



Chapter Fourteen: The Carlyle

It was a full month before Jasper got two days off in a row. I wouldn't take his rest away from him. The only opportunity we got to spend time together was cuddling in bed late at night, usually. He needed this more than anything else. I loved it. I adored snuggling with him. I would always be his teddy bear.

We got up at his usual time, just packing an overnight bag so we could stay in New York City for the evening. It was a three-hour drive. We hadn't taken a road trip like this before, and it was nice. The scenery was beautiful, and we were listening to music as we held hands. We shared breakfast as he drove. It somehow felt cozy.

I gasped when he pulled to a stop in front of the hotel. It was in the middle of Manhattan. I recognized it from movies. Every single one of them showed it with a sweeping shot of Central Park. I didn't know the name until then, though. It was on the awning when we came in, but I missed it.

He got out of the car, handing his keys off to the valet before taking our shared bag. My boyfriend put his hand on the small of my back, smirking to himself.

The logo was on the walls as we came inside the building, The Carlyle. The insides were black-and-white marble. It was like stepping into the twenties or thirties with the grand architecture and opulent decor. I just stared at him.

“What?” he smiled.

“We are not in Dallas. A hotel like this in New York costs...” I trailed off because I had no idea. He made a face. He had made all the plans for the next two days, and I wanted to pay for parts of it, but he refused. Jasper claimed this was one of the times he was going all out, and he didn’t want to worry about my money. He made me promise the night before to not even try.

He spanked me with a wooden spoon until it, and I, broke.

It was so much fun.

“I told you-”

“I know what you told me,” I laughed. “I just didn’t expect to see Central Park from our hotel.”

Leaning in, he pressed a kiss to my cheek. “We’ll be able to see it from our room.”

Surprisingly, we didn’t look too misplaced in the hotel. We were comfortably dressed, but there were tourists in shorts and tank tops that showed too much despite it being in the low sixties outside. It was pleasant but windy, and way too cold for that.

We went to the counter to check-in. He slid his credit card over and smiled at the woman. “Dr. Jasper Hale.”

“Yes, Dr. Hale. We have your room ready for you and those items you requested. Is there anything else I can help you with?”

“No, thank you.”

“So, what are we doing today, Doc?” I asked as I leaned my head against his shoulder. “If you’re going to spend two thousand on a hotel room, we shouldn’t waste it.”

He chuckled softly. “It wasn’t that much.”

“How much?” I questioned as we stepped onto the elevator. We were all alone, so he pushed me into the corner and kissed me as he grabbed my neck. It was a distraction. “How

much?" I asked again with a laugh. I curled my tongue against his bottom lip, grinning wickedly when he pulled away. "Tell me."

"Half that," he remarked, smirking as he flexed his fingers around my throat.

"We could have stayed in Brooklyn, and-" I teased, but he shut me up with a kiss.

"No. Tonight's special."

"Oh," I drew out at his vagueness. "Are you really not going to tell me anything?"

Jasper kissed me again, holding my face as he pressed me as hard as he could against the wall. We just kept going up, our kisses deepening. His hands smoothed over my hips. The doors opened finally, and he took my hand.

"We're going to put our things away, and we'll have lunch because I'm hungry." I giggled, nodding in agreement. "And then we'll go to a museum for the afternoon."

"What about tonight?"

"You'll see."

He pulled the keycard out and slipped it in the slot, waiting for it to flash green before allowing me inside first. As promised, we could see Central Park from our bed. The vast windows overlooked the busy city. The sky was a beautiful blue with fat fluffy white clouds. It was stunning.

"Wow! Honey!" I gasped stupidly, glancing back at him. He was so proud of my reaction, his hands in his pockets as he leaned against the bed. I ran and tackled him onto it, giggling as I did. "It's so gorgeous!"

He flipped us so that he was on top, looking down at me with a big grin. "It was worth every cent for that reaction right there." His lips pressed fiercely against mine. I held onto his blond curls, enjoying every second.

