**You don’t love me!**

The dinner was arranged at seven o’clock in the evening, at Janne’s place. It was bigger, more spacious and had a decent porch, viewing the backyard with the tall, birch trees. Despite the season, it was still fairly warm; they could hang out all together there – and not only for a quick smoke. They could have a drink, even feast on some barbeque goodies, straight out of the grill, while the abstinent keyboardist would be sitting at the dinner table alone, watching the rest of the CoB enjoy their meal, their talk and a so-craved cigarette, behind the shut window. Alexi would then feel strong enough, to shout at him *“Nerd!”* behind the safety of the shut window.

Well… This was the only negative aspect about spending more time at Janne’s place. Alexi was obliged to rush out to smoke, which was bearable when the weather was still mild, like that day, but it definitively sucked when the snow had covered the whole yard and the surroundings and the chill wind was penetrating his skin down to the bone. But all the rules were set by Janne because it was still regarded as his house, a situation Alexi only hoped to change for the better finally, especially after the upcoming dinner they were preparing for Henkka, Jaska, and Roope. He wished it wouldn’t end up as another friendly, casual crash with their mates, devouring huge quantities of meat and beer, burping loudly, watching football, and eventually postponing making announcements, for the unknown.

This time Alexi had a whole agenda for the night – and this didn’t consist only of food and drinks with their buddies. He wanted to tell them officially that Janne and he were together, against the current. He had planned on offering them a whole banquet, all by his hands to show off a little bit to Janne – *“look, I don’t completely suck!”* It would comprise a starter pumpkin soup, a big cabbage-lettuce salad, grilled potatoes with some spicy seasoning and grilled pork chops and sausages for the main course, and an apple-crumble with plenty of cinnamon and ice-cream for dessert. Unheard of for Alexi!

“ You’re cooking? Fuck!” was Janne’s first reaction; he didn’t believe in his eyes when Alexi had prepared a real supermarket list with all the ingredients he needed. “Let’s see which hospital is on duty tonight, just in case…” he had teased him and the latter squinted, flipping his middle finger at him, mouthing his favorite words: *“Fuck you”.*

OK, he might not be the best cook, but that wasn’t because he was useless by default – he simply didn’t spend so much time in the kitchen. Soon this was to change, he mentally promised himself. He hoped he would be able to freely make “good-morning” pancakes to his loved one, when they were in Helsinki, on day-offs between gigs.

“ You’ve never tried my super awesome pancakes, that’s why all that bile…” Alexi responded at his irony light-heartedly as they rolled the supermarket cart into the vast store.

“ Well, that’s because you never wake up before afternoon – unless we are already late for the studio and I’ve been shaking you for …hours, maybe?”

“ That’s because we are always in a hurry and never relaxed, dude! Don’t you think that all the stress of hiding not to be seen together makes one …exhausted?” Alexi questioned Janne, with expectant eyes.

“ You are always exhausted, Allu…” Janne sighed exasperated and picked a packet of pork sausages from the shelf of the fridge. “How many packages do you think we’ll need? There are four pieces inside…”

“ Five’s enough I think. How hungry are you for a thick, big sausage with extra creamy sauce?” Alexi provoked him with a toothy smile across his face. Janne glared at him and he retreated his advances, catching up from what they were discussing before being interrupted about the sausages. “I was saying that I am exhausted, because you stress me! Don’t show affection, don’t lean too close, don’t touch me, they’ll see us, let’s stay at the bar till closing time because if we leave earlier, they’ll get suspicious-”

“ –They ARE already suspicious, because you always sneak into my bunk on the tour bus! Not to mention the hickeys you left on my neck that night before the San Diego concert!” Janne pointed his finger indicatively at Alexi.

“ So what?! You covered them with makeup, no big deal! And you know I get nightmares… Only you can save me…” Alexi melted with affection and stood on his tip-toes to reach Janne and give him a bear-hug.

Maybe he was expecting a fleeting kiss in return, but that was far from what he got back; Janne opened his eyes wide, appalled, and pushed him away embarrassed, for fear they might be witnessed.

“ Stop, are you nuts? What are you doing? We are in a super-market, for fuck’s sake! Old ladies wouldn’t approve of such courteous acts!” Janne imploded, his neck and cheeks suddenly red-hot.

“ You see what I mean? Jesus…” Alexi grunted disappointed and rolled the cart further down the aisle. “I’ll need a big jar of pickles and mustard… Top shelf, I can’t reach it, dammit!”

