



Punching Down

Somehow, Jasper kept it in his pants at my place, though honestly, it was evident that it was a challenge. I laid on top of him on the couch for a few hours, occasionally making out. I would go until I could feel him just about to break then pull away to snuggle against his chest. Whenever we did, his hands would stop under my breasts or over my ass like a nervous teenage boy. It was exactly what I wanted. I needed to test the limits of his control.

I made chili bean stew with cornbread and sweet tea for dinner. It took forever to figure it out because he kept saying 'whatever I wanted' when all I was hoping for was to make him happy. He obviously enjoyed the food, eating two bowls before washing the dishes for me while I put away the leftovers.

We ordered enough groceries for me to make breakfast, lunch, dinner, and even dessert for the following day. After he dropped off his suits at the front desk in the morning, Jasper hauled the rest of his clothes to my place. He wouldn't let me take them from him, going right away into the laundry closet to start them.

Breakfast was just simple eggs, bacon, and toast with juice. I loved cooking for him. I liked how taking care of him made me feel. His equal eagerness to please me made it even more rewarding.

Once the food was eaten, the dishes cleaned, and his clothes were put in the dryer, we laid on the couch again. We tangled in each other, our legs twisted together. The television was off, and neither of us reached for the remote.

"So, are we just going to nap?" I asked after about fifteen minutes, snuggling deeper. I wedged myself between him and the couch to get more comfortable.

"Yes, please. I haven't had one in months," he murmured, kissing the top of my head as he readjusted beside me sleepily. Jasper reached for the blanket and pulled it over both of us. The air in the apartment was just a little crisp, and his warmth was perfect. Soothingly, he played with my hair until I fell asleep. It didn't take long. I felt so safe and comfortable.

When the front door opened, I barely registered it. I hadn't thought about my roommate in a couple of days. I had sent her a text saying that I was going to be out for the evening a couple of nights before and wasn't sure when I was going to return. We hadn't spoken at all since then. She was out all night the day before.

"Ah, so you're who the flowers are from. I figured. I don't know if I trust you," I heard Tanya say very sternly. I was having trouble opening my eyes because I had been in such a deep sleep. My face was practically smashed into his armpit, too. It was probably a good thing that he smelled so good. All I wanted her to do was go away so that I could go back to sleep.

He replied softly as if not to wake me. "Nor should you. But I'm going to try to earn that back. You're important to her."

"You really hurt Bella," she said fiercely. I finally looked up at her. She was visibly angry, her pale cheeks red, and her eyes dangerously narrowed. I had never seen her look that way, even when she was fighting with Edward. "And it's not okay."

Jasper shook his head in agreement. "No, it's not. I regret it more than anything." He squeezed me a little, his fingers curling around my hip.

"It's alright, Tanya," I mumbled drowsily as I finally lifted my face. "I can be mad all on my own."

"I know you're into pain, but I've never seen someone suffer like that-" She began to venomously rant but stopped herself. Tanya sniffled a little before focusing again. "It scared me! You don't get another second chance, and I'll make sure of it." She pointed at his face, standing over him at the end of the couch.

"If I fuck up this badly again, I don't deserve it. I'm not into this. No one is. It's not what I wanted. I just wanted her to be able to move on. I was trying to protect her in my own fucked up way," he swore quickly.

She cocked her hip and shoulder to the side as she looked down at him as if he was stupid. "Are you fucking serious?" She snapped. Tanya actually balled up her fist a little like she was about to punch down at him, but Edward popped out of nowhere and wrapped both of his arms around her shoulders. "Protecting her?! You were protecting her? Someone's going to need to protect you-"

"Okay! That's enough, tiger. Let's not assault the federal agent," he mumbled to her as she stamped her feet uselessly. His girlfriend pouted, pulling away from him. She walked behind Edward, crossing her arms over her chest with a huff.

Both men looked at each other awkwardly, silently. Jasper cleared his throat first, his head tilted back against the couch arm since we hadn't sat up yet. "So, um, shall we just drop it and pretend nothing happened?" He offered. "We're just both pricks."

