



Chapter Twenty-six

In the night when all the fun was done, Edward and I picked up all our things scattered around the house. It was crazy where some of our clothes landed. We took a lovely shower after a little snack where we had round two, or maybe it was three. I wasn't sure, but we crawled into bed at around one in the morning. It was a perfect ending to a practically flawless evening. The only bad thing was that it didn't last long enough. There was never enough time with him. I could never get enough.

Far too early, before the sun was even up, my phone rang. I slapped at the table until I found the offending object, bringing it to my ear as I sat up against the headboard. My eyes didn't want to open, so I didn't bother to look at the caller ID.

"You should just use the iPhone instead of carrying around two phones all the time. We can switch the numbers," Edward mumbled, half asleep as he rolled over away from the bright light of the screen. It wasn't a bad idea, but I didn't want him to pay for my service. It was something we would discuss later.

But I couldn't articulate that at dawn. "Mm," I hummed in response before answering the phone clumsily. "Hello?"

"Morning, sweetie!" My mother gushed, far too happy for the time.

Nothing was wrong by her far too perky tone, which only made me angry. As if I wasn't annoyed enough at just being awake in the first place. If there had been something amiss, it would have been a whole different story. "Mom, do you have any idea what time it is?" I nearly growled through clenched teeth. Rubbing a rough hand over my eyes, I tried to mash some sleep out of them. I blinked repeatedly, but they still didn't want to open.

"Nope, why? Were you asleep?" She genuinely inquired.

She was lucky I couldn't slap her through the phone. Seriously? Why else would you ask a question like that? Did she have any common sense at all? "Yes, I was. Normal people are at 5:28 am. Especially on a Sunday. What on earth do you want?" I replied sarcastically.

Edward scoffed into his pillow.

"Boy, you're not friendly in the mornings, are you? You used to get up so early. I thought you'd be awake," she laughed like she didn't have a single care in the entire world. I wasn't amused.

She was right. Usually, I was an early riser as my boyfriend liked to call it, but never at this ungodly time unless I had something planned. Besides, even if I was, it was still in bad taste on her part to bother someone before daylight.

"You know it's rude to call before the sun rises, right?" I pushed. She used to teach Kindergarten, and I knew she taught manners. I sincerely doubted she had forgotten them already. I shuddered to think if she bothered other people like this.

"It's up here," she answered.

I felt like facepalming myself, hard. "That's because you live in Florida. There's a time difference. Mom, seriously, what do you want? Please tell me you didn't call me to chit-chat?" I pinched the bridge of my nose, willing my oncoming headache away. This was not how I wanted to start my day. I knew I was short with her, but she was getting on my nerves.

"Everything okay?" Edward asked as he rolled over again, this time resting his head on my stomach over the comforter.

Petting his hair, I sighed quietly to myself. At first, I shrugged, but then I remembered that A: it was dark and B: he probably had his eyes closed. He wasn't a mind reader, after all. "Yeah, fine," I replied.

Instantly, I wish I hadn't, though. I could practically see my mom's ears perk up. Mentally I smacked myself, hoping someone would knock me out at that point. It would be preferable to having the conversation we were about to have.

"Are you with someone?" Renee jabbered in an excited rush. "Oh, Bella! Who is it? I knew you were with a boy that one time," she gushed again.

Groaning, I covered my eyes with my hand. How old did she think I was? Did she really expect I would answer that? She instantly turned into an over-eager teenager that wanted all the deets.

Gag.

"I'm talking to myself. See, Mom? You've driven me crazy. Congrats. Mission accomplished. I'm going to hang up now if that's all you wanted."

"I heard a voice," she said in disbelief, ignoring my sarcasm. She did, but I wasn't going to give in. Especially this early. I would have rather lied than deal with it.

"In your mind, maybe," I dryly responded. He snorted again quietly, shaking his head into the blanket.

"Isabella!" She snapped at my rudeness.

I quickly returned her ire. "Renee!" I wasn't about to let her treat me like a kid. Besides, she brought it on herself. "Alright. Bye-bye then."

"What are you doing for Thanksgiving? Do you want to come down? Spend the weekend on the beach?" She asked in a rush. She knew I would hang up if she didn't hurry. I sat there, just stunned, then baffled by her craziness. "We could get you a tan to go along with your turkey!"

"First, Thanksgiving is next week. Second... are you out of your mind? I have a job now. I can't drop everything to travel across three states. Real-life doesn't work like that!" I scolded, always feeling like the parent in the relationship. "Besides, I already have plans. I'm going to lunch at Charlie's girlfriend's house."

