



Episode One-hundred-fifty-one

“You’re here!” Rebecca shouted as she ran to me in front of the restaurant. She picked me up off the ground with her hug, my feet dangling in the air by at least two feet. I giggled as I squeezed her back. “We’ve missed you so much!”

“I missed you, too,” I breathed, clutching her neck. She smelled of lavender. It wafted from her hair and clothes.

Rachel hugged me from behind. “Stop hogging our sister!” When I was put down, I twisted to take her in my arms too. “You are so cute,” she whispered into my curls.

“Thank you.” When she placed me down to my feet, I shifted to glance at my boyfriend, who was grinning from ear to ear. It was so innocent and full of joy. “So, I’d like you ladies to meet mine and Edward’s best friend and new roommate, Jasper.”

I hated telling a lie, but it wasn’t wrong. It was just... omitting the rest of it.

He stepped forward so he could offer his hand to each of them. They both looked at him with wide eyes. “My goodness.” He wrapped his fingers around theirs as he kissed their

knuckles. Rachel visibly fluttered at his touch, a girlish giggle falling from her lips. "You all have the exact same face. Absolutely stunning. Your father must have been a very good looking man to make such beautiful daughters."

Laughing, Rebecca's cheeks flushed a soft shade of pink. "Aw, thank you. Dad wasn't bad looking, no. We come from decent genes."

Our sister leaned in. "It's nice to meet you. We watched your video together just earlier. I mean, yesterday. Last night. It was very sweet," she stuttered, glancing at me after she shook his hand again. I think she only wanted to touch him once more because he was so handsome and charming. "Everyone in the tribe subscribed. All of us. Seriously. It's all anyone is talking about right now."

Her words made me anxious, though I couldn't say why. Maybe it was knowing folks I was related to were watching, and I wished to perform well for them. "That explains how I got so many so fast!" I joked awkwardly.

Jasper put his arm around my shoulder and rubbed it for just a moment. "Mm, I don't think there are that many people in your family," he replied with a smirk. He was trying to help me relax. "You ladies ready to head inside to get something to eat? I'm starving. Breakfast was years ago."

"Me too," I agreed as I wrapped my arms around his. He stiffened up beside me, but I didn't let go. I would hang off of him if he were just my friend too, and my family needed to be okay with that. It would be weirder if I didn't.

He opened the door for us, allowing us each to go inside first as we went to the hostess stand. I was taking my sisters to The Capital Grill for lunch. I allowed them to pick the spot since I didn't know what was good around Seattle.

"So, get whatever you want. All of this is on me," I insisted.

"No!" They both said at the same time, then turned to look at me in surprise.

Their reaction made me laugh. "Um, yes. Didn't you see? I'm a famous YouTuber now. I'm made of money," I replied sarcastically just as the host got to the stand. Politely, I smiled at them. "Hi. Black- party of four. Thanks."

"We wanted to treat you," Rebecca countered. "That's why we picked here! It's so good!"

I scoffed loudly as I shook my head. "My younger nursing student sisters are not taking me out to an expensive place like this. I'm the older sibling. This is my right. I am buying you lunch to celebrate. This is my treat."

“Tony is rubbing off on you,” my boyfriend muttered under his breath. I glanced at him. “He is. You adore giving your cash away.”

His comment made me smirk. “I always did, actually.”

He rolled his eyes. “Oh, yeah. I guess that’s true. That’s one of the first things that made him really fall in love with you. Your generosity.”

“Aw,” Rachel sighed then looked between us. “That’s so sweet. Are you sure? We saved up-”

I brought my hand up to stop her from going on. “You do not have to save up to get anything for me. Ever. I mean it. I have everything I need, and I am very well taken care of by a man who is determined to just shove money at me. All I want is to know you and be in your lives. So, yes, I am positive. Let me buy my sisters’ lunch. I’ve never been able to before.”

They both nodded vigorously. We hugged for a moment before we walked to the table.

