



Episode Sixteen-

Three hours later, I walked out of the offices a much richer man.

My hands were shaking when I got into the car. It was just after two in the afternoon. I called the first person I could think of.

"Hello? Tony?" Jasper answered his cell phone quickly. It was pretty early in the morning there, but he was probably at work. He worked at a local news station in Sydney.

"Hi," I breathed out, my voice quivering.

"Are you okay? Did something happen?"

"Um... I sold my movie," I said in a bit of hysterical laughter, tears beginning to form in my eyes. "I... I just sold my script to Disney, and they want me to be the star."

"FUCK YES!" He shouted and laughed. I could tell he actually jumped up and down for me. "HELL YEAH! Yes, you fucking sold a script to Disney, you talented bastard! I am so fucking proud of you!"

I laughed at his reaction. "This is... This is everything I ever wanted. This is everything that I've ever dreamed about. Holy shit! HOLY SHIT!" I began to freak out as it fully set in what was happening. "I AM GOING TO BE SO FUCKING RICH! HAHA! I'll be able to do whatever the fuck I want after this. I could retire and just spend the rest of my life surfing and making dumb shit videos for fun!"

"So, what are you going to do, huh? How are you going to celebrate? Have you told your new girlfriend yet?"

"No," I laughed, smiling as I leaned my head back against the headrest. "No, you're the first person I called. She went out shopping. I don't know what we'll do. She said she was going to make dinner tonight, but maybe I'll take her out instead. Oh, goddamn! I am so fucking happy right now," I told him as I wiped the tears away from my eyes.

"I can imagine!" He chuckled. "It's been a good week for you."

"It's been the best damn week of my life. It feels... It feels like the universe just went '*here's everything you could ever want in this life! Enjoy!*' Just all at once," I laughed once more, too giddy for words to fully express.

"So, which is the best part? The girl or the money?" He teasingly asked.

"The girl," I said without hesitation. "Man, I would go get her an engagement ring right now and ask her to spend the rest of our lives together if I thought she'd say yes. It would just be the icing on the cake."

He clicked his tongue. "Please don't, darling."

"She wouldn't say yes. She's more practical than that," I chuckled, taking in a deep breath. "Thankfully. One of us has to be, but I do want to buy her something."

"Flowers?" He asked in curiosity.

"Actually, I have a better idea. She was showing me this makeup catalog this morning at breakfast. She said she used to collect that kind of stuff but hasn't in a while. She said she wouldn't buy it for herself, but it was obvious that she liked it."

"Oh, that's perfect then," he agreed. "Ladies do like their cosmetics. Sounds more interesting than flowers anyway. Longer lasting."

"I'm sure I'll get her some of those soon too. I know she likes to take pictures of flowers. She loved the ones at the zoo."

"I am so glad things are going so well for you right now," my best friend informed me warmly.

"I wish you were here so we could all go out and celebrate together," I remarked honestly. "You were the first person that I thought to call for this exact reason. Thank you... Thank you for being such a wonderful and supportive friend. I miss you. I miss you so goddamn much."

"Oh, *darling*," he sighed. "I miss you, too. I do. I wish I were there too. You don't know what that means to me when you say that."

"You could take my job offer," I advised him. "You could come here to LA, and we could make those dumb shit videos together for the rest of our lives."

He sighed again. "I wouldn't feel right about taking your money."

"I'd make you earn it," I promised. He chuckled.

"I doubt it. Look, I gotta get back to work. Go buy your old lady some face paint. I'm sure she'll love it."

"Yeah. Hopefully. Alright, mate. Text me later. Have a good day, yeah?"

"Yeah. Love you, darling. Congrats," he added before hanging up on me. I chuckled again, taking a deep calming breath.

The catalog was from a large makeup store. After some googling, I went to the nearest one. As soon as I walked in two saleswomen descended upon me eagerly.

"Hi, how can we help you today?" One of them chirped. The other just nodded, standing beside her with a big black mesh shopping bag. I must have looked like a big ol' target. But that was fine, though.

"Actually, you can. You see, I'd like to buy a gift for a woman. But she's not just any woman. I'm pretty sure she's the love of my life, and I have literally just had the best day of my career. So, I'd like to spoil her. I have a general idea of what I'd like to get her, but I'm sure I'm going to need some help picking it out."

"What are you looking to get?" The other girl inquired.

"Everything. Anything she could possibly need to feel pretty. She showed me a certain brand that she really liked. Something... Face."

"Too faced?" The first questioned.

"That's the one!"

