his hands in embarrassment. “I can’t believe I wore a dress. I really do have childhood

amnesia because I don't remember that at all."

"It was Zara's dress," Alec said. "And you really do look like a proper little girl. You were so adorable."

"Please stop it," Natsu said. "Stop bringing up my past which I have clearly forgotten."

Alec removed Natsu's hands from his face and said, "And you've forgotten we used to be best buddies."



Alec

Cheeks flushing red, Natsu said, “Yeah, I did forget that. I mean, recently, I’ve kind of had a vague feeling that we used to be like that when you’re nice to me and stuff. But I don’t know why I only ever remember, so clearly in fact, that you were a bully to me.”

Alec snorted. “All I ever remember about you is your glare and you throwing yourself at me and hitting me and pulling at my hair. I remember in the morning I’d get up to you hitting me before you’d sprint away, which annoyed the shit out of me.”

Natsu looked guilty at hearing that and said, “Sorry. I just thought at the time that you played a prank on me by moving me from my bed into yours, so I hit you.”

Alec looked at the boy long and hard and then burst out laughing again. When he managed to stop, he said, “So in actuality, you instinctively climbed into my bed during sleep and when you woke up, you thought I was the one who pranked you by putting you in my bed, so you hit me and then ran away?”

Natsu, his eyes large, nodded. “That sounds about... right?”

Alec said, “It appears that summer you threw a hissy fit was the turning point. It changed our best buddy’s relationship. So, what was it? Why did you throw such a nasty tantrum?”

Natsu frowned and thought hard and then said, “I don’t know. I mean I kind of do but I kind of don’t at the same time.

I just remember being very angry and upset at you and that you...”

“That I?” Alec urged.

“That you... wouldn’t pay attention to me and that...” He tilted his head to one side. “There was a girl. You brought her around like every day and you were with her all the time and I... got upset.”

Alec was stumped, and then because he couldn’t help himself, he burst out laughing, *again*. Natsu turned to look at him and said, “What’s so funny?”

Alec wiped tears from his eyes and said, “Brat, you were nine and you were already jealous because I was with a girl.”

Natsu looked dumbfounded. “Oh... So I was... jealous and angry and threw a tantrum because you were dating that girl?”

Alec tightened his arms around the boy and squeezed him lovingly. “It makes me so damn happy that my cute bunny has been possessive of me since he was a mere kid.”

“I’m not... possessive of you,” Natsu said.

“If throwing a hissy fit and starting a ten-year-long war with me just because I started dating girls isn’t being possessive of me, then I don’t know what is,” Alec said.

Natsu snorted. “A ten-year-long war? A bit of an exaggeration, isn’t it? And if I remember correctly, it has always been you who started it. You’d always call me names and spank me.”

“It’s because seeing your face always gets under my skin,” Alec said. “And I just never understood why. I think now I do.”

“Oh? And why’s that?” Natsu asked.

“Because I can’t have you by my side.” He admitted. “As you grew older, you have stopped paying attention to me. You ignored me, and I can’t stand that. Sometimes, when I called you names or spanked you, you’d just walk away, ignoring me, but all I wanted is for you to look at me.” He growled. “Fuck, I know it’s illogical, but there it is, deep down, it’s because I just really want you.”

Natsu pursed his lips. “So, you do nasty things to me just to get my attention?”

“And you do nasty things to me just because I wasn’t paying you attention,” Alec said.

Natsu chuckled, shaking his head in disbelief. “We’re a pair of idiots.”

“Indeed, we are, imp,” Alec said. “So, let’s stop being a pair of idiots and start being a pair of lovebirds instead. How about that?”

“But we’re still in our testing period,” Natsu said. “Because I don’t fully trust you yet.”

Alec sighed. “Fine, I’ll allow this testing period, but only for a month max. After that...”

Natsu raised a brow. “After that?”

Alec cupped the boy's chin firmly and then claimed his lips, kissing him hard, surprising Natsu. When he moved back, he said, "After that, we're dating and going all the way."

Natsu blinked. "All... All the way?"

Alec licked his lip and then said, "Yep. All the way." He snuggled his face against the boy's nape and then kissed him there as he trailed his hands down the boy's torso.

Natsu squirmed and said, his voice quivering, "Where are you touching?"

Down there, and Alec felt the bulge. "You're hard," he said.

"I don't usually get hard in the morning," Natsu said. "It's your fault. Kissing me and touching me. You better take responsibility, mister."

My, but didn't it sound like the brat wanted him to help with the masturbation again? Alec wondered if Natsu was liking it too much, which pleased him. He chuckled and said, "Gladly."

He slipped down the pajama pants and underpants, and Natsu's hard penis came springing out willingly. Since it was bright from the morning sunlight, he admired the cute thing, which had a lovely rosebud color.

"You're staring at it too much, pervert," Natsu said.

"What? I thought you like me looking at it?" Alec asked, amused. "Since it's getting harder, perhaps it likes me paying it my undivided attention? The same as its master?"

Natsu was bright red on the face. “You are a pervert with your dirty talk.” He groaned. “It’s weird having another man staring at your cock like he wants to eat it. It’s not food, you know.”

“No, it’s not,” Alec said. “But I’m certain it’d be just as delicious as a Michelin Star meal.”

Natsu looked flabbergasted. “Why in hell would you compare my cock to a Michelin Star dish?”

Alec chuckled as he gently wrapped his hand around the delightful thing as it grew hotter and firmer at his mere touches. He said, “I think the comparison isn’t far off. Most Michelin Star dishes are small in size, but the taste and the satisfaction... It’s certain to be out of this world.”

His stroking was undoubtedly a wonder to the boy because he groaned softly and shuddered against him. Natsu said, “I can’t... believe... you...” He groaned again and squirmed.

“You can’t believe I...?” Alec asked, teasing him as he squeezed and then caressed and then rubbed hard, stroking from the base of the shaft to the tip and then went down again and up, driving Natsu quite insane as the thrilling sensation flooded him in hot waves that refused to give him a breather.

Natsu shuddered and heaved. “Oh, my fucking... heavens...” He buried his face against Alec’s chest and clung to him.

Alec continued the affectionate torture as Natsu squirmed in his arms.

Natsu lifted his head, and wrapping his arms around Alec's neck and his face close, he said, "That you'd compare... my dick... to a Michelin Star dish just because... it's... small."

"Oh, dear, I see I've hurt someone's pride?" Alec chuckled.

"My pride is not hurt, bastard," Natsu said. "My dick is a Michelin Star. It's precious, so you better savor every moment you get the chance to touch it."

Alec snorted. "Indeed, I am savoring it every moment, and will do the same when I get to have a taste of it in my mouth."

His words must have really turned Natsu on because he felt the cock in his hand stiffen even more, twitching, too, with pre-cum leaking while his body writhed in rhapsody.

"You're the worst at making me feel weird things," Natsu growled out between panting and then slammed his lips against his, his tongue out and ready for some hot action.

Alec welcomed the kiss and the small tongue that seemed so eager for a tender assault. Their lips locked, Alec kissed Natsu deeply. Their tongues intertwined and danced with one another while his hand was enjoying the feel of Natsu's cock getting even harder, twitching and pulsating hot.

He increased the pace of the rubbing as he tightened his grip, and Natsu groaned and heaved into his mouth as he tensed. Alec did one last stroke, and Natsu came, his cock spurting cum as his body trembled and writhed against him.