"I didn't know he had a girlfriend. Why didn't you tell me that your dad had one?" She demanded, almost as if she was offended by the very idea. Like she still owned him or something. I didn't appreciate that at all. She was doing everything right to rub me the wrong way.

"Because it's none of your business."

“Yes, it is. He’s the father of my child. I need to know these things,” she retorted, sounding downright annoyed.

“I’m an adult, not a baby, and it stopped being yours when you decided you were too good for him,” I told her in his defense. I would never mention this conversation to him, but I couldn’t bear the thought of her giving him crap because he had a life after her. She thought she was a princess and expected everyone to pine over her. That was hardly the case. “You better not say a word to him either. I mean it! This is none of your damn business.”

“That’s a little harsh,” she replied quietly.

“I’m not awake enough to candy coat bullshit. Those are the punches. You can either roll with them or think before you call someone this early in the morning.”

“Fine! Grumpypants! Whatever. Go back to sleep. We can discuss Christmas later,” she scoffed, practically sounding like a preteen. She seemed younger by the minute. I just rolled my eyes in the darkness.

Yeah, so not going down there with that attitude, I thought to myself.

“Love you, sweetie!” My mother blurted out as if she had completely forgotten the discussion we just had. I shouldn’t have been surprised. That was her way.

“Yeah, you too,” I mumbled before I hung up. I wasn’t about to give her more time to start up the conversation again. When I was sure the call had ended, I turned off my phone and tossed it back onto the table beside me.

Edward wiggled his face into my blanket-covered stomach, one of his hands resting on my waist. “People crazy?” He inquired into the comforter, his voice a barely audible mumble.

“Generally, yes. My mother, especially.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Me, too.” I glanced over at the clock. It was nearly six in the morning, and the sun was coming up outside. The light was slowly starting to spread across the floor from his window. I groaned to myself and rubbed my eyes again. All the sleep was gone from them. “Want to go back to bed?”

“Hm,” he hummed in reply, not answering. I smirked slightly to myself.

I slid down a little, Edward adjusting so that his head was resting comfortably on my shoulder. Turning my face to the side, I brushed my nose against his and placed a tiny kiss on his mouth, which he returned with a gentle smack of his lips.

Though I was comfortable, I wasn't able to relax, and he could tell. I hated that I bothered him, and I did try to stay still and quiet, but he could feel the tension in my body.

Gently he squeezed my side, giving a soft sigh. "No more sleep, then?" He asked as his hand gingerly dragged over my bare stomach.

"You can go back to sleep," I offered. "I don't mind."

"I can't if you don't," he answered softly. "So, what do you want to do today?"

Awkwardly, I shrugged the other shoulder. "I don't care." Then I sighed in annoyance as I remembered something.

"What?"

"I need to walk-of-shame my ass back to my place for some clothes and stuff."

Sitting up, he rubbed his hand over his face as he yawned quietly. "Well, I know what we'll do today then."

"What?"

"We are going to get you some things to keep here. This is the third time you've stayed over and had to go back to your house to get stuff. And it's silly. There is plenty of space in my closet and a couple of free drawers in the bathroom," he firmly declared.

"But, Edward..." I drew out, not entirely sure how to end my sentence.

"But what?" He pushed, laying back with his arms above his head as he stretched. One of his elbows popped, as did his spine.

"You don't think that's getting too serious too fast?" I finally asked as I sat up against the headboard completely. The question deserved my full attention. It was too important to talk about laying down.

He frowned to himself as he sat up too. Edward took a long time to answer, thinking over his reply carefully. "Honestly, I don't know if it is or not. Do you think it is?"

"I don't know," I slowly replied, playing with the edge of the blanket. "What will people think?"

"Seriously?" He snorted in disbelief. "Is that what you're worried about? What others think? I don't give a damn. I only care about what you think and feel. If you think it's too fast, that's one thing... but... no. I don't care."

"Yeah, but what about your family?" I blurted out, my worry coloring my tone. "Thanksgiving is next week. What will they think if they find out I've been staying over?"

"They'll just be thrilled that I'm happy. Besides, it's none of their business. Bella, are you worried about what they'll think of you? Sweetheart, I'm an adult, and I'm practically a saint compared to my brother. Don't worry about that."

"Of course I am," I sighed. "How could I not be?"