Jasper pulled out my sisters’ chairs for them first as he talked, shaking his head the entire time. “It’s because he thinks once you get enough money, you won’t doubt your skills anymore. But I’ve seen that idiot’s bank account, and it’s done nothing for his confidence levels. The only thing it’s changed is he’s becoming better at acting like it doesn’t bother him.” He pulled out my chair. They were both impressed. He sat on the opposite side of me. “It doesn’t matter that you keep getting annoyed about it because he won’t stop now. Especially with how you acted at Easter.”

“But those were gifts for all of us, and supporting museums, and the money for Culture for All is-” I stopped myself. “I just don’t feel like I’ve earned it!” I ranted before I closed my eyes. “No. I will not get riled up about it anymore, especially when it’s giving me the ability to do things like this for you guys.” I peeked at my boyfriend. “And buy your plane ticket from another continent.”

He winked at me before glancing down at his menu.

We sat for a long time after our food was done, just chatting. They told me about their classes, work, and total lack of sleep. But they both loved their jobs. I was so proud of them. There was no doubt in my mind that my sisters were much smarter than me, and I was amazed at their strength.

“I wish we could come down tomorrow, too,” Rebecca complained. “And that we could hang out all night. Take you out. It sucks that we have to work the graveyard shift.”

“Isn’t it a little creepy to call it that when you work in a hospital?” I asked with a quiet laugh.

Rachel nodded quickly. “Oh. It is. Fun fact, nurses are morbid as fuck. We’re a dark bunch. Half our jokes are about death, and the other is about how stupid either the patients or doctors are.”

“Ah, gallows humor. Another trait you share with your siblings,” my boyfriend teased. “We just spent the other day recording short videos on famous murderers. I’ll be editing that for a couple of weeks.”

“Oo! I can’t wait to watch that,” she remarked with a big smile.

“Vanessa will love it too,” Rebecca agreed. “So, you make whatever you’re interested in?” I nodded. “That is so cool. It’s the perfect job.”

“Well, I don’t know if this part of it counts as working. That’s coming, though. We just signed a contract with Lay’s and-”

“Lay’s. Like the potato chip company?” Rachel interrupted in surprise. She leaned in and whispered as she gripped the tabletop. “Frito-Lay?”

Shyly, I nodded. It just came out. I didn’t mean to sound as if I was bragging. “Yeah. I have a feeling that’s going to be when the actual work begins. I’ve got to make original recipes with their chips. We’ll film a lot for them. Some commercials- Edward is doing more voice-overs too.”

“I loved his Super Bowl commercial,” she giggled. “It was the best of the year.”

“I love it too,” Jasper agreed with a chuckle. “Normally, I detest the fake dumb big ass voice he uses for things like that, but it was perfect.”

“Why do you hate it?” Rebecca questioned.

“He sounds like he’s about to call footie matches at any moment. ‘And look at him go! He’s going for the goal! Oh, rough play! Yellow card!’” He mocked, copying his tone. He did a great impression.

I snickered at his mild meanness. “It’s not that bad. It’s just what he has to do to get himself motivated enough to go out and be in front of people. When he uses that voice, he’s not our- my boyfriend, he’s Eddie. Edward and Eddie are friends, but they are in no means the same person.” I took a sip of my wine, trying to act like I didn’t slip up. They didn’t notice, of course. I cleared my throat. “I haven’t met your Tony yet, I think.”

Jasper pushed his lips to one side, then shook his head. "Oh, you have, but he doesn't come round often. That's good, though. I may still call him that, but he's not that person anymore. He was a very shy lad, and nervous with low esteem. Tall and awkward, and a bit of a fattie." He snorted. "Puberty hit him like a freight train and dragged him a few meters down the tracks."

"I can't see that," Rachel admitted, ducking her head. She lowered her voice. "He's so freaking hot."

Leaning in, I touched her hand. "I'll show you videos once I get a chance. They were so fucking adorable as teenagers. Oh, my god. I love it. His grandma gave us a hard drive that he tried very hard to lose, but I copied it all to a couple of places. It's too good," I gushed.

"I have it too," Jasper said into his beer and laughed. "I should have just posted those. I don't think I'd have to come out then. Everyone would know." He glanced at me. "Just like you did."

