

shadows of light

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by [cassandraofthemoon](#)

Summary

23-year-old Alina and 25-year-old Aleksander hate their guts, but what will happen once they are forced to fake date for a night?

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

i.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Alina let out a breath once the lesson finished. History of Art was the most boring class: an endless talk about columns, chapels and mythology. It would've been way more interesting, if only the teacher just cared about what he was saying.

As she was leaving, somebody caught her arm. Fedyor, probably the nicest person in the whole university, smiled at her. "How are you, Alina?"

They had met on the first day of uni: she was too confused about classes, materials and exams and he was kind enough to explain to her how everything worked. After that, he'd invited her to hang out with his group of friends, who were a couple of years older than her but decent enough not to treat her as a child, and they'd had so much fun that they still invited Alina once in a while.

"Now that the lesson is over, much better." She shook her head. "What a way to end the week, right?"

He cocked his head to the side. "Have you got plans for the weekend?"

"No, not really. I think I'll get some rest." As she said it, she imagined herself in her dorm room with its twinkle lights and the candles burning, comfort-watching an episode of Modern Family. She found well-spent alone time recharging, and she couldn't picture herself eager to hang out with people after spending 30 hours a week surrounded by her weird Art colleagues. She considered herself a rare exception from her snobbish classmates, always ready to party, smoke and ignore everybody they didn't like.

"Well then, I have just the right thing for you." He yanked her out of the building, grinning like somebody just told the funniest joke on Earth, "you won't say no."

They reached a bench, and only a few meters away she recognized the two people sitting: one was Ivan, Fedyor's boyfriend. Alina couldn't decide whether she liked him or not. He seemed an okay guy when he talked to her, but his acquaintances made her wish Fedyor would find someone better than him. One of the aforementioned acquaintances, Aleksander Morozova, was the other person waiting for her and sighed as he saw her. He lighted up a cigarette, like she was trouble and needed the stress relief. They knew each other, since they had friends in common, but despised their guts.

He was a Business major and Alina couldn't stand his self-centeredness, his pride and the half-grin he always had when he looked at her like he was looking at something funny. As far as it regarded Aleksander, he hated Alina just for fun. Or at least that's what she thought.

Alina looked at Fedyor. "Whatever it is, I'm saying no."

"You haven't even heard what it's about!" Ivan laughed.

"If it involves him, I'm not doing it." She wasn't even trying to hide it, everybody knew that if they were to be left in a room alone, only one of them would've come out alive.

Fedyor talked, not paying any attention to her friend's protests. "We need to help a friend." He patted Aleksander's shoulder. He didn't seem particularly into the plan. "Yeah, he's not your friend but he's mine, and a friend of a friend is a friend, so you're stuck with him. Our genius Aleks made up an amazing girlfriend every time he talked to his mom, so now that his family is in town, they are not asking to meet her, they demand it. And we know just one person who could fit in the description," he smirked.

Alina was outraged with the whole proposal. She turned to Aleksander, "no fucking way. You're an asshole, you lie to your family, don't even bother to ask for a favor - you let Fedyor do it - and expect me to say yes? Did all the girls you fucked and dumped say no to this recital?"

He seemed to think about it for a couple of seconds before saying, "I don't want to do it either, Starkov. It was not my idea and I think it's stupid."

"Finally we agree on something." She took off, but once again Fedyor stopped her.

"*Now* he's being an asshole. He doesn't want you to know that he can't tell the truth now because it's too late and his grandpa is really old, he just wants to see his grandson finally settled." She didn't seem too convinced. "Did I mention he's really old? Like sick, but not too sick?"

"Besides," Ivan added, "his family is super nice, nothing like him. And their food is so good! You'll have a lot of fun, you'll just have to pretend to like him."

"I'm not sure I can manage that." She snorted. "Is it all true?," she asked Alesander.

He just nodded.

She couldn't believe she was being convinced out of pity for one of the most entitled pricks in the university. But the thought of a family, somebody who cooked for you and was eager to know your significant other, made her ache with wanting. She was alone, without a proper family, and nobody of her relatives ever as much called her, let alone visiting. She could pretend for one night to be part of something. Besides, she had something in return to ask for.

"Fine, I'll do it," she saw Aleksander's gaze on her, "but I want something in return, Morozova."

"Name it, Starkov." She noticed only then that he was shaking his leg.

"Say 'please'." A smile tugged at the end of her lips.

He took a last drag on the cigarette, then he launched it with a flick of his finger. "Please." He looked like he had just swallowed a firebrand.

"Good. And don't smoke, I like my boys as good as they can be."

Aleksander pulled off at the dorm entrance and texted her that he was waiting outside. Above that, he could read the brief exchange of text they had that afternoon:

5.14 pm *I'll pick you up at 07.30 pm*

5.17 pm *ok*

Why had she agreed? She had every right to hate him, since he tried to be his worst self – which wasn't difficult – when she was around. He had tried to insult her, objectify her and diminish her, among all things. Everything to get push her away and get her out of his mind, to forget the sound of her laugh, that made him want to bottle it up so that he could hear it later; and the way she lighted up the room each time she smiled, obviously not at him. Actually, he considered, today she had smiled at him. It had seemed like a wicked grin, and it surely was something out of spite, not a real smile, but he would have settled for that. Anything just to have a bit of her attention.

He wasn't even sure why he had agreed and not called the thing off. He couldn't stand the fact that he had to pretend, to fake what he would have done freely, to put himself in the pain of seeing how things could have gone if he had been just a little less idiot. But, then again, he would have been fine even with the longest torture, just to trick himself into thinking this pretend was something more.

Just when he started to worry this was all a prank Alina had set for him, he saw her walking towards the car.

Aleksander let out a breath. Her straight hair fell down her back, which was covered by a black velvet dress. She left her septum at home and had gone for what people would have called natural make-up if it wasn't for the deep red lipstick, that made Aleksander gasp. Oh, the things he would have done to those lips.

He was struck with the view of her thighs slightly bared by her inclination as she got in the car, and he had to get a hold of himself. He cleared his throat and managed a plain 'hi.'

"Hello, Aleksander." They fell into an awkward silence, so he turned on the radio because it was either that or something that would have turned him from mean to pathetic.

After a couple of turns to a road that led out of town, Alina asked "where are we going?" She tried to sound relaxed, but he could feel her tension. She wasn't used to rides with strangers at night.

"We're going to my grandparent's house. It's a bit far from uni, that's why I stay in the dorm instead of their place, but I have a room there too. You'll see it." Realizing this must have

been no proof he wasn't actually trying to kill her, he reassured her, gesturing towards the car screen, "look, it's here. You can send the address to somebody if that makes you feel safer."

"I already told my friends where I'm going, so you'll be the first to be questioned if I go missing." A lie, since she hadn't found the courage to tell anybody she had agreed to this stupid thing just to be included in something and maybe, just maybe, see a different part of the guy who was the bane of her existence. Or at least she hoped he was any different with his family.

"Well, I'll have to get creative with an alibi then," he shrugged.

"One more idiotic joke and I'll turn tonight into your worst nightmare, Morozova, I'll have a lot of fun doing it." He bit the inner part of his cheek not to talk back and wondered whether this exchange excited him or made him nervous. "So," she kept going on as she deliberately changed the radio stations, "is there something essential your girlfriend should know, besides how to be as pretentious as you all the time?"

He ignored her comment since he was in no position to tease her. "Well, I play the piano, I've always had cats, and now we have the Darkling at my grandparents'. I called him that because he's stealthy and always looks like he's planning your murder." He thought about it for a second. "I love chocolate, have Russian origins and, last but not least, I don't smoke."

