



## **Episode One-hundred-forty-one**

Edward woke up excited about the baby shower. It was... a little strange, to be honest. It wasn't exactly the type of party men got enthusiastic about normally. Perhaps Jasper was right about getting him a pet. He needed something to focus that kind of energy on.

Before we left, we packed our bags for the weekend. There was an entire plastic tub of sex toys. We didn't bring much in the way of clothing, though. It all fit in the same suitcase.

I had gotten Lauren and Tyler a gift that was a little overboard. I might have had too much fun shopping in the baby section, doing a ten-minute spree where I just grabbed everything I thought was cute. It was so cheap for babies, and I knew I had the money to blow. I got clothes that were unisex in larger sizes since I knew everyone would give them newborn things. I wanted to be different. Also, I would take pictures at the event while Jasper, Edward, and Seth all filmed it. They would make it into a video. It was his best friend's present to them. It was very sweet.

We showed up early to help them set up. The affair was being held at a rented pavilion by the beach. Her friends were helping decorate, and they were getting the whole thing catered. Lauren was in charge of the food, by choice, and she went nuts. It was a vegan calorie bomb feast. It was a thirty-foot long buffet that ended in several kinds of cupcakes because she

couldn't decide what she wanted and got them all. And for once, she could eat everything at a party without worrying about it destroying her innards.

As it got closer to the starting time, Tyler, with the help of Edward, brought out two enormous boxes from the back of his car. They were elegantly wrapped with white paper decorated with blue and pink hearts. They were put under a sign that said 'boy or girl?' with matching balloons. Streamers dangled from everywhere. Her friends had even found confetti that was edible and dissolved if soaked in water for too long, so they could use it without hurting the environment. It was light and floated around whenever the wind picked up. It was dusted on every surface.

I looked at Jasper when we had a second alone. Everyone seemed to have a job to do. Edward was doing the heavy lifting, moving tables around. Our boyfriend was following me to get B-roll for the video while I took photos of her friends and family preparing for the day. I already had over five-hundred. "Please don't let him do this for me when we have kids. Reign him in."

He snorted. "How?"

"Good question," I mumbled and snapped a picture of him smiling. "At least make it not frilly for me. Maybe something elegant. You know, like yoga pants and hot wings."

Chuckling, he winked at me.

The star of the show arrived right on time, being escorted by her mother and mother-in-law. They helped her from the car, scooting down from the high SUV. Waddling, Lauren's ankles were visibly swollen. She was wearing the long, flowered dress that we picked for her photoshoot, and the wind whipped it around her legs.

We all did our parts, snapping pictures and filming as she walked towards us. She flushed a little. Tyler rushed to her, taking her hand. He quickly brought her into a kiss, whispering in her ear. She squeezed him back tightly, leaning into him.

She got passed around, hugging and kissing all the hundred or so people that showed up for it. Our friends were loved. The table of gifts was massive, stacked high with boxes and bags. There were three diaper cakes. One pink, one blue, and the last yellow and purple. They had at least four full packages of diapers with just bows on them.

They pulled out none of the stops to make sure they had everything they needed. There was nothing she could want for. The poor woman looked exhausted less than thirty minutes through.

“I’m so glad we’re eating first,” Lauren mumbled to me when she got a second to breathe. Her hand was on the bottom of her belly, holding it up. She pouted at my camera, and I took a close-up picture.

“Aren’t you ready to find out?” I teased gently. She just shrugged and picked up a plate. I giggled as she put two veggie burgers on it. “Those look good.” Smiling, she held it up to her nose playfully to sniff. I snapped her photo again, making her laugh. Then she scooped up some vegan mac and cheese and filled the rest of the dish with it. “I don’t suppose you’d help me fill up another?”

“Sure,” I laughed, picking up one of the disposable dishes. “Just tell me what you want.”

Tyler was visibly dying the entire time.