“ There you go!” Janne picked the product with ease and placed it in the cart.

“ Stupid people, what do they think by placing those huge jars so high? One can get themselves killed!”

“ It’s the least popular, cheapest tag, Allu. Your choice – not their fault. Bigger brands pay to be placed in the lower, more accessible shelves…”

“ So, I am obliged to either buy the popular shit that cost more for a smaller quantity, or I depend on a taller man, because my parents were stingy with a few centimeters!?”

“ Oh, they made a wiser placement of the missing centimeters, trust me!” Janne winked at him meaningfully and Alexi blushed.

“ Dude… Still, though, not appreciated enough to get rid of all that prejudice and hiding like THIEVES or OUTLAWS! As if we are doing something wrong!” Alexi spoke out loud and Janne motioned at him to be quiet, his turn now to take on a sweet, rosy color all over his face. “Chilly sauce, over there!” Alexi ordered annoyed.

“ Ain’t I here with you? Picking the things on the top shelf for you?” Janne jested with a tender smile on his face and stretched out provocatively to grab the chilly-sauce bottle for Alexi, along with a few packages of corn tortillas. “Besides, it’s you who blushed redder than this sauce merely at the reference of a FEW BETTER DISTRIBUTED CENTIMETERS! It’s you who is shy, not only me…” and Alexi scowled at him menacingly.

“ –What do you need the tortillas? They are not on the list!”

“ Yeah, but I want them. I wanna have burritos for tomorrow!”

“ Yeah, but I don’t-”

“ Well, you can eat something else! I won’t force-feed you!”

“ I thought we were eating together tomorrow…”

“ I’ve asked Antti to drop by my house tomorrow.”

“ Antti? You didn’t say anything – you didn’t even ask me! …Which means you didn’t even think of us spending the weekend together…” Alexi protested.

“ Allu, I haven’t seen Antti in …weeks!”

“ But we could spend our weekend together, like a real-” Alexi started formulating his sentence but Janne cut him:

“ –We can do this anytime! You can stay, if you want! Antti likes you a lot, he really admires you…”

“ Oh, for real? I don’t fucking care! Fuck him and his admiration – he can shove it up his ass!” Alexi shouted frustrated and paused in front of the dairy fridges.

Janne gave him a dirty glower as he picked three cartons of light milk and put them into their cart.

“ Dude, watch your mouth…” he only snarled at his furious, short partner.

“ What’s this shit? I want full fat milk, not thinned, fake shit!” Alexi burst out, already feeling pretty wired up with Janne.

“ Get it yourself! It’s not on the top shelf!”

“ Really? Thank you very much!” Alexi grunted and hauled three bottles of full fat milk into their cart, three bottles of strawberry-flavored drinking yogurt, two big containers of 35% cream and a couple of packages of plain, strained yogurt. They literally filled up the whole cart.

“ Hey, hey! What are you doing? Who are these for?” Janne questioned in astonishment.

“ For me-”

“ –They won’t fit in the fridge, dude!”

“ We can buy a bigger one, dude! How about this?” Alexi concluded triumphantly.

“ Don’t be silly! We don’t need all this shit!” said Janne placing the redundant dairy products back on the shelf.

“ We don’t? Now it’s ‘we’?”

“ Yes, Alexi” – Janne’s serious voice, calling him by his full name, pronouncing harder the ‘x’ for emphasis – “We don’t need all these things for tonight!”

“ Whereas we need three bottles of light milk for tonight, huh? To make cocktails-right…”

“ I want them for me! Not for tonight! Jesus fucking, Allu!”

“ Well, I want all these for myself, too. Not for tonight. Fuck you, Janne!” Alexi retorted and replaced the dairy products he had picked, back to the cart.

“ Fine. You can take them to your home, with you.” Janne stated annoyed at Alexi’s stubbornness and rolled the cart away.

They were already making a spectacle of themselves in front of so many ignorant, but curious strangers, merely by fighting over …not-spilt-yet milk!

“ So now I put my personal things in my fridge, in my home right? Separately, right? Maybe you want me to stay at my place tonight as well, after the guys are gone, huh? Kick me out?”

“ Come on, Alexi… Take it easy, for once… Why do you always have to take it so wrong? I didn’t mean it this way, you know what I mean…”

“ No, actually I don’t! You just asked me out of your home!”

“ No- I said the fridge doesn’t fit in all the extra things!”

“ Well, we can buy US a new fridge!”

“ For once, Alexi, be serious! We’re not here to buy a fridge! We have a dinner tonight with our friends, remember?”