"They'll love you," he tried to assure me, but I shook my head. "Yes, they will. They'll find you as wonderful as I do. Love, I want you to keep some things here. I want to know that I have a piece of you here all the time. And I want to know that there aren't ever any excuses for you not to stay with me when you wish to. Plus, I don't want you to have to 'walk-of-shame-it.'"

I laughed at him using that term. Chuckling too, he knew he was winning. How could I say no to an argument like that? "Fine. We'll go to the store and get some cosmetic stuff. I've got clothing at home."

"Yeah, but if we go clothes shopping together, I can help you pick out lingerie."

I could practically see his wicked grin and wiggling eyebrow in the darkness. Snorting and covering my face with the blanket, I leaned against his shoulder. "You're ridiculous."

"No, I'm a horny man who wants to see his hot girlfriend in pretty things. Come on, please?" He pleaded with me in a cheesy kid's voice. "Please, please?"

"If you get to pick out my panties, does that mean I get to choose a pair of silky drawers for you?" I teased in a thick southern accent.

He laughed loudly, burying his face in my hair. "Silk feels odd. I got a pair once. I felt like my pants were going to just slide right off. And they stick to your skin. They're weird."

"Ah." I shrugged as I snuggled in closer. "That's okay. Suits are to women what lingerie is to men. Especially what you were wearing last night. Oh, God. You looked so good."

"Stop it, you're going to make me blush," he complained softly against my scalp.

"I like it when you do, though," I told him honestly. "It's so sweet."

Kissing my mouth lightly, his hand rested on my jaw. I could feel the warmth in his cheeks as my fingers drifted from his temple to his chin as our lips moved together.

We didn't get out of bed until the sun was completely up, and both of our stomachs were growling loudly in demand for some nourishment.

Instead of wearing my dress from the night before, I stole Edward's gray shirt again and a pair of sleep pants that dragged the floor by about a mile. He seemed to like it because he kept grabbing my ass on our way to the garage, making me squeal and laugh the entire way.

Instantly, it stopped. I wasn't expecting to see Jacob there, especially on a Saturday.

"Oh! Good morning, Mr. Masen," he said as he stood up from the desk quickly. "Bella," he smiled at me. I took a step closer to Edward, sliding my hand into his.

"Jake! Good morning. What are you doing here on the weekend?" His tone wasn't accusing, just surprised.

"I got the parts in for the sixty-seven on Friday. So hopefully I can get it running. I wanted to get a head start on it. If this works, I want to move on to the exterior restoration sometime this week," he explained, pointing to a blanket on the far side of the room with tools on it. "If that's alright with you, sir."

"You don't have to work on the weekends," my boyfriend insisted.

"It's not really. I'm excited about this."

"Well, if you want to... Go ahead. Just don't work too hard." He smiled, squeezing my hand before looking over to me. "Jake is the best mechanic in Shreveport. He's already partially restored a classic Harley for me."

"How many vehicles do you have?" I asked in a murmur.

"Here? Six, four of them drivable, and one bike. I kind of collect them. I have several more in storage in Chicago. So, what would you like to drive today, my love? It's up to you."

"Oh," I hummed, my face turning red suddenly with the attention on me. Both Edward and Jake were staring at me, though the mechanic's expression didn't really look amused in the least. In fact, he was frowning to himself. I balled my dress up a little more in my hands, my house shoe covered feet sliding against the floor. "I like the Camaro."

“Excellent choice.” He beamed, unaware of the weird tension in the room. He walked over to the desk and plucked up the keys for me. “Have a good day. Ready, sweetheart?” He asked as he opened the driver’s side door for me.

“Yeah,” I shuffled promptly over to him past Jake, who didn’t say a word. I got in quickly, starting up the car before Edward even sat down on the passenger side. I gunned it out of there.

“Is something the matter?” He inquired when he finally realized my expression. My fingers were dug deep into the leather-covered steering wheel.

“I don’t like him,” I answered in a soft tone. “Jacob, I mean.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. He just gives me the creeps for some reason. He hasn’t done anything per se,” I sighed. “I don’t know. As I said, he kind of freaks me out.”

“I can let him go if it’s that bad,” Edward stated bluntly.

“No!” I blurted out. “I don’t want someone to lose their job because I’m uncomfortable. I mean, if he does something wrong, that’s one thing.” We were quiet for a long time. When we were at a red light, I turned to look at my boyfriend. “You really would fire him, wouldn’t you?”

“Yes, of course,” he replied as if it were nothing.

“Even though you said he was the best?”