"So, you want to get her everything for a full face of makeup? Do you know what shade of foundation she'd want?" One of them wondered, looking at the other.

"Um..." I drew out and smiled awkwardly. "I have a few pictures of her if that helps?"

"We can work with that," the second girl answered as she took my phone to look at the pictures I had of Bella. I had taken loads, some when she hadn't realized. Off while she was sitting by the pool, looking off into the sunset or cooking in the kitchen while I watched. "Oh, she's pretty! Look," she showed the other girl. "Just Too Faced?"

"I know she's interested in that brand for sure, but it doesn't just have to be that one, I suppose. She did mention that she loved the ones that smell like food."

"Oh, I know what she wants." She started walking towards a section to one side of the store. She showed me a Christmas display. I picked up one of everything on it. The girl with the bag passed it to me. "There is even more over here if you want to get her something else."

"How about this? You two pick out everything you would buy if money were literally no object. As I said, I had the best day of my career, and this woman deserves the world."

"Seriously?" The first saleswoman asked after a surprised pause.

"Absolutely."

"If you're really interested in doing that, may I suggest signing up for a credit card? You get points for your purchases, and you get twenty percent off your entire first purchase."

"Sounds perfect. Hook me up."

"Does she like colors, or is she into nudes?" One of the girls questioned with an excited smile.

"She's all about the rainbows," I grinned.

"Oo..." They looked eagerly at the other. "I know exactly what we should get her. So, like I'm going to pick out all the absolute fan favorites and-" she went on and on. I was happy to let her go. They both looked like they were having fun.

They asked every time they picked out something, but they quickly learned that I wasn't going to say no to any of it. I knew I was spending thousands, and I didn't care at all. It was merely a drop in the bucket now. And I knew in my heart that Bella wouldn't buy herself anything this nice and I wanted her to have beautiful things. I also wanted her to wear it all for me.

Besides, if she was going to be my girlfriend, eventually she was going to join me on a red carpet. I hoped anyway.

Just as I finished up at the store, I received a text from Bella.

"I forgot to get your key code."

I smiled to myself. At least I knew she was going to be home soon too. *"I'm sorry. I forgot to tell you. It's 10051985."*

"That's my birthday?"

"Your birthday is May 10th, 1985?" That was one of my sister's birthday. I was a little surprised.

"No, October 5th, 1985." She answered back right away. It was only a couple of weeks after my mother's. I had sent her, along with Sasha, a print of her work.

I was a little sad to have missed her birthday since it was so recent, but at least I had an excellent present to make up for it.

"Oh, that's right. It's backward here. It's one of my sister's birthdays. One of the middle ones. Sasha. I figured my birthday was too obvious, so I always use one of my sister's birthdays instead."

"It's going to be easy for me to remember," Bella replied.

I would have been home much sooner if traffic wasn't such a bitch. I was stuck behind a wreck for an hour almost. When I pulled into the garage, my window was rolled down, and I could smell something delicious wafting through the air. It was the aroma of steak.

Suddenly as the scent hit me, I became overwhelmed.

It smelled good because a woman I cared about and cared about me, was cooking for me. Without having to be asked or paid. She wanted to. This was her way of spoiling me, and I wasn't even sure she knew she was doing it. At that moment, I knew that's what I wanted to come home to every night. To my exquisite Bella. Knowing that I would be able to share the day with her made it a million times better.

I wanted to cry again.

Before I went in, I decided to make a quick diary entry.

"It is October twenty-five, 2018. It's mid-afternoon and-" I stopped, smiling too much as I sniffled. "Fuck, I am so goddamn happy. I feel like I'm getting things that I didn't even ask for. All I ever wanted was to be in a Disney movie, and I got that today, and it's even one that I wrote. And the best part is that there is a beautiful woman in there who I can't wait to share this with." I laughed, leaning my head back. "*Fuck!* I did it. How? How did I get so fucking lucky?" I took several deep breaths. "Okay. Fuck. Okay. Ha. Let's go surprise our sweet Bella. Hopefully, she likes her belated birthday gift."

Bella was sitting on the couch with earbuds in and was quickly typing away. I placed the orange bag of goodies behind the sofa to give to her later. Quietly, I put my arms around her before pressing my lips to her temple. She jumped in surprise before melting against me.

"You're home early. Is that good or bad?" She asked gently as she smoothed her palm over my forearm.

"Very good." I couldn't help my wild smile as I pushed her hair away from her eyes so I could kiss more of her delightfully soft skin.

"Let me just finish sending these pictures to Al, and you can tell me all about it," she told me just before kissing my fingertips that she brought to her lips.