Alec watched, enthralled at the sight of Natsu basking in the rapture coursing through him, his pretty face an expression of

pure bliss. When it was over, Natsu opened his eyes, and the moment he saw Alec's gaze on him, he said, "Holy fuck!" and buried his face against Alec's chest.

Alec couldn't help himself and burst out laughing. "Too late, brat," he said.

"Ugh! I can't believe it," Natsu said. "You watched me come. This is so embarrassing."

Alec was about to open his mouth and say there was nothing to be embarrassed about when Natsu swiftly moved out of his arms and hopped from the bed, pulling his pants up at the same time. Then he all but flew out of the room, leaving Alec to stare at the door clicking shut, bemused.

He sighed and said under his breath, "Brat." He glanced down at the bulge between his legs, and here, he thought he'd get a return favor.

It appeared, however, that delightful favor where he'd get to feel Natsu's hands on his cock would have to wait for another session. That brat needed time to recover from his embarrassment after all.

Alec started masturbating himself, thinking about Natsu and the feel of the boy against him as he stroked his rock-hard cock. When he came, it was to the memory of Natsu's beautiful face basking in the pleasure. He couldn't wait to see the boy in that state again soon, and he smiled, his eyes dark.

30



Natsu

“Here you go, your pasta,” I said, placing a tasty plate of creamy fettuccine on the table in front of a young woman. “And here’s your extra cheese pizza.” I placed a board of pizza in front of another. “Enjoy your meal, ladies.”

“Thank you so much,” they both sang out in unison.

“No worries. Call if you need anything else,” I said.

I was about to leave them to it when one said, “Uh, wait!”

“Yes?” I asked.

The two looked at each other for a moment, and then one said, “Can we please take a picture with you and the food? I mean the food looks so delicious and you... You just look so darn cute in that bunny tux.”

Great! I just knew they were going to say that.

Since that day Aki, Yuki, Finn, and I had marched into the café in our bunny tuxes and some girls had taken photos of us, it had gone viral on social media. Aunty Lena, who never missed an opportunity marketing whatever could bring business to the café, had made us triplets wear the costume during our shifts to attract the customers. It was like we were the mascots for Sunshine Café or something.

Since today was a Saturday, she had rostered us three together, and the restaurant was damn busy. Everyone had been on their feet since the door opened, and that hadn’t stop.

It was going to get even more hectic now that it was the lunch rush hour.

Smiling pleasantly and hiding the reluctance in my voice, I said, "Sure."

We gathered close and posed with the food, and both girls took selfies with me in the middle. Once done, they thanked me profusely, and I scurried away to serve the next table.

As I was busy going about my work, now and again bumping into either Yuki or Aki, or being called to join them to take snapshots, I did not miss the intense gaze following me around.

Yep, Alec was watching me again.

It had been one month since that day he had confessed to me, and since then, he had been true to his words. He had never once spanked me, nor had he ever been nasty to me and called me names.

Okay, scratch that. He still called me brat, imp, runt, or punk, but apart from that, he had never been nasty to me.

Nice. He had been way too nice to me, and so gentle that it felt kind of weird, but damn wonderful at the same time. I guessed I still had to get used to him being such a gentleman to me.

"Natsu!" he called out over the loud buzzing noise of chatter.

I walked over to him, knowing he had one thing or another for me to bring to the customers. He did, a tray filled with

drinks.

“Table ten,” he said.

“Got it,” I said, picking up the tray. I was about to leave when he ruffled my hair and then brushed his lips on my forehead, and I flushed hot in embarrassment in response. I couldn’t believe he was so bold as to do such an intimate thing right here in front of the customers.

I avoided the many eyes on us, not to mention the obvious grins and giggles. I whispered, “Stop doing that in the café. The customers don’t like it.”

“They don’t?” Alec said with a raised brow. “I think they do, since they can’t seem to stop staring, grinning, and giggling every time.”

I harrumphed and then left with the tray of drinks in my hands. As I passed some tables, I saw that some were indeed giggling as they eyed me, and one said, “They’re so cute together. Like seriously, they’re dating.”

“I know,” another said. “I came here just to see them being lovey-dovey.”

Yet another said, “I swear they did not get along a month back.”

“It’s the enemy to lover trope in real life,” the first said.

None of us got any downtime until closing hour, and by then, I was damn beat and collapsed on the booth after the cleaning was done.

“I cannot move another inch,” Yuki said, sprawling on the chair.

“Me, neither,” I said.

Chuckling, Landon said, “You both are weaklings.”

Yuki pointed and said, “You can spout such nonsense because you’re not running around like a headless chicken and just stand behind the counter and make drinks.”

“Making drinks is a barista’s job, runt,” Landon said.

I said, “Where’s Aki?”

“Probably in the kitchen with Edwin,” Yuki said.

“Ah,” I expressed. Of course, Aki would be with Edwin. He’d take every opportunity to be with the man.

“Natsu, come on, time to go,” Alec called out.

I raised a brow, refusing to move an inch from the seat. “Go where? The house? Give me five minutes. I swear my feet are killing me.”

Alec folded his arms across his chest. “I guess you’re not pumped for our date night tonight, then?”

I widened my eyes. Ah, shit! I had forgotten about that.

Date night, eh? This would be our fourth, since he had insisted we have one every Saturday night where he’d take me out for dinner and then do something fun or nice after, like a movie, a long drive, or just a walk along the beach. Of course, he had never told me what he had planned, which was rather quite exciting.

I wondered what he had in store for us tonight.

“I am excited,” I said. “I’m just a bit tired that I can’t move.”

He sighed in exasperation and said, “You’re a weakling.”

I glared. “Am not!”

He came over, leaned in, and put one arm behind my back and another under my legs. I stared, wondering what he was up to. Suddenly, he lifted me into the air and said, “I’ll carry you home, then.”

I was stunned. So was Yuki because he was staring at us like we were a pair of aliens from Mars.

Holy shit! Alec was actually carrying me, like that first day us triplets had arrived in Spring Valley, except that time he did so reluctantly and with annoyance, while this time...

He was grinning at me, his eyes twinkling. “What’s with that look?”

I wrapped my arms around his neck and said, “You better not drop me.”

He shuffled me in his arms, did a little toss even, and I gasped, freaking the hell out. “You bastard!” I slapped him on the shoulder. “I swear, if you drop me, you have to take responsibility.”

“I’ll only be too glad to take responsibility,” he said and planted a kiss on my lips. “You have the foulest mouth. Stop it with the word bastard already.”

“I will if you stop calling me runt and punk and brat,” I said.

“Never,” he said. “You’re a brat after all.”

“Meanie,” I said, tightening my arms around him as I rested my chin on his shoulder. My gaze met Yuki’s who was still slumped on the chair, and I saw him winking at me. I gave him a thumbs-up.

Yuki turned to Landon then and said, “Carry me home, Landon.”

Landon snorted. “Hell, no.” He turned and was about to follow me and Alec toward the back of the café when Yuki stood and hopped on his back. “Get off of me, you damn monkey.” He chuckled.

“Nuh-uh!” Yuki wrapped his arms tightly around Landon shoulders.

Landon, having already given up, moved his hands to hold Yuki and said, “Then hold on tight. If you fall, don’t blame me.”