"Yeah, sounds good," he nodded quickly in agreement. "I apologize again."

"As do I."

Edward nodded once more, putting his hands in the pocket of his slacks. He sort of grinned, rocking on his heels. "Cool. Well, it'll be nice to see Bella happy again at least."

My boyfriend looked down into my eyes, squeezing me again before glancing at Edward. "If you do anything to make her in any way uncomfortable, you will be the one assaulted by a federal agent," he said very seriously, throwing his words back at him. "That hasn't changed."

"Understood," he promptly acknowledged.

"As long as he stays how he's been the past few weeks, it'll be fine," I defended Edward, finally sitting up and popping my back. He gave me a brief smile.

"I'm trying to respect your wishes."

I nodded. "I know, and I thank you for that."

Tanya took a step forward, her arms still crossed over her chest. She wasn't pleased, at all. Her pretty face was scrunched up in a pout. "So, what? Is everything just going back to how they were, or are you actually his girlfriend?"

A grin spread over my face. "We're dating now."

“How is that going to even work? You’re never here!” She waved her hand at him, her nose crinkled up as much as it could before she puffed in frustration. My friend was just as protective of me as I was of her. She was ready for a fight.

Jasper sat up finally. “I’m moving here permanently next month. I will have to travel occasionally, but I’m going to be working at the state level. So, I’ll never be more than an hour plane ride from home.”

“Well! Good! That’s a start!” She fussed angrily, but she was losing steam. She looked at everyone in the room. “I’m going to get ready!” Tanya snapped at Edward, stomping into her bedroom. She would take her fury out on him, and he would probably love it. I sort of giggled anxiously, putting my head in hands for just a second before I ran my fingers through my hair.

“Y’all going out?” I asked conversationally, trying not to be totally unpleasant. Everything was weird enough. We didn’t need to be sitting in silence.

“Yeah. Family thing,” he mumbled, just sort of standing in the middle of the living room. “Barbecue. It should be good. My mom’s a great cook. I mean, you’ve had it,” he pointed at Jasper.

He nodded uncomfortably. “Oh, yeah. I remember. Good brownies.”

“Yeah, it’s kind of her specialty,” Edward continued, obviously not wanting the silence either. I think he was actually a little scared of Jasper. He probably should have been.

“Why don’t we go to my room?” I offered, standing up quickly. I pulled Jasper up off the couch with both hands before turning to Edward. “Have fun tonight!”

When we got to my bedroom, I leaned against the door after I shut it. I covered my face again with my hands and took a deep, shaky breath. It was a hell of a way to wake up. My heart skipped unpleasantly in my throat.

“You okay?” He touched my shoulders. I nodded, slowly dropping my hands.

“It’s just weird. It’s fine,” I promised as I took another deep breath and finally looked at him. “It’ll get easier, especially when Tanya calms down. I should have told her. I forgot to talk to her. I was distracted.”

Jasper brought his palm up to my cheek. “She has a right to be angry at me. I can see what I did. It’s written all over your body. On your face. I hate it, and I hate myself. I knew I had been cruel, but I had no idea that it would affect you like this.”

I anxiously looked down at my body. “Do I look that bad?”

He swiftly took my face in his hands. "No! But you look... frail. Your face is gaunt. Honestly, you look better than you did from even just two days ago. I can see it in your cheeks." He ran his thumb over them gently.

"Is that why you keep feeding me?" I smirked. He shrugged a little. "I'm really fine."

He shook his head, avoiding my eyes. I pulled him to me in a kiss. It was fierce, wanting to show up just how okay I was. When he pulled away, he rested his forehead on mine. His eyes were tightly closed, and his face was pained.

"I made the woman that I love stop eating and lock herself away. What kind of monster am I?"

"I barely left the house before! And I chose to change my diet."

"Because you were so unhappy that everything tasted-" He stopped, frustrated.

I kind of laughed hollowly. "Honey, I'm fat. I needed to lose it."

"No!" He argued ferociously. "You will not insult yourself. Not right now. Not ever."