She twisted her mouth. "Will you ever stop lying to your parents?"

"No. Also, my father died when I was ten."

"I'm sorry about that." She meant it, since she had lost both her parents and knew the feeling, but it cost her. She now thought of the dinner as a mistake: she wanted to forget the funny name he gave his cat and the fact that they shared something so deep. She wanted to erase the human part of him from her mind, because it made it difficult to just hate him.

"Don't worry, Fedyor told me you went through the same twice," he trailed off. The thought of him and Fedyor talking about her had her stomach in knots. "What about what I should know about my girlfriend, other than not attending parties and having fun?"

"If you call parties whatever it is that you attend to, then not going is the only way to have fun. Or wake up without puke all over your room." She knew his parties were the wildest and didn't attend them because of it, other than the fact he had never personally invited her, but just let her in since she was with Fedyor. "I like drawing, puzzles and cooking. I have Russian origins too, as you can imagine, and I'm a very selective person, so this is one of the reasons why you should worship me for being your girlfriend."

God, he could do that. "Well, not *you* you, just-" the words died in her mouth as the car entered a driveway to the most beautiful villa she had ever seen. The garden was full of blossoming flowers and spotlights that light up the house so that she could admire it in its splendor. The three floors, the classical style, and the huge windows made her think she was in a fairytale.

He parked after grunting about his aunt's car taking his spot and they quickly walked to the door. They both wanted it to be over, so it had to start quickly.

A middle-aged woman with grey hair and an unmistakable resemblance to Aleksander opened the door and hugged him. "Oh, my boy," she held him tight, "you've grown so much." She got out of the hug to see her guest. "You must be Alina," she exclaimed, and Alina wondered if he called her mother to tell Alina's name earlier in the afternoon. "Aleksander wanted to keep you all to himself!" She hugged her too, and the gesture seemed genuine: she was trying to welcome her into her family house.

She introduced herself as Baghra as they entered and Alina was not surprised to see how the exterior of the villa matched the interior. Beautiful pieces of art hung on the walls; the main room was styled with antiques and she saw at least 10 people chatting by a fire. She felt overwhelmed by the people turning around all at once and getting up to greet her.

"Did I mention, Starkov, that we're a big crowd?," Aleksander whispered behind her. He was trying to hinder her, but she had been a people pleaser her whole life, she could bear a night of people eager to like and be liked by her. Or at least, that's what it seemed. So she gave him her best smile and put a hand on his arm, "stop it, Sasha!" That must have surprised him, because she saw a quick change in his gaze. He then acted as if nothing happened and ventured to talk to his relatives.

She was overwhelmed by the aunts, cousins, uncles and grandparents. Everyone was delighted with the fact that Aleksander had finally brought a girl home, and she was so smart, so sweet and so pretty. But after the initial excitement, everybody got back to their conversation, and Alina found herself at the corner of the room, her only companion the Darkling who purred at her.

She grabbed the cat and started petting him, making silly voices. "Oh, look at you! Sasha thinks you're so bad, but you just want to be loved, don't you?"

"I never said he's bad, Starkov." Aleksander was now next to her, with his usual grin. She wanted to punch him to make him stop.

"So that's the murderous bastard," Alina acknowledged, pretending he hadn't just walked on her.

"Just give him a couple of minutes, then you and your hands full of scratches will see."

"I bet you would like that, you idiot."

"Why don't you keep calling me Sasha? I like it better, it shows the fact that you're madly in love with me. But I can't blame you for that, can I?"

She felt blushing despite herself. "You forget too soon that I'm the one who has the upper hand here," she chided.

Before he could answer, Baghra interrupted them. "Alina, there's one last person you need to meet!" She looked at Aleksander, "Malyen's here."

"God no, she's not meeting him," but Baghra already led Alina to a group of people and Aleksander could do nothing but follow them.

He hated his cousin. Everything in him, from his deoxygenated hair to his streetwear screamed 'entitled idiot', and he seemed to have his way with girls, or with anything he wanted, actually. But he was family, so all he could do was insult him subtly every time they met, which luckily wasn't often. Too bad he was so dumb he didn't even consider Aleksander's insults as such.

But as Mal introduced himself, he recognized the spark in Alina's eyes. Of course she had to be charmed by him, two idiots like that could just complete each other. He was asking her how old she was, joking that he now thought this fantastic girl was just a ghost, and too bad she's with him, she's wasted for a guy like that. But they were just jokes, Mal would have argued, Sasha would have nothing to be mad at. He just had to sit there and hope for an excuse to bring her away from him, so he was so happy once the aunts ushered everybody to sit, since it was time to eat.

Luck definitely wasn't on his side tonight, since Mal and Alina ended up seated in front of each other. He knew it would've been a long supper, so they had all the time in the world to flirt.

The first meal was soup, and after they finished eating it - Mal couldn't hit on her while eating - and Alina had complimented the food for the hundredth time, Baghra shushed Mal before he could talk to her again. He was so glad his mother was here. "Enough, boy, you're monopolizing her," she said that with a smile but everybody knew she meant it. She was a Morozova too, she knew how to subtly send somebody off. "So, I reckon you have Russian origins."

"Yes, ma'am, my father was Russian. I lived there for the first years, but sadly there's not much of it I remember."

"Oh dear, that's a shame. Next time we're going to Russia, you're coming with us. It'll be good for you to connect with your origins and spend some more time together."

She laughed nervously. "I'd be delighted."

Aleksander intruded. "Stop it, mom. Don't pressure her," and he finished the last of his glass of wine.

"Oh, nonsense. You've kept her far away from us for too long, we have catching up to do! For example, there's this picture of him when he was little, I have it in my wallet, wait..." Aleksander rolled his eyes and bolted towards his mother, who put him in line by slapping his hand.

"*Prekrati, mama*," Aleksander hissed.

"C'mon, you're so beautiful now, what's the problem in showing how beautiful you were at five?" She grabbed the wallet in her purse, which was on the ground beside her, and handed Alina a photo.

Baghra was right, he was a very beautiful child. The picture retracted a young Aleksander dressed as a reindeer, probably for Christmas or Halloween, with a chocolate tablet in his hands and the proof he'd been eating some of it on his face.

Alina squeezed Aleksander's arm and flinched when she felt his muscles contract. "You were so cute, Sasha, why would you ever hide something like that?" Then she gave Baghra a seraphic smile. "Can I take a picture of it? He's just so cute with chocolate smeared all over his face."

Baghra accepted and Alina took the picture, then winked at Aleksander.

This was all too much for him. He was driving her insane with all her fake flirting. It pushed something both guttural and gentle out of him. He wanted to talk back, to mock her, because that's what she was doing with him. But he also wanted to show her thousands of photos like the one she photographed, wanted to hear her say how beautiful, small, and funny he was. Because he could be all that and she had to know it.

He had to let everything out. "Mom, we've been terrible hosts to Alina." Both she and his mother frowned. "We haven't shown her around the house. Alina studies Art at uni, she'd love to see everything we have here."

"Of course, Alina," Baghra was mortified, as if she just noticed she hadn't given her a plate and everybody ate but her. "Come on, dear, I'll show you," she said while getting up.

"No, mom, I'll take care of it. Let's go, love." He held out his arm and she grabbed it, and they walked to the first floor without speaking.

The second they were out of sight, he almost shouted, "what do you think you're doing?"

"What do you mean, Sasha?" She licked her lips and gave him an innocent look. He had to make the most out of his rage before she charmed him out of it with her big brown eyes.

"This isn't a party, you don't have to enjoy yourself, you need to do me a favor."