“I’m holding on real tight,” Yuki said, grinning cheekily.

We were nearly at the back door when Edwin and Aki came out of the kitchen, having finished with the cleaning and switching off the light. Edwin said, chuckling, “What is this? A piggyback procession?”

Yuki said, “Us poor bunnies are too tired from the hard labor Queen Lena had submitted us to. The kind knights are carrying us home.”

Aki burst out laughing. He even had tears in his eyes. “My brothers are a pair of weaklings.”

Edwin turned to Aki and said, “You’re tired, too, aren’t you?”

Aki blushed red on the face and then meekly nodded. “Yeah. It has been a full day today, but I’m fine. I’m not that ___”

With a swish, Edwin picked up Aki in his arms. I saw Aki widen his eyes in shocked surprise as his face grew even redder. I knew he was secretly over the moon that Edwin was carrying him princess style. Yuki and I looked at each other, snickering.

Hence, us triplets were carried back to the house by our respective knights, and in the living room of the café house, Landon dropped Yuki onto the sofa where Yuki went rolling over and proceeded to loll there, cotton bunny tail in the air and the side of his face resting on a cushion. Edwin gently put the very dazed-looking Aki on the sofa, too, and as he ruffled Aki’s hair, causing his rabbit ears headband to fall from his head, he said, “I’ll get started with dinner.”

Alec still had me in his arms, and he said, “It’s our date night, so I’m taking Natsu out.”

“Only four for dinner then,” Edwin said.

Alec took me upstairs and into my bedroom. He plopped me on the bed and said, “If you’re too tired, take your time getting ready. Our reservation isn’t until seven.”

I nodded, and he walked out the door, undoubtedly to shower and change. I rolled onto my stomach on the bed, a grin on my face.

An hour later I was ready, wearing a pair of dark jeans and a light sweater since it was cooler now that it was the middle of fall.

I tilted my head to one side as I stared at myself in the mirror. Come to think of it, us triplets' birthday was only a few weeks away. I wondered if we should do something fun. We'd be turning nineteen and it'd be our first birthday in America after all.

“Natsu, are you ready?” I heard Alec's voice calling out.

“I'm done,” I said, rushing out of the bathroom.

31



Natsu

Alec was waiting for me in the living room, and as I went down, Aki and Yuki were still on the sofa, watching anime, while Edwin was in the kitchen, cooking. Landon was probably in his room doing his thing.

I said, “We’re off now.”

“Uh, have fun,” Aki said, and he looked damn red in the face and fidgety. He was even avoiding my eyes, too. What was up with him?

Yuki managed a wave and a wink, along with a cheeky grin. “Have a pleasant time, you lovebirds.”

“We will,” I said as Alec and I walked out the door.

“Aki was acting a bit weird,” I said in the car as I put on my seat belt.

“Did he?” Alec asked. “Probably nothing.”

I nodded.

When Alec parked the car half an hour later and then ushered me into a fancy restaurant, I was floored. Wow! The place was damn nice, and a few minutes later I thought, and damn expensive, as I looked through the menu.

Alec picked up his wineglass and took a sip, and I did the same, mine apple juice, of course, because I wasn’t yet of drinking age.

“The view is so nice,” I said, staring at the glistening dots of light down below. This place was located on a hill that looked

across the small city of Spring Valley.

“Mm-hmm.” Alec nodded. He reached out across the table and took my hand into his. I had seen couples do that in the café sometime, and I had never thought Alec would do that to me, too. It was nice.

His thumb rubbing the back of my hand, he rested his other elbow on the tabletop and said, “So, it’s been a month.”

I knew what he was referring to and nodded. “Yeah.”

“And?” he prompted.

“And?” I raised my brows.

He snorted. “Brat, our testing phase has come to an end.”

I widened my eyes. “Oh... Yes, it has, hasn’t it?”

He sighed, clearly in vexation. “Well?”

I felt my cheeks growing hot and I said, “Well, uh...”

“Have I shown you enough how sincere I am?”

I nodded. “Yes, that you have.”

“And?” he prompted again.

“And, uh, yes, um...” I said. “We’re really... dating for real now, right?”

He chuckled. “Hell, yes! Finally.” He leaned over the table and kissed me on the forehead. “You’re my boyfriend now.”

Boyfriend. Shit! I was now really Alec’s boyfriend. That made me so damn delighted that it made my heart race.

Our food arrived, and mine, which was an assortment of seafood, was delicious. Alec had the steak, and I couldn't help asking for a bite or two. He even fed me.

Throughout the whole meal, Alec's hand kept touching mine whenever he had the chance, and after dessert, we left.

What would be after this? I wondered since the night was still young. A walk along the beach, perhaps? That'd be lovely.

It was about ten minutes later when I found out that it was indeed a walk, though not along the beach but through the Spring Valley Botanical Garden. It was rather beautiful, with the place lit up with lamps along the pathway and glittering, colorful lights on trees and bushes.

Alec held my hand as we strolled, enjoying the fresh breeze and just chatting about random things. Nothing to do with the university stuff or the café, of course. Those topics were off-limits during our date nights.

When the walk came to an end an hour later, I was pleased with the date. Now it was time to return home and snuggle in. I'd probably find myself in Alec's bed again in the morning.

It seemed I had not missed a night of sleepwalking into Alec's room and crawling into his bed since I had moved back into the café house. It was just so bizarre. I mean I had never done that sort of thing with either Aki or Yuki before. In fact, I had never done it with any other person except with Alec.

“Did you enjoy tonight?” Alec asked as he drove us back home.

I nodded. “Yeah. It’s really nice tonight.”

“Rating?”

I chuckled. “The best out of the four.”

“I see. I’m glad you enjoyed tonight then,” he said and then chuckled. “I remember our first date; you were so nervous.”

I said, “It was my first date ever, so of course, I’d be nervous.”

When the car unexpectedly turned right instead of left, I perked up and said, “That’s not the way home.”

“We’re not going home,” Alec said.

“We’re not?” I said. “Did you have something else planned?”

I saw him smiling. “You just wait and see.”

Fifteen minutes later, I stared, eyes wide in bewilderment as we entered the five-star hotel that I heard belonged to Jaxon and Finn’s parents. Or rather, the company that they owned and ran.

“Wha... What are we doing here?” I asked. But, of course, I didn’t miss the overnight bag Alec was carrying.

“Obviously, we’re spending the night here, just the two of us,” he said.

I went stiff and said, “We are?”

“Surprise,” he said, grinning at me, his eyes twinkling.

Oh, my heavens! All the way! Were we going to go all the way tonight? I mean sure, we had done some intimate things together, like kissing and him touching me and making me come but never anything further than that. But now...

I felt my face flush hot and my head just kind of went dazed.

“If you’d rather not...” Alec said. “I’ll cancel the reservation.”

I thought about it for a moment and then, staring at the floor instead of looking at Alec, I said, “Uh, no. Canceling now would be a waste, right? Let’s... spend the night together.”

Alec wrapped his arms around me and said, “Are you sure? You understand we’ll be...” He leaned in close and whispered softly into my ear. “Making love? I’ll be eating your cock and fucking you in the ass all the way.”

I felt like my brain was going to fry and my heart would burst out of my chest, it was pounding so hard and fast. I nodded and said, my voice more than a little shaky, “Yeah... I know.” I lifted my gaze up to meet his and said, “I finally get to see your huge-ass cock.”

