



One-hundred-forty-eight

The next morning, we both got up with our boyfriend before he went to record for the day. We had things to do too. I enjoyed watching them work out in the gym- one doing weights while the other ran until they were dripping with sweat.

Seth showed up right on time. We were finally about to film our murder shows. We were both excited. It was going to be so much fun. Jasper would film and edit it all.

“I love that you always have coffee waiting for me when I arrive,” our friend mumbled as he went to make himself a cup. “I don’t even stop at Starbucks on the way anymore. This is so much better.”

“She needs to produce a video on it. How to make it and whip it into fancy drinks.”

“I think it’s already on the list,” I offered, looking at my research. Though I had thought I did enough, I decided to do extra people because I wasn’t sure the ones I picked were good enough. It was making me go back and forth in my mind. I had a binder full of information.

He nodded. "It is. But I think it would be popular, and we should move it up."

"Well, Mr. Hale, I trust you. Tell me what to do and when to do it," I said before taking a sip of my drink. He raised his eyebrows at my wording. "You're the one with the experience. I want you to teach me."

"Would you like me to go through the list to put notes next to the ones I think would be best?" He offered. I could see it in his eyes that he was trying so hard not to be a pervert. It was an arduous task.

"Yes, please." I winked at him so Seth couldn't see.

Our friend clapped his hands together. "Alright. I'll get started setting up."

"I've got it ready!" Jasper promised. "You wanted the green screen background, yeah?"

"Yeah! Thanks. Awesome. Well... I guess, let's begin, huh?"

He and I sat beside each other at the desk with our printouts of information and questions. He pulled out a pouch with highlighters and pens for him to make notes with.

"So, who's going first?" I questioned.

"You can."

Jasper bent behind the camera, adjusting it. "You should do the intro then."

"Sounds good," he agreed. He sat up straighter, waiting to be counted off. "Hello, everyone. My name is Seth, and this is Bella, and today we're talking about something most foul. Murder."

"Dun-dun-duh... Cue cheesy horror lightning sound effects," I said dryly.

He laughed softly. "You know that has to go in now." I giggled wickedly as well before shrugging. "So, we've gone to a few haunted places before, but this is different for us."

"True crime is something both of us are really interested in, and we thought this would be... not fun, but interesting."

Seth scrunched up his face. "It's a little entertaining to chat about." He pinched his fingers together. "It's kind of like talking about movie monsters," he admitted.

“Yeah, when you look at it like that, it makes it feel very much removed from reality. But we just want to start by letting everyone know that we do not idolize these people.” I glanced over at him, and he nodded in agreement.

“No! Not at all! In fact, I plan to mock the fuckers the entire time. We will never in any way disparage the victims or their families, no matter what walk of life they came from or what they were doing before they got killed. They did nothing to deserve it, and we talk about these villains so we can hopefully gain the knowledge to avoid them. So, do you want to get us started with our first monstrosity?”

I flipped to a certain page. “I wanted to begin with something rare in the killer world... a female murderer. And to make it even better, she’s from Australia. Or maybe it’s worse.” I laughed, then made my eyes wide. “This one is... bad. So awful.”

“Oh, ho ho... If this is what I think it is, this is terrible,” Seth declared in an excited voice. “Are we about to talk about human skin curtains and cannibalistic Sunday dinners?”

“WHAT?!” Jasper spoke loudly from behind the camera. His eyes were gigantic. Though I had sent most of my basic notes to our friend, my boyfriend had not read them yet.

“Uh, yeah,” he replied as he nodded his head, grinning. “This shit is cray-cray.”

“I hope that stays in the video, too,” I giggled. “So, I have some pictures to put up on the green screen in post-production about who we’re talking about.” I brought it up on my phone and showed it to my man. “It’s all in the files for you.”

“She looks like every Aussie mum from the nineties,” he mumbled as he handed it back.

I slipped my cell into my pocket, looking at my notes before peering up ominously. “Katherine Knight is a mother, but you wouldn’t want her to be yours, that’s for sure. Especially since after she killed her husband, she cooked up his literal ass to serve his children.” He gasped loudly. “She even arranged place cards on the table with their names, each with a slice of roasted dad with vegetables.”

Jasper looked utterly horrified. Our friend was giddy beside us. “This will be such a good show.”

Giggling, I shook my head a little. “Okay, so I’m going to list off some basic facts that we know to be one hundred percent true about Ms. Knight, then we’ll get into the more interesting stuff like the dinner and the fact that she masterfully skinned her ex like a cow.”

My boyfriend’s eyes got bigger somehow. He leaned in to hear more. The further we got into the filming, the more we were trying to get our cameraman to react. He liked horror movies,

but he had not heard of most of the cases we were talking about. They were far more gruesome and scary than any film.

We took a break and ordered some lunch after the third. It was easy enough to get through, even if the details were dark. I could tell our friend was having a lot of fun. I was too. We went outside for a beer and some sunshine while we waited. I kind of hated how I sat alone on the couch. I knew Jasper wanted to sit with me but thought better of it.

“Hey, so how did your date go?” He questioned as he reclined in a chair across from me. I had forgotten about it.

Seth sighed and looked out at the city for a moment before he shrugged. “Meh.”

“You or her?”

“She wasn’t interested in a second one,” he remarked, taking a sip. “She said if I had an actual job...”

“Fuck her,” I snapped automatically. “I don’t know how much you make, but I know it’s more than any office job around here. Also, it’s when you want to work.”

“Apparently, YouTube is a fad,” he stated the words sourly, making finger quotes as he did. “Whatever.”

Jasper scoffed. “Everything is a trend. Literally, every damn thing. There are very few jobs around now that existed even a hundred years ago.”

