



Off my chest

I was laying on top of Jasper in the dark of his hotel room. He would have to fly out in the morning, back to Albany. We were both fully dressed in our pajamas, I just couldn't get close enough to him. His hands were running up and down my spine soothingly. My ear was on his heart, listening to it beat in a perfect rhythm. We had been silent for a long time. We were supposed to be trying to sleep, but neither one of us was feeling it. Both of us wanted as much time as possible with the other.

His hands stopped at the center of my back as he pushed his face in my hair to deeply breathe in my scent. "It'll never be enough," he said suddenly, his voice mumbled.

I looked up at him slowly. "What?"

"I'll never get enough time with you."

I shook my head slowly, holding his gaze. There was the tiniest bit of light in the room, and I could just make out the lovely features of his face. "We've only been dating a couple of days. You'll get sick of me. Just wait."

"No," he stated firmly and very seriously.

"Mm, yes," I said a bit sarcastically as I laid my head back down.

His grip tightened around me, pressing my body to his. "Little girl, I am going to keep a running tally of spankings that I owe you. Don't argue with me about these kinds of things."

I giggled. "Good. I hope you do. I want you to beat my ass for years to come."

Jasper laughed loudly before quickly clearing his throat. "Mm... Me too, darlin."

"What's going to happen in the morning?" I asked abruptly. My worry had been building in the back of my head all night.

Sighing, he squeezed me again so that his fingers curled into the fabric of my t-shirt. "Well, I'll wake up at five and take a shower, alone unless you want to join me," he began with a slight smile. "Then I will take you to one last lovely meal together. Next, I'll whisk you home, bring all your of your stuff inside like a gentleman, and get you tucked into bed so you can go back to sleep. Finally, I'll head to DFW and take a four-hour nap myself."

"That's not what I meant, but I like that," I admitted softly.

"I realize. All I can say is that I will kiss you goodbye and tell you that I love you but wish with every fiber of my being that I was just crawling into that tiny bed with you so you could use me for a pillow. And when I get to the airport, I'll think about texting you already but won't because it's pathetic."

"No, it's not," I promised. "Text me every single moment that you can. Just like before."

He chuckled softly. "I think that I'll text a bit more than before. I'll make more time. I need you in my head to keep me sane."

"That better not be my job because then we're both screwed," I muttered, making him chuckle again.

Jasper shook his head and kissed the top of mine lightly. He let his lips linger there, his nose pushing into my scalp. "I just need your light. I need the hope that you give me. You provide me with a reason to get excited about waking up every morning. It's been a long time since I've felt that way."

He was being so sweet. I swallowed back my emotions. They felt heavy in my throat, a lump forming as I tried not to cry for some reason that I couldn't quite understand. I was used to him not being around, but now it was so much harder to even think about. But it was more than that.

"I don't want to disappoint you," I confessed, closing my eyes for a moment.

"You couldn't."

"That's not true, and you know it," I replied. He shook his head in response. "I could hurt you. I could break your heart. I'm not perfect."

Jasper lifted my chin so that I would look into his eyes. "It ain't possible. I never thought I would get this chance with you, and the fact that you're allowing it is enough. We will hurt each other, but as long as it's not purposefully cruel, and we admit our mistakes, we'll be fine. Hopefully, we'll be better for it. I've never had a desire for this kind of relationship before... But I want it with you. And I'm willing to go through anything to have it."

"Have you ever dated anyone?" I asked in curiosity.

"Not more than a couple of months here or there. It's been years, though. Mostly in high school. Some in the military. Not since I've joined the FBI."

I laughed. "Oh, god." Sighing, I shook my head. "So neither of us has any experience. This is going to go well."

"It is," he said so sincerely that I wanted to believe him. I leaned forward and gave him a gentle kiss on the lips.

"Why am I different? I know that you have to have had other good subs," I asked when I pulled away. Everything seemed too good to be true, and my heart could hardly take it. I kept searching for the cracks in his story because it didn't seem possible.

He shrugged casually. "I had good experiences with people who were great submissives for others, sure. But I've never met someone that I was as excited to spend time with like this, non-sexually. I want to have a conversation with you. I want your opinions. I want to see you smile. I want your friendship and happiness." Jasper stopped for a moment to collect his thoughts. "The first time that we had regular sex, it had been the first time that I had vanilla in years. I wasn't even sure that I would still enjoy it before that night. I was starting to worry because I wasn't interested in anyone for anything other than to fuck and beat them. But it was... better."

"Than what?"

"Anything that we had ever done before. Better than anything that I had done before with anyone else." His fingers moved into my hair, playing with it gently. "It was the first time that I was able to not be in control and enjoy it fully, maybe ever. I love being your Dom, but I also like being every other part of myself with you."

I leaned forward once more and kissed his lips deeply. He hummed against my mouth, holding me there. It was tender and loving, his hands flat against my back as he pressed me to him.

"I love you," I whispered, laying my head on his shoulder when we finally pulled apart again.

"I love you too, darlin," he breathed.

Sometime shortly after, we fell asleep while spooning.

Jasper literally tucked me back into bed that morning, mischievously scooping me up and placing me under the covers to make me laugh. He kissed me over and over again until finally, he had to go, or he would miss his flight. Somehow I fell back asleep almost instantly, having been pampered with a good breakfast and lots of attention. I only got a couple of hours and was exhausted.