Alec burst out laughing. Stroking my cheek with the back of his fingers, he said, “Yep. The one you couldn’t seem to stop staring at that time when you brazenly pulled away my towel.”

Those words. He was teasing me, I knew that. But shit, I couldn’t believe I really was going to get to see Alec’s mighty,

impressive weapon again, and honestly, I was looking forward to it. Not to mention touching and stroking it.

Suddenly, I stiffened and glanced down.

Alec must have noticed as well, and he chuckled. “You’re sensitive, aren’t you.”

I said, “Shut up and just check in already.” He laughed, and I pushed him away as I said, “Go!”

Ten minutes later, we took the elevator up to the thirtieth floor. As we entered our suite, I gazed around in delight at the luxury.

“Whoa! So nice,” I said. I went over to the window and stared out at the amazing nightlights across the city. “Look at the view. I bet it’d be even better during the day.”

Alec left the bag on the sofa and then came over to stand behind me. He said, “We’re not here for the view or the room, airhead. We’re here for some hot, intimate action.” He planted his lips on mine and kissed me hard, plunging his tongue straight into my mouth as if he had been starved for a century.

I welcomed his tongue in, wrapping mine with his as our lips locked. When he moved back, he chuckled and said, “Mm-hmm. You’re getting good at this.”

I grinned and said, “I learned from a notoriously lousy man.”

He snorted, and I felt his hand groping my cock, toying with me. “Lousy, am I?” He started stroking, and I squirmed, my knees going weak in an instant.

I leaned against him and said, “Yep, you’re so lousy that it’s good.”

“Punk,” he said. “It’s time I get to devour that Michelin Star cock. I’ve been dreaming of this day for ages.” He bent, wrapped his arms around my thighs, and then lifted me, plopping me over his broad shoulder like a sack of potatoes.

“Have you?” I asked, my head on an almost upside down angle.

“Yep,” he said.

“Since when.” I wanted to know the details.

“Since when do you think?” he said, a dark, secretive smile playing about his handsome face, which made me suspicious. I suspected it must have been when he had seen my cock, which had been that morning I had woken up to find myself in his bed.

He put me on the luxurious king-sized bed and then lay on top of me. Our lips met and we kissed, slow and gentle, our tongues dancing with one another.

When Alec moved back, I said, “Alec, shouldn’t we like shower first? I’m so sweaty, and I... Uh, I don’t want my first time to be me all sweaty.” Besides the fact that I had to clean myself down there, too. I mean... Damn! Didn’t I have to get myself loosened up and stuff?

Alec said, “I suppose you’d want your first time to be perfect.”

“I kind of do,” I admitted.

“All right,” he said. “Let’s go in and shower together.”

I widened my eyes. “Come again?”

He kissed me on the lips briefly, and when he moved back, he said, “Let’s erase that distasteful memory of us in my shower cubicle that day by doing something wonderful in the shower together tonight.”

Erase that distasteful memory? Did he mean that time I stumbled into his bathroom and into his shower cubicle that morning when us triplets had first arrived in Spring Valley?

“Oh, yeah,” I said. “And you spanked me that time. I demand a payback.”

He chuckled. “You’re welcome to spank me in the bathroom.” He pulled me up and then led me into the en suite. I grinned, pumping myself up for a good payback.

32



Natsu

The bathroom was indeed fancy and luxurious, as expected with a five-star hotel. Apart from the huge shower cubicle made entirely of marble, there was a hot tub, too.

“Look, they even provided the essentials,” I said, inspecting the toothbrush and paste as well as face wash, shampoo, conditioner, and body gel.

Alec took one toothbrush and said, “This one’s mine.” Then he started brushing, and I did the same. When he was done, he started stripping, and I stared wide-eyed at him standing there before me, utterly and gorgeously naked.

Holy fuck! The man was a hunk, all right. Just look at all those toned muscles and the six-pack abs and the...

I froze, staring at that magnificent cock, my toothbrush in my mouth. Alec snorted and as he ruffled my hair, he said, “Have enough looking yet?”

I felt heat rush to my face. I mumbled, “Not yet.” Damn, but he’d be a perfect model for a nude sculpture, like those Greek or Roman ones.

He turned on his heel and headed into the shower, and as he proceeded to wash himself, I watched, still brushing my teeth. With his hair and ripped body glistening with water droplets and bubbles from the body gel here and there, he said, “When are you going to be done and join me?”

Despite wanting to stand right here and admire him a bit longer, I knew I'd have a better view once I was in the shower with him.

I quickly rinsed my mouth and then stripped down to my birthday suit. I would have been shy if I hadn't been in Alec's arms and had him touching me and my cock quite a few times already. So there I was, stepping into the shower cubicle with him, without a care in the world that I was utterly naked, with my dick sticking out and...

Yep, it was hard, raising its head high. It looked damn proud. Although not as proud as Alec's because that mighty thing was just so big and magnificent.

I lifted my gaze to him and said, "You got hard?"

He chuckled. "And why wouldn't I? When I've been kissing and touching you? When I see that." He looked at my cock. "And this." He cupped my face, his eyes on me.

I said, "You get turned on just seeing my face?"

"Yep." Then he kissed me, soft and gentle, and I moaned, liking it. When he moved back, he said, "Open your mouth, please."

I obliged and parted my lips.

The moment he could, Alec plunged his tongue right in, and I greeted him with my own meeting his. He chuckled into my mouth, clearly amused as we kissed. Meanwhile, his fingers dug into my hair while his other hand trailed down my body to my butt. There, he touched and squeezed me.

I felt this tantalizing sensation rush through me, and I couldn't help myself and flung my arms around him, drawing us close, feeling his wet, slippery skin against mine.

When he released my lips, he said, "This will definitely erase that horrible memory of us sharing the shower cubicle."

I said, "That reminds me..." I unwrapped my arms from around him and moved back. "Turn around, please."

Alec raised his brows. "Oh? I see I'm getting a spank?"

"It's payback time, bastard. I have no idea how many spanks I've received from you, but today, mister, I'll be taking my sweet revenge."

He chuckled and then shrugged. "Let's see how hard you can hit." He turned and presented his backside to me.

I stared. Damn, even his ass was sexy. This man had the full package.

"Here I come," I said and swung my hand. Slap!

I did it as hard as I could, but it didn't appear to affect him at all. He said, "Done already?"

I harrumphed. "It's the shower. My hand slips and I didn't get to do it properly."

He burst out laughing as he wrapped his arms around me. "No making excuses. You had one chance, and it's gone, brat." He crushed his lips on mine and thrust his tongue right into my mouth, invading me and kissing me so damn hard, it made my head spin and I became breathless.

He sucked at my tongue as I whimpered and squirmed against him, my head in a daze. When he was done with his sensual assault and showing no sign of breathlessness, unlike me, he said, “Right. Let’s get you all spick-and-span.” He grabbed the shampoo and started washing my hair for me, and I stood there, staring at him in a stupor. Then he started with my body next, and soon, I was covered in bubbles and smelled like a spring flower, while his hands were all over me washing me, stroking me, and kneading my nipple.

“Gotta have these babies squeaky clean before they’re being served,” he said darkly.

Squeaky clean? Before they were being served? My nipples?