"Which is what I'm doing. I don't know your family, but they seem to like me, or at least they don't seem to hate me..."

"Fine, that's true." He clenched his fists to stay focused. "But stop flirting with Mal! Do you think I haven't noticed it?"

"No, but it's not my problem. I was just being kind with him, it's not my fault he's a damn psycho who's trying to steal his cousin's girlfriend right under his nose."

He had no words for that. She was being nice, he kept talking to her and she answered politely, but always briefly. She didn't like his attention. Not even he could hold her accountable for something like that.

"Okay, I hate to say it but you're right. He's earned a punch. God, I wanna hit him so badly, the last time was in second grade. Too much time has passed."

"And what happened?"

"I don't know what we fought for; all I remember is our mothers separating us."

"And they punished you?"

"Yes, but my mom said it was only because I didn't get away with it, and needed to improve." Was he talking about the same woman who hugged her and talked about visiting Russia together?

"Okay, fine. We need to be normal and not give them doubts." Alina started walking towards the stairs, but he grabbed her wrist.

"No, you delete that photo if you want to make it downstairs."

She grinned. "It's never gonna happen. I have a picture of you smiling in a reindeer costume, not to mention the chocolate. I'll protect it with my life."

He was so angry he had to focus on his breathing. "Come on, Sasha-"

"Don't call me that."

She faked surprise and raised a hand to her chest. "How should I call my handsome boyfriend? Saha, honey, *lyubov*-"

Aleksander lost it. He pressed his lips against hers, before opening his mouth and trailing his tongue inside her. She felt the urge in the kiss, not sure if it was his or hers. Right now, with their body so close and their hands wandering, she couldn't tell where one finished and the other began. There was nothing shy about the way he touched her. His touch was firm, greedy, he wanted to claim her body like his and she would have let him. They could have hated each other any other day, but she was tired of the pretense - which part of it was fake? - and the way he held her made her feel this was what they were supposed to do all the time instead of spitting venom to each other.

He held her and she circled her legs against his hips. His hands were now on her thighs and she felt the bulge in his pants, hard against her. He wanted her as much as she wanted him.

"You don't know how I want this," he moaned and squeezed her.

"Oh, I know," she bit his lower lip, "not only I feel your boner, but I've also been wanting this."

His grip weakened as he opened a door and turned the light on. She registered being laid down on a bed, and soon a pile of clothes formed on the parquet. Once they were both naked, they stared at each other for a second. It felt too little for Aleksander, who wanted to explore every detail of her with his eyes and his body, wanted to feel the sculpture come to life before him. She probably felt the same thing, because he noticed on her face the same look of devotion he had.

Alina was the one to move first: she left a trail of kisses on his jaw, his collarbone, his stomach, and then to his groin.

She gently grabbed him and he moaned; but before she could suck him, she looked up at him and whispered, "say 'please'."

A trembling laugh left him. "Not again, Alina. I think once is enough."

She let go only because it was the first time she heard him say her name with such passion, and a mote of desire came through her. "I'll make you say it tonight."

"What are we betting?"

"You choose it."

A light flickered in his eyes. "A date. If I win, we'll have a proper date. And you won't wear panties to it"

She shook her head in disapproval but agreed. "Fine, If I win, we have a proper date and a whole album of you as a kid." She wasn't asking for sweet and funny pictures of him, but rather something to hold against him. She wanted to tease him into being nice and cute.

"Deal."

"Deal." She giggled, "you could have asked me to delete the picture instead." He wasn't so sure he preferred it to the other option.

She didn't wait for a response and started giving him the best blowjob he had ever had. She was sloppy, the way he reached for the end and the sound she made when she couldn't take it anymore, when he was too big for her and she gagged over him, drove him nuts. Just as he felt about to be overwhelmed with pleasure, she stopped.

"Asshole," he muttered between shaky breaths. He didn't want to be any more compromised by her.

"Say it." She was too pleased with herself to hide it. "You'll get to come in my mouth, or my face, my boobs, whatever you like." To make the offer more pleasing, she spread her legs even wider.

At that, he decided he didn't care anymore. She already had him wrapped around her fingers, leaking with pre-load. The word would have made little difference compared to his state right now.

"Please," he said it so softly she didn't almost hear him.

"Question is, is this how you want to finish?"

"No," he shook his head too frantically, "I want to be inside you."

She chuckled. "That's what I thought."

He felt strong all at once. He stood up and laid her on the bed again. She automatically spread her legs for him, and he couldn't resist the view of her cunt, so wet just for him.

"We need to break you in, Alina." He licked it for the whole length, and she couldn't suppress a moan.

He slightly lifted his head to her, to see how she was desperate after the minimum touch. "Be silent, Alina, I'm giving you a tour of the house."

She nodded and headed to her nub, tilting it with his tongue. She gripped his hair with one hand, and the sheets with the other one. He tasted her juices and added a finger inside her, slowly sliding in and out. That was enough to make her scream, but she bit her lip from preventing it.

"So tight for me," he chided, "how will you take me?"

But as he said that, he added a second finger and she couldn't hold it any longer. "Please," she tried to whisper, "I want you."

He grinned, and she added, gathering all the strength she had left not to stutter, "I'm not ashamed of saying 'please' or look defied when I know I am. I'm just glad I'm not the only one like that today."

He left her, started looking for something in a drawer, and came back with a condom. He wore it and placed himself at her slick entrance; he wanted to taste every moment of it. He'd been imagining it for too long.

As he entered, she knew he would have been too big for her, if she wasn't just so horny. Her whole body ached for him, for the bittersweet sensation he was giving her, pain and pleasure mixed. She grabbed him by his shoulder and closed the distance between them, and as he was thrusting for the second time inside her, so slow it was paining her to wait, she whispered "harder" inside his ear.

He obeyed. She felt he had been slowing down because he didn't want to hurt her, but she wanted him so much, everything else besides the way she felt perfectly full didn't matter. She didn't give a shit about anything, her mind was too full with a single demand, *more more more-*

He kept moving to a strong, regular rhythm, whispering "beautiful" and "my Alina" looking at her.

"So good for me," he shook his head and placed his thumb on her clit, "I want to give you a reward for having the perfect pussy for me." He started circling it, and her legs started trembling. Her body was not physically able to take what her mind wanted so much.

She came breathing in heavily, holding to the waves of pleasure that rolled into her, that he was so kind to give her. She let her body relax as she felt his thrusts sloppier, his face contrived with desire, and knew he spectacularly came by looking at his beautiful face.

He laid down next to her, just a few moments before cleaning himself, and started getting dressed again. "We need to go downstairs right now, or else they'll get suspicious."

She realized only now she was in his bedroom. She always thought that a person's bedroom was one of the most private aspects of one's life; she found herself snooping through his bookshelf and admiring photos of a 17-year-old Aleksander having dinner with friends, playing curved on the piano, at the beach with his mother and smiling with the Kremlin behind them.

She couldn't help but imagine herself in one of these pictures, but quickly dismissed the thought and prepared herself, and once they were both ready, he held out his arm to her again and she took it. He looked too pleased with himself.

"I don't think you'll laugh once I have your photo album, Sasha. You should fetch it now." She was hiding with confidence the thought of what they just did, and the fact that they had agreed to a date. Oh, how the tables had turned.

"Or what? You'll tell everybody that you hated me and we faked being together, right before you came on my cock? I don't think so, Alina."

"Shut up, or I'll cancel our date."

"You already like me too much for that." As they descended the stairs, she wished she had a smart answer for that, but she was shocked that it didn't trouble her he was right.

Chapter End Notes

prekrati, mama - stop it, mom
lyubov - love

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I had so much fun writing this, it's probably a bit too long but i wanted to keep every detail in!