When I woke up in the mid-afternoon, there were two messages waiting for me from Jasper. One was from only about an hour after he left. It said, "I regret not getting into that tiny bed so much already." The second was six hours later, from just a few minutes before. "Honestly, it's not possible for me to express in words just how much I regret not getting into that bed with you this morning. Fuck this. I need a proper vacation and a drink. February? Do you want to spend two weeks somewhere with me with no phone?"

"Sure," I replied. "I'd love to."

My phone beeped, and I thought it was Jasper again, but it wasn't. I had gotten an alert on my phone from the news in Rochester. Two young black women were found murdered, bound, and gagged, in a small patch of woods just outside the city.

"There were two bodies found in Rochester. They were teenage black girls," I texted him in surprise.

"I know," he answered. "I'm on my way there now."

My breath actually caught in my throat. "Is it him?"

"Yes," he replied instantly with a dreadful sense of finality.

"Two at a time now?" Horror filled me. The monster really was escalating.

"It's not the first pair. The press doesn't know all the victims," he informed me. I was surprised that he gave me this information so easily. I had become annoyingly obsessed with the case and started looking around New York and neighboring states for similar cases before that fateful night, but I didn't want him to know that.

I wanted to ask so many questions. I wondered if he would actually tell me anything that the news couldn't or wouldn't. Biting my lip for a moment, I decided to press my luck. "Are they recent or...?" I wasn't sure the polite way to ask how fresh the corpses were and I didn't want to sound like a sicko.

"Recent. We're putting the time of death sometime in the past forty-eight hours for both of them. They were killed almost at the same time, most likely."

"What was their exact cause of death?" I knew most had been strangled, according to the press, but some had been stabbed as well. I had a theory that he probably killed them that way when things went... badly, for him.

I had a vision in my head for this moron. Some drooling monster with a tiny IQ and a smaller penis who was such a hideous beast that no woman would willingly touch him. I often wondered how his terribleness didn't stand out, flashing like a neon sign above his head. *Murderer. Murderer. Murderer.*

"We won't know that for certain until we get the autopsy, of course. But they were tied up and strangled like the others. They're also covered in a variety of cuts, scratches, and stab wounds but none of them appear lethal," he explained. Another message promptly beeped. "I shouldn't be telling you this."

"No! I'm curious!" I typed quickly. "Maybe talking to me about your cases could help you. You know that I've done a ton of research on this kind of stuff for stories, so it doesn't bother me," I promised.

"Maybe," he replied. "I have to go. I'm sorry. I hope you got some sleep."

"I did, and I dreamed about you," I answered, missing him already. It wasn't untrue either.

"When I napped, I dreamt of you too."

I spent the rest of the day working on my cop story and catching up on laundry. I had shoved all my clothes into the corner of my closet, and they needed a good wash. The apartment was quiet, Tanya wasn't around. It was the perfect time to work. I was almost done with the first rough draft, maybe a couple of chapters away at most.

For the first time in a long time, I felt inspired. I wrote for almost a full twenty-four hours in a row. The only breaks that I took were to eat, go to the bathroom, and to talk to Jasper. He called for a few minutes before he went to bed, just to hear my voice. He sounded so exhausted, barely able to stay awake. It was unsurprising late though, it was after one in the morning there.

After I typed the last paragraph of the story, I started at the screen for maybe fifteen minutes in shock. I had written the novel surprisingly fast, and despite that, I was extremely pleased with it. It was a rare thing. It would be polished in the second draft, fixing mistakes and typos, but I was more than satisfied with the plotline.

Then a thought popped into my head. A single, wonderful idea.

I couldn't wait to give it to Jasper.

But I wanted to give him more than just the digital copy. He loved his paperback of my book. I had been thinking about what to get him for Christmas since he had left, but I didn't really have any great ideas. I hadn't been excited about the holiday at all before, but now I couldn't wait.

I had a laser printer that I had gotten stupidly cheap used that I rarely actually turned on. Somehow, I got it in my head that it would be good for printing out my work to give out. Like I would be spending that money on copy paper. It was mainly used for coupons and taxes.

It was two in the morning when I decided to run to Walmart that was not far from my apartment to pick up printer paper, a binder, a hole punch, highlighters, multi-colored pens, and post-it notes along with the gift bag to put it in. It wouldn't be the only thing that I gave him, but I was so thrilled about him reading it.

When I got home, it was just after four in the morning. The apartment was dark, and Tanya's purse was on the hook, so I knew she was home. Edward's jacket was beside it. I was almost to my room when he came stumbling out of her bedroom, drunk with sleep. He was just in his underwear. Stopping to look at me, he pushed a hand over his face roughly.

"Hey. Where have you been?"

"Christmas shopping," I told him honestly, lifting the sacks I had.

He peeked inside, leaning over a little. "Office supplies?"

"No, they just go with it. I'm giving Jasper my latest book for Christmas, and he likes to take notes in the margins," I explained.

Edward nodded his head thoughtfully, leaning his forehead against the door jamb as he looked me over. He genuinely smiled, soft with his drowsiness. "He'll like that. He's been talking about your stories for years. I never realized that they were yours."

I looked him over curiously. "Have you ever read any of my books?"

"Yes," he said quietly, looking away with a soft blush on his cheeks. "The Marie Bell stuff."

"Before or after you knew it was me?"

"After," he admitted. "I should have read it all sooner. I've known about them for a couple of years. Jasper has recommended them to me more than once."

I smirked a bit to myself. "Yes, you should have," I replied as I went into my room.

Putting my haul on my rarely used desk, I flopped back onto the bed. With a goal in mind for the following day, I fell asleep quickly. And once I finished his book, I would start looking for some more Christmas presents and not just for him.