



Episode One-hundred-sixty-eight

I was so damn hot.

But that wasn't surprising since Alice was pressed against me, her head on my chest. Jasper was on the other side of me, his arm over both of us. Edward was squeezed behind him, their legs tangled together. We were just a mass of sweaty bodies, all of us only in our underwear. The night came back to me in flashes of bare skin and loud moaning.

Groaning, a cramp ripped through my lower back. My stomach wasn't happy either. I patted my best friend, wanting her to move. Slowly, she rolled away from me. She sighed, not really waking up.

Pushing myself up, I found it a little hard. I was sore and exhausted. Another thing that wasn't surprising considering all I had been doing over the previous month. It was still dark outside, but Edward's alarm would go off in about an hour. Sitting on the edge, I willed myself to get up to go to the bathroom. When I stumbled inside, I barely got the lights on before slamming

the door shut and dashing off to the toilet. When I sat down, I realized my panties were utterly soaked in gore.

“Oh, Jesus,” I mumbled, kicking them off. There were streaks of blood on my legs. Some spots were already dry and flaky. When I stood, I whined in disgust. It was everywhere. I was making the clean white space look like a crime scene.

“Bells, honey, are you okay?” Alice called softly through the door. I quickly threw away my ruined underwear, shoving them to the very bottom so they couldn’t be seen, and turned on the shower.

“Yeah,” I replied. “I just started my period, and it’s... it’s a rough one.” She opened the door and hurried in before closing it behind her. “I haven’t had one in ages because of my IUD. I guess I was due.” Another cramp twisted in my gut. “Fuckkk...”

She pouted. “Poor thing. I thought those were supposed to stop them completely.” I shrugged. “Okay, I’m going to get the bed cleaned up, then I’ll get you some medicine.”

I didn’t want to think about what I left behind on the sheets. I was embarrassed enough as it is.

Leaning against the countertop for support, I took a deep breath. “Edward has some non-over-the-counter painkillers. The good stuff. From the dentist. They’re like nicer Ibuprofen. Get those,” I replied right away. “He’ll know where they are.”

“I’ll get you some edibles, too. They’ll help.”

Weed wasn’t a fix-all, but in this case, it wouldn’t hurt. “Those chocolate truffles. Start with three of them. I have a high tolerance.” I stepped into the shower, unable to deal with the gross feeling of blood on my thighs for even a second longer. It was dripping, thick, and slimy.

About five minutes later, Edward climbed in with me. He came up behind and wrapped his arms around me wordlessly. There was so much worry in his eyes. “I’m sorry,” I began.

“No. What? Why?” He shook his head in surprise. “Do... do we need to take you to the doctor?”

I laughed, rubbing my forehead. “No, it only sucks because it’s been so long, I think. I was cramping last week, so I knew it was coming. I’ll be fine. It just surprised me. I obviously wasn’t prepared.”

Leaning back against him, I closed my eyes. He squeezed me tighter to him. “Are you up to going to the set?” I wanted to say yes. I truly did. He was so excited about it, and I was only going to get one more chance. But I still felt as if I had a fever, and they were the worst cramps I

had since I miscarried when I was in my twenties. My bottom lip quivered as I shook my head. He quickly turned me around. “No, no. It’s okay. You don’t do that. You don’t feel good. Plus, you’re jet-lagged. I know you must be tired.” I nodded, still pouting. “Love, it’s alright,” he chuckled, pecking my lips. “You’ll get plenty of chances to see me act like a dumbass. Don’t worry.”

“You don’t, though. You’re such an incredible actor,” I responded in a watery voice. “I want to see you, but I don’t think I can. I’m sorry.”

His hand rubbed soothing circles in the middle of my back. “Maybe tomorrow.”

“I’ll feel better by then, I just-”

“Don’t worry about it.” Edward ran his thumb over my bottom lip. “Get some rest. Relax. Hang out with your best friend. Jasper can-”

“He should go to the set,” I interrupted. “You need your alone time together too.”

