



## In the CVS

“I have to get a present for your parents,” I said suddenly as I walked out of my bedroom on Christmas morning. We had gone to my apartment so that I could get ready and retrieve all of his gifts for the day. It just dawned on me out of nowhere, and I almost shouted it at him in a panic.

Jasper looked at me in surprise. He was sitting on my couch, wearing a nice pair of slacks and a white button-down shirt with no tie. I decided to wear the new black dress that Alice had gotten me while it still fit well enough. Since he looked nice, I wanted to, too. I had done my hair and makeup as well.

“Darlin, don’t worry about that. You can just put your name on mine,” he smirked at my attitude. It didn’t help.

“No! It’s our first Christmas as a couple, and I should have thought about getting them a present anyway.”

He quickly shook his head. "We've been together for two weeks, and you didn't agree to go until a day ago. Bella, it's fine. Showing up is enough."

I thought for a moment, biting my lip as I totally ignored him. "I bet there is somewhere between here and there that we can stop at. A drugstore, at least. I could get a card there. Gift cards and cards to put them in, maybe," I thought out loud.

"Bella-"

I pouted, huffing a little as I began to pull out my phone from my purse to check some information. "We're stopping. There is a CVS down the road. Hm. What kind of things do your parents like?"

"There isn't going to be any arguing with you, is there?"

"No. So, just tell me, so we can get through this faster."

My boyfriend sighed, shaking his head again as he stood finally. He came over to take the gift bags from my hands. "Uh... Let's see. Mom likes books and wine. Chocolate. I don't know, pretty standard stuff. She collects angels. Dad likes cars, beer, and football. He likes candy, too."

I nodded quickly. "I can work with that."

The drugstore was unsurprisingly busy. I went to the liquor aisle first. "What kind?"

"Oh, um... The cheap shit is her favorite. God, what is it? Arbor something...?" He tried to think about it. "She loves it. It's like Kool-aid."

"Arbor mist!" I knew exactly where it was because I sometimes drank it, too. "Any particular flavor?"

"All of them," he stated sarcastically. I grabbed two of the big bottles. "Isabella!" Jasper laughed.

"What? They're cheap!" I defended myself. "And maybe she'll like me more if she's drunk." He just smirked. "Okay, beer?"

He reached over and grabbed a six-pack of Abita, putting it in the cart. I pushed it into the next section, which was the Christmas candy aisle. I got two different kinds of chocolate boxes with assorted flavors. There was a little crystal angel ornament hanging up from a display. I decided to get a classic car ornament, as well. Hurriedly, I found bags and tissues.

“Oh, shit. Your sister and your grandmother. I should probably get them something, too.”

Instead of arguing with me, he just reached over and got two boxes of truffles. “They love these. Just put Emmett’s name on it too because he’s going to eat most of it.”

“Ah, well, get the bigger one for them then.” I pointed to the one next to it. He kept shaking his head but did as I asked. I just got big bows to put on top of those. “Okay. I think that’s good.”

“I think that’s going overboard,” he joked.

“You know what? One,” I mumbled under my breath as I pushed the cart up to the front of the store to check out.

“One what?”

I glanced over at him. “Oh, honey. One... mmm... tally,” I said as I eyed the two kids in front of us in line. He instantly understood and began to chuckle as his cheeks turned red.

Jasper nodded, clearly amused. “You’re really gonna punish me for pointing out that you obviously don’t need to get all of this stuff?”

“No. I’m going to because you’re teasing me when clearly I just want to make a good impression on your family the first time that I meet them. It’s Christmas, and I am a guest. I will not come empty-handed. My manners are better than that, and you should know that.”

He wasn’t expecting my good argument. Jasper was still smiling, but his expression was more bashful. “You know what?” He repeated my phrase. “You are correct. I apologize. One.” He nodded in agreement before leaning over to kiss my cheek.

When we got to the car, I arranged the presents for his parents in separate gift bags with tissue paper before sticking the bows on each box of chocolate. The twenty-minute drive to his parents' house was quiet as he held my hand. I was too nervous to talk.

The neighborhood that he turned into was very nice. We pulled up to a massive black iron gate, and he punched in a few numbers. It allowed us in. There was still a five-minute trip down the driveway to the big ranch style home. Beautiful oak trees lined the road, and there were flowers and colorful trees everywhere.

“Oh, wow. This is nice,” I whispered. “Um, what do your parents do?”

“Mom is a housewife, and Dad sells cars,” he explained very casually as he went to the trunk to pull out all the gifts. He was going to have to make two trips, even with my help. He had a lot of things to give out, as well.

Something sort of clicked in my brain. A sense of recognition just out of reach. I thought about it. His father must have been an excellent car salesman to live in a home this nice. Maybe even owned a lot or two. Then I realized.