He turned his attention to my cock next, and he started cleaning that, too, his hands stroking and rubbing it, the bubbles covering the rock-hard organ from the base to the tip. “Yep, this one is a Michelin Star. Gotta have it squeaky clean before serving.”

I said, “Stop it with the dirty talk.”

His eyes on me, he said, “You want me to stop it? When you’re so turned on whenever I do it?” He flicked the tip of my stiff cock, making it spring like a damn coil. “Just look how hard you are.”

My face felt like it was on fire, so fucking embarrassed, yet turned on I was. I mumbled, “You’re awful, Alec. I swear—”

He kissed me on the lips, shutting me up. When he moved back, he said, “You swear what?”

I heaved and managed to say, “I’m about to come already.”

“Nope. We can’t have that now, can we?” he said, his hand on my cock again, squeezing it and blocking the tip with his thumb. “Not yet, brat. No coming until I say so.”

“You don’t have a say on whether I can come or not, dammit!” I said, quivering as my cock pulsated hot in his hand.

“No means no, brat,” he said. “If you dare come now, I will spank you.” He squeezed me harder as his hand went to my behind. There, he touched my buttocks. It was the first time I had ever been touched there, and I jolted, shocked and surprised as he poked a finger in.

I felt this overwhelming, electric-like thrill run through me from head to toe, and I sucked in my breath. When Alec rubbed me hard, I shuddered and tensed and then I came, right there and then, my body squirming in pure euphoria like I had never done before.

My fucking heavens! I felt my knees go weak as I leaned against Alec, who had a smirk on his lips. He sighed, as if in disappointment, and he said, “Ha! Damn, you came. Looks like I’d have to spank you to behave.”

Of course, I’d come. He did that on purpose, I just knew it.

“You’re a demon,” I managed to say between panting.

He bent down and gathered me in his powerful arms. “Enough with the cleaning. I think this delicious feast is ready to be served to the Overbearing Oni.”

I widened my eyes. Holy shit! He knew I had him as Overbearing Oni on my phone?

“How’d you know?” I asked as he took me out of the shower cubicle.

“Yuki told me,” he said.

I grunted. “That bastard.” When I saw him heading to the door, I asked, “Aren’t we drying ourselves first? We’re still wet from head to toe.”

He chuckled. “There’s no need.” Back in the bedroom, he laid me on the bed. “You look fucking delicious and sexy like that.”

He thought me wet from head to toe was sexy? It must be true because I could see his cock was getting harder and twitching, too.

Holy fuck! That cock just twitched.

I rested on my elbow as he sprawled above me. He said, “Let’s get our sexy time started.” Then he leaned in and kissed me on the lips.

He teased and toyed, licking and sucking at my lips, and then my tongue, making me so damn dazed and breathless. When he was done with that, he trailed little kisses down my throat and chest. There, he stared at my nipples, long and hard.

Embarrassed that he was gazing at me like I was a fascinating painting or something, I covered my chest with my arms and said, “Stop that. You’re making me feel weird things.”

He smiled and removed my hands from my chest. “Weird? Why would you feel weird things? You mean me looking at your nipples turns you on.”

I muttered, “Why do you always look at me like that? Like my cock, and now, my nipples.”

He chuckled. “You have no idea, brat.” He didn’t elaborate as he leaned in close and then blew air onto one.

I tensed as this tingling sensation rushed over me.

He said, “Round, perky, and pink, like a rosebud.”

Unbelievable! He was comparing my nipple to a rosebud.

“I’ve been thinking constantly of this day,” he said, then opened his mouth and devoured one while he took the other between his finger and thumb.



Natsu

I tensed as he kissed, sucked, and licked the left one, while toying with the right. I squirmed and arched my back, thrilling heat coursing through me. My fucking heavens! It felt so damn good.

Alec continued to lovingly torture my nipples while he rubbed his hard cock against mine, and I swore I nearly came for the second time. He went at it for the next ten minutes, and when he had enough for now, he trailed more little kisses down my body, switching to licking, too, which made me squirm in delight. Fuck! He was licking me like I was a delicious dessert.

When he got to my cock, he licked his lip like he couldn't wait to sample a tasty dish. His dark eyes on me, he said, "Bon appetit."

I braced myself for it, because this was the first time in my life anyone would be taking my cock into their mouth. I thought I was ready for it and that I could take it, but I was wrong.

I was so fucking wrong.

Alec devoured and sucked me like I was a sweet popsicle, and I swore I felt like I'd die as this overwhelming inferno of a thrilling sensation stormed through me, drawing me in a pool of heat. My body, on its own accord, arched back at the same time I flopped back onto the bed, heaving, my heart racing like never before.

I shuddered and squirmed, my legs bent, and my toes curled taut as I had my hands on Alec's head, wanting so desperately to push him away yet never wanting him to stop this amorous torture that was driving me insane.

Alec took me deep in his throat again and again, and I, the inexperienced boy, came again and again into his mouth, shaking and writhing until I was spent. Only then did Alec allow my cock to go free, releasing it from his mouth with a pop.

Hovering above me and gazing down at me, he said, a dashing grin on his face, "That was... divine. It certainly is a Michelin Star cock."

Still dazed from the powerful experience, I said, "You're an oni."

"Yep, I am," he said, his hands around me as he pulled me up. "Now then, brat, how about some servicing?" His hand over mine, he guided me toward his cock, and I knew what he wanted.

Despite I had just come—that crazy, earthshattering orgasm—I was excited again at the mere sight of his cock, massive and damn hard.

I eagerly touched it, feeling the firmness and the heat, and then I started stroking him, just like the way he had done to me. Goodness, it was long, and thick. This was one mighty cock indeed.

Alec kissed me here and there, and now and again said, “Good boy, you’re doing a good job,” while I rubbed and caressed him. I didn’t know how long I kept at it, maybe around fifteen to twenty minutes, and my hands started to feel rather exhausted from the work.

I said, “Are you ever going to come?”

He chuckled. “I don’t just come so easily.”

“Like me,” I said sourly.

“Oh my, I see the brat is jealous?” he said.

“I’m not jealous,” I said. “Just come all ready.”

“I’ll come inside your cute ass, thank you very much,” he said, touching me at the back.

I said, “Then let’s get that started already.” Of course, I remembered that sensation when he had a finger in, and I wanted to feel it again.

Alec kissed me on the forehead and then said, “All right.”

Within moments, I found myself lying on my belly, hugging a pillow, while Alec was behind me. Gosh, I could feel his hot, heavy frame on top of me, enveloping me, and it felt so right.

Kissing me on the side of my face, he touched my butt and then slid in a finger into my already lubricated hole, since he had just lathered some scented oil onto me. I couldn’t believe he had actually brought that along in that overnight bag.

“Tell me if it hurts,” he said into my ear.

I shuddered at the mere feel of his hot breath on my skin, and I nodded. “Mm-hmm.”

With only two fingers inside me, I was already groaning and squirming so hard, feeling those hot, stimulating sensations stirring within me, making my head so fucking dazed. It wasn't long before he said, “It's loose enough. Can I put it in?”

I felt like I'd die if he didn't and nodded. “Hurry. Just do it already.”

He chuckled. “It seems you're even more eager than I am.”

“How can I not be... eager when... you were fingering me?”

I felt him inserting the tip of his cock in, and then...

I sucked in my breath as I felt his thick hotness smoothly slide into me, and I writhed and tensed, my head a mess.