I live on comments, kudos, bookmars... anything, really! So please let me know what you think about it!

P.S. I'm about to add another chapter because they keep living in my head rent free, so stay tuned!

ii.

Chapter Summary

Alina and Aleksander spend a fun night together and when they wake up they find themselves blocked because of a blizzard.

Chapter Notes

I don't know how but I found myself writing about them again. I like so much seeing them in this context!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Alina went through the rest of the dinner half-heartedly. She kept smiling politely, answering questions about her studies and her life as pleasantly as possible, but her mind stayed on what had happened upstairs.

She still felt Aleksander's touch on her, burning like fire. It cost her admitting that she wanted him, after everything they'd been through. But she had survived being honest with herself, and she knew deep down that the heat she felt when she saw him was due to excitement and desire, not just rage and bitterness. Facing the truth and accepting that her feelings would have never been reciprocated was harder than masking them with hate, so every time he was near her, she didn't miss the chance to anger him. If she couldn't have love, she was fine with hate too.

But despite that, they had talked about a date; they even joked about it. It happened during the weirdest circumstances, so probably nothing was going to happen, but she surprisedly found herself eager to know him: the real Aleksander, not the one she despised. She enjoyed what she now recognized was their flirt, but also wanted something more. There was something gentle, pure in him, and she wanted to find it, feed it and keep it to herself.

Aleksander nudged her, and reality hit. She saw everybody's eyes on her, and she looked up at him, silently pleading for his help.

He understood. "So? Do you want to spend the night here and leave tomorrow morning?"

"Yeah," Mal intruded, "we can play some board games and spend more time together. Besides, if you say yes, Aunt Baghra won't hate you for taking away his golden boy," he said it playfully and everybody - except Baghra- laughed, but she sensed a hint of sarcasm in the last words.

"You can wear Aleksander's old clothes for the night, and tomorrow you'll leave. I know you have plenty to study, but it'll be so good to stay a bit longer with you. We don't know when we'll see you again, since Sasha took so long just to introduce you to us," Baghra said, giving Aleksander a chiding look. Alina thought of meeting his family again, but for real, knowing there could be a relationship not just between her and Aleksander, but also his mom and aunts and cousins. Before she could get too attached to the idea, she swiftly put away the thought.

Even Genya, Aleksander's little cousin, was slamming her hands on the table, hoping to convince them. Alina found herself in the difficult position where she basically couldn't say no, so when she looked up at Aleksander and saw him making no motion to refuse the invite, she shrugged and tried to look pleased, "then it's settled!"

Aleksander waited for everybody to mind their business to whisper to Alina, "if you don't want to, we can leave. I find it easier to handle just my mother than the whole pack, that's why I didn't say no in front of everybody." He turned towards her, "really, I've put you through so much, it's only normal to call it a night."

Alina touched Aleksander's arm, clearly just to keep the appearance, and shook her head, "don't worry, I think you're eager to spend some more time with your family, I can hold on for a night." But they were being too polite and friendly, and it scared her. So she got back to her usual smirk and added, "and this way you can drink some more wine to forget what happened earlier."

"Why would I? I have a beautiful mental image of you on your knees for me," he grabbed the wine bottle and poured her a glass, "you should drink to forget how much you wanted me. I bet you think it's embarrassing, but I find it quite cute." Then he raised his voice a bit and raised his glass towards her, "cheers, lyubov."

Alina tapped her fingers against the chair, too startled to answer rationally. The only thing she could do was chug her glass right away.

Alina was near the fire with Genya, one eye to the 7-year-old redhead trying to prevent her from getting too close to the fire, and one eye to the Darkling, who was clearly about to scratch her as she was trying to pet him. God, she didn't recall babysitting being so tiring.

"Come, Genya, why don't we go see what your cousins are doing?" Mal and Aleksander were on the opposite sides of the sofa at the center of the living room. They were both staring at the girls, and occasionally exchanged hateful side glances. Alina would have paid to be inside Aleksander's head, to understand why he had that undecipherable look when he was looking at them. Maybe he thought she was incapable of keeping the child safe and wanted to supervise them?

"Yeah! I want to play Monopoly!" Anything just to get her away from the fire hazard and the possibility of bleeding and crying. They reached for Mal and Aleksander, and by the time

Genya convinced everybody to play and they opened the game, she was already tired of it and seemed busy playing with a doll of Ariel. Were they still producing them?

"Lina, do you like 'The Little Mermaid'?" Genya asked, swaying the doll.

"A lot, Genya. It was my favorite when I was little! I loved the prince and the castle, wasn't it beautiful?"

Genya nodded. "I liked the dance," then she turned to Aleksander and climbed in his arms, "Sasha! Sasha, I want to dance! Let's dance!"

Aleksander, with a resigned face, stood up with Genya and waited for her to put her feet on his. He didn't try to turn her down, so Alina assumed he knew the only way to make her stop was by saying yes. "Just this once, little one, have I made myself clear?" She nodded and he held her hands before they started dancing around the room. Aleksander hummed some music and Genya laughed and squeaked every time he moved too fast, and she thought she was going to fall, but he never let her go.

But after three dances Aleksander collapsed on the couch and Genya, with many complaints, was escorted to bed by Mal, who Alina just discovered was her brother. Then she noticed Aleksander and she were the only ones there; everyone else had already gone to bed. She admired the beauty in the room: it seemed even bigger now that almost nobody was there, and it made the pieces of art stand up, but one more than the others.

Aleksander noticed Alina staring at him. "What, are you jealous? You want to dance too?" He stood up and held out a hand to her, an invitation she was so keen to accept she had to clench her hands. "Weren't you tired?"

"I never tire, but I had to fake it, or it would've ended like a revel: I would have danced to death."

She giggled but didn't move. He wanted to hold her and sway her all around the room. To extinguish the distance between them, needed just for once their bodies close, without any deprecating jokes and angry smiles. But to have it, he thought watching Alina who had no intention of standing up, there was just one way. "Oh, you don't know how to dance, I assume. Maybe you should stand on my feet too." At that moment, he couldn't lower his shield, but it was a necessary evil.

And just like that, she was standing. "I know it's just a trick to touch me," she faked confidence, "but I'll do it. So that you can see how nice it is to hold me instead of insulting me." She chuckled before putting some music on her phone, "but you already know it, don't you?"

He grabbed her and, "enough talking, Starkov," and closed the distance between them. He was the one who shouldn't have talked, or he would've told her everything he shouldn't have.

Alina felt his back muscles, his perfume that reminded her how just he felt inside her, and his look on her. She felt she could've fainted, but instead stood straighter as he placed his hand on her shoulder.

He was slowly brushing the small of her back with his fingers spread, and Alina was too focused on his lips ajar and all her nerve endings that were on fire to consciously move her feet. Luckily, Aleksander conducted so well that she felt like a puppet moved by its puppeteer. The only difference was that she was alive, willingly giving herself to him and marveling at how he pulled all the right strings. It felt nice being guided through something.

Just as she thought it, she lost her balance and fell backward. She saw the panic in Aleksander's eyes, but she was reassured in falling on the couch, her head and back on the settees. Her chest rose quickly against Aleksander's, who was on top of her. If it were possible, they were even closer.

They stared into their eyes for a few seconds, and Alina felt more naked than before. She felt his gaze indulging on her as if she had a secret answer hidden as his life depended on finding it. Their lips brushed so gently, it almost didn't happen. But it did happen, and Aleksander kissed Alina as if she was glass, he was afraid of dropping it and ruining everything, of hurting himself with the pieces. He leaned back, with his body still on hers, and placed a kiss on her nose. That was the most intimate they'd been, Alina thought, and turned red.