“Are you sure? He doesn’t mind taking care of you.”

Emotions stung my nose. They would upend everything to make sure I was alright. “I don’t need anyone to take care of me,” I complained. “It’s just my period.”

He made a funny face, his mouth pushing to one side. “Ah, come on. You don’t want him to pick up snacks and supplies for you? Bring you breakfast in bed?”

“We can order stuff,” I countered. “He doesn’t want to wait on me.”

He twisted his head to the side to look at me. “Do you think we don’t enjoy doing these things for you? Because I think you relish doing them for us...” He trailed off. “It’s okay to relax and let us take care of you. We want to. You don’t always have to be the caregiver.”

His lips pressed to my forehead for a minute, letting them linger there. I took a deep breath. “Alright. But I still think he should go to the set. I bet Al would enjoy a day alone. She might need some one-on-one time.”

“Yeah, I think so, too,” he agreed. “We have enough time to order some breakfast before I go. Would you like to?” I nodded in response. “Anything you want?”

“Doughnuts and hot chocolate.”

He smiled a little. “I can arrange that. You want that place with the real bougie stuff?” I nodded again. “Yeah, that sounds like the perfect way to start the day.”

There were fresh sheets on the bed, and Jasper and Alice were both dressed and sitting on it. On the bedside table was my medicine and the edibles. They were sharing a joint, cuddled together. Dripping, I was still only wrapped in a towel. I rushed through my routine, barely having enough energy to bring my arms up to rub my moisturizer in. Edward was moving around the room in his sleep pants.

“Sorry about that,” I mumbled to them. It was such a rude wake-up call. No one enjoyed waking up in a puddle of their own blood, let alone anyone else’s.

“It’s okay!” Alice said quickly, reaching for me. “Stupid fucking periods.”

I swallowed the pills and took a sip of coffee before popping an edible into my mouth. “Amen.” Plopping down heavily, I ate another. She rubbed one of my shoulders. I leaned into it. “Can I have someone’s hoodie?” I asked in a weak voice.

Edward was the first to the closet, pulling out a freshly washed one, and brought it to me. He also fetched a pair of panties and yoga pants. “There you go.” He brushed his knuckles over my cheek. “I’ll start the order now. What do you want?”

“Chocolate, glazed, blueberry, something creamed filled. Or custard.”

“So... All of them,” Jasper smirked.

After slipping on my underwear and leggings, I ate the last edible. “Yes.” I took the joint from him, still topless. I was already bloated and uncomfortable, so I might as well go all the way and hurt myself some more. “And the biggest milk chocolate hot chocolate they have with extra whipped cream. We have milk here, right?”

“Yup,” my boyfriend grinned, tapping on the screen. He passed his phone to our man. “Pick out what you want, lovey.”

Taking a drag, I gave it to Alice before pulling on Edward’s hoodie. It was wonderfully soft and smelled so good. I flopped back onto the mattress, readjusting until my head was on her lap. It was wrapped awkwardly in a towel, and it came loose as I moved around. She pulled it away and brushed her fingers through my damp hair.

“So, is this really why you like the idea of polyamory so much?” She joked, holding the joint to my lips. “Having a whole host of people jumping up to make it all better?”

“It’s one benefit, for sure.”

She touched my nose. “I can see the appeal.”

I twisted towards her. "It's the individuals, not the romantic situation. I know what all of you would do for me, as friends and lovers. I've seen it with my own eyes."

She brushed her fingers over my temple into my curls. "It's because we all love you."

Smiling, I kissed her bare thigh. She was just in a nightgown. "I know. I'm so lucky."

"So, what are we going to do today, hm?" Jasper questioned as he laid beside me, taking a hit and blowing it out away from me once he took it from her grip. "Watch movies? Play video games?"

"You're going to go to the set with our boyfriend and have a good time. After we eat, I may just go back to sleep."

"Sounds good to me." Alice leaned over and kissed my cheek. "Wanna snuggle and nap all day?"