He was sweaty and wiggling in his chair beside her at the front table that they shared with their families. The poor man had been keeping it a secret for ages and was about to explode. Either way, he seemed happy. He kept laughing, maybe a little too loudly. I was really surprised no one had blabbed about it.

“Okay, so before we get to dessert... IT’S TIME!” Lauren’s mother sang into a microphone someone had brought. She stood in front of the crowd, holding her hat on her head with her other hand to keep it from blowing away.

Lauren despised every minute. Our friend didn’t have any desire to be in front of all these people. She wanted to be eating cake. But Tyler was beaming. He took the mic from the older woman.

“First, I want to say I love you, and I am so excited to be on this journey with you. I’m glad we’re going to get to share this. Thank you for everything you do, and I know you will be a wonderful mother,” he told her as he looked directly into her eyes as she stood beside him. Her hands were behind her back shyly, rocking on her heels a little.

Pouting her bottom lip, she grinned. She was attempting not to cry. “I love you, too,” Lauren breathed. “Thank you for trying to make this special.”

He lowered the microphone. “Gotta make up for eloping.” The crowd laughed. He looked at them, bringing it back to his mouth. “Here’s your big party.” It got louder. He chuckled too, rubbing a stray tear away from his cheek. “Okay, so here’s how this is going to work. One of these is the baby’s gender, and the other is a surprise.”

“Oh, so there’s a gift in there?” She beamed.

“Yup.”

“Oo...” She got a little excited. “Is it a puppy?” She peered at the crowd. “We’ve been talking about it for a while. I think it would be good to have them grow up together.”

He made a face as if he was pretending to think about it and then shrugged. “You are... surprisingly close. There’s not a live animal in there, at least, but it might be a picture of one. But you’ll see. Okay, so pick a box to open first.”

She stood behind them, thinking. Finally, she went with the right one, tapping it with her finger.

“Ready?” He looked at everyone then back at her. We were primed for her reaction. I never stopped snapping pictures. He lifted the lid off the large package, and pink balloons rose from it. One of them had an ultrasound with the word ‘girl’ on the bottom.

Lauren screamed and jumped with her fists in the air. “Yes! We’re having a girl! It’s a girl!” She then began to cry in earnest. She hopped into his arms, hugging him tightly. He was crying, too. He held her, kissing her deeply. Their families took turns embracing and kissing her, telling her how happy they were about it. Their daughter would be beautiful with lots of curly hair.

“Okay, okay, okay,” Tyler said with a little laugh as he rubbed his hand over his jaw to get the errant tears. There were so many that they were running down his neck. “Are you ready for your surprise?”

“Yes!” She giggled, holding her stomach as she rocked on her feet again. She was much more excited than she was before.

“Do you want to do this one?” He asked. She nodded excitedly, going to the box. Lauren was so sure she was about to get a new pet. She removed the lid and blue balloons lifted into the air right in front of her face. One of them had an ultrasound that said ‘boy’ on it.

No one did or said anything. Lauren’s mouth hung open in confusion. She slowly looked over at her husband. He just beamed, waiting for her to figure it out.

“It’s twins! Congratulations!” Edward called to her. She turned to look at him and the camera he was holding directly in front of her. He was right there, waiting for this exact moment.

She spun around to Tyler and punched him with all of her might in his arm. It actually made him stumble backward. “YOU’VE KEPT THIS FROM ME FOR WEEKS?!” She shrieked.

Jasper laughed under his breath and took a step forward with his camera. I started taking pictures again. My finger had slipped off the button as I gawked. This was going to be a funny video. They were definitely putting it on YouTube.

“Ow,” he whimpered, rubbing his arm.

“We... We’re not ready for two. We only ordered one of everything. How-How are we-” She began to panic. “Car seats and cribs and-”

“Actually,” Edward piped up. She twisted to look at him, wondering why the hell he was speaking at that moment. I was pondering that, too. “You have two. I bought duplicates of everything on your registry. It should arrive on Monday. Congrats.”