"I think you fell on purpose," Aleksander whispered against her cheek. "No," Alina muffled a laugh, and was about to tell him the truth: that she didn't mind him, in fact, she liked him and the dance was the most beautiful thing ever, she never wanted it to end. She wanted to beg him not to leave his hands off her, nobody touched her like he did, but she heard someone coming down from the stairs, and they quickly moved.

Aleksander grabbed her hand before Mal, who was now staring at them, could see anything. They said their goodnights and went upstairs. Alina felt almost drunk, but she thought the wine and the swaying had little part in it.

As they entered the room, Aleksander went for the bathroom. He washed his face and tried to compose himself in front of the mirror. He was bewildered by how the smallest touch drove him insane. He regretted agreeing to spend the night here: it meant he and Alina had to share a bed. First the sex, then the kiss, and now a night together. His bedroom was becoming his personal hell. But, he tried to rationalize, they had to sleep. It's not like he was going to be there for eight hours.

With this calming thought, he left the bathroom and found Alina on his bed. Trying not to pay any attention to the memories of few hours earlier on the bed, he fetched her an old pair of sweatpants that would have fitted her, one of his t-shirt and some towels, then turned the lights off and waited for her.

Alina lit up the torch on her phone, as she couldn't see anything, placed her clothes on his desk and, glad it was dark and he couldn't see her face with half makeup on - waterproof eyeliner was a pain to get off without a proper cleanser - seated on the free side of the bed.

"So," she said, deep down regretfully, "you stay on your side and don't touch me." She turned to him and turned off the torch.

"Are you afraid I will attempt your virtue? Because you're a bit too late for that," but still moved a bit on his side of the bed to give her more space.

Alina smiled as she slid into the warm blankets, and she wondered how come she was in the bed of the guy a couple of days ago she would've sworn was her nemesis, and felt comfortable in it.

As he heard Alina's breath steady itself, Aleksander prayed God he would be able to sleep, but just seeing her back covered with his t-shirt, 'Morozova' written on the back, he was sure he wouldn't have even blinked.

Alina woke up feeling petrified, chills sending down her spine. Thunders scratched her ears and bolts of lightning lit up the room.

Storms terrified her since she was little; she always snuck up in her parents' bed and only then felt safe going back to sleep. She always imagined being with them when this situation occurred, but this time, probably due to the new surroundings, she couldn't relax.

She tried counting, focusing on her breathing and grounding techniques, but since none of it worked and she felt anxiety building up in her chest, she gathered every bit of force of will she had and rolled on the other side, facing Aleksander, who was blissfully sleeping. She dragged herself closer to him and gently shook him by the shoulder.

"Aleksander," she whispered not too quietly, "I'm scared." He idly opened one eye, then closed it again and put one arm around her shoulder. Alina felt this as an invitation to get closer, so she pressed her body against his, her face against his chest and her feet against his calves. Only by hearing his steady heartbeat she managed to get a grip on her own and slid into darkness after hoping Aleksander was too tired to remember what happened.

When Aleksander woke up, the first thing he noticed was his hand over Alina's hip. Flashbacks of her waking him up hit him, but he wasn't sure it happened or he had just dreamed it.

Had Alina come to him seeking shelter? The image of her curled up against him made him smile and his heart almost exploded as he placed a kiss on her forehead, caressing her head.

That must have startled her, since she rolled on the other side and adjusted to his body, pressing her ass against his hipbone and stretching. That awoke something in him that hadn't totally gone to sleep.

Aleksander was considering how to leave that excruciating situation when he saw Alina's lip tugging. Then he grabbed her hip and whispered into her ear, as her half-smile died on her lips, "not so fun now, Starkov? Getting busted while rubbing your ass on me, just to tease

me?" He gently turned her to face him and shook his head, "naughty. I should teach you a lesson, fuck some proper manners into you."

Alina had to suppress a chuckle, since it was exactly what she was looking forward to when she woke up and felt Aleksander's erection against her. She didn't think he was going to sneak up on her and take the matter into his own hands, but now he had, and he didn't seem to mind the idea. It was clear now that they were at least attracted to each other, and if she wasn't going to have him as a boyfriend, why not have fun at least?

She pressed him against the bed and sat on him, hands on his warm chest, and said, "do you think you're in charge of the situation here?", but the moan that escaped her lips when she felt him, coated in his sweatpants, against her body, didn't let her strike as convincing.

Alina decided to take advantage of the situation and started rolling her hips against his length, enjoying the view of Aleksander tilting his head back and biting his lip.

She felt him pushing against her, grabbing her ass and squeezing. She liked the pressure of his fingertips on her, directing her movements and setting the right pace. "God, Alina, you can't do this to me first thing in the morning."

"Where's the attitude you had a minute ago? Are you already tamed?"

"You wish, Starkov. I'm just enjoying it while you do all the work."

She shook her head and went for a wet, sloppy kiss. Their lips met and he thought this was heaven: waking up by her side all snuggled up against him, not to mention the way she was working herself up against him. So when she moved away from his mouth and reached for his lobe, his neck and his collarbone, leaving a trail of saliva, he was sure he was about to die and this was God's last gift.

When she raised her head, she saw Aleksander loosely roaming through his nightstand with a hand and his eyes ajar.

"Wait, I got this." She giggled and stood up a bit, reaching for the condom he was looking for. "Wanna do this straight ahead?"

He reached for her and held her against his arms, "I've wasted enough time not fucking you. I need to catch up, milaya."

That made Alina shiver, and she was glad he took the condom from her since her hands were shaking. She didn't have to check to know she had made a mess between her legs, her cunt clenching at nothing, desperate for him.

Once he wore the condom while she undressed, he tried to stand on top of her, but she firmly placed a hand on his chest. "You said I had to do all the work, right?", she grinned as a wicked idea started forming in her head.

He nodded and she put a hand on his length, slowly lowering her hips until the tip was inside. She felt already so full she wanted to stay like that forever, but she felt delirious thinking

about him going deeper inside her, and greediness and fear mixed up.

Once she managed to lower herself completely, with his skin against her clit, she moaned and grabbed his shoulder a bit too roughly. She quickly moved her hand, scared to have hurt him, but he kissed her palm and put it where it was. "I don't mind it, Alina, it reminds me that behind this soft exterior, there's a girl who takes what she wants. And I like that about you."

She couldn't take it anymore. "I've decided I'm spoiling sex for you." She murmured through whimpers, his hand squeezing her nipple. "You won't be able to have a girl on your lap without thinking about me, naked and wet for you. I'm going to be all you'll ever think about when somebody comes on you, and you'll wish it was me again."

Aleksander wanted to tell her that it didn't matter, she was all he could think about anyway. The way she felt around him was nothing compared to the other girls he had fucked, useless attempts to satisfy himself as he couldn't be with whom he really wanted. They didn't stand a chance with the actual goddess who was fucking herself on top of him, anyway.

He wanted to let her know that and so many other things, but he was captured by the expression of sheer pleasure Alina had. He could feel she was coming and thrust harder inside her, until his flesh could touch her clit and give her a buzzing sensation. That turned him on even more and climaxed with her, until their bodies were a hot mess of panting and sweat.

He felt amazed by the way they matched, like pieces of puzzles Alina said she liked so much, by their capacity of driving each other mad with words first and then with their bodies; so when Alina laid on the bed next to him, he squeezed her arm and asked, "can we stay like that for a bit?"

The fact that she nodded and closed her eyes made him feel at peace.

