



Episode One-hundred-Seven:

A few days passed. Edward worked, as did I. I filmed with Tyler and Seth three days in a row on different projects. We mainly did cooking videos, but we also shot some more funny reviews with Tyler at his place with Lauren. I also finally caught up on all the pictures that I had gotten behind on. All the books that I wanted to make were done and ordered. I focused on my online store, as well. On average, I was making around two thousand a week just on that.

I couldn't bear to look at my account information. Though I knew that I was doing well, and that was all that mattered. The only bills that I was really paying were my part of the rent to Alice since all of my things were still there. Soon enough, I would have to make the trek back to New York. I was dreading the effort, though. It would make me depressed, I feared. It would be cutting the final tie to my old life.

Finally, it was time for my appointment with my new therapist. I nervously sat in the waiting room, playing with the silver swirling ring that Edward had gotten me for Christmas. It twisted and spun around my cold finger, my heart thumping in my chest almost painfully.

"Isabella," a handsome blond man with light blue eyes called from a doorway that led to a fancy office. I instantly stood. "Hello, Isabella. I'm Dr. Caius. It's nice to meet you," he said in a thick accent. He was perhaps Russian. I wasn't sure.

“Bella,” I corrected quietly as I followed him into his office.

“Ah! Bella. Good! Yes. Bella, you can call me Kostas,” he responded brightly, pointing to the bright red plush sofa that took up one wall of the room. There was a comfortable chair across from it with a small table beside it. On it was a glass of water and an iPad. “Have a seat. Would you like coffee or tea?” He pointed to an automatic pod machine on the counter across the room from us. “Or cocoa?”

“Hot cocoa would be nice.”

He quickly went to work on that, making two mugs of hot cocoa from packets. It was just Swiss Miss, which I was fine with. “So, what brings you into my office, hm?” He asked curiously, tearing one of the white envelopes open to pour into the bottom of the cup.

“Several reasons, actually. Um... First and foremost, my anxiety is getting the better of me. I’m on medication, but I don’t feel as if it’s helping.”

“Ah, yes. I saw that in your file. You don’t feel it’s having an effect at all?”

“Not enough,” I breathed.

“No worries. We will try another. We have options. I did research on the medication that you had a bad reaction with so that we can avoid such a thing in the future.” He nodded, putting the first mug in the machine for water. “What other issues?”

“Gosh,” I laughed tensely. “I’m not sure an hour is enough to list them. I have issues with PTSD, survivor’s guilt. I’m a widow. My self-esteem. I’ve just moved across the country away from all of my friends. I started a new career. Plus, I just found my birth family and learned my father is dead. And, I’m in a new relationship with not one, but two men-”

“Wait,” he stopped with a little laugh of his own. “That’s a lot of information. Two men?”

I actually didn’t mean to throw that out there right away, but I was just on a roll. I flushed a little. “Oh, yeah. I’m not cheating. We’re in a relationship together. I live with my boyfriend Edward, and we’ve been together for almost six months. And we just started dating his childhood best friend, Jasper. He’s currently living in Sydney, but he’s moving to the states to be with us around June first.”

“How did this happen? Online or...?” He asked curiously, starting the second mug. He was stirring the first. “Marshmallows?”

“No, thank you,” I smiled. He handed me the cup with the spoon and a napkin. “We were on vacation in Sydney. Edward is Australian, and we were visiting his family. We spent a lot of time together. They’ve always been very dear to each other. They were even roommates for years. But I got close to Jasper too. We’re both pansexual, and we bonded over that. And we both love Edward more than anything,” I grinned a little more. “We got drunk together one night, and one thing led to the other. In the morning, I realized that it wasn’t just sex for them. Well, for Edward. I knew that it wasn’t for Jasper.”

“And how does that make you feel?” He inquired, sitting down with his own mug across from me.

“Which part?” I laughed.

“Yes, it is a lot to unpack,” he agreed with a chuckle. “We’ll start with more than just sex.”

I took a small sip of the hot sweet brown liquid. “It’s a mix of things. Excited for the future and surprised. Not in a bad way. Edward and I connect on so many levels, I shouldn’t be shocked that we share something so fundamentally similar. I feel dumb for not seeing it sooner, though. That he likes men, as well, I mean. And I’m sad for them. That they weren’t in a place where they could share their feelings without a buffer, but happy that I could be that for them.”

He nodded, still stirring the spoon in his mug. It clicked against the sides. “How long have you been in a polyamorous relationship with him?”