“Hale BMW?” I looked over at him in shock.

“That’s one of them, yeah,” Jasper replied nonchalantly. “He sells a few different brands.”

There were Hale BMW commercials all over the radio and ads covering the whole town. There were probably ten lots that I could think of off the top of my head that he owned and operated. I had seen the little Hale motors logos on the back of cars and felt terribly jealous over their new vehicles for years. I think he owned rental places too. That explained why Jasper’s rental cars were so nice.

“Oh, you come from money. That makes sense,” I commented sassily.

He looked shocked. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing-”

“One, little girl. You better explain yourself.” I laughed at his threat. “Two.”

I clicked my tongue and rolled my eyes. “Your clothes. Where you like to eat. Why you like control,” I murmured the last sentence. He swatted my ass playfully. “Oh, do the other now too.” Jasper popped me again, making me laugh.

The front door swung open. I was pretty sure that they couldn’t see us from behind the opened trunk. I snorted, shaking my head as I tried to will my light flush away. Jasper pinched my ass, making me squeak and giggle again.

A giant man that was probably close to seven feet tall and three hundred pounds of muscle, or at least it felt like it to me, came out. He was wearing blue jeans and a big ugly sweater. I wondered where he found one that size.

“Hey, hey, hey,” he called to Jasper. I don’t think that he noticed me. “Need some help?”

“Yes, please,” he replied.

The man came around the car and stopped to look at me in surprise. "Oh, well, hello there. Aren't you a cute little thing! What's your name, sugar?"

"Bella," I responded in shock as he took one of my hands. He actually brought it up to his mouth to kiss.

Jasper swatted him upside the back of his head before he could. "No. Don't be weird with my new girlfriend."

"Aw! Bro! You got a girlfriend!" He exclaimed excitedly, ignoring his threatening tone. "So, you are the sweet little thing that Caroline won't shut up about. Good. For. You," he said each word purposefully as he checked me out. Then he looked up at Jasper. "Does she know that she's coming?"

"No," he answered. I didn't know that. I figured that he told them the day before or the night that I agreed. "I thought that I'd surprise her. Give her less time to prepare her questions."

The giant laughed. "She's going to lose her shit. I'm Emmett, by the way. I'm this loser's brother-in-law."

I took his offered hand and shook it firmly. "Aw! I almost liked you, and then you called my boyfriend a loser. Now you can go fuck yourself," I responded too sweetly.

He laughed again loudly, putting his hand on his belly as he did. "I like you already. You're feisty. I like my ladies with a little attitude." Emmett picked up the rest of the gifts in one arm.

"No shit. That's why you married Rose," Jasper smirked, rolling his eyes as he slammed the trunk closed. "Please be careful. There is beer in one of those."

"Hell yeah. Is that for me?"

"Bella got it for Dad."

"Aw, he's gonna love her too," he commented as he moved the more substantial bag to his other hand. "Good. So, if you could two could hurry up and have kids so that they get off our backs, that would be great."

I looked over at Jasper as we made our way up the pathway to his parents' home. "Oh, I got the shot when I went to the doctor earlier this month. Merry Christmas."

Emmett burst into laughter again. "Damn. What a way to crush my dreams. Thanks."

“Did you really?” Jasper asked in surprise. I nodded, smirking at him as I shrugged.

“Ho, ho, ho,” I said dryly. Honestly, I just wanted to stop having a period and not take a pill every day.

Jasper’s brother-in-law continued to chuckle as he led us inside. The house was perfectly decorated in chic rustic decor. Everything was wooden.

“Hey, MA!” He shouted towards a door. “Your firstborn is here!”

“By twenty minutes,” a man in a recliner mumbled as he shook his head. I very much saw Jasper in his features. His silver hair was slicked back, and he was wearing jeans and a nice polo shirt with ‘Hale’ sewn into the breast. “Merry Christmas, boy. Where have you been?”

“New York.”

“Sick of the yankees yet?” He joked, getting out of his chair. Emmett took the gifts that I had and put them under the huge Christmas tree. It was overstuffed with presents. The theme was definitely angels. Hopefully, the one that I got for her wasn’t one that she already had.

“You have no idea,” his son replied as he gave him a hug. “Missed you,” he murmured into his shoulder, patting his back.

The older man slapped his shoulder hard in return. “Me too.” He turned his attention to me before looking back at Jasper with a grin. “Well, well, well. Hello. I bet that I know your name. Isabella?”

“Bella,” I corrected, offering him my hand. “It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“Caroline is going to lose her mind,” he laughed, looking between his son and his son-in-law. It was the same thing that Emmett said. He shook my hand gently, his skin soft and cool.

“Um, should I be worried?” I asked jokingly.