Once they cuddled, Aleksander found the force to get up and was startled when all he could see from the window was a thick layer of snow. It seemed like it had snowed all night long and kept snowing. When Alina saw his puzzled expression, she quickly dressed and looked at the window. She saw a landscape perfect for a postcard, but worry soon took over her excitement for the weather. Were the roads filled with snow or icy? Was it possible to drive and go back to the dorm?

"We need to go downstairs," Aleksander ran his hand through his hair.

"Sure, but are there any clothes that might be my size? I don't want to go down dressed like I'm going to a gala night, but these" she gestured towards his clothes, "seem like I'm about to go into a street fight."

"Are you disrespecting my sense of style?" He arched a brow but opened a drawer. "These are all the clothes that don't fit me anymore, they should work for you. Pick whatever you like."

Fifteen minutes later, they were ready to get downstairs. Aleksander couldn't help but smile as he saw the table full of his favorite dishes: maple syrup next to pancakes, the pie his mother always baked when he was little, apples and strawberries in little bowls. This image took him years ago, when he was just a little boy visiting his grandparents, amazed by the lights in the Christmas tree and ready to shake the wrapped gifts, hoping to have a clue about what they were.

"Oh dear," Baghra greeted his son kissing him on the cheek and patting Alina's arm, "the roads are all blocked. I'm afraid you won't be able to return today." She was faking disappointment and he knew it, but Aleksander was suddenly too excited about what was becoming his new staycation to mind.

Alina checked her phone. "It probably won't be a problem, since they're shutting the uni down for a couple of days, due to bad weather." She scratched her head, trying to hide the perplexity on her face.

Aleksander grabbed her hand and they sat at the table. While Aleksander dived in the food, Alina stuttered for a second. She knew this was a rich breakfast for a family that reunited maybe twice a year, but she was sure it was also a bit of a display for her, to show her how welcoming they were.

Relieved by that, she started eating her pancakes, but it didn't last long before Genya surprised her by hugging her, and Alina placed her on her lap. "soon until Stop bothering the adults, Genya," Mal, who was right behind her sister, said, "'morning, guys."

"Hello! She's no trouble at all, she's so sweet."

"My mom told me you're staying, I'm sooo happy!" Genya hugged Alina. "Can we watch Cinderella?"

Finally, somebody who liked Disney princesses as much as her. "Later, sure."

"Do you know they have a big wedding?"

"Yes," Alina didn't actually remember the wedding scene, but there had to be one.

"Yes! They are so happy because they're in love." Genya nodded as if she *knew* love was that easy. "And because there are a lot of people and fish at the wedding." She seemed to think about it for a second, then spit up, "can I be a flower girl at your and Sasha's wedding?"

Alina looked up at Aleksander just in time to see him choke on his food.

Chapter End Notes

Next one is going to be the last chapter, so stay tuned! Kudos and comments are well appreciated :)

p.s. come say [hi on tumblr](#)

iii.

Chapter Summary

Alina and Aleksander try to talk about their feelings (it's hard to when all you do is have sex, ik) and have fun "studying" together.

Chapter Notes

it's the last one! Very very minor spoiler about Money Heist season 1 and 2 I guess?

Nothing is beta-read and I'm the only one who proofreads it, so please overlook any possible mistakes!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Alina was looking at the flashcards on her phone, thanking the Gods for having invented Quizlet, the only thing that let her study when she was away from her books.

After they all had breakfast together, everybody left. She could hear Aleksander playing the piano from the living room, people chatting and minding their business far from her. She could afford some despair, alone at the kitchen table. The finals were close, and she had programmed to study all day long for the next few days, but that was before she found herself locked at Aleksander's house. All she could rely on was her phone, which wasn't enough, but she had to adapt.

Baghra came in with a pile of clothes and frowned seeing Alina's desperate expression. "Don't do like that, Alina. I'm sure you'll pass your exam, I can tell you're a smart girl." She put the clothes on the kitchen island and patted her back, "I didn't mean to mind your business, I just recognized the app design. I can't remember how many times I've had the same conversation with Sasha. He always did well in the end and I'm sure you will, too."

Those words, which generally would've left Alina in a state of indifference or, at worst, annoyance, had a weird calming effect. It was nice having somebody who believed in her and thought so highly of her, even if those were just clichés.

She let out a breath and with it all the anxiety that had been building up inside of her. "Thanks, Baghra. I'm not so sure about it, though." She shrugged.

"Oh, nonsense," she dismissed her. "Do you want a hot chocolate? Always good to lift the spirits."

Alina nodded, so Baghra started taking stoves and ingredients. "I really had that conversation with Sasha many, many times. He's always been so smart, but so afraid to fail and let everyone down. Probably it was my fault for letting him wrongly believe his worth was based on grades. I love him more than everything, you know."

Baghra had her back turned on her, so Alina didn't have to mask her confused expression. She didn't know why she was telling her any of this, why she trusted her so much to share this confession with somebody she had just met.

"Of course," Alina reassured her, "I can see by the way you treat him: you're always so welcoming and kind. It's clear he's the light of your life."

"Yes," she snorted, and Alina could tell this confession was something she just didn't want to burden alone, not to share with anybody in particular, "after Sasha's father died, I clung to him, because otherwise, I wouldn't have made it. I had to remind myself that I was a mother first and a widow later, and my pain was second to my son's, even if it didn't feel like it. So for a time I might have been too suffocating, because he worried me. He cried all the time and refused to do the things he liked the most. He was just grieving, I guess. But seeing him in pain, even if it was normal and he had to if he wanted to improve, destroyed me. Maybe I should have given him more space." She could see some of her movements, so mechanical as she was focusing on something in the past.

"I'm sure you did the right thing, Baghra. You raised him to be a good man, so you have nothing to worry about."

"You're right," she turned and gave her a cup filled with smoking brown liquid, while sipping on a similar one. Alina noticed her red face and realized she had been crying for the whole time. She felt sorry for being too captured imagining the rough times she was talking about and projecting on herself to notice she was crying.

"He seems fine, now. I know he still has some demons, as I imagine you do too, but I'm sure together you'll fight them." Alina held her hand and squeezed it, and it felt so wrong. Those people, who had welcomed her, didn't deserve to be fooled by her, no matter how hard she wanted it to be more than a pretend. She didn't know whether she was angrier at Aleksander for proposing something like that, or with herself for being too excited about playing boyfriend and girlfriend to think this through.

"I didn't want you to be my psychologist, I came here to tell you I have clean clothes for you," she laughed, but it came out as a snort.

"Don't worry, it's good to let it all out."

She nodded. "On a lighter note, we really think you're a good match. Actually, we no longer believed you were real. My sister and I are a lot on the phone, and every time I'm on speaker and we talk about it, I always hear Malyen say, 'sorry, Auntie, he's faking it. There's no way he can land a girl that beautiful.' I knew he was just jealous." She shook her head.

At that moment, Aleksander entered the room. "Yes, he's always been jealous of me. What are we having for dinner?"

Alina was so interested in the conversation, she didn't hear the music stop. She also knew something was going on. "How could he say I was beautiful if he hadn't met me yet?"

"Sorry, Alina. We were just so curious, we asked for a photo of you. And he delivered. I think it was from Instagram, or whatever you guys use for communication."

Alina looked at Aleksander like she was seeing him for the first time.

"Enough, mom."

"I didn't say anything wrong!"

"I said enough, mom." He looked embarrassed. "With all due respect, you know."

Baghra's face smoothed down a little.

"Alina and I wanted to go for a walk. Can she use your shoes and coat? Hers are too light."

Aleksander didn't wait for an answer and yanked her to the door, while Alina tried to explain she didn't want to go out and didn't want to be so much trouble for her mom.

