



Episode thirty-six:

Bella had undressed already when I came out of the bathroom, lying on the bed while smoking one of the oil pens that Tyler got me for my birthday. My brain went from romance to the rubbish bin in two seconds flat. I had wanted to soothe her anxiety and give her the comfort that she needed. But as she sprawled out like a fantasy in our bed, I wanted to give her something else. As the smoke curled from her lips, it twirled and reflected the neon lights from the windows in the darkened room.

Her head lulled to the side as she gazed at me. "Sorry for stealing your weed."

"No. Everything that is mine is yours. I think you might need it."

"It's so strong," she whispered, looking back at the ceiling. "It's helping already." Bella reached out and offered it to me. After removing my shirt, I came to the bed to get it from her. I laid beside her, taking a long drag.

Then I coughed like a maniac.

Bella giggled, rubbing my chest. "I told you that it was strong. Little hits. This isn't your joints." She leaned over me to get the bottle of water from the bedside table. Her breasts swung in my face.

The drugs took effect shockingly fast, my body relaxing as my mind fogged. I handed it back to her with a little grimace. "I'll check the water," I mumbled in a raspy voice.

"That's a huge tub, it'll take a minute," she said as she watched me get up. My girl rolled to her side, taking another little drag. She held her head up with her palm on her temple, her fingers twisted into her hair. "This place is so beautiful. I think it's the nicest hotel I've ever stayed in."

The water was only halfway up the sides, the room filling with steam. I adjusted the temperature, so it wouldn't be too hot. Afterward, I finished getting undressed.

I came to stand in the doorway. "Yeah, it might take a little while."

Her breath caught in her throat, her eyes moving from the tip of my toes all the way up my body. Bella blushed, biting my lip for a moment. "You are the most beautiful man that I have ever seen."

I wanted to hide away from her compliment. Maybe tell her it wasn't true. I needed to be confident, though. But nothing I could hide my wild flush. "I think you might be biased," I repeated her words from earlier in the night.

She shook her head slowly, holding my gaze the entire time. "I'm not. I'm a photographer. I've been taught what true beauty is, so I can look for it to make my art. You are an artist and a masterpiece, all at the same time. You are perfect."

I laughed because I couldn't help myself. Pushing my lips together, I looked away for a moment. "You are so very smooth, my darling. But you a bit of a try-hard." Bella giggled, hopping out of bed towards me. I scooped her up into my arms, kissing her for a long pleasant moment.

We made out in the bathtub until the water was cold and filthy from the soap. We crawled into bed right after, both of us tired from the day. She wore a lovely little nightgown and curled herself around me. I wouldn't make a move on her, even if I wanted to do so desperately. She would have let me, but I felt guilty about it after spending the day with her dead husband's family.

I fell asleep quickly but woke up in the middle of the night. I felt restless, and apparently, so did Bella. Her head tossed gently back and forth to the side. Her fingers coiled into the sheets as her face scrunched.

“No,” she whispered in her sleep. I kissed her temple lightly. She whimpered and turned into me. “No. No, Aiden,” she breathed. “No. Please. Don’t. Aiden. Stop. Aiden. Aiden. Aiden.” Bella began to cry, her tears dripping down her cheeks.

I pulled her to me tighter. “It’s okay, love. I’m here. I’ve got you.”

“I don’t want to.”

“Then you don’t have to,” I answered, kissing her again and again very lightly. I just wanted the bad dreams to go away.

“Edward,” she whimpered my name. She sniffed deeply, the tears still coming. “Please, Edward.”

“I’m right here. Shhhh…”

“Edward, I love you. Please.” She shivered all over.

I began to tear up, pushing my face into her hair. “I love you, too. It’s okay, baby. I’m right here. It’s just a bad dream.”

She stilled, and after a moment said, “hm?” She pulled back to look at me with her eyes open, obviously confused.

“You okay?” I asked gently. “I think you were having a nightmare.”

Bella nodded slowly, rubbing her eyes with one hand to get the tears out of them. “I’m sorry,” she mumbled before rolling over. I realized then that she wasn’t really awake then either. I turned over with her, spooning her back as I adjusted the blankets. She tugged my hand around her stomach and pressed it to her heart with her palm on top of mine. A second later, a tiny snore fell from her lips.