"This bed makes me feel like I'm lying on a marshmallow," I joked against his mouth. "Oh, my god. You didn't have to do this for me."

"I did it for me. So I could see you act like a giddy little girl. It's my favorite."

"I have no idea what we're doing tonight, but I swear I will try really, really, hard to make it extra special for you," I teased against his lips before kissing him slowly. My hands skimmed down his sides to his ass.

“I have no doubt, darlin.” Jasper kissed down my chest and stomach until sliding off the end of the bed to stand. I pouted a little as he held his hand out to me. “I’ve got something to show you.”

He brought me to my feet and walked me over to a table. In the center was a bouquet of roses and a giant pink box. It reminded me of the one he had gotten after the meeting with the publisher, but much bigger.

Jasper flipped it open to reveal an assortment of tiny cakes. They were all very different and beautiful, decorated elegantly with frosting, chocolate, and fruit. There were at least a dozen of them.

He kissed my neck from behind, his hand going around my waist. “Just a hint at how much aftercare I think you’ll need tonight.”

I giggled like an idiot. “Oh, my god. Yay.”

Chuckling too, he pecked my ear. “Later, though. These are for tonight and tomorrow. We have reservations.”

We left the hotel and walked the busy streets together. He knew what direction to go, leading the way. Jasper took me right away into Central Park. The crowds thinned out as we traveled a tree-lined path. He was so quiet.

“Are you okay?” I questioned gently.

“Yeah,” he swore promptly. “Just excited about today. And a little overwhelmed. I’ve been thinking about this for a while now. And it feels like it’s going really well.”

“Yes, it is.” I paused when we got to a beautiful set of statues. I recognized them right away, as did Jasper.

“Alice in Wonderland. A classic. Just like your books will be someday,” he breathed, smiling as he did. He squeezed my hand. I realized then he had come this way on purpose.

I wrapped my arms around him, grinning like the Cheshire cat. “Oh, you are laying it on so thick, Dr. Hale. Don’t stop. I love it.”

He laughed as he pulled me closer. “Before we get to the restaurant... I have something for you.” He got out a tiny, baby-blue box from his pocket. “Since you’re enjoying this so much.”

Beaming, I took it from him. Afterward, he walked behind me, his fingers moving along my neck. I opened the package, revealing a miniature rose gold key that went perfectly with my lock. He unclasped my necklace so he could put it on before securing it back in place.

“Perfect,” he praised as his fingertips traced the chain.

I couldn’t say anything. I just turned around in his arms. Kissing him deeply, I felt as if I would cry. “I adore it. Thank you.”

Jasper rested his forehead against mine. “Good. I’m glad. I hope this makes up for me leaving you alone so much.”

“Oh! You don’t have to make up for anything. I love what we have here. You know that.” I promised, touching his cheek. He beamed at me, quickly nodding.

“Yeah.” He cleared his throat roughly. “Come on. Lunchtime. We don’t want to be late.”

It was just a short walk to our restaurant. It was Loeb Boathouse, right in the middle of the park, by the bright green pond filled with boats.

After lunch, we walked to the Museum of Modern Art. It reminded me of the day we went to the one in Dallas, but only a little. Our world was completely different from then. I was honestly terrified back then as we strolled through the white halls together. None of that remained. My man had more than proven himself.

When we got back to the hotel that afternoon, Jasper told me to get dressed up. He wanted me to take a shower, and to do my hair and makeup, too. He washed up quickly before leaving me to get ready.

He came back to the room, clad in a nice suit while holding two bottles of champagne. I was just finishing. He grinned when he saw me, walking over to the fridge to make sure they were cold for when we returned.

Taking my hands, he brought each up to his lips to kiss lightly. “Sometimes, I’m still blown away by how gorgeous you are and how lucky I am to be allowed to occupy the same space.”