“Yes. If you feel there is something off with him, there probably is. I trust your instincts, and I don’t want you to be uneasy,” he explained, taking my hand and bringing it up to his mouth for a gentle kiss. “Is there anything I can do?”

“No, it’s okay,” I assured him.

“Please let me know if he does anything... inappropriate, alright?”

“I will,” I breathed as I pulled up in front of my place. “Just let me get changed real quick, and we can go out.”

Which we did. We spent most of the morning and afternoon shopping, which Edward insisted on paying for. I didn’t like it really, but he said since he was the one that wanted to do it, then he should cover the expenses. He used his Jedi business mind tricks on me and somehow got me to agree.

When we were all done, I felt like those Stormtroopers in the first Star Wars. Yes, those were, in fact, the shoes I was looking for, and no, I suppose if you put it that way you can pay for them...

Damn him and his crafty mouth.

Monday was a rather gloomy day. It was the first time in a while it had rained, and the temperature was close to what it was supposed to be for the time of year. It was chilly, especially with the wind. I didn't let that stop me from doing the grocery shopping I needed to do, though it sucked to bring it all inside. Luckily I dressed comfortably for the day, sporting an old pair of shredded jeans and a nerdy Hello Kitty shirt I loved. I was such a little kid at heart sometimes.

After I got everything put away, I worked on prepping veggies and such for a couple of the meals we would have in the next week. Of course, Thursday was covered since it was Thanksgiving. I hadn't asked him about Friday yet. I had no idea how many people would be there, what they liked to eat or if they had restrictions, or if Edward even wanted me to cook in the first place.

It was something we would have to talk about.

I prepared the vegetation for the beef stew we would have the next day, along with cubing the meat that would go into it. Plus, I was going to make cornbread with it. I figured it would go over really well since it was supposed to rain the following days too. It would be a comforting meal for a drizzly afternoon.

After getting it all ready to go, I washed up and began work on our dinner for that night. It would be a lovely baked tomato sauce over thin spaghetti with meatballs. And to go along with that, the most delicious smelling garlic bread you have ever come across. I had to admit that I was kind of excited about it. It was something simple that so few people seemed to do right, even at restaurants. I was admittedly picky, though.

Slicing the tomatoes in half, I covered them in garlic, onions, olive oil, herbs, and salt before tossing them into the oven. They would cook for a while, so I had time to make up the tiny meatballs that would bake too.

The house smelled amazing by the time 5:15 rolled around. I had the table set for two with a couple of glasses of red wine, salad, and bread, which I wrapped in foil to stay warm. The sauce was still simmering on the stove with the meatballs flavoring it. I saved the pasta for the very last minute so it wouldn't get gummy.

I danced around the kitchen, humming to myself as I cleaned and waited for my incredible man. It was a dreary day, and all I wanted to do in the evening was cuddle. Okay, maybe more than that. But it was a good start. I had some other ideas that were more innocent too.

When I heard the front door shut, I brought the bowl of sauce out to the table along with some cheese to sprinkle over it. "Hey!" I called. "Dinner will be ready in a couple of minutes. You have just enough time to get changed if you want. I'd suggest it. It's spaghetti, and I've seen you eat," I giggled to myself.

There was no response, but I knew well enough that he could hear me.

I walked through the dining room towards the foyer. "I got some gelato," I added. "I figured we could do a theme night. Make it all Italian. Maybe after dinner, we could play a game or something. I was thinking that you've never shown off your Mario skills-" I stopped mid ramble when I came to find a tall blond fellow standing beside Edward. My boyfriend's expression was one that was hard to interpret. I couldn't tell if he was happy, mad, or annoyed. "Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't realize you had company," I mumbled as I took a step back, embarrassed yet relieved I had said nothing dirty.

The man, an older gentleman with dark blue eyes, turned towards me after removing his coat. He immediately frowned as his face flushed red. It was so direct that it made my stomach clench in nervous shock.

Edward cleared his throat and walked to me. "Honestly, neither did I." He smiled almost anxiously. He ran his hands over my shoulders gently, leaning over to give me a quick but sweet kiss on the cheek. Standing beside me, he rested his palm on my back. "Bella, this is my father, Carlisle Cullen."

Warning bells went off in my head, especially since the man's eyes went wide with shock before narrowing angrily.

"Hi," I breathed.

"And Dad, I would like to introduce you to my incredible girlfriend, Ms. Isabella Swan," he continued with a grin. It was a charming and pleasant smile, but I could barely notice it. My eyes were locked on his furious father.

Finally, he broke eye contact with me. They snapped over to his son. "Girlfriend?"