

Chapter Twenty: In the Family Way

Emmett and Rosalie ran to get everyone some breakfast after the ultrasound. I was starving, and no one else had eaten either. Everyone was too anxious to even consider it. They came back with four white boxes of doughnuts stacked high in his thick arms. His wife had a bag hanging off of each arm, trailing behind him.

“There are six of us!” Jasper complained as he watched him walk in, his eyes wide with surprise. His family didn’t know how to not go overboard.

“I know! That’s why two of these are for the nurses,” he said back cheerfully, not bothered as he marched towards the small table in the corner of the private room. He put two of them to the side and brought the others to me. He placed them at the foot of the bed and opened with them a little dramatic flair. One with half chocolate half glazed and the other was a mix of the fancier ones. They were both crammed full.

“Oo!” I said excitedly. “Um, I need a plate.”

He handed me a pile of napkins before I grabbed myself an éclair and a glazed one. Rosalie came over with an offering of chocolate and regular milk, or orange juice. I took the chocolate with a grin. It was much better than anything we could have gotten in the cafeteria. My stomach growled in delight.

“Darlin, that’s a lot of sugar,” Jasper began in a worried tone, and I swear five heads swung in his direction at once to glare at him. His face turned white with embarrassment before he flushed. “It’s too bad you don’t have something savory like bacon to go with it,” he added in a rush as his eyes shifted to the floor. He cleared his throat.

“That was the worst save in the history of mankind,” Emmett laughed as he thumped down into the uncomfortable pink plastic recliner. The air pushed out of it like a sad dollar store whoopie cushion. It made me giggle.

“I’ll take these to the nurse’s station,” Justin offered with a shake of his head, then stretched. He had eaten a chocolate one hastily and claimed an orange juice. “Maybe I can

encourage them to speed up your departure. Before the boy gets popped for telling a pregnant woman what to eat.”

“I didn’t tell her she shouldn’t or couldn’t,” he immediately defended himself. “I’ll get her another one if she wants. Shush.” He pouted at being teased by his playful family.

“When you get out, we’ll take you to lunch,” my mother-in-law promised, rubbing my knee over the blanket. They were still sore from hitting the tiles the day before when I threw up. “Mamaw wants to see y’all and make sure you’re okay.”

Quietly, Jasper laughed. “We’re literally eating right now.”

“One, this isn’t food. This is a breakfast dessert, and it doesn’t count. Second, you know she isn’t getting out soon,” she retorted with a roll of her eyes. I saw her children in her when she did that. I wondered if our kid would have their sass or mine. “You think of whatever you want to eat, and we’ll take you there, sweetie,” she encouraged in a baby voice. I would be pampered and spoiled. Getting knocked up had put me on an even higher pedestal, but I wasn’t sure how that was possible.

As I tried to figure out what I wanted, I considered my appearance... which was rough. I wasn’t certain what condition I was in. I hadn’t looked in a mirror yet. “What happened to my clothes from last night?” I questioned, looking around for a plastic sack with my belongings. It was the first time I had thought about it. “And my purse?”

My husband frowned. “They didn’t make it. They had to cut them off once you were out to check you out. Your bag is okay. I got it.” He handed it to me from its spot under the bed. One of the straps was broken, and there was blood on it. “I mean, it’s not good, but it survived, and I didn’t let anyone steal your things. I also have your necklace and ring in my pocket.” He patted his jeans.

“Thanks,” I grimaced as I held up the severed band with two fingers. “I’m going to need clothes to leave in. Ugh, and a shower before we see Mamaw. We both smell terrible.”

He nodded in agreement. “You could just drop us off at the house and go pick her up and bring her back. We should order lunch and have it delivered. I don’t think I’m really up to being in a restaurant right now. Or a car for longer than necessary.” I agreed with him, taking things out of my purse to check their condition. My phone had an annoyingly small crack in it. Other than that, everything seemed fine. It was about to die and needed to charge.

Rose, who was even quieter than normal, forced a smile. She had been eating doughnuts at the table while sipping on regular milk. “I can run to the store real quick and pick up some clothes for you. Text me your sizes. There’s a Target down the road.”

She was being so good to me. Just looking at her made me feel more guilty than I ever had before in my life. My birth control hadn't lapsed that much by the time I got in the family way. I couldn't imagine struggling for ten years with no results, and then her brand new sister gets it on the first attempt without trying. Though I had offered to carry for her, I wasn't ready to be a mother myself. It was a different kind of commitment. I wanted to be selfish and play around for a lot longer with my newfound money and fame. Fantasies of glamorous parties and nightclubs in LA and NYC died.