Cackling, I put my hands over my face. "Well... It's only obvious if you're one of us," I teased. "The Britney Spears karaoke is a giveaway, I have to admit. That one the straights might even notice."

"Tony was obsessed with her, and he wanted to bang her." I blew a raspberry in disbelief. He placed his hand on his heart as he feigned insult. It was too big and loud. "That is my story, and I am sticking to it."

"Mmhmm," I hummed. "Shaking that wee baby gay ass like it was pride. So cute." I pinched his cheek.

He was turning red in the face. Both of my sisters were laughing. "You know, it's not smart to mock the man who has your fate in his hands." He wagged his finger at me. "You lost that bet, and I'm still deciding what horrible thing I'm going to make you do for me."

"I'm not scared of you. Go ahead. I have no shame. Film me, I don't care," I said with my chin in the air. I glanced at my siblings to explain since they looked confused. "Something to do with the channel. It's dumb."

"No. No, it's not," he stopped me. "It's very important. You need to see that these people want to follow you, too. Eddie is a success, yeah. But you are as well while boosting up his rising star. This network thing with the group was only a dream of his, but because of you, it's more successful than he ever imagined. I don't think you understand how many things will snowball after this point."

I lifted my glass. "I think you're right about that part, at least. Because I have no idea what I'm doing. I'm just showing up when I'm told and cooking food I want to eat."

"I'm so jealous," Rebecca sighed. "Your entire life is crazy and incredible. And you seem so happy. And you have wonderful friends and a gorgeous fiancé."

Taking her hand, I gave it a squeeze. "It is great, but it's even better now that I have y'all. I have literally everything I've ever wanted. An enormous family that loves me, a job that is fulfilling and rewarding in so many ways. Friends that give me a reason to smile every single day."

She sniffled deeply through her nose. "We're so happy to have you with us now too. It's so amazing. We never thought it would happen."

"Me either," I breathed softly.

After we finished eating, we spent a little time walking around Pike's Place Market. It was an incredible spot for photographs and one place in Seattle I always wanted to visit. It was so much fun to shop with them. Jasper was happy to carry our bags the entire time. So many times, I found myself wanting to kiss him but was unable. It made me sad, but maybe one day, I could share that part of my life with my siblings. My older relatives might not understand, and I didn't want to ruin those relationships yet. Everything was so fresh.

We stood in the parking lot afterward, hugging. It was hard not to cry. "So, we're going to come down for Sunday dinner. We'll see you then," Rachel spoke in my ear as she held me close to her firm body. They were both very fit.

"Gramps is so excited about that," our sister added. "He's got something arranged, but I don't know what. He invited everyone, so get ready. It's going to be a thing."

"That's actually perfect because I have something planned too."

"And it's pretty big, too," my boyfriend remarked with a smile as he put my bags into the trunk of our rental car. I bought pickles, jellies, jams, honey, and other stuff I didn't have to refrigerate. I was probably going to have to buy another suitcase just to haul all of it back. There were also wines, beers, and liquors to make videos with for Edward. I knew how much he liked those. I didn't bother to look at the price for once, determined to get out of a certain mindset. This was for work. The cost didn't matter. It would make us more cash in the long run. Plus... I could buy things for the people I loved, and it didn't hurt me money-wise, and I was going to take advantage of that fully.

"Oo, mysterious," my sister teased. "I can't wait to find out."

We watched them drive away while sitting in our car. Jasper reached over and took my hand. "They are lovely."

"They really are. Wait until you meet Jake," I paused for a moment. "I love my sisters, but I've never felt a connection like I have with him. It's so different."

"I wonder what that's like," he whispered to himself before shaking his head. "So... We have all night."

"That we do. Is there anything you'd like to do?" I offered as I leaned in to kiss him. We were all alone once more, and no one could see us unless they were looking directly into the windows. We did for a long, pleasant second with his fingers in my hair.

"Would you like to go out on a date tonight?"

Grinning, I pecked his lips again. "I'd love to."

