



Chapter Twenty-two:

“Good God, Almighty. What the hell is in this box?” Jasper groaned in a strained voice as he brought a container from the bed of his truck. He put it down and placed his hand on his back like it would work out the kinks. “Rocks?”

Alice glanced at him. “Yes, actually. It’s always windy out there,” she said as she and I arranged the huge canopy poles she used to hang the clothes on. “I’m going to use them to hold down our tablecloth and such.”

“Ah, okay...” he drew out, shaking his head as he rolled his eyes. “Of course, I guess that makes sense. Sort of.”

“Bring the table down next and then get that box over there!” She directed her husband with a twirl of her finger. “I need you to put the sign up when we’re done setting this up. We’re both too short.”

“Fine, fine,” he mumbled, waving her off. Jasper was not a morning person. Alice and I were. It pissed him off a little. It made us laugh, but we already had two pots of coffee between us. We were both giddy.

The smell of food floated through the wind. There was something spicy wafting from one corner of the Maker’s fair and something sweet coming from the opposite direction. It was like

honey and cinnamon. I would have to check it out soon. A lady selling coffee was two tables away from us, and I knew we would be good friends with her. The rest of the row was taken up by an entire family selling different things from wood crafts, knitting, lollipops, cookies, paintings, handmade greeting cards, and jewelry. They were busy setting up together, throwing sarcastic comments back and forth as two kids ran around the table.

I started hanging up the dresses by design and size. Alice set up the table with some purses and accessories she had created while Jasper put up the giant sign she made. It was like a long blanket with the words 'handmade clothing stitched with love' embroidered into the fabric. Charming with all its bright colors, it would undoubtedly grab someone's attention.

My peasant skirt flapped in the wind, and I wrapped my sweater around me tighter. It would get warmer outside as the sun came up, but that time couldn't come soon enough. All I could think about was Edward and spending the day with him. Warm, inside, and on his couch.

"Where are you at, Bells?" Jasper asked as he climbed down off his chair and dusted off his hands on his pants. "You're not here with us."

"Nowhere," I muttered, but I could see Alice smirking to herself out of the corner of my eye. "What do you have planned for today?"

He smiled at me wickedly. "I plan to sit around in my underwear and watch sports."

"You could at least do a load of dishes," she mumbled. He stuck his tongue out at her, and she returned it. "Maybe some laundry, too."

"Maybe," he replied, holding his chin in the air. "We'll see."

"Jasper!" Alice spoke in a scornful voice. "What would your mama say? I'll be working my butt off here all day, and I'm not even forcing you to stay. You will do some dishes and a load of clothes!"

"Yes, ma'am," he frowned. When she turned, he stuck his tongue out at her again, making me laugh.

"I saw that," she declared, not turning around. "Now leave before you get yourself in real trouble."

"Yes'em," he said, his southern accent thick. Jasper came over and planted a big kiss on my forehead before going to kiss his wife, smacking her ass hard afterward. Squealing, she slapped him on the shoulder in return.

It was cute to see them play like that. They were the most relaxed couple I knew.

We finished setting up earlier than I thought we would, so Alice and I had some time to sit around and drink our fresh cups of coffee while we waited for the fair to open.

“So, how much do you want to make?” I asked casually. I knew my friend. She always had a goal.

“Two fifty. I’ve got another two-fifty in savings. I’m hoping to take Jasper on a weekend trip out of town for Christmas. Maybe in Arkansas or Texas. Perhaps Hot Springs.”

“That would be fun,” I said, leaning back as I enjoyed a rogue beam of light that splashed across the concrete-covered parking garage that held the fair. “I’m excited I’ve got money to spend here on myself.”

“We’ll have to take turns shopping,” she commented with a slight smile. I nodded at the happy thought.

It was a slow start to the morning. Alice only sold two dresses and a purse in the first few hours. I could tell it was making my best friend frustrated, not that I could blame her. I hoped things would pick up for her in the afternoon.