“Over a month now. We haven’t actually been together for most of it, which has its pluses and minuses.”

“Such as?”

I stared into the swirling fluid, playing with the spoon a little. “Sydney... we were focused on the new exciting sex. Which, sure, is great. But that’s not what makes a healthy partnership. We’ve been forced to concentrate on getting to know each other more.” I laughed again, looking down at the cup. “Sex is still a factor, but it’s not at the forefront. We talk about our feelings a lot. Especially Jasper and I. He’s been very comforting the past few weeks.”

He picked up his tablet and tapped it so that it turned on. “And what has he been comforting you about?”

“Oh! Well, that’s one of the big reasons that I’m here. I recently took a DNA test. I was raised by my grandmother before she died when I was fifteen, and I didn’t know my father. My mother died when I was five of a drug overdose. And... I found my family. My real family.” Tears instantly sprung to my eyes, my nose stinging. But I held them back. “I found out that I’m Native American, which is amazingly cool. And that I have three half-siblings and an aunt and uncle. A grandfather who is the chief of our tribe, too! Which is great.”

“But your father is dead,” he added quietly.

“Yeah, it’s been terrific besides that. I am happy to know, but it hurts.”

“Why was your father not in your life before if I may ask?”

I swallowed, my mouth suddenly dry. Quickly, I took another sip. It was too hot to have a big gulp still. “My grandparents kept me from him because he wasn’t white. My grandfather tried to kill him, permanently putting him in a wheelchair. Shot him, actually. I think it’s what drove my mother to do drugs, so it’s like they killed her, too.” I paused for a moment, feeling a thrill of an angry tingle as it ran down my spine at the thought. “They hid me. I guess you could even say that they kidnapped me. My father searched for me his entire life. He died of cancer a couple of years ago, but my brother Jacob continued to look for me for him.”

Kostas leaned his mouth against his hand as he rested his elbow on the arm of the chair. He nodded thoughtfully. “Have you been able to meet your new siblings? Have you made contact with them?”

“Oh, yes! Edward planned a trip for us the weekend after we found out. He flew my best friends in to surprise me, and we took a private jet to Washington. I met most of my remaining family while I was there, and we talk on the phone, too. All the time. My sisters and I have been texting all morning about bugging our brother,” I smirked a little. “He’s having a baby soon, and they’re throwing the baby shower for his wife.”

Smiling, he tapped on his tablet as he glanced up. “And from your reaction, I take it that everything is going well with them?”

“Better than I could have ever imagined,” I admitted to him, rubbing my cheek with my palm for a minute. “I feel like there is a whole new part of myself that I don’t know, and it’s a little jarring.”

“As it should be!” He offered sympathetically as he leaned forward. “I must say that you lead an exciting life, Bella. I have so many questions now,” he confessed, thinking to himself.

“Yeah, this isn’t really something you cover in a session or two,” I joked.

“No,” he smirked. “Let’s see. Let’s go in a different direction. Career. Tell me about that.”

“Well,” I started, licking my lips. “I’m a photographer and have been pretty seriously for almost a decade now. And I worked in the non-profit field with my best friend. I helped her start her charity in New York. Or was, until about three months ago. Then when I moved to LA about a month ago, I began working with my boyfriend full-time in his budding media empire.”

He cocked his head to the side. "Media empire?"

"Edward is an actor," I smirked a little again. Once more, I played with the spoon and twisted it between my fingers. "How unusual in Los Angeles, right? But he's the real deal." I looked up at him. He was a very expensive doctor with loads of forms on privacy. I was going to have to trust him. "Have you heard of Eddie Cullen?"

Dr. Caius instantly lit up in recognition. "Ah! Yes! The voice actor. I enjoy video games. This is your Edward?" I nodded in answer, smiling to myself as I did. "He does more than that, though. Ah, short life-style videos online?" He thought out loud.

"Exactly. I'm making those with him now. His manager signed me a couple of weeks ago, and we have already gotten sponsorship offers. Soon he's launching a network with channels done by our friends and me. Jasper when he gets here, too. He works in production at a news studio in Sydney right now. Anyway, I actually started making them with him before we even began dating, but now it's full-time."

"You don't seem excited about that," he commented gently. "Is there a reason for that?"

"Oh, I'm really psyched. I'm just... scared."

"Of?"

"Edward is younger than me, and he is so full of energy. I'm worried that I can't keep up. Mentally and physically. I can't keep track of all the things that he's doing in his career. I literally fell asleep on the set the other day after I played an extra for three hours. He carried me to the car after working twelve hours."