At least I wouldn't have to do all the press and the book reading for *The Cop's Story* the following month while heavily pregnant. I didn't seem to have any symptoms, though. But as I thought about it, I realized my stomach had been slightly disagreeable on occasion, and my appetite swung around with my mood, switching between starving and not willing to eat a bite. It depended on nothing more than a whim.

"Can I have another doughnut?" I questioned. Emmett returned them to me instantly with a smile. "Thank you." He offered them next to my husband. "Eat. You're cranky when you're hungry."

He took one with a smirk. Jasper knew I was right, though.

It took another four hours for them to release me. My sister-in-law brought me some sleep pants and a hoodie along with a pair of house shoes. She also bought me a maternity shirt. It was from Valentine's Day. It was long-sleeved and red with pink, blue, yellow, and purple hearts on the belly. They said 'love,' 'kiss,' 'xoxo,' and 'baby' was in the middle yellow heart. It was right where the wand had pressed into my gut.

Showing it to my husband, I tried not to tear up as I looked at it. I wasn't sure if they were good or bad tears. Rose was being so wonderful to me. I changed into it quickly in the bathroom. It made Caroline giddy when she saw it.

"I already hate how comfortable it is," I complained as I took his fingers with my uninjured ones. He chuckled, kissing my forehead with his hand resting on my stomach.

My in-laws dropped us off at the house. When we turned onto the street, one cop car drove past us, and another was parked directly across from our residence. His family waited until Jasper did a check of the perimeter before they left to go get my medicine, and Rosalie and Emmett went to go get Mamaw. Everyone was so eager to be helpful.

We trudged up the stairs, taking every step heavily. I laughed when I saw the chair. It was hysterical. "You better put that in the closet if your parents are coming by. The entire thing. I'm going to use that eventually, goddammit." I pointed at it.

He sighed, putting it away. "You won't be up to anything for a while, and we'll have to change the way we play while you're pregnant."

"How?" I asked as I plopped onto the bed. I kicked off my shoes with my toes. They were thick and fur-lined with heavy bottom soles. They matched my new purple hoodie and sleep pants.

"I can't hit you now," he stated earnestly, closing the closet door.

I snorted. He acted as if he regularly beat me. "You only leave marks when you really try. You've never struck me hard or anywhere near my stomach. I don't think it'll be changing any of that anytime soon," I retorted. I was no different from how I was two days before.

"No, I mean, I won't." He came to the bed and kneeled down in front of me. "I could have lost you and our child last night. Someone is trying to hurt you. I cannot and will not do anything to put you in danger. Even if you think it's silly or unnecessary. We'll play, and I'll serve you however you wish, but when you're mine, I will treat you as carefully as possible. And that's my choice as your Dom."

Pouting, I closed my eyes. "But spankings don't hurt."

He pushed my shirt up over my stomach to expose my bare skin. It was purple and blue in certain places because of the seatbelt. Lightly, he kissed where the little heartbeat was. It had been fast, like a hummingbird. He put both hands on either side. "We can play in other ways, Isabella. Don't worry. I'll still have you. We'll just have to be more creative."

We were silent for a long minute while he pressed his face into my belly. I could feel his eyelashes fluttering against it. "Why are you not mad at me for forgetting?" I blurted out. "You should be."

"You know, if you were poking holes in the condoms I wasn't using either, I'd be a little pissed. But seeing as the last six months of our lives have been the biggest whirlwind, I think I'll forgive you. You're not the only one responsible for our birth control." I smiled at his words as he kissed my stomach again. I played with his hair, scratching my nails against his scalp. "I will say one thing. If the last twenty-four hours has taught me anything, it's that even if you're having the very worst day of your life, it's possible to be happy and grateful. And pleasantly surprised. So, I'm choosing to be happy right now."

"So, what do you want?" I asked as I touched my sides, looking down at the bump that wasn't there. I was already chubby, and I wondered how long it would take for me to look pregnant.

He looked at me with an innocent grin. "A shower."

“Ugh, me too. They won’t be gone that long. We should hurry, actually.” I meant boy or girl, but that sounded better.

Mamaw gave Jasper the longest hug when she showed up with his twin. She pushed her bottom lip out as she ran her soft, wrinkled thumb over a small scratch on his jaw. “I’m going to kill ‘em,” she remarked in a gravelly voice.

“I believe you would sincerely try,” he smirked at her as he rubbed her forearms.

