Meet Me In The Sunshine

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Carl is on the way to the front room, book in hand that he's been meaning to finish. Weekends at Rachel's place are often laid back and quiet – Carl has learned it's what you get when your partner is an introvert, but he really doesn't mind. Quite the opposite, it's often a respite from his gruesome job and Jasper and Martin's unpredictable presence.

Because despite what people may think about Carl, he likes predictability and he likes simplicity.

Today, her flat isn't quiet, and he stops near the door to the kitchen to see what's going on. Rachel is standing at the counter, dressed in comfies, her hair done up in a messy ponytail. An old alternative rock song is playing from the Bluetooth speakers and she is swaying and singing along word-for-word with carefree abandon as she rolls something dark brown between her palms into small balls before she dusts it in what looks like cocoa powder.

Carl can't not stand and watch and think, gosh, how did he get so lucky? What he also thinks is how he never had this with Victoria. She didn't like getting her hands dirty and she didn't like preparing things in the kitchen beyond something you could just heat up. Somewhat ironic that she put so much effort into choosing their kitchen appliances and accessories.

What Carl has discovered about Rachel over the months is that she has a sweet tooth and she loves baking or making treats. There'd often be a homemade cake with their afternoon tea or still warm biscuits or some new recipe for sweet snacks she saw online and wanted to try. Carl isn't very fussed about food but he can't say that he's complaining.

She seems to have noticed that she has his undivided attention because she stops what she's doing and looks at him, her mouth curving into a smile. "Caught you starin', didn't I?"

He shrugs. "It's the view. Can't help it."

She points at the speaker. "Want me to turn it down?"

He shakes his head. "Nah." Then he edges closer, reaches for some of what he's now identified as chocolate mixture. He can get a fingerful before she slaps his hand away.

"Nuh-uh. You can have them when they're ready."

He licks the chocolate mix off his finger. It's slightly bitter, dark chocolate with a definite alcoholic undertone. Whisky, he guesses. It tastes lovely.

It tastes like more, so he reaches out again, but this time Rachel is faster. Her hands are smeared with chocolate all over, and first she holds the palms out to him threateningly, but now the game is on and he goes in for the kill with a smile and a chuckle.

She growls at him playfully, then puts her chocolaty palms on his cheeks. Before he can pull back, he's got the gooey stuff over his face, but he's soon rewarded with her reaching up on tiptoes, planting a kiss on his lips.

When he kisses her back, he can taste the chocolate, not sure if it's from his lips or hers, but it doesn't matter because now he leans in and goes in wholeheartedly. She returns the kiss but then pulls back and giggles.

He smiles at her mischievously. "What?"

"You're a mess."

"So are you."

"It's all over your beard."

He raises his eyebrows. "Don't you dare tell me to shave!"

She lifts up her hands defensively that are still smeared with chocolate all over. "I would never."

"Good."

Before he retreats, he dips a finger in the chocolate again, which Rachel scolds with a playful, "Out!"

He just laughs and sticks his tongue out to her before he leaves for the bathroom to get cleaned up. Yep, he's definitely a lucky man.