Edward gave her the phone, so she could get whatever she wanted after looking at Jasper's order. I knew he had a ton of food already picked out. He would make sure I didn't want for anything. "Man, I wish I could do that, too. Sounds perfect."

I gazed up at him. "What? Don't want to be an evil magical pirate?"

He pursed his lips and wrinkled his nose. "Yeah, I do, actually. Sorry."

"I'll come tomorrow, I promise," I breathed, reaching for his hand. "I can't wait to see you. This sounds like it's going to be a fun one."

"It is." He took my fingers and bent down to kiss them. My friend passed him the phone back so he could put in the order. "I'm going to get some coffee. Do you need anything else?"

"Maybe a heating pad."

Biting his lip, he glanced around as if he was actually looking for it. "I don't think I have one of those. I'm sorry."

Alice pulled out her cell, holding up one finger. "We'll have it delivered. No worries. I'll get you hooked up, baby. Do you need tampons or anything?"

I hummed. "I'll probably need more- a mixed pack. And get some pads, too. This is a heavy one."

She nodded in understanding. "Let's see. Candy. Salty stuff. Sodas. I think you have plenty of liquor here. Hm... what else?" She paused. "Ass wipes." Jasper burst into laughter. "Well, that's what they are!"

Edward shook his head, turning on his heels to go to the kitchen.

I continued to smoke with her as I watched the men get ready for the day. We were still waiting for our food. My edibles were kicking in, and it dulled the aching pain coming from my lower body. I had already bled through one plus tampon in the hour since I had gotten up. It was going to be a miserable day.

"Fucking cramps," I whined.

"You know what? I have something else that'll help. I'll be right back." She gave me the almost finished joint, our second, and dashed off the bed. I had been going so hard lately and knew soon I would have to slow down, but it wasn't going to happen this week- or month.

"Are you sure you don't need to go to the doctor?" Edward questioned, pushing his mouth to one side as he gazed at me. He was in slacks and an undershirt. He didn't want to get his button-down messy when the food came.

My best friend returned quickly with a small silver tin in her hand. "You really haven't been around many women on their periods, have you?"

"He's got four sisters!" I defended him.

"Yours makes me more nervous than theirs, for obvious reasons," he countered. "Can you blame me? It's just... ah, I'm worried. I wouldn't want to leave you alone today in this state. I'm glad Alice is here for you."

I grinned. "Me too."

She crawled into bed behind me and lifted the back of the oversized hoodie. "I got some CBD salve. It's supposed to be good for this."

"And how much THC is in it?" I questioned.

Humming, she read. "Twenty-five percent." I put the joint in the ashtray. "It's an indica, so it should help you relax." It was minty and tingled as it touched my skin. I moaned softly in pleasure. "It smells like Icy Hot."

"It feels like it, too. It's nice."

“Dove, you’re going to be stoned off your gourd in like twenty minutes. You haven’t eaten...” Jasper said with a slight smirk. “You’re going to need all those carbs and sugar.”

My arms wrapped around my stomach. “It won’t matter because I’m just going to go to sleep. I am so fucking tired.”

Alice rubbed the leftovers into her knees. “I have never met a woman who suffers as much from jet lag as you. You’d think you’d be used to it with all the traveling you’ve done. But it spans you every time.”

“Every. Damn. Time,” I mumbled in agreement. The doorbell rang. “Oh, thank god.”

I dumped my hot chocolate into one of Edward’s massive mugs that was closer to a bowl and topped it with the whipped cream they put on the side. There was even shaved chocolate. I covered mine with it and put the extra on Alice’s strawberry white chocolate version. She added some of her pink shavings to mine. I ate four doughnuts, dunking them into the drink.

“Can we do a shoot here?” I pointed at my mug with a glazed one in my hand. Half of it was in my mouth.

“I’ll see what I can do,” my boyfriend winked at me.

“If we ever get the time.”