"I'm not!" I smirked at his fearsome attitude. "I could probably stand to lose twenty more, at least. Don't worry, though. That's not going to happen because I like being fed." I poked my stomach.

Jasper sighed softly, pulling back to look in my eyes worriedly. "When I leave again, you'll not stop eating, will you?"

"When you leave, are you going to not talk to me?" I seriously asked.

He shook his head quickly. "We'll talk as much as I can. I promise. We'll speak on the phone and text. Or we can try Skype."

I brought my hand up to push his hair out of his eyes. "Then I don't see it being a problem. Don't get used to this. I'm going to plump right back up. Especially since it's Christmas time."

"Good. I hope so," Jasper mumbled, pouting out his bottom lip a little.

A question popped into my head, and I just blurted it out right away. "Are you really normally into thick girls, or is it just me?"

Laughing at my abruptness, Jasper looked away for a moment. He took a deep breath. "Um, I like curvier women, yes."

"Why?" I asked next. It just leaped out of my mouth. I couldn't understand it and had to know. He could have anyone.

He took a step back, his face bemused. "Why are you attracted to me? Why is anyone attracted to anyone?"

"Uh, I'm attracted to you because you're over six feet of muscles and heroic scars with a face like Apollo," I answered very sarcastically. "Come on. You know that you're hot. I'm cute, but you're out of my league. Normally I wouldn't have even tried speaking to you because there wouldn't be any point. I figured you'd end up treating me with total disdain just like Edward did in the beginning before he knew. You shouldn't want me."

"Okay," he laughed bitterly, "that's ridiculous! Just every part of that. First, I am not any of those things and-"

"Shut up," I snapped. "You don't get to insult yourself either. You make every woman you look at just sigh because you're all southern charm and manners with that body. And I won't argue with you about it."

He smirked as he looked up and flushed red. "Okay. What do you want me to say, darlin? Skinny girls don't come with big enough asses? That I need to be able to see my whole handprint on it? I'd like to be smothered in thick thighs?" He took another step back, bending down a bit to look in my eyes. "Little girl, I want to bury my face in your tits and never leave. Your lips are the sexiest on the planet. I dream about them, and I draw them over and over again because I can't stop thinking about how perfect they are."

I giggled, looking down at the floor. "You could probably fit a couple of handprints on mine. A couple on each cheek."

"I know," he moaned hungrily, making me laugh louder. Jasper smiled at my reaction. "When you're ready, I'll show you. I am going to make love to you for hours, maybe days. I don't think that I could express my feelings accurately with words, but I'll try until then."

"Days?" I asked in a tiny voice.

"At a minimum," he promised, looking deep into my eyes as if he was willing me to believe him. I did.

"Mmm, I wonder if you could take a vacation in February," I mused jokingly.

Jasper groaned loudly, and we both actually laughed. "I can see," he kind of playfully whined.

"I'm surprised that you didn't complain," I teased. "That's a long time."

He stepped forward, looking rather serious again. "Bella, if you need to wait a month or two, that's fine. I'm a big boy, and I made my bed, I will lie in it. I might want more, but I understand why I don't get that yet. And I want to show you that I'm serious. Sex is extra. Everything else is just a bonus."

"So, if I decided that I didn't want to do it again until some wildly long amount of time. Like, say, a year. You'd just... take it?" He was smirking, knowing that I was teasing him. Slowly he ran his tongue over his teeth, then rolled his eyes before nodding. "Oh, fun. Okay, so, I think we'll wait until the wedding night then," I stated puckishly, making my eyes playfully big. "How's your mom, by the way?"

He laughed loudly before composing himself. Jasper sniffed deeply, trying to make his face serious. "Well, all I can say is to expect a very short engagement."

It was my turn to laugh, my head falling back against the door as I covered my mouth with my hand. "Oh, god. If I did that, we'd end up eloping in three months. I don't want to die of blue balls either."

Jasper chuckled, finally closing the short distance between us again to hold me. "Well, I don't think that's a good idea, but it's not the worst way this thing could go."