“Yes,” all three of them replied at the same time, making me giggle.

A door opened beside us, and Rosalie, Jasper’s beautiful sister, poked her head out. “Oh, there you are. Mom, Jazz is here,” she called as she looked back into the room.

“Aw, Jazz,” I smiled at my boyfriend.

“Oh, good! Perfect timing,” I heard the older woman say as she came closer to the open door. “I just got the ham in the oven. That’ll be done in about two hours. We can open presents now and-” she stopped when she saw me. Caroline’s eyes got big, and she grinned wildly. Then she actually squealed. “Why didn’t you tell me?!”

“Surprise,” Jasper smiled innocently as he held out his hands. His mother did not look the least bit amused with him.

She actually shoved her son out of the way to hug me. My eyes got huge as she squeezed me. “Hello, sweetheart. Merry Christmas! Welcome!”

“Thank you. Your home is so beautiful,” I complimented her, my voice a little strained. “Thank you for allowing me to join you. I hope that I’m not imposing.”

Caroline pulled back finally, taking me by the shoulders. “Gosh! No! Not at all! I am so thrilled that you are here. I was really hoping that you’d join us.” She beamed before glancing back at her son.

“She was rather disappointed when you didn’t join us for Thanksgiving,” Jasper father’s inserted. She quickly sent him a nasty look. “Well, you were.”

I shook my head. “Oh, I didn’t even celebrate Thanksgiving this year. I was sick,” I lied before smiling politely.

“No! Poor dear!” She put her hand on my cheek. “We’ll just have to make sure that your Christmas is extra special then.”

“It already is,” I said as I looked over her head at Jasper. He smiled at me happily. His mother looked between us and sighed. Her son rolled his eyes, reaching to take me out of her grip.

“Okay. So... We’re almost ready to open gifts! Just give me a few minutes,” she announced in a rush before going off in an unknown direction down a hall beside us. “Oh! Someone go find Mamaw! She’s wandered off!”

Jasper leaned in to whisper in my ear. “She’s going to find you a present,” he teased.

“Oh, no! She doesn’t have to do that!” I breathed quickly.

“Too late now, dear,” Jasper’s father smirked, patting my shoulder. “Just accept it. It’ll be easier, I promise.” He winked at me. “I’m Justin, by the way. Nice to meet you, Bella. Boy, why don’t you give her the quick tour since your Mama is going to be a minute.”

He nodded respectfully. "Yes, sir."

"I'll go find Mamaw," Rosalie offered.

"This is the den. This is generally where they spend most of their time," Jasper began. He took my hand and started taking me down the hall. "There is actually a living room that no one goes in unless there is a party. Bathroom, of course," he pointed to an opened door. "Rose's old room. It is still the same as it was when she was seventeen. And mine." We came to a room at the far end of the hall. That's really where he wanted to take me for some privacy.

Opening the door, he allowed me inside first before flicking on the light. It was rather plain. A set of wooden bunk beds took up one wall. It had stairs with drawers in them. Everything was blue or green. It was sparsely decorated as if a teenage boy stayed there a long time ago. The only touches of Jasper were the few drawings stuck to the wall.

I felt his hands run down my shoulders from behind. "You didn't spend much time here."

"Not really," he whispered, pulling my hair away from my neck to lightly kiss it. His hands rested on my hips, pulling me tight against him. Jasper finally tugged off my coat and put it on the bottom bunk before removing his own.

Almost nervously, I played with a ring on my right hand. I couldn't look him in the eyes. "So, do you think that she'll let me pick out my own wedding dress, or has she already bought it?"

He laughed. "We're eloping."

"You better not say that too loud, or she'll think that you're serious."

"I am serious. I just don't know when it'll happen. Not this year, at least," he joked. Jasper reached his hand out to me, and I took it. Quickly, he pulled me towards him and into a kiss. I giggled against his mouth as his hands slowly slid down to my ass. Humming against his lips, he squeezed when he realized that I wasn't going to stop him.

"I miss you," I whimpered quietly, pressing my face against his chest to catch my breath.

Lovingly, he kissed along my temple. "I do too. No rush, though. Whenever you're ready. We've got time."

"I know."

There was a knock at the door. "Do y'all have clothes on?" Emmett thundered. Probably loud enough so it could be heard down the hall.

“No! Go away!” I shouted back at him just before I swung open the door almost violently. It made him jump and then burst into hilarious laughter. He clapped my shoulder as I came out into the hall past him with my chin in the air.

“You are feisty,” he said, glancing back at his brother-in-law as he pushed past him to walk beside me.

He put his arm around my waist. “Rude,” Jasper teased in my ear. He obviously thought I was funny, though.

“One?” I asked with a little smirk, winking at him.