“Maybe in a couple of months,” Edward sighed and shrugged. “Add it to the list.”

Both men kissed me goodbye, tucking me into bed with my best friend curled around me. I wasn’t sure how long it took me to fall asleep, but I don’t think they were out of the driveway. I was too full, too heavy, and the blood loss was making me dizzy.

When I woke up again, I had bled through my pants. I wouldn’t throw them away, though. I soaked them and threw them into the wash after getting changed. Alice had the freshly delivered heating pad waiting for me. She was the big spoon, her hand on my stomach comfortingly.

“I like your bed,” she mumbled in my ear.

“Me too, but it’s not really mine. It’s Edward’s. He picked it out before we met.”

“Eh, it’s yours now. All of your stuff is here now.”

I snorted. “I don’t think that’s how it works.”

She hummed for a long second. “I’m pretty sure that’s how marriage works.”

Shaking my head, I closed my eyes. “We’re not married yet.”

She sighed. “Yet. You will be soon enough, though.”

Her tone made me pause. I rolled over to look at her. “Does that bother you?”

Alice scratched behind her ear. “Yeah.”

My heart skipped a beat in dread. “Why?”

Shrugging, she had a sad smile. “I never got my head together for you because I assumed you would always be there, and I lost-” She stopped and huffed. “I would have never guessed this time last year that you’d be here. New York City was always our dream. We went there together. It feels like we broke up, even though we weren’t dating, but you had no obligation to me. And now I feel guilty for taking advantage of you all that time.”

“You didn’t, though.”

She refused to meet my eyes. “Yeah, I did. It was so one-sided. You always took care of me. You cooked every meal and cleaned and-”

Immediately, I shook my head. “I wanted to do those things.”

“I’m a shitty girlfriend.”

I laughed. “You weren’t my girlfriend.”

“But I should have been.” Her expression was so bitter.

Biting my lip for a minute, I tried to think of what to say. “Isn’t that up to me, too?”

“Of course,” she sighed. “But, before Eddie and Jasper, you would have said yes if I asked you. Even with Aiden. And I knew that. You would have hopped at the chance because I know how deeply you care about me. But you wouldn’t now. You’ve changed and grown for the better, and I could never keep up. Not emotionally. There is something missing in me, I don’t know what. Rose has it. That’s why she gets to have Emmett, why she gets to be happy.”

“I will always love you,” I swore.

She smiled slowly. “I know. So will I. Just not in the ways we need to be satisfied.”

“Maybe if you move to LA or we go to New York, things would be different. I just don’t have the energy for you right now. It wouldn’t be fair. You deserve so much better.”

My friend scoffed quietly under her breath. "Sweetie, that's not something you need to worry about. This is a 'me' issue, not you. I doubt it would be much different wherever we lived. I hate dating. It's too much work. I'm going to get wrapped up in my job again and ignore you."

"You never ignored me. Ever. CFA is important to me, too, you know. I know how much you have to work to make it a success, and I am so proud of you."

She paused for a moment. "It's going to grow so much in the next few years because of you and Eddie. That money he gave me... I cried. Hard. For hours."

"I did, too," I admitted. "It's what made me finally shut up and accept that he has the cash to do that kind of stuff on a whim. He's not stupid. He knows what he's doing. And he'll probably get all of that dough back in taxes."

"It's okay to do a good thing for a partially selfish reason. Being greedy isn't necessarily bad. Sometimes, for the greater good, you have to take care of yourself first. You can't help others if you're not getting everything you need."

I placed my hand on her cheek. "Is that what you're telling yourself to not feel guilty for just up and leaving?"

She snorted loudly. "Yeah."

"It's excellent advice. You should listen to it."

We stayed in bed all day, watching movies, listening to music, working on pictures, and eating. I tried to stay awake for my boyfriends' return, but after ten, it became impossible. It was well after midnight when they crawled in with us. We would have to get up by seven, so they were both going to be exhausted the following day. So, after a swift round of kisses, we all quickly fell asleep.