“Fuck!” Alec groaned out. “You're so fucking tight and hot.”

“Fuck! Alec...” I moaned, shaking and heaving. “I'm gonna die.”

Hugging me from behind, Alec worked on soothing me, kissing me gently. “You're not going to die, brat. Fuck, but you're squeezing me so fucking tight, my cock's going to explode.”

Explode? Fuck him! I felt like he was ripping me apart from the inside.

“I’m gonna die, Alec. Do something,” I demanded. “Please do something. My insides feel so fucking full and...” I groaned, my body shaking and squirming under him. “I’m gonna die.”

He growled. “Then do you want me to pull out?” he asked.

I did but didn’t at the same time. “No... Move. Just move your fucking cock. Just start fucking me already. Oh... Fuck, I’m gonna die.”

“Oh my, fuck, you brat!” He rumbled. “Do you want me in or out?”

“In. And. Out,” I said between heavy breaths.

He grunted and then pulled out completely, leaving me feeling utterly empty and sad.

Suddenly, I felt myself being lifted and then turned around. Facing him, he repositioned me, him between my legs. “Do you want this or not?”

I stared at him long and hard and then nodded. “Yes! I want it. I want it so fucking much.”

“But you told me to...” He growled yet again and then spread my legs wider. I bit my lip, watching him in anticipation as he slid his cock into my butthole for the second time. Then I felt it, his thickness deep inside me, and I flopped my head back on the bed, shuddering and writhing and heaving.

“Natsu! Open your eyes,” came the command.

I fluttered my eyes open and stared at him.

“Fuck!” he heaved and leaned down and kissed me near my eyes. “You’re crying. I know I’m big. I’m sorry.”

Holy shit! I did not know that I was crying.

“I’ll pull out now,” he said. “I don’t want to hurt you.”

He moved, and I mindlessly reacted, wrapping my legs around his flank and my arms around his neck, imprisoning him from escaping. “No. No. No. You’re not going anywhere,” I said.

“Fuck, Natsu, you’re hurt.”

“I’m not... hurt. You’re just too big, but I’m fine,” I said. “It feels really good inside. I swear I’m about to come with just having you inside me.”

He stared at me for a moment, his eyes dark, then said, “Fuck, Natsu! I swear...” He grunted darkly and then started moving, slowly and gently as he kissed me deeply.

With each tender thrust, I felt like my world was going to explode like a big bang, and I writhed and groaned, my head in a haze, my body moving along with him.

Oh, fuck! Just having him sliding in and out of me felt so fucking good. I hugged him tightly as he continued to thrust in a rhythm, and I loved it so damn much.

“Natsu, you feel so fucking good,” he said into my ear. “You’re so fucking tight.”

“Is that... good or bad?” I asked.

“Good. It’s fucking good, brat,” he said. “I’m going to go faster.”

“Faster?” I asked.

“Can I?”

Now that I was used to his size inside me, I nodded. “Yeah, go faster.”

With that permission, he really did go faster, so fucking fast that I cried as he pounded into me like an automatic drill. I tensed, my body trembling and quivering as I held on to him for dear life, my head spinning out of control. And then I came, long and hard, with just my ass being fucked. And yet, Alec continued to fuck me—hard—and I became hard again, and then I came, yet again.

I came four times while Alec fucked me relentlessly and persistently for the next half hour, and he had yet to come once. When he finally did, it was deep inside me, with me coming for the fifth time, my body writhing, the overwhelming euphoria engulfing me like a tornado.

I felt Alec spurt his cum inside me, silky and warm, and his body tensed against mine. When he was done and relaxed, I was still going, my body squirming under him, him watching me like I was an interesting movie. Once I was done, too, he leaned down and kissed me on the forehead. He said, “That was fucking amazing.”

“I think I saw the stars,” I said, dazed.

“You saw the stars, eh?” he said, kissing me on the lips this time, then plunging his tongue into my mouth.

34



Alec

Alec was captivated, not only to the frenzied pleasure Natsu was able to give him and that earthshattering orgasm when he came deep inside the hot, tight tunnel that was the boy's ass, but to the brat himself who had been nothing but a sultry minx.

He released the sensual lips that never seemed to displease him and gazed down at the boy who was staring up at him in a stupor.

Fuck, he thought, just look at him, gloriously beautiful and a hot mess. Alec was once again turned on.

He leaned down and trailed little kisses down Natsu's slender, toned body, and when he got to the nipples, he couldn't help himself and took one into his mouth again, kissing, licking, teasing, and sucking. He felt Natsu writhing under him, moaning and groaning.

While he was enjoying tormenting the pair of rosebuds, switching kisses between one and the other, he stroked the boy's cock, which was now hard again.

"Alec?" The soft, uncertain voice came, which drew his attention.

"Hmm?" He lifted his head.

Staring at him, Natsu asked, "Just wondering, how long are we going to be doing this?"

Alec raised a brow. “How long? I suppose as long as we want.”

Natsu widened his eyes. “Oh... Then how many times are you intending to, uh...”

Alec grinned and then said, “I don’t plan on counting. But I guess until you’re too tired for the next round. Does that answer your question?”

Natsu simply stared at him. “Until I’m too tired for the next round?”

“Mm-hmm. Are you tired already?”

The boy shook his head. “I have a pretty good stamina, you know.”

“Wonderful,” Alec said and then moved back and got off the bed.

“Where are you going?” Natsu asked, sitting up.

Alec winked and then went over to the other side of the room where the overnight bag sat on the sofa. He unzipped it and searched for the important items he wanted. And voila!

He returned to Natsu, who stared at the items, looking damn flabbergasted.

“Wh... What the hell are those?” he asked, backing away from Alec.

Alec chuckled as he climbed onto the bed. “Where are you going?”

“I’m running away, obviously,” Natsu said.

“Running away?” He burst out laughing. “There’s nowhere to run away to. Now, come here.”

Natsu shook his head. “No way in hell.”

“Come on,” Alec said. “Be a good sport. I got these for you.”

Natsu stared at the rabbit ears headband and the butt plug with a cotton bunny tail at the end, which Alec knew the boy had never seen before. But, of course, he suspected the brat knew where that’d go, which explained why he was retreating.

“Come here, Natsu,” he said.

Natsu shook his head and said, “Put those away and I’ll come over.”

Alec said, “I’ve bought these for you. I’ve been fantasizing you wearing these since…”

“You’ve been fantasizing me wearing those?” Natsu was astonished.

“Yep,” Alec said.

“But why?” he asked.

“It’s a man thing,” he said. “A man’s dream. My dream.”

Natsu snorted. “And your dream as a man is to see me in those?”

“Yes,” Alec answered. “Now, can you please come here and put these on? It’ll only be for a few minutes.” When Natsu refused to budge even an inch, he said, “Please? You’ll make

me really happy. You'll make one of my dreams come true. It'd really turn me on."

Natsu stared at him for a moment, his face flushing red, and he said, "Only for a few minutes, right?"

Alec smiled darkly. He suspected the fact that he had revealed it had been his dream to see the brat in these and that it'd really turn him on had touched Natsu's soft spot. He nodded. "Only for a few minutes."

Natsu sighed and then crawled toward him. Close, Alec gathered the boy into his arms and then kissed him solidly on the lips. "Thank you."

"I'm only doing it because you seem so desperate," the boy said. "You're so fucking weird."