It was nearly straight up noon when Jasper showed back up with a Subway bag in his hands. “I thought I’d bring the hard-working ladies some lunch. And I did the dishes and two loads of laundry. I’ve even put them away,” he said with his chin raised high in the air like he was proud of himself. Alice gave him a big sloppy kiss as I snatched the sack from his grip. I was starving. But he hardly noticed. He was too busy macking on his wife.

He had gotten me a meatball sub with some sour cream and onion chips, just how I enjoyed it. It smelled so good. We sat back in our chairs with him manning the battle stations as we munched. She leaned over about halfway through my six-inch sandwich, talking behind her hand. “Is that who I think it is?”

“Huh?” I mumbled through a big bite. She pointed dramatically to one side at Edward, who was looking beautiful in his leather racing jacket, a white t-shirt, and jeans along with those black converse he liked so much. His eyes were skimming over someone’s booth that had all kinds of scented soaps.

I felt my jaw drop, and Alice giggled. “I thought so.”

Putting my food down, I quickly wiped my face. “Hey... Um, I’ll be right back.”

“I guessed as much,” she replied with a knowing smile.

“What in the world are you doing here?” I asked as I came to Edward’s side. He passed the woman selling soaps a twenty, and she gave him a bag. He had several already.

“Well, Christmas is coming up. So, I figured I’d come over and look. Is that okay?” He asked with an innocent little smile. “Plus, I wanted to see how things were going for you and your friend.”

“Ah,” I shrugged. “She’s done better, but it’s still early yet.”

He frowned. “That’s too bad. I hope it turns around for her.”

“Me too,” I sighed quietly.

“Would you like to walk around with me? I’ve only gone to a few stalls,” he softly inquired. I smiled and nodded.

“Why don’t we put your bags behind the booth, so you don’t have to carry them around?” I offered as we wandered in that direction. “Alice wouldn’t mind.”

“That would be great,” Edward agreed. I took the sacks from his grip and strode back towards our little patch of concrete. As soon as Jasper realized who was with me, his back straightened up. “Good afternoon.”

“Mr. Masen, sir! Uh, hi,” he stuttered. He had been caught off guard. It wasn’t something that happened to him often. It made his wife giggle.

She cleared her throat. “Hi,” she said sweetly as she came to stand beside her husband. “I’m Alice Whitlock. You must be Mr. Masen. It’s so nice to meet you formally.”

“Likewise,” he smiled his charming grin and shook her hand, but I could see the slight blush in his cheeks.

“Hey. Since Jasper is here with you, I’m going to take my turn shopping. I’ll be back in a while,” I told them. “Jazz, you can eat the rest of my sandwich.”

“Sweet,” he answered like an excited teenager. “Thanks, baby.”

“Enjoy,” I laughed. “I’ve got my cellphone on me if you need anything.”

Edward bought several things, ranging from homemade lollipops and cake balls for later to earrings for his sister and a bracelet for his stepmother for Christmas. He tried to pay for a bag I purchased for myself, but I didn’t let him. It was good to buy something for myself, even if it was his money to begin with. But, at least in my mind, I had earned that cash. I had to admit it

was kind of fun to watch him, though. He was a little awkward, shy, and always kind as he praised people on their handiwork.

After we finished, he walked me back to the table to get his other bags. When we got there, he cocked his head to the side. "Mrs. Whitlock-" he began.

"Alice," she stopped him with a smile. "Yes, sir?"

"Edward," he grinned in return. "I was wondering if you have sizes to fit a one, two, and three-year-old?"

"Yes, I do. Every dress design you see goes from six months to a five-year-old."

"Alright. My nieces are a little chunky. We may want to go up a size on each of them. I love them, but my sister feeds them whatever they wish," he chuckled. "They're as sweet as candy, but you don't want to stand between them and their dinner."

"That shouldn't be a problem," Alice giggled happily. "Do you see a dress you're interested in?"

"Yes, I'd like to get them one each of the Christmas designs," he stated as he pulled out his wallet.