We cleaned up at the hotel we were staying at for the night. We would drive to La Push in the morning and stay in a humble lodge in Forks, the small town closest to it. I didn't have the fanciest of dresses with me, just modest stuff because I was spending time with my family. So I did my makeup fiercely to contrast it, braiding my hair around my head like a crown. I was in the bathroom while my boyfriend looked up things for us to do. He got ready much quicker than I did, so he relaxed on the bed.

"So, I thought we could go to a movie because I don't know about you, but I'm not hungry yet."

"You ate so many samples at the market," I giggled. "Sounds great." I spritz some perfume on all my pressure points, then right between my tits. The only thing I was lacking was my jewelry.

"I did. But it was so good!" He said with a laugh. "After the movie, we can go out to eat and then go-" He paused when I came out.

I slipped in one of my earrings. "What?" I put on the choker my aunt made next before putting on both of my silver rings, the one from my grandmother and the other from Edward. I was adding a lot of accessories to brighten up my look.

"Wow, you are so lovely," he breathed. He was lying back against the headboard, his ankles crossed. He always dressed so sharply, his blue turtleneck making his eyes glow. His slacks were tight, charcoal gray.

Finally, I put on my Rolex, so we could match. “Thank you, handsome. I’m just trying to keep up with you, though.”

Chuckling, he scooted off the mattress. “Nah, pretty sure I’m chasing your coattails, gorgeous.” He came up behind, putting his hands on my hips as he kissed the back of my neck. I leaned my head forward to give him better access.

“I think you’re back there on purpose because you like the view,” I breathlessly teased.

“Can you blame me? Who wouldn’t fancy staring at this ass all day and night?” He squeezed one of my cheeks. Giggling, I rested against him completely. “Do you want to go dancing after we eat?” I nodded. “Perfect,” he smiled against my skin. “Why don’t you pick the movie?”

“Anything you’d prefer to see?” He just shrugged and shook his head. “No preference at all?”

“Nope, I want you to choose.”

I turned, taking his hand. “Okay, but you have to pick dinner.”

He brought it up to peck my knuckles. I could tell he craved my lips but didn’t wish to mess them up. He dragged my fingers over his smooth cheek. “Sounds good.”

Jasper was totally shocked when I picked a bloody sci-fi action movie. He tried to convince me I didn’t have to select a guy flick. We could really see whatever I desired. I wasn’t sure why I would want to see a bad rom-com or a kid’s film over that. It wasn’t the gruesome part that surprised him, but the science fiction. He had yet to figure out how much of a nerd I was.

We held hands in the theater. There weren’t many people in our showing, but it was an earlier one that had been out for a couple of weeks. It was seven when we walked, and there was a line to buy tickets. I was glad we weren’t crammed in with so many others.

For dinner, he chose a little family-owned seafood restaurant. It was so intimate with candles on the table and the lights down low. Someone played piano music in the background. We held hands underneath the tabletop, my foot rubbing against his ankle the entire time. It felt like we couldn’t keep our eyes off of each other.

The club we went to was simply called Queer, and I knew instantly why he picked it. It was just after nine in the evening, and it wasn’t too busy yet. We walked right in. The bouncer smiled at us as we did.

“A couple of drinks first?” He offered with his hand on the small of my back. I nodded with a smile. He pressed a quick kiss to my cheek.

We went to the bar, taking up a pair of empty stools. The bartender came right away, giving us a big grin. She was a butch blond woman with a very cool undercut and tons of piercings. “Hey, guys! What can I get you?”

“Let’s start with two shots of Jack, and I’ll have... uh,” he drew out. “Give me something local on draft. Lager.”

“Sure, I’ll let you a taste first.” She nodded, getting a tumbler and squirting a little into it. “What about you, beautiful?”

“Mm, I’ll take a hard apple cider if you have any.”

“We have six kinds. What brand?”

“Oh! My kind of place. I guess Woodchuck or Redd’s if you have those.”

“Woodchuck in a bottle, coming up. We have an apple, pear, and raspberry.”

“Raspberry!” I said excitedly. “That sounds so good. Thank you!” Jasper liked his taste of beer and offered me a sip. “That would be marvelous with a burger.”

