

Chapter 32

Extreme Satisfaction

The cozy lighting inside the bakery welcomed us out of the cold and late-afternoon darkness. The small place was packed. Resentment stirred my guts at the lone teenage girl seated at a table reading a book. Eyes on its pages, she ran her index finger around her empty plate, then picked up her coffee cup, also empty, and drank with her eyes still on the damn book.

Waiting adults would have approached the table as a gentle hint to share its occupancy. Why should she ignore us because we were younger than her? I pulled off my gloves and hitched my chin toward Dimitri. The girl elongated her neck. She didn't look up.

"Will you be much longer?" I asked.

She turned a page, but kept her eyes averted. "Until I finish this chapter."

"Will that be in this century?" The edge in my tone was unmistakable.

She glanced up—to a spot over my head. "I'd say fifteen minutes. Or less, without interruptions."

"Even with interruptions, you'd need less time if you read without moving your lips."

She snapped the book shut, and her nostrils flared. "You are the rudest little boy I've ever met."

Little boy? I simply laughed. "And you are the rudest cow I've ever met."

While she sputtered, I turned and walked with Dimitri out the door without ordering. The wind howled, and the snow gusted in our faces, but my insides boiled.

"Can't blame her for wanting to stay warm." Dimitri rubbed his hands together.

"She doesn't own that table."

"We're kids. She's older. She—"

"She's a cretin. Yet she treats us like mental defects."

"There's another bakery around the corner. Let's—"

"She should pay. Are you with me?"