"Which one?" I asked. "There are five different Holiday styles."

"Can I get all the sizes in each design? What would that be? Eighteen months old, a three-year-old and a four-year-old size? They're coming for Thanksgiving, and I want them to have something to wear for the Christmas season."

"These dresses are twenty-five apiece," Jasper clarified to him in a strangled voice. His eyes were as big as saucers. "Are you... Are you sure?"

"Oh? That's it? They're adorable and look very well made. I've spent ten times that on clothes for them that were ripped apart in an hour. Well, in that case, can I have three of the Saint's ones? LSU, too. One for each of them. My sister and her husband love football." Edward looked down at the table and found the bows. "Oh, do these go with them? I'll take these, too," he told her as he picked out six, then passed them to me.

Alice was practically vibrating as she carefully put all the items in a few bags for him. When she told him the total, she was literally trembling. "That will be six hundred four dollars and ninety-five cents. If you're still certain."

It was, by far, the biggest sale she had ever made. It probably took her a full month to make that from the store she sold them at.

Edward laughed. "Of course, I'm sure. I'm positive when my sister sees these, she'll want more, too. But I'm confident Bella will direct her your way." He winked at me, and I felt my cheeks flush. He pulled several hundreds from his wallet and found a ten-dollar bill stuck in there. "Don't bother with the change. I'm not worried about it."

"Thank you so much," Alice gushed. Jasper stood there, speechless. I think it was a first for him. He repeatedly blinked, his big blue eyes still wide.

"I'll see you tomorrow, Ms. Swan?" He smiled at me. I could only nod. I had nothing I could say about the fantastic thing he just did for my best friend.

When he walked out of earshot, she jumped up and down. "HOLY SHIT! BELLA! OH MY GOD! I LOVE HIM! I COULD KISS HIM!"

"That was amazing," Jasper finally muttered. "Seriously, seriously, awesome."

"Yes, it was," I agreed once I eventually got my voice back. "I'll be right back."

Running after Edward, I caught up to him in the parking lot. His hands were overflowing with bags. Before he could say anything to me, I grabbed the back of his head and brought him down for an extremely passionate kiss. He moaned in surprised pleasure, wrapping his arms around my waist so the sacks were resting against my ass.

"Why did you do that?" I asked as I pulled away.

"Do what?"

"Buy all those dresses."

"As I said, my little nieces are coming for Thanksgiving. I thought it would be nice and—"

I shook my head, stopping him. "You didn't have to get them from Alice. You can buy clothes anywhere, and you didn't have to buy that many. You just doubled the goal she set for the entire event. Edward, you have made her day, if not her month. It was extraordinary. Thank you."

"Does it make you happy?" He asked me quietly, looking at me from underneath those damned eyelashes.

My heart fluttered in my breast. "Yes, very much so."

“Then that’s all that matters,” he replied, leaning down for another kiss. It would have lasted longer, but a truck honked at us, wanting to back up. “I should let you go back to your friends. I’ll see you tomorrow?”

“Of course,” I told him, feeling the thundering in my heart even harder as he walked to his car. Getting out of the way, I went back to the booth. Alice and Jasper were both staring at me. His jaw was nearly to the floor, but she was smirking to herself.

“What the hell, Bella?”

“She likes him, you idiot,” she laughed. “Wow, that was intense.”

“I only wanted to thank him.” I sat back in my chair, suddenly feeling breathless. I ached in ways even I didn’t understand.

“I want to thank him like that too,” Alice snickered wickedly. Her husband grabbed her in his arms, squeezing her tight. “Okay, maybe not the exact way Bella did,” she squealed, throwing her head back.

“Are you two together?” Jasper asked after he gently tossed her in her chair.

Shrugging, I felt embarrassed by my answer. “I don’t know.”

“No, honey,” she smirked, “the better question is: does she want to be with him?” They looked at me at the same time, but I hardly noticed because I was still watching his car drive away.

“Yeah, I do,” I finally responded when he was out of sight. “I really do.”