"I blame it on Jaxon," Alec said.

Natsu raised a brow. "What does Jaxon have to do with any of this?"

"He has everything to do with this," Alec said as he put the rabbit ears headband on the boy's head. "Cute."

Natsu rolled his eyes. "I can't believe I'm wearing another set of bunny ears."

Alec said, "Turn and give your ass to me, please."

Natsu turned, presenting his ass to him as he leaned on all fours on the bed. Alec stared at the milky flesh, and because he just couldn't help himself, seeing how adorable it was, he squeezed and caressed and then leaned in to kiss. Natsu

groaned and squirmed, his cock twitching at the fondling. “Hurry up! Just put it in already. Your few minutes are almost up.”

“All right. All right.” Alec planted another kiss on the boy’s butt for good measure and then inserted the butt plug. He was fucking pleased to see Natsu shivering and writhing before him.

“It’s... cold,” he said. “It feels weird.”

“Bear with it for a few minutes,” Alec said, admiring the cute ass and the cotton bunny tail sticking out. Wanting to preserve the image and keep it for later use, he swiftly picked up his phone and then... Snap! Snap! Snap!

Natsu looked over his shoulder, and the moment he saw the smartphone, he glared and turned over. “You bastard!” He reached for the phone, but Alec shuffled back in the nick of time. “Alec! Delete them!”

Alec raised a brow. “Delete what?” he asked as he took more photos, of Natsu on the bed, utterly naked, with only a pair of bunny ears and tail. Fuck! The boy looked so fucking sexy and adorable. His dick responded appropriately at the alluring sight, raising its head and turning hard.

Natsu heaved. “The photos. I know you took photos of my ass.”

“It’s memories,” Alec said. “Can’t I keep them to remember our first time together?”

“No. Not of my ass—”

Alec pulled the boy to him and took his lips, silencing him. When he moved back, he said, “You have the cutest ass I’ve ever seen.” He sighed. “All right, I’ll delete the photos.”

Natsu stared at the photos and said, “I can’t believe my ass looks like that.”

“Cute, right?” Alec said, chuckling.

“Cute, my ass,” Natsu said.

Alec began to delete them in front of the boy, so there’d be no suspicion that he hadn’t. He wanted them to be open and honest with each other now that they had seriously started a relationship. Done with erasing all of the photos, he rested the phone on the bedside table and then said, “Now, let’s continue with our intimate bonding.”

For the next hour, Alec kissed, stroked, caressed, and fondled every part of Natsu, who in turn did the same to him. It was pure bliss for both of them, and Alec wished they could go on all night and the next day, too. But alas, that was not possible since he needed to be at work by ten tomorrow morning. Although Natsu had his day off, which the boy would need after this.

Alec pulled the butt plug out as Natsu watched, and then he plunged his thick, hard cock in, and the boy writhed, heaving and moaning. When Alec started to move, Natsu wrapped his arms around Alec’s broad, powerful shoulders.

Fuck! It felt so fucking good inside, and Alec shuddered and tensed as he thrust, with each slow movement sending waves

of rapture through him, making his head dazed. Time became meaningless as he continued the sweet bliss, and again and again, he drove in deeper, hitting that spot that always made Natsu shiver in jubilation, moans of happiness escaping his mouth.

“Alec...” the boy groaned. “Alec... I... love you. Fuck, I love you. You’re driving me crazy. You’re driving me insane. I’m scared.”

The pure elation in the boy’s beautiful face was like Cupid’s arrow hitting Alec’s heart, and he felt himself tense, joy washing over him. Holy fuck! The brat was telling him he loved him for the first time, and while they were fucking at that.

Alec plowed in deep again, making Natsu squirm as he tightened his hold on the boy. He said, “I love you, too, Natsu... So fucking much. You’ve driving me insane, too, in more ways than one.” He claimed the boy’s lips and plunged his tongue in, kissing him while fucking him.

When he did another deep thrust, Natsu came, writhing beneath him, his cum spurting out against Alec’s toned belly. Alec, too, came, deep inside the boy, ecstasy flooding through him, making him so fucking happy. Yes, he was enchanted by this brat.

Once the orgasm was over, Natsu lay there, spent and heaving, and Alec thought he had never seen a more beautiful sight in his life.

Alec made slow, sweet love to Natsu three more times, fucking him deep and making the boy come until he was exhausted, and only then did he stop.

Spent from the intense lovemaking, Natsu lay there on the bed, his body soaking wet in perspiration, and his butt a hot, sweet mess with Alec's cum.

Alec got off the bed and headed into the bathroom, humming. He was indeed one happy man. It was a little later when he returned to the bedroom, where he gathered the half-asleep Natsu into his arms and carried him into the bathroom. There, he put the boy in the hot tub filled with scented warm water, which drew him awake.

“What are we doing in the bathtub?” he asked.

“We're cleaning you up, of course,” Alec said, pulling the boy into his arms.

35



Alec

With Natsu straddling him and falling asleep, Alec started washing the boy and cleaning his ass, prying out the cum that was still lodged deep inside him. Once they were both cleaned and dried and feeling fresh, he carried Natsu back to bed and climbed in next to the boy.

With Natsu in his arms, he said, “Good night.” But, of course, it was already two in the morning. He couldn’t believe he had been that gung ho and went all out making love to Natsu, and it had been their first time together, too. Unbelievable.

Natsu managed a groan before falling silent, deep in his slumber. Alec fell asleep too, and when he woke, it was to see Natsu in his arms, watching him.

He smiled and greeted, “Morning.”

Natsu returned the greeting with, “My butt hurts.”

Alec burst out laughing. “I guess I went overboard last night.” He leaned in and kissed the boy on the lips.

When he moved back, Natsu said, “You did. But I guess I’ll get used to it.”

Alec suspected Natsu was implying that he didn’t mind him being that zealous during their passionate time together.

“I love you, brat,” Alec said, feeling the urge to utter those words again.

Natsu, flushing red in the face, said, “I, uh, love you, too, Alec.”

“I’m so glad my feelings are reciprocated,” Alec said, squeezing Natsu in his arms.

“Of course, they’d be reciprocated. Didn’t we like each other since we were kids?” Natsu said.

Alec nodded. “I suppose. We were childhood sweethearts at one point.”

Natsu said, “Yep.”

Alec reached for his phone and checked the time. “Ah, damn. It’s already seven.”

“Yeah,” Natsu said. “Don’t you have a shift at the café today? But we still have plenty of time.”

Alec nodded. “Mm-hmm. Luckily, I don’t have to be there until opening hour at ten.” He smiled darkly. “There’s still plenty of time.”

Natsu raised a brow. “Yeah, to get ready and stuff.”

Alec said, “Getting ready shouldn’t take more than ten to fifteen minutes.” He moved and was on top of Natsu in an instant. “I’m thinking of at least one round before checking out.”

Natsu widened his eyes. “My fucking heavens! You really are an overbearing oni.”

Alec burst out laughing.

Moments later, Alec had Natsu lying on the bed and he was standing at the end, his cock root-deep inside the boy's asshole, thrusting hard, driving Natsu's body along with his every move.

Fuck, he loved Natsu in this position. Not only did he have the pleasure of such a wonderful view of the boy basking in the bliss, but his own cock could reach a deeper region in Natsu's, too. So fucking deep, in fact, it was drove him quite senseless.