“And those that have, have changed because of modern tools,” I added. “Like Jake’s hobby is woodworking. Even though he does a lot of traditional stuff, he’s still got electric saws and shit like that. Well, all I can say is thank goodness you dodged that bullet. She sounds like an idiot. What a bitch. You make real bread, and that’s what counts.”

Snorting softly, he shook his head. “You know what? You’re right. I was so caught up in her looks, I ignored some red flags early in the conversation.” Seth sighed, pushing his fingers through his spiky black hair. “It feels like I’m wasting my time trying to find someone.”

“You’re young. Why are you in a rush?” My boyfriend asked.

“Thirty-two is not a spring chicken,” he countered. “I want a relationship, but at what cost to my ego and sanity? I hate feeling judged. I don’t want to only fuck. And Tinder is stupid. I need a friend to go home to at night.”

“You’ll get that,” I promised.

Seth picked at his beer bottle. "I've never been jealous of Tyler and Lauren before. I saw their relationship grow and how it took time and hard work. That shit was tough. But now that they're married and about to have two kids- I just... am I ever going to have that? Or am I only an old man on YouTube?"

"You are a very talented creator, producer, writer, and entertainer. You aren't just anything. You're fucking Seth Clearwater. You are a joy to watch and a pleasure to be around. I don't know why these twits aren't chasing after you, but they should be," Jasper told him while using his bottle to talk. It bobbed with his words, pointing at him. Every time he boosted people up, it made me realize why Eddie had an ego.

He laughed, taking a big sip. "I need to say that to myself in the mirror every morning."

"Yes, you do," I agreed.

"Mm," he hummed, shifting in his seat. "My confidence has been shit lately. I think part of it is watching you and the boss just fall into place. You literally showed up to his doorstep with a bow on your head and a note attached that said, 'Your soulmate!'"

"It wasn't that easy," I said with a brief laugh. "And the only bow I had was on my suitcase, so I could tell which one was mine once I got off the plane."

"Close enough!" He spouted, making Jasper chuckle softly. "Do you ever feel jealous of their relationship?"

"Oh, without a doubt, but probably not for the reasons you'd think," he answered with a smirk. "But that was more in the beginning. Then I met Bella, and it was like she came wrapped with a little bow and a note that said, 'Best friend.'"

I wanted to kiss him. He winked at me so our companion wouldn't notice.

"Yeah, I'm kind of jealous of that, too. It took forever for Lauren to like me."

"And then you make fun of her for being fat while pregnant with twins," Jasper snorted, taking a sip. "Smooth."

"Fuck, I know. I wasn't thinking. I've apologized again. She's still salty."

The doorbell rang. My boyfriend automatically got up to get it. We both stood to follow behind. "Send her a vegan pizza and dessert at random. In the notes, say it's for Tristan and Imogen. It'll put you back in her good graces," I offered as I patted his shoulder.

He pulled out his phone. "That's an excellent idea. I'll do that tonight. I'll text Tyler to see what they've got planned," he mumbled to himself. "Thank you. You're such a wonderful friend."

"Don't worry about dating. If you're not enjoying it, it's okay to take a break. It doesn't mean your romantic life is over. Mine was on pause for three years and look where I am now. Focus on yourself, and your person will come along."

"Yeah. You're right. I've got a bunch going on with this, anyway."

When we finished rolling for the day, it was late afternoon. We had a lot of fun when we were together. The boys broke down the equipment so it was out of the way.

"So, do you think this will do as well as your video yesterday?" Seth mused as he put his personal camera away into its bag.

"Which was it?" I questioned, watching them from the couch with my binder. I was writing notes to myself for the next time we did it. Though I liked how we did, I knew we could do better. I also wished to look for extra visuals for them. I had several songs recorded that I wanted to suggest to Jasper too.

He seemed surprised that I didn't know. "The coming out one. It's gotten like twenty-five million views already, last time I checked."

I dropped my pen. "Seriously? What?" I looked at my boyfriend. "Really?" He nodded, blushing a little. I bit my lip. "How does it have so much?"

"Eddie is getting closer to that thirty million mark. People have been sharing it, too. And there was a BuzzFeed article about it. There's been a lot of nice comments and supporters so far. Some haters, but it's the internet," Seth explained. "You've been on there a lot lately."

"What?"

"Oh, BuzzFeed. Someone up there likes you," he chuckled. "My mom sends me shit whenever you're on there. 'Look, it's your boss and his pretty girlfriend!'" He said in a funny, purposefully bad accent.

"Your mother doesn't sound like that," I teased. "I've heard her." She was loud over the phone.

"No, it's my grandma, but I think it sounds funnier that way."

"Your mum thumps the back of your skull a lot, doesn't she?" Jasper questioned. Seth nodded with an impish smile. Laughing, he shook his head. "Yeah, I'm a little shocked it's done

so well myself. And I'm a bit panicked because none of my friends have said anything, but they probably just haven't seen it yet, you know? All of Tony's sisters have sent me messages, though. They're so sweet."

I smiled to myself. "I like my future sisters-in-law."

"Me too," he acknowledged with a slight sigh. "They're glad you encouraged me to come out so I can be myself. And you know what? I agree with them."

Automatically, I got up to hug him. He pulled me to his chest, squishing me. I wanted to kiss him properly but settled on giving him one on the cheek.

"See? Now I'm jealous of your friendship. You make it look so easy," Seth complained jokingly. I went to him and embraced him, too. Then I pressed a kiss to his temple. "I enjoyed today. This was new, and I think I needed that. I hope we get to do it again soon."

"We will," I promised.