He basically dressed her and gave her his arm before going out, which she was reluctant to take.

"Do I need to remind you that we're a couple now and that, mostly, you'll fall in the snow if you don't grab my arm?"

She took it and grumped, "I think you have some explaining to do, regarding this couple-thing."

His quizzical look didn't surprise her.

"You know what I'm talking about."

"Okay, fine. It was a picture I sent after agreeing with you to spend the evening together."

"It didn't sound like it, though."

"It is the truth, though."

"Should we ask Baghra when it happened, just to be sure?" She moved back to the house.

"No no no no. Fine," he seemed pissed, "I sent it before we talked about it. But don't get any wrong ideas, it was a photo of you just because you're Russian, and I thought my grandparents would have liked it more. Nothing else."

"Then why didn't you pick another girl and tell her she was Russian? My face doesn't exactly scream 'Russian'"

He shrugged. "I didn't think about it."

"Oh, Sasha," she batted her eyes at him, "just say you're crazy for me, it's way more plausible."

"You want me to say it just so that your love is mutual."

"Asshole," she muttered.

"You like it."

She squeezed his arm until it hurt. "I don't."

He moved away and held his arm with his other hand, taking it to his chest. "You hurt me, Alina!" He hissed before bending his body.

Alina started laughing because he was surely faking it, but got so distracted she didn't see the snowball before it hit her face.

"Hey!" She shouted before cleaning her face.

They threw snowballs at each other, both laughing too hard to have a precise aim or make decent balls. That's why when Alina fell on the snow, Aleksander couldn't believe he had hit her that hard.

Worry took over as he reached for her and looked down on her. "Are you hurt?"

"No, but no thanks to you. Help me up, please." She held her hand and, as he reached it, she used all the force to bring him down. Eventually, she succeeded and he fell beside her. "Now we're even."

He tried to mask his laughter with a petrifying look. "You did it on purpose."

"This time, yes, but it was easy to understand: you're not that good of a shooter."

"Shut up."

"Make me," she smirked.

"I won't hesitate if it's necessary."

"I think it is," she slowly nodded. They got closer and their lips met. At that moment, nothing else existed. The snow, the teasing, the pretend. They both knew it was real as Aleksander sucked Alina's lip, and she felt his face warm against hers, despite all the cold. They stayed like that for a couple of seconds, with their breath brushing against each other's lips, before Aleksander smiled and suggested going back, since it was getting colder.

"We should take a shower once we're home, so we'll get warmer faster," he added.

"Together?" She arched an eyebrow.

"Maybe." But instead of going towards the house, Aleksander kept walking in the opposite direction and made sure nobody was there before taking out a cigarette and a lighter.

"Sorry," he said with the cigarette in his mouth, before cupping his hand to light it up, "I need the stress relief."

"I think you've had plenty," a smile tugged at her lips. "Yes, but it's never enough when family's involved."

She giggled, but then they stayed quiet until eventually Alina broke the silence. "You heard my conversation with your mother," she guessed.

He nodded.

"She really loves you."

"I know, and I love her." He took a drag on the cigarette and breathed out before asking, "do you really think I'm a good man?"

"A week ago, I would've said no. But now-" she shook her head, "I don't know. I mean, sometimes you're nice with me, and it's not enough clearly, not when you've always hated me, but around here you seem different. Almost good." She tilted her head, "what do *you* think?"

"Of course I want to think I'm a decent person, but I'm not so sure about it." He passed his free hand through his hair, "you know these things define you. In my case, I think it ruined me."

"I think it's an excuse. Hell, I know you're in pain, but you seem pretty fine, here. I don't think you're faking it, because you're nice to me even when nobody's watching. I think you're building up a wall when you're around somebody who's not family. You just hide your true self when you're not alone, and the fact that we've done you know what here with me, who I assume deep down you really don't hate, is the proof."

He was annoyed by her last assumption. How could she think it when the opposite was so clear in his heart? "You know I don't hate you, Starkov!" "Do I?"

"Okay, I might have overstepped sometimes, but I wouldn't have kissed you and slept with you if I had hated you. Damn it, I wouldn't have even asked you out or to do this pretend."

"Well, sex is just sex, and you asked me out while I had your dick in my hand, so I thought maybe you weren't that serious about it?"

"I don't go around promising dates while I have sex, Alina. I might have some casual sex, but it's always safe and the other part always knows what they're up to."

"Well, that's reassuring."

He finished his cigarette and littered it in a nearby bin, "what I'm trying to say is: you have a wrong idea of me and I contributed building it up. Fact is, it's wrong and I'll prove it. Okay?"

She hesitated. Deep down she hinted why he wanted to prove her wrong, but she didn't want to be illuded. "Mh, okay."

"Perfect, let's go home now."

When they got home, the heat - and Genya, who was dancing to the Money Heist intro - welcomed them.

"Isn't she too young to be watching this kind of show?"

"She is. She's just listening to the music, hasn't watched it." He hung the coats. "She'll be so grown up when she watches it, it'll be like an old times series."

"I think you're exaggerating. She'll watch it in a week and freak out about Berlin, just like the rest of us did."

"Yeah, he was awful."

"What? I meant he was hot."

"Do you like Berlin?" He asked, wide-eyed.

"Don't you?"

"I think he was the real villain. I mean, he molested a girl he abducted, so he doesn't strike me as man of the year."

"I didn't say he was good, just that he's hot and my favorite."

"God, you're deranged," he shook his head.

She lowered her voice, "I willingly slept with you, so yes, I am."

"You say it like it's not gonna happen again."

"I don't think so, no," she chuckled.

Alina saw the moment he had a lightbulb moment. He grabbed her by the arm and led her upstairs. When they found Baghra rummaging in the storage closet, he adjusted the grip and said, "Mom, I need to help Alina study, please don't let anyone disturb us." She gladly nodded and, once they entered his room, he carefully locked the door.

Alina frowned. "Are you locking me up to force me to study? It won't be effective. Trust me, I tried."

"This time it will, because we'll be playing strip-flashcards!"

He took her arched eyebrow as an invitation to continue. "I know you use flashcards, I've seen them at uni. So I'll be asking the question on the card, and if you get it right, I'll take off a piece of clothing, if you get it wrong, you will. First one naked loses." He laid his hands behind his back. "Also, since you say you'll be no longer sleeping with me, we'll both get dressed and go on with our lives once the game ends. Right?"

She couldn't stop grinning. "God works hard, but you definitely work harder."

"Let's not waste our time, love. Hand me the phone."

She unlocked the phone and handed it to him, hoping for the best but preparing for the worst. The flashcard had the name of a painting as a question and the name of the artist as the answer. It was no surprise that after three questions, Aleksander removed his shoes, his socks and the sweater he was wearing. It wasn't her fault he was asking all the easiest questions about Monet, Raffaello and Renoir.

"I don't think you'll flunk this test," he curled his lips.

"It's not my fault you ask all the easy questions."

He narrowed his eyes at that and started choosing the questions. By the seventh one, Alina got one right, leaving Aleksander shirtless, but three wrong, which led her to follow Aleksander's strategy, leaving her without shoes, socks and the sweater too. She counted their pieces of clothing and gladly noticed she was wearing three more than him: stocking, a bra and an undershirt.

Despite the situation, she didn't consider herself a potential winner: Aleksander's body was mesmerizing, and she knew it could only get worse. She got two more questions wrong, indeed. She knew the answers, but that handsome, half-naked idiot was distracting her by turning her on.