"Oh... fuck..." Natsu cried out. "You're so deep, you're practically hitting my stomach."

Alec drove in again, and damn, he could feel it, too, the tip of his mighty cock slamming on Natsu's stomach, which not only made the boy shudder in ecstasy, but made him cry, too, as he kept coming again and again. And when Alec himself came, too, he pulled Natsu up to embrace him, kissing him on the forehead as the boy came yet again. Damn, he was so fucking sensitive. What a delightfully responsive body this brat had, and Alec loved that.

Finally opening his eyes, Natsu said, breathless, "I swear, if you keep at this with me, I'm going to go insane."

"I'll take full responsibility, I promise," Alec said, smiling, and then he kissed the boy on the lips. "I love you."

"Well, I don't," Natsu said.

Alec snickered. "Oh my, you're pouting."

"Am not," Natsu said.

“Yes, you are,” Alec said, moving his hip, which in turn moved his cock still deep inside the boy.

Natsu shuddered. “Stop it, demon pervert.”

“Come on, say it,” Alec said. “Say you love me, too.” He moved again and snuggled himself even deeper, making Natsu squirm in his arms.

“You bastard! I said stop it,” Natsu gritted out. “I swear...” He heaved as he tightly clung to Alec.

Alec felt Natsu’s cock harden again against his belly, and he teased, “Oh my, looks like somebody’s cute cock is up again.”

“Shut up,” Natsu said. “Whose fault do you think it is?”

“Yep, mine,” Alec said. “And I’ll take full responsibility.”

“You better,” Natsu said and eagerly planted his lips on Alec, kissing him. Their tongues intertwined as Alec started moving inside Natsu again, and the boy groaned deep into Alec’s mouth.

His breath hot on Natsu’s skin, Alec said, “You’re so fucking cute.”

“And you’re so fucking sexy.” Natsu nodded. “Yep, you’re a sexy, overbearing oni, and your cock inside me is driving me crazy.”

“And your asshole is driving me crazy, swallowing me whole,” Alec said in return. “Now, how about you tell me you love me, hmm?”

“You’re such a persistent prick,” Natsu said. “Fine, I love you, so fucking much.”

Alec chuckled, pleased. “Attaboy,” he said and then went all out at thrusting, making Natsu breathless and dazed and a hot mess for the second time that morning.

It was nine by the time they were finished with their passionate fervor, with Natsu covered in Alec’s cum all over his body, and Alec looking so damn pleased at the sight.

“You’re a fucking demon, I swear,” Natsu said, trying to get up from the bed. His legs crumpled, and he would have fallen to the floor if Alec didn’t catch him in time.

And then he was up in the air, with Alec carrying him into the bathroom. “Allow me to clean you up, brat.”

“I’m so glad I have today off,” Natsu said.

“Me, too,” Alec said, grinning.

“Stop it with that smirk,” Natsu said, but his lips were sealed shut with another kiss.

Natsu was barely able to walk to the car after they had checked out, and once they were back home, Alec carried the boy up to the house. Edwin and Landon were smiling, while Aki and Yuki were concerned at the sight of Natsu looking so dazed and just out of it.

As Alec put Natsu on the sofa, Landon said, “You two look like you had a ton of fun.”

Both Aki and Yuki came to sit next to Natsu, inspecting him from head to toe, a worried expression on their faces.

Yuki asked, “Natsu! Are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” Natsu said weakly.

Edwin said, “Can you even walk at all?”

Natsu shook his head. “I can’t. My butt hurts like hell.”

Both Landon and Alec burst out laughing, and Aki said, “Stop it, both of you. It’s not funny. And Alec, you told me you’d go easy on Natsu. It’s his first time.”

Natsu turned to Aki. “Wait! You knew that...” The boy shook his head. “No wonder you looked and acted so weird yesterday.” He sighed. “You two did not even give me any warning at all. Like it was a total surprise for me.”

Alec said, “Don’t blame them. I asked them for help.”

Natsu raised a brow. “On what?”

“Picking the restaurant and the hotel,” Alec said. “Aren’t they great bros?” He kissed the boy on the lips.

Aki flushed hot on the face watching them, while Yuki grinned. “You lovebirds,” he said.

“Let’s get you and me some breakfast,” Alec said and headed over to the kitchen.

Edwin said, “I left some toast, scrambled eggs, and bacon for you two, knowing you’d be starving.”

Alec chuckled. “Thanks, Edwin.”

Landon left the house for the café to start work and Edwin headed into his room to get ready. As for Alec, he got started with getting the breakfast, and as he was doing so, he heard Aki and Yuki bombarding Natsu with questions, which amused him.

“What was it like?” Aki asked. “When...”

“No, I’m not telling,” Natsu said.

“Oh, come on, please...” Aki begged. “Can’t you just tell us a little? Like when, you know...”

“Nope,” Natsu said. “You just have to wait and experience it yourself.”

“I can’t believe you’re so stingy with information,” Aki said, harrumphing.

Natsu said, “Then get your ass moving and confess to Edwin already.”

“I concur,” Yuki said.

“Shut up, you two,” Aki said. “It’s not like it’s that easy just...”

Alec glanced up to see Aki’s face turning beet red, and he had to shake his head. Then Edwin returned and said, “Aki, would you please give me a hand in the kitchen? I just got a call from Luke. He’s going to be a bit late.”

Aki perked up instantly and grinned widely. “Sure.”

Moments later, they were out the door, with Edwin’s arm around Aki’s shoulders, his hand ruffling the boy’s hair.

“They’re just going to take forever,” Yuki said. He shrugged. “But it’s none of my business.” He smiled cheekily. “Or is it?”

Natsu said, “You’re up to something.”

“I’m up to nothing,” Yuki said, his eyes twinkling.

Natsu said, “By the way, should we do something about our birthday?”

As he brought around two plates filled with food, Alec said, “Right, it’s going to be you triplets’ birthday soon.”

“Let’s do something fun,” Yuki said.

“Yeah,” Natsu said. “But what?”

Yuki said, “Let me do some research.” And he was out the door and rushed up the stairs.

Alone, just the two of them, Alec pulled Natsu into his arms and kissed the boy on the lips. When he moved back, he said, “Let’s have some breakfast. And I love you, brat.”

“Yeah,” Natsu said. “And I love you, too, Overbearing Oni.”

Alec chuckled and said, “Open your mouth, please.”

Natsu, staring at him, did, and Alec fed him a slice of toast. “Nice?” he asked.

“Mm-hmm.” Natsu nodded, and he was about to lean in for another bite when Alec claimed his lips again. Natsu wrapped his arms around Alec and returned the kiss, their tongues intertwined passionately and wildly.



THANK YOU!

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Haru to Aiden

Aiden to Haru

Noah to Haru

Mason to Haru

PARANORMAL ROMANCE

Tales of Beastkin

Shiro

Adam



Bella (bl pen name of Alexia) is a self-proclaimed hermit, puppers-loving girl who likes to write anything bl/mm romance—be it contemporary, historical, fantasy, paranormal, or a combination of any of these. Currently residing in Aotearoa (land of the long white cloud), she spends seventy percent of her time watching anime and reading comics and the other thirty percent daydreaming about food and procrastinating. Whatever's left she actually uses to write books that may or may not bring her a few precious gold coins to support her lifestyle.



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