“ Oh, I am being serious! I’m serious about US! ‘s just you who doesn’t care…” Alexi whined and took over the cart from Janne, pushing it further down the aisle, leaving the other man gaping at him flabbergasted.

“ What now? …Oh, come on, Allu!” Janne ran behind him to catch up with him. “Don’t be silly…”

Alexi didn’t slow down, to wait for him. He has literally running, pushing the cart with enough thrust, then grabbing the handler and letting his body surf behind it, like the cheeky boy he was.

“ I’m not silly! It’s you who never skips to remind me that I don’t mean anything to you…” he shouted back at Janne.

“ Oh, Allu… Please… And please, stop running with that damn cart in here! I can’t keep running after you through the whole supermarket! We are making a debacle of ourselves, it’s ridiculous and childish!”

“ Right- and you are TOO ASHAMED to show that we are together!” Alexi halted abruptly and Janne stumbled on him carelessly.

“ Allu!”

“ Sorry, sorry… I forgot to hide our relationship from the indiscreet toilet rolls and diapers! Crude witnesses – and we’ll be all over the news… Sorry!” – they had reached the paper section.

“ Shut the fuck up, will you?” Janne palmed his mouth to muffle his loud complaints.

Alexi sniffled in his hand with despair, mixed with disappointment. Janne’s smothering hand was soft and clean – and turned him on instantly; made him eager for the tall guy, perhaps he wanted to brush his lips against the humid skin and definitely run a wet tongue, to savor him. He hated himself for not being able to show some dignity, some self-respect, even self-restraint! Janne was humiliating him with his cruel, nonchalant stance all the time and he would be willing to ignore the belittling behavior, in order to yield to his charms on the first opportunity. How pathetic.

The first tears leaked out of control from the corner of his eye – and Janne noticed.

“ Hey, Alexi…”

He couldn’t hold back his tears anymore. No. The hell with it – may as well let Janne know about his great power over him. One glance at his crotch would have more to say than simple words.

Janne softened his grip and he came closer to him, almost enfolding him with his larger body.

“ Hey baby…” – which only made Alexi sob wilder now.

An old lady who was purchasing three big packages of incontinence diapers glared at them, a bit disconcerted. She either thought that Janne was a thug, harassing the smaller man – or she had assumed their actual status and felt disgust, contempt. Two men hugging together like lovers – how depraved! New generation gone wild, for sure… She rolled her cart quickly away from them and when their distance was safe enough, did Janne relent his grip on Alexi.

“ Hush baby…” he repeated tenderly and patted his hair with his other hand.

“ I… I can’t take it anymore… This hiding…”

“ Hush… We are telling the guys tonight…” Janne promised and hugged him with affection, kissing the top of his head. Alexi melted in his arms – and he hated himself even more for showing powerlessness towards his resilient boyfriend.

“ I don’t believe you”, he only expressed petulantly.

“ No, come on. You know that’s not true…”

“ I don’t… I think you’ll shy away and-” Alexi didn’t have the time to finish his sentence because Janne’s voluptuous mouth had covered his own and his lips were swallowing him with their smoothness.

The kiss was both tender and hot, gaining in intensity with every passing moment. He reciprocated him, of course, and parted his lips to let him in. Janne tasted clean and fruity, always delicious, to devour. The sensation made him murmur inanely with longing, which earned him Janne’s subtle smile. He could feel the smile shaping his lips as they were kissing.

“ Baby… Stupid baby…” Janne whispered tenderly and kissed him again.

Alexi’s body disintegrated within the keyboardist’s grip, his legs wobbly like jell-o, and his hands paralyzed, like the dangling limbs of a cotton doll. Only his heart was beating strongly with every passing moment.

“ Alexi? Is that you, honey?” a familiar voice interrupted their intimate session. Instantly they parted, blushing wildly to get caught.

It was his aunt. He hadn’t seen her for quite a long time, due to their constant touring. Until that day, of all days, of course, in the supermarket, where she had the chance to find out more about her little nephew’s life.

“ Aunt?” he muttered only. “ This… This… This is our keyboardist!”

Janne glared ominously at him: *keyboardist? All that fuss to be just the keyboardist now?* Alexi wouldn’t even dare to glimpse in his direction!

“ And boyfriend. We are together… Obviously” he said to the gaping lady and Alexi flushed redder than a well-boiled lobster.

Why – it would be the perfect chance to practice what he preached – *right Allu?*

The end

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19/11/2022-26/12/2022