I knew exactly what we needed. Champagne.

"Don't rush. It smells so good in here," I complimented her skills. I didn't know exactly what it was, but I knew I was going to love every bite.

"I hope you like it. It's roast beef. It won't be done for a while, though. I wasn't expecting you yet."

"That's okay. I haven't had a roast in ages. Sounds perfect," I commented as I found the wine glasses. I didn't have champagne flutes, but these would certainly do.

I made quick work of the cork as she finished whatever task she was doing. Bella turned when she heard me open the bottle, a small smile spreading on her lips. She closed her laptop.

"It was a really good meeting."

I passed her a glass.

I took a deep breath. "I just sold a script to Disney. They're going to make my full-length animated movie and not only will I have part of the creative control, but I will also be doing the lead character. I'll get a huge cut of everything. The movie. The toys. Future movies and shows. The clothes. *Everything.*"

Bella's face instantly lit up and her eyes got huge as she threw herself at me. "What?! Why didn't you tell me that's what you were going to do?! This is so big! Oh, my god! How exciting, Edward!"

"I didn't know!" I laughed at her pure joy. It was precisely how I felt. "I gave it to them on a fluke a couple of months ago when they first did my contract. I was just supposed to work on a brainstorming session for a television show for the Disney Channel today, but they wanted to talk to me about this instead. They kind of blindsided me. They loved it, though! They're talking about a 2022 release day. It's so soon! We've already got some tentative paperwork in place. I just need to let Zafrina and my lawyer look over the contract."

Then she kissed me, breathtaking and deep. She poured all of the passion she had into it. I didn't know how she had so much in her tiny body.

"I'm so happy for you!" She gushed.

Before we made a giant mess, I took the glass from her and placed them both on the side table. Then I grabbed her face and showed her all of *my* passion. She laughed as we fell back onto the cushions, her fingers in my hair as she held our kiss. Wrapping her legs around me, she pulled me as close as she could to her body.

"I am literally euphoric," I told her honestly, letting out a nervous laugh. Tears pricked at my nose, and I took in a deep breath in an effort to hold them in. I couldn't though, so I hid my face in her neck. She let me, her fingers gently soothing me. "I'm so glad you're here so I can share it with you."

"You're such a darling," she breathed as she kissed my forehead lightly. She used Jasper's pet name for me unknowingly, and I don't think she knew how special it actually made me feel. "What do you want to do to celebrate?"

"This. Exactly this," I said as I rolled beside her so as not to crush her. She immediately brought her head to my chest, her hand going to hold mine as it laid on my stomach. I couldn't stop my tears. "I'm so overwhelmed right now."

"I can only imagine. But you are going to be so amazing! You are so talented and funny. It's going to be great," she praised me so sincerely, her glowing eyes looking into mine. I leaned

my forehead against hers before nodding and taking another breath. I needed to calm down before I openly sobbed in front of her and couldn't stop.

I don't think she would have judged me for it, but it's not something I wanted to do either way.

"We shouldn't forget about our champagne," Bella finally suggested when I had calmed, a small smile still on her pretty lips.

"Oh, right!" I laughed as I finally came to sit up. I had forgotten about them.

Much like the night of the storm, Bella curled herself against my side with her glass in hand. She put her head on my shoulder, and I wrapped my arm around her as tightly as I could.

"How was your day?" I finally asked when my brain started to function again.

"It was not nearly as exciting as yours. I just went to the mall. Got some food for tonight and tomorrow and started dinner. I made a mousse for dessert. I talked to AI and told her about you and Thanksgiving."

"I hope she likes me," I replied honestly. I hoped all of her friends did. She had said that they all loved her late husband, and I could only aspire to live up to whatever standards he set.

"Oh? AI? She is friends with every single person she meets. She is the most agreeable person on the planet. She's actually a therapist by training. And she's pretty great at it. She was the only one brave enough to be friends with me in first grade despite my grandma being the scary lunch lady and my big scary scar. Came up at recess on the second day of school I was there, told me that everyone else was scared of Mamaw, but she didn't care. She liked my big hair, weird eyes, cool scar, and let me copy her homework." Bella smiled a little wistfully at the memory.

She had called her AI, but certainly, that wasn't her name. "How does one become an AI? Alexandra? Alana?"

"Mary Alice Brandon."

"That sounds very southern."

She tilted her head up to look at me. "She's Cajun, actually. Her twin sister is named Rosalie. I thought it was so awesome when my best friend came with a bonus best friend with the exact same face."