His brother-in-law cleared his throat to get his attention. “So, dude, no one’s informed her, yet,” Emmett called as he sat in one of my chairs. He was right on the edge, perched like he was excited to see what happened next.

She didn’t sound pleased. “Told me what now? Oh, god. What else?”

Jasper bent his knees a little so he could look at her face. “Are you ready to be a Great-grandma?” He asked her in a calm and gentle voice.

Her reaction was instant. April screamed in happiness, surprising everyone in the room. If I had put money on it, I would have said Caroline would be the screamer. She threw her thin arms around his neck. Her toes barely touched the floor as he held her up. “Oh! I never thought I’d live to see them. That’s amazing!”

Poor Rosalie looked so crushed as she sat beside her husband. Her expression was the only one I could focus on. She wasn’t talking at all, and her eyes were glassy and red. In her fist was a tissue that she had been fidgeting with.

“Excuse me for a minute,” I blurted out, pushing myself off the couch to hurry to our room. It was suddenly suffocating. Without my permission, I ran into the bathroom. I couldn’t even bother to turn on the light. I leaned against the sink with both hands gripping the edge. My body was trembling, though I wasn’t sure why.

Footsteps thumped up the stairs. But it wasn’t my husband’s. My sister-in-law poked her head in the room. “Hey,” she whispered. “Morning sickness?”

I shook my head. “No,” I breathed as I looked up at her. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah. Just worried about you and Jasper. And my niece or nephew,” she declared hurriedly.

For a long moment, I stared at her before I began to cry. Every emotion was right on the surface. “I’m sorry. I didn’t know. We weren’t trying. I forgot my shot. I’m so stupid. And I am so-” She stopped me by hugging me tightly. She rocked me back and forth in her tight embrace.

“No. I’m happy. Don’t be sorry.”

“I’m so scared.”

Her lips rested against the top of my head. “I can imagine. And so is Jasper. Now he has to protect both of you. He doesn’t know how to do it, and I don’t know what to tell him. Maybe buy a castle, build a mote, and fill it with gators.” I snorted quietly. “I’ll do anything to help, though.”

I pulled back so I could look in her eyes. “I know this hurts you.”

She shrugged. “The pain isn’t your fault. And it’s just a little sting. I feel it every time someone I know gets pregnant. But this is better. I get to play with this baby, which is great. I will babysit literally whenever, by the way.” She took my hand. “Want to come down to talk about food? I need something better than an éclair.”

“Yeah,” I nodded after drying my tears. I forced a smile, and she matched it.

“Woo, that puking will do a number on it,” Mamaw said as I came back down the stairs slowly. I held onto the railing to make sure I didn’t fall. “Ginger and crackers. Honey, get her some ginger candy, tea, and ginger ale next time you go to the store. And mints,” she added, directing it towards Jasper. “You know they only call it morning sickness because men are too stupid to listen to women when they say it happens all the time.”

I laughed at her blunt attitude. “I’m fine. Just a false alarm. But it does explain why I threw up yesterday,” I sighed and sat beside my husband on the couch. Emmett had given his seat to her. “I’m actually hungry, though. Does anyone have any suggestions? I’m open to ideas.”

After his parents returned, we ordered a large Chinese food feast. It was delicious. Even if Jasper mumbled about needing to be careful with salt in the future as he read the soy sauce bottle. He worked out at home every day still, but I had never seen him study a label before. He was more of the ‘consume veggies and fruit daily and exercise’ type. It worked well for him because he could eat like a horse.

We were all sitting around the dinner table, just talking, when his phone rang. “Sam,” he mumbled to me before he picked it up. “Hey, man. What’s up?” I couldn’t hear what he was saying, but Jasper’s face went gray. “No. No... You can’t be serious? When? Shit. Shit. Okay.” He inhaled as he closed his eyes. “Yeah, I will. Thanks. I’ll talk to you tomorrow.”

“What?” I questioned instantly. Everyone had gone silent, waiting for him to answer.

He had to take a deep breath before he could speak. “Last night, in Rochester, New York, Bree Tanner’s mother was involved in a hit-and-run accident. The vehicle went over a bridge, and she sustained massive blunt force trauma to the head. She died this morning of her injuries,” he announced as calmly as possible as he placed his phone face down on the table. A shaky hand went to his mouth as he closed his eyes again.

“No!” I yelled as I collapsed into his arms. He pressed me to his firm body. “No,” I cried into his shirt as my fingers curled into his shoulders.

He was shivering just a little as if he were cold despite the heat being on. I could feel it in his grip as it twisted as tightly as he could around my middle. Jasper rested his head on top of mine. “There’s more than one.”