Everyone was perfectly still while they waited for her to react. Lauren brought both of her hands to her mouth. There was so much tension in the room. “Oh, Eddie. Thank you. You knew, too?” She breathed softly. He nodded. “For how long?”

“Uh, the beginning. I needed to talk to someone,” Tyler admitted with a sigh. “He’s the only guy friend I know who’s been around babies before.”

She looked at both men before finally hugging her husband. “We’re going to have twins,” she sniffled. “What the actual fuck, you son of a bitch? How could you keep that from me?” She whimpered in his chest so only he could really hear her. I only could because I was so close with my camera. Her fingers curled tightly into his shirt, holding onto him.

“Sorry,” he chuckled at her attitude. “Isn’t that cool, though?” She nodded a little.

“Yeah,” she whispered. Then she perked up. “Oh, god! That’s why I’m so fat!”

Laughing, he leaned his head back. “Yes. Yes, it’s obviously because it’s twins.” He nodded in agreement, gazing at her lovingly once more. “Are you ready for some dessert now?” She swatted him again.

When we had a moment, I pulled Edward into a kiss. Smiling, he brushed his fingers through my hair. “You’re an amazing friend.”

He shrugged bashfully. Jasper was right behind me. “Kiss him for me, please,” he whispered in my ear, leaning in so close that his lips were almost touching my skin. Nodding, I lifted on my toes to give our boyfriend a deeper one.

It took an hour for them to open all of their gifts, oohing and awing at everything. Most of it was neutral since no one knew. They would have plenty of stuff for both of them. These kids

would be so loved by the best parents. I wasn't sure how their little bungalow would handle all their new gear.

Seth was quietly filming the entire time. He stayed on his feet, moving around to get the best shots. He wasn't talking too much.

"Are you okay?" I asked gently.

"Yeah," he sighed. His eyes were unseeing as they stared ahead at the crowd. "Just surprised he didn't come to me. I mean, I get it. Eddie is the baby master among us. I don't know. So much is changing. It's not even my shit, and it's overwhelming."

I touched his shoulder, making him look at me. "It's because you care about your friend so much. It's okay. You'll be a great uncle, you know that?"

He made a face and laughed, shaking his head. "I'll be a bad influence."

"We all need one of those, right? Life would be boring otherwise."

"Yeah," he grinned slightly. "You're right. We do."

After the boys gave all of their footage to Seth, we left the party to go to our cabin we rented. The sun had just started to go down, and it wasn't too late in the evening. We were planning on stopping at the grocery store on the way there to stock up on supplies. It had a full kitchen and a grill for us to enjoy. We wouldn't talk to or see anyone else for as long as possible.

Edward rested his hand on my thigh, smiling. He was in a wonderful mood, not that I could blame him. So was I.

"You're so pleased with yourself," Jasper teased, rubbing his shoulders from the backseat. "That was sweet what you did for them."

Shrugging, he tried to act as if it was nothing. "Aw, I only wanted to make sure they have everything they need. They don't know it yet, but when the babies are born, I'm going to give them each fifty thousand for when they turn eighteen. Plus, give him and Seth a bonus because they both deserve it. I've already got it all in the works."

I looked at Jasper, and he was gazing back, his eyes wide. "Darling, that's a lot."

"College is expensive. I was actually thinking about giving more, but I don't know what the education system in America will look like then. That should be more than enough to get a car and get established as an adult, I think."

“More than enough,” I agreed. “You’re very generous.”

“They’re my friends, and if I can take some of their parental worries away, I will. They’ll have a million details to stress about, but they’ll never have to worry about that.” He nodded his head decisively. “This is the best part of being rich,” he admitted, glancing over me for just a second. “My parents aren’t wildly generous people, but my grandparents are. And I always thought about all the things I could do, if only…” He trailed off. “And now I can.”

“I am so glad your act of rebellion is kindness.” Jasper touched his cheek from the backseat. He leaned his face into it without taking his eyes off the road.