By the time Aleksander was only wearing his boxers, Alina was wearing only her undershirt and panties, and she was afraid he could notice how wet she was. There was no doubt he had noticed her hard nipples through her top. She had decided to take off her bra so that she had a tiny chance of not being topless.

"I can't believe you wear so little, it's freezing this time of the year."

He avoided commenting on her nipples. It was too easy. "And I can't believe you wear so much, you have way more chances of winning. Next time, we're setting a limit of clothes." *Next time?* "So, next one." He looked at the screen. "We have 'Ville-d'Avray'. Who painted it?" He was trying to be his most provocative, with his voice low while darting his muscles.

She tried to focus. Was it Corot or Courbet? How could she forget every time? Wait, she knew Courbet painted 'The spinner', and there was only one painting with his name on the cards. So it meant it had to be Corot. That's why she leaned forward and whispered,

"Courbet." She didn't want the game to be over, and feared a little what might have come next.

His face lit up, smugness all over it. "Ha! That's wrong, it's-" he looked down at the screen "Corot, whoever he is."

She motioned to lift her undershirt, but he stopped her. "Don't! Well, not that I don't appreciate it, but I would rather see you without your panties."

"You can't choose which piece I have to take off."

"Fine." A long moment passed while they looked at each other, and she finally took off her shirt in one swift motion.

Obviously, Aleksander's gaze focused on her chest, and he made it pretty clear that he liked what he was seeing. "I say we call it a tie," he licked his lips, "and move on to another game. More interactive, I'd say."

Alina didn't even nod, she just stood up and seated on his lap, her arms around him and their chest against each other.

"No girl in a painting can look as beautiful as you," he whispered against her ear, his warm breath giving her chills.

"I think you're quite a model yourself," she shook her head.

This intimacy was what made his heart ache. He wanted to hold her even tighter, until they became a single person. He already felt subjected to her when he saw her smiling, the image of her launching a snowball at him and missing, all laughter and snow in her hair. He felt completely enslaved by her mentally, and now wanted to feel they physically belonged together.

That's why he laid her down the bed gently, kissed her lips one last time and left a trail of kisses down her body. He didn't want to miss out an inch, wanted her to feel loved in every corner of her body. He worshipped her tits, squeezing them and sucking her nipples.

He felt her arching her hips against him, asking for more, so he leaned over her cheek and whispered, "you want more?"

She nodded frenetically. "Please, Sasha..."

"Please what?"

"Please, I want you, please..."

"Sssh, just wait a little longer."

He knelt before her legs and she automatically spread them. Aleksander didn't think he could ever get used to this sight, the most beautiful girl he'd ever seen panting and sweaty because he had on her the same effect she had on him.

He placed a hand on each asscheek and spread them even further to admire her folds. Her opening was slit and he couldn't resist placing a finger at the entrance. The simple contact made her whine, and she almost screamed as he fully inserted it. When he took it out, it was glistening.

"That's what happens when I play with you, milaya. You make such a mess. But don't worry, I'll clean it." He licked her from her asshole to her clit, and she pushed her hips to feel him more. His tongue tilted her nub, and she felt on the verge of tears by the electric sensation that was rushing through her body.

When he added two fingers and started pounding her while sucking her clit, she came on his mouth and their eyes locked while she shivered through her orgasm.

He kissed her on her forehead, "I think seeing you naked was the most beautiful thing ever, but this is the best." Her cheeks flushed, but she realized now she didn't mind being seen this vulnerable by him. On the contrary, she enjoyed this intimacy. "Again," she whimpered.

"So eager, I like it." He grabbed a condom from a drawer, "we mustn't waste it, it's the last one." He wore it and placed himself at her entrance, savoring the moment.

He slowly advanced until he fully entered, but the fact that he hadn't stopped made Alina feel too full. She placed a hand on his chest and he asked, "is it too much?"

"Yes," she nodded, "but I want more."

He was sure he was about to come once he heard it, but tried to clear his mind pumping restlessly inside her. She wanted more and he was giving it to her. He would've given her everything.

He hit the sweet spot she wasn't capable of reaching even with her dildo, and the overstimulation sent her crazy. When he started rubbing her clit, he knew he was leading her to another orgasm. "Be good, Alina, and come for me again."

His words were the last touch to push her off the cliff. Her hands reached for his back and scratched it, and she tried to hide her moans by biting her lip. When she was done, she was reduced to a wet mess. Her wide eyes and wet lips were driving Aleksander insane. She felt tight yet he move so smoothly inside her, and when he came he pushed harder than ever, until that his muffled screams mixed with Alina's.

Lunch went smooth, and the workers were spreading salt, so by tomorrow morning, they would be able to leave.

Alina felt finally free wearing women's clothes. They were Baghra's, but she was trying to focus on the positive things.

She was alone at the table. Actually, everybody was there except Aleksander, which was the same thing, seeing how much time they had been spending together in these days.

She thought he had gone to the bathroom, but once she heard the piano from the living room, she excused herself and reached him.

She saw him standing straight on the seat, yet he was so focused and so passionate, he and the piano seemed the merge.

There was no need to say he played masterly, but she was more attracted by the way he moved his fingers and pressed his foot on the pedals. He was wearing only a T-shirt and paid careful attention to his muscles and veins. She recognized the melody as "When I was your Man" by Bruno Mars and started whispering the words, afraid to disturb him and to be too out of tune. She had never been any good at singing.

He raised his head and smiled at her while keeping on playing, and she noticed sweat coming down from his forehead. She wanted to wipe it away with her hands. Instead, she put them in her pockets, aching with desire.

By the time he was done, she was seated beside him.

"Who broke your heart?"

He shrugged. "Life, I guess."

"It seemed more than just life. It seems blonde, tall and hot."

"I'm serious, I haven't been in a proper relationship since I was 16, if that can ever be considered one."

"Of all the girls you've been with, none of them mattered?" She tried to hide her jealousy with a chuckle.

"No." *Only you do.*

"I'm not buying it. Anyway, you're really good at it."

He moved his fingers. "I have skilled hands." He grinned. "Actually, I just wanted to play it while I can. Tomorrow we'll be back to reality."

"Do you mind?"

"It is what it is. But I really enjoyed this, with you."

She bit the inside of her mouth. "I liked it, too. Your family's really nice. Well, except Mal." She looked around to see if he was nearby.

"He never is." He rolled his eyes. "You know, it can be like that even when we're back at uni."

"Oh, I know, you owe me your photos and a date."

"Yes, but also we can visit here sometimes. I come here often anyway."

She laid her head on his shoulder, looking at the newly-set Christmas tree. "I think I can get used to it."

"Do you like it?"

"A lot." It was huge, and it only took an hour to set it. She stared at it and daydreamed about laying on the sofa, a book and a hot chocolate in her hands. She knew she was imagining Aleksander hugging her too, and for the first time didn't mind admitting it. She felt at peace with herself and at home in this huge villa, and it was the first time in a while. It was also the first time she felt hopeful about the future, and she could finally relax.

The end

Chapter End Notes

It's been amazing. Thank you to everyone who read, left kudos or commented on the story!

Also, this is the first story I finish, so please let me know EVERYTHING you think about it, I need it to improve my writing for the other stories I should have finished instead of writing this one, but they just had gotten into my head!

Now that I'm on holiday I'll write more (other stories but also about their date so stay tuned!!), and I hope to hear from you!

merry Christmas :)

End Notes

prekrati, mama - stop it, mom

lyubov - love

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I had so much fun writing this, it's probably a bit too long but i wanted to keep every detail in!

I live on comments, kudos, bookmars... anything, really! So please let me know what you think about it!

P.S. I'm about to add another chapter because they keep living in my head rent free, so stay tuned!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!