I giggled stupidly because I didn’t know what else to do or say. I believed him. He made me feel more beautiful and special than I ever had before.

“I can’t wait to eat cake off of you tonight,” I eventually replied, pulling him down to me for a fleeting kiss. Since we were dining out, I only put on clear lip gloss. I didn’t care if I messed it up.

His hands slid to my waist. "Me too," he remarked with a chuckle.

We took a taxi to the restaurant he had selected for dinner. Once again, we had reservations. This one was called 'The Modern.' It was a bougie place with six-course meals. Right away, as we sat, Jasper ordered a bottle of wine for us to share and a martini. He gulped it down quickly and asked for another.

I held his hand. "Are you okay?" I inquired again, the second time that day.

"Yeah," he immediately responded. "I'm just a little anxious. Don't worry about it, darlin'."

"Don't be. Today has been perfect," I assured him, practically cooing the words before kissing his cheek. He leaned in my touch. "It's already been magical."

He relaxed some in his seat. "Good. I'm glad."

Two martinis and the wine didn't help, though. He seemed to be squirming in his chair. Finally, the bill came. Jasper took a deep breath, steeling himself, and looked at me seriously.

"So, I wanted to discuss something with you, and if you don't want to, feel free to tell me no," he began.

"Oh, my," I started in a joking tone. "What ghastly things do you wish to do to my body?"

My boyfriend laughed awkwardly, sitting back in his seat. "No. I'm being sincere right now. Give me this."

I giggled softly. "Okay, I'm sorry. Go ahead."

He licked his lips and took a deep breath. "I just... I just want to start by saying that these past few months with you have been incredible. I didn't realize when I asked you to be mine, that things would move so fast. I didn't mean them to," he hesitated. Quickly, Jasper cleared his throat. "Until I met you, I didn't know this was what I wanted, and it feels like a gift. Bella, you are literally my fantasy, and I love you more than anything on this earth. And I will until the day I leave it."

"I love you, with all my heart," I swore.

"I know. You're fantastic at showing me every single day. That's why I wanted to make today so memorable for you. You're putting up with so much."

I rolled my eyes. "Please. I feel like I'm on an adventure."

“Good. Um...” he drew out. Jasper licked his bottom lip again. “I was wondering, or rather, I hoped you would move in with me when we get back to Dallas. I know we haven’t really talked about what happens after this, but I want that to be our next step. And I totally understand if you need some time to consider it, and I don’t expect an answer right away.”

Nodding my head gravely, I peeked at him from underneath my eyelashes. “Okay, let me think about it a little.”

Instantly, Jasper looked panicked, but he tried to keep it from his tone and expression. “Oh! Yeah, of course, darlin! Take as long as you need-”

Giggling, reaching for his hand. “We’ve been living together for months. Yes. I’ll move in with you, you idiot.” I smirked, realizing this was why he had been anxious all day. Jasper had been building up to this moment.

He laughed, letting out a huffing breath as he leaned forward. Running his fingers through his thick hair, he glanced up at me with a small smirk. “First, I love you so much. Thank you. I can’t wait to have a real home with you. Second, I’m going to beat your ass for calling me an idiot.”

“Oo! Right now?” I asked cheerfully with a big devilish grin.

Retrieving his credit card, he shoved it hastily into his wallet. “Yes, right now. I’ve been freaking out for a week about this, and you make jokes like the little wise-ass you are,” he chided. Jasper wasn’t angry, though. We were about to have a lot of fun. Grabbing my chin, he yanked me towards him for a deep and forceful kiss.

“Why were you?” I asked when he pulled away, resting my forehead on his. “You had to know the answer. I’m yours. I belong to you.”

His fingers wrapped around the back of my neck, pushing his lips against my forehead and then my nose, brushing his own along it. “I feel the same way.” We kissed for a long minute before he stood up, taking both of my hands. “Come on, little girl. You have such a rude mouth. I think I’ll have to find something for it to do.”