She poured our drinks, giving us our shots. He slipped his debit card to her to start the tab. I wanted to argue since he paid for dinner, but he was making money off the videos too. I knew how sensitive I could be about the cash, and I didn’t want to step on our good time.

We had our Jack at the same time. “Another round, dove?”

“Yes, please.”

She poured us some more instantly. “You two look so familiar. Have you come in before?”

We shook our heads. “We’re from LA, actually. I’m just visiting some family, and I’m dragging him along to carry the luggage.”

He laughed. “There is no dragging. I wanted to, and I’m glad we are. This is fun.”

The woman peered at his credit card for a minute. “Jasper... and Bella.” My boyfriend and I looked at each other. “Your ‘coming out’ video was awesome. A bunch of us the other day watched it. Welcome to the family, my man.” The bartender fist-bumped him.

Chuckling, he turned a little pink in the face. "Thank you. I'm glad I've finally found my people." He put his arm around my shoulder. I leaned into him, resting my head against him.

"It's so much easier when you have supportive friends."

"Yes, it is," I agreed.

"Aren't you dating that famous dude? Shit... what's his name?" She mumbled to herself.

"Eddie. He's a voice-over artist and actor," I answered, realizing she watched the video not because of our boyfriend but because of the content. "He's recording right now. Otherwise, he'd be carrying bags too."

Jasper laughed again. "Yeah, but they'd be his own. That man loves to shop way more than you do. And you were practical about it earlier in the market. You were purchasing things mainly for the channel. He has no chill. And he would have bought the whole damn place."

The bartender smiled at us. "Maybe I should check out some of his stuff since he's obviously an ally. Anyway, let me know if you need anything else."

We danced for a couple of hours, getting more drinks in between. We were playful and innocent, but I could feel it in his touches- he wanted more. But people in the club knew who we were, and we wouldn't put Edward's career at risk. I liked it most when he pulled me close from behind, my back against his chest. His mustache kept tickling me.

He took a deep breath through his nose. "You always smell so good." His lips were almost pressed against my temple. "I've never wanted to kiss someone more than I do right now," he whispered in my ear.

"I constantly feel like that when I'm with you." I turned my head slightly to the side to look into his eyes. "It's so hard to resist."

Lightly, he pecked my cheek. "Sometimes, I just can't."

Around midnight, we took a brief break. It was getting late, but neither of us wished to leave. We kept saying one more. We sat at a table across from each other to keep the temptation to a minimum.

A waiter, a different one from who took our order, came to us with a single beer. It was the kind Jasper had been sipping on all night. "Hi, someone wanted to send you a drink," he said in a bright voice to my man, putting a little square napkin on the tabletop.

Looking around, he laughed in surprise. "Oh, um... who?"

"Me." He put it down on the table, then offered him his hand. "How are you doing, sexy?"

His mouth dropped open, then he peeked at me. Gossip must have gone around the bar about who we were, and he thought we weren't together as a couple, which was both good and bad. "Uh... I'm doing great, but I'm missing my boyfriend."

The waiter clicked his tongue, then glanced at me. "Did I ever stand a chance?" I shook my head, trying not to giggle at what was happening. "Aw, nuts. Well... enjoy the drink on me, anyway. Congrats on coming out of the closet. We're thrilled to have you."

The only one who was going to have him that night was me. I wasn't jealous, but proud. He was mine.

As soon as he was out of range, I laughed loudly. "Hey, sexy," I cooed at my boyfriend, sliding my hand over his. I bit my lip dramatically, fluttering my eyelashes.

"We should have gone to a straight club. No one would have known us there," he murmured, taking a sip of his free drink. He offered it to me. "Let's head back after this. I think I'm done being out for the night."

As soon as the hotel door closed behind us, I was in his arms, and he was kissing me. I jumped up and wrapped my legs around his waist. He easily caught me, his thick hands going to my ass. He pressed me against the wall, my heels falling from my feet with the force of it.

"Fuck me," I begged against his mouth. "I need you. Please."

We didn't even make it to the bed.