I laughed at her words. "I can see why that would make someone happy. Bonus besties. Are you all still close?"

"Yeah. Rose and her husband live in New York, too. In Coney Island. They'll be at Thanksgiving. They're both lawyers. Rosalie is in family law and Emmett, her husband, is an immigration lawyer. They're really great. They're both so kind and generous. They both give a lot of pro bono work to CFA, the non-profit. Emmett was one of the first volunteers we had that wasn't a family member. It's how they met."

"What a wonderful way to meet someone. They sound like lovely people."

"They are. It's like having two sisters and a brother now. I'm so glad Ms. Lettie, their mom, took me in. She's always been so accepting. They've all been so good to me. I can't imagine having a better family." She was dejected for a moment. "Normally she'd be in town too for Thanksgiving, but she's going to spend it with her stepfamily in Texas. She feels really bad about it, but both Alice and Rosalie are relieved. She's a handful." She smiled again. "They're all going down there for Christmas for a couple of weeks, though."

"Are you going to go with them?" I had no plans for Christmas and had already resigned myself to spending it alone. It would be the first that I wouldn't be spending it with all of my sisters and nieces. Though I had plans to spoil them rotten, it wasn't the same.

Maybe I could spend Christmas with Bella instead. It was a delightful thought.

"No." She quickly shook her head. "Two weeks is too long for me to be in Texas. I made the excuse of work. I'm just going to send a gift. There was much guilt to be had."

Ah, what a perfect segway...

"Oh, speaking of gifts," I mumbled as I reached behind the couch to retrieve the bag. Her eyes got wide as I put it on her lap.

"What did you do?"

I smirked a little at her reaction. "I had a good day, so I wanted to spread the love. Happy belated birthday."

Her mouth opened and closed again, looking between me and the bag for a minute. Then, as if it would bite her, she pulled it open to look in. Then she began to take out her bounty.

"Oh, my god. What did you do?" She asked again.

"I didn't know exactly what to get, but I remembered you said you liked this brand. So, I told them to get me basically one of everything. I showed them a couple of pictures, and they picked out the colors for the foundation and everything. So, if it's not right, we can return it. I also got to talking to them, and they told me about the 'fan favorites,' and I told them to just give me whatever a girl might need to put on their face. Which is apparently a shit load of things," I explained with a big nervous grin.

"Holy hell! How much did you spend?" She gasped. Like I was going to tell her that.

"Um, I don't know. I signed up for their little club though, and they said I had already hit 'platinum' or 'diamond' or... something and that you could get some good stuff from it. Free shipping, too. So, if you ever see anything else you need. I don't know if I missed anything," I explained casually.

Her face was bright red. "I'll never need anything ever again! This is crazy!" She said in shock. "Why?"

My tendency to go too far was obviously coming out in full force. It was probably a good thing Jasper told my dumbass not to buy a ring. I probably spent about as much on all the makeup.

"Do you not like it?"

"No. I love it. It's just too much," she added quickly.

Yeah, I had gone too far, but she was going to let me. I could already tell.

I decided to play dumb. "We'll get you a box or something to keep it in. We will get you some more luggage."

"That's not what I mean," she giggled as she rubbed her fingers across her cheeks and over her eyes. "I actually bought a suitcase today. I just... Eddie, are you sure? This is a lot."

"Why wouldn't I be sure about seeing you happy? Seeing you smile is worth every cent."

She swiftly shook her head, making her pretty curls bounce.

"You have the biggest day of your career, and you buy me a gift, though? I should be buying you dinner or drinks."

"And you have bought me dinner," I replied as I waved my hand towards the kitchen. "And, it seems like a perfect celebratory meal. Besides, like I said. It's for your birthday. I missed

it by that much." I put my fingers very close together. I saw her nose wrinkle, and my smile grew. "I only missed it by a couple of weeks."

"Thank you," she breathed.

"You are very welcome, my darling," I assured her before I pressed my lips to her forehead for a long moment.

"When I used to get new makeup, I would try it all out by doing swatches of all the colors on my arms. I have the strongest urge to basically paint my entire body funny colors," she whispered in a silly voice, her eyes wide with surprise. I couldn't help but laugh as I gazed at her. She was trying to make me, though.

"I don't think you have enough real estate to do all the shades. You might have to do it a few times. Wash off and start fresh." Oh yes, I would very much like to bathe with her again.

"The bottom of your shower would be looking like someone murdered a clown," she teased with a mischievous smile in an adorable thick accent.

This goes with chapter 16 of IP.