He typed into his tablet, biting the corner of his bottom lip before he gestured at me. "What does it mean to keep up?"

I took a long sip, considering it. "I'm not sure exactly. I feel like I'm in this weird space between not doing enough and doing too much. I'm tired, but when I sit down, I hear my grandmother's voice telling me to go do something else. And Edward has all these grand plans for the future."

"Are they your plans, too?"

"Some of them."

"Such as?" He tapped on the screen, taking a long slurp before setting the white mug down on the table.

"Marriage. Children-"

He brought his hand up. "Have you decided to get married?"

I smiled. "Yes," I answered without hesitation. "But not yet. He would marry me tomorrow if I told him. But we're going to wait until at least October to make anything official."

"This makes you happy?"

"Very," I grinned a little wider.

"And you've discussed children as well?" Kostas continued to question.

My face dropped a little, and I sighed. "Endlessly. Edward is young. Like I said. Twenty-five. But he's so ready for kids, and marriage, and the whole nine yards. And I eventually want that too, when we've been married for a while, but I don't know if I can even have kids. And my sister-in-law is pregnant, and my one female friend here is pregnant. It's screwing with my head."

"Why do you think you can't?"

"I tried for years with my late husband, and we weren't able to conceive. His sperm count was fine when we had it tested. He died before we could find out... If it was really my fault. And I haven't tried to figure out for sure. Physically, I feel fine, so there hasn't been a reason to go to a doctor."

Dr. Caius nodded his head. "And when did your husband die?"

"Four years ago. A couple of weeks before his fortieth birthday," I explained in a meek voice. "Aiden had something called a PFO. It's a hole in the heart. He didn't know that he had it. Most don't and don't even need treatment, surprisingly. His just suddenly... tore his heart apart. It's rare, but happens."

He gasped. "How terrible! He died of a broken heart!"

"Literally," I smirked a little sadly, finishing my drink. "I honestly never thought that I would get into a relationship again, let alone far enough into one to have kids. I feel irresponsible not looking into it now. But I'm terrified to do so."

Sighing, he pushed his mouth to one side. "It is a hard thing. It's scary. Would knowing these answers make you feel any better?"

"I don't know. Edward doesn't care if we adopted, so it doesn't matter that way. It just makes me feel inadequate."

He sat back in his chair a little as he crossed his legs at the knee. "It is not uncommon for people to feel that way when they cannot have children," he mused. "But the ability to have them is less important than the capability to give them love. Your partner says he doesn't care if you adopt. Do you?"

I quickly shook my head. "That was my plan with my best friend, actually. In New York. We were thinking that once we hit our forties, we'd slow down enough to foster teenagers. Her non-profit helps disadvantaged youths, among other things."

"What is the name of the charity?"

"Culture for all. Fantastic organization. I'm super proud to be a part of it. I miss it terribly. I have so many friends who do it, and it's always just so much fun," I elaborated in a rush.

He wrote down the name, smiling. "I will check it out for myself. We're coming to the end of our time, Bella. So, I am going to go ahead and write you a new prescription. I've made sure it won't interact in any way with your birth control. I know that is a very big concern of yours. Understandably."

"Yes, thank you," I responded quietly, taking his little slip of blue paper.

"I would like to see you next week, yes?" He asked. I nodded in return. "Same time?" I nodded again. "Good, good," Dr. Causis replied, typing into his tablet again. "So, I am going to give you some homework. It is easy, though. Relax for thirty minutes every day. Time it, if you must. Read, nap, paint your nails. Play video games," he said with a little smile. "Whatever you wish. Write it down and how you feel before and after. Then bring it with you next time."

"Shall I start a journal?" I pondered, still looking at my prescription. "I had one with a therapist before, where I wrote three things that I was grateful for every day."

The doctor laughed. "Actually, that was going to be next week's homework. It might help you with your self-esteem and anxiety."

"I don't mind starting that now. I'll pick up a new diary on the way home."

He stood from his chair, and I did the same. "Perfect. I look forward to seeing what you have written. And I will look into that non-profit." Kostas extended his hand and offered it to me, shaking mine quickly. "I enjoyed speaking with you today, Bella, and I look forward to our time next week."

"See you then," I promised. I knew for sure that I was coming back.

Before I returned to the house, I went to the craft store and spent way too much money on journaling supplies. Pens, markers, stickers, tape, and a beautiful rainbow book to write in. If I was going to do it, I was going to do it all the way.