That morning, I woke up with a little kiss. Bella was fully dressed and leaning over me. She brushed her fingers through my hair, gazing at me lovingly. “I’m going to practice. I’ll text you when it’s over, so I can meet you somewhere. I’ll need to get cleaned up and put my stuff away, though.”

“I’ll meet you at the apartment if you like,” I offered, rubbing the sleep out of my eyes.

“That would be perfect. Actually, I stuck the spare keys in my purse to give you anyway,” she mumbled, looking into her massive bag. She quickly pulled them out, just a couple of keys on a single ‘I ‘heart’ NYC’ keychain. “One is for the lobby, and the other is for the apartment. Do you need anything before I go?”

“No,” I smiled at her. She began to get up. “Wait! Yes, I do.”

“What?”

“Another kiss,” I grinned stupidly. She rolled her eyes but smirked as she crawled back onto the bed to give me one more. This kiss was far more intense. I rubbed the back of her neck, holding it for as long as she would allow me. “I’ll see you in a few hours, my darling.”

“Get some more sleep,” she called to me as she went towards the door.

That would not happen. I threw the blanket off of me once it closed and hurried to go get a shower. After I finally got dressed, I checked my phone. Jasper had replied to my last message.

“Please, do not propose to this woman after a month, Tony. I’m serious. You can’t be this stupid.”

I replied after shoving my wallet in my back pocket. “I’m not proposing tonight! I just found the right ring, and I know that I will spend the rest of my life with her.”

The phone rang. I was a little surprised. It was really late there. I thought, anyway. I wasn’t sure about the time change.

Jasper began talking right away. “Oi! Why- Just... what? What are you doing? It’s been a month. You are not this kind of person. You plan every moment and- and-”

I laughed. “Yeah, I know. I am. This is me... planning. I’m not going to propose today or this month or even this year. But I just need to have it. I know this is the ring that I need to get my girl. I need to see it on her hand. It’s perfect.”

“You don’t even know her size!” He fussed. He was a little annoyed with me and bristling for more of a fight. It was probably the first problem that popped into his head.

“That’s true. But rings can be easily sized. Also, I can just ask.”

“Okay, go ahead and ask her what her ring size is,” he said with extreme sarcasm. “That won’t scare her at all.”

I laughed again. “Okay, maybe. Well... I could ask Alice, her best friend.”

“And tell her what? Don’t you think her best friend will tell her that you’re buying her an engagement ring?” He pressed.

“Or I could lie. It’s not that hard. I am an actor. I could say that it was for something else.” Pausing, I waited for him to argue some more. He grunted. “I could say it was for Christmas. ‘Hey, Al, this Eddie, um, I was going to do a bit of holiday shopping while Bella is at practice today. I don’t suppose you could help me out with sizes, huh? You know, like for clothes, shoes, jewelry or whatever’,” I quoted very casually. I heard him groan loudly.

“You’re going to buy this girl an engagement ring.”

“I’m going to marry this woman. So, yeah. I am. I need it.”

Jasper sighed heavily. “Why now? Why do you need it? What happened?”

I sat on the edge of the bed. “Yesterday, we spent all day with Aiden’s family. And they were wonderful. And I watched her with her niece, and I wanted it to be our daughter. I saw her hold our baby in my head, and it just- gah. Like, she’s just literally an angel. She so perfect that I know that she was made for me.”

He began to laugh, and then he sighed again. “Crikey. You are the most dramatic cunt.”

“Okay, so hear me out. We have so many things in common. Our hobbies. We enjoy everything from the same kinds of foods and music and books. And she loves food as much as I do and just knows everything that I don’t about it. She’s smart and funny, talented as hell. She’s an artist in every single way. Music, dancing, photography, singing. Bella came to New York to be on Broadway after she got her education. But it didn’t work out for her. I can give her that. I can make her a star and give her all of her dreams. And she’s amazing with kids. She is strong even though she’s gone through hell. Bella’s backbone is made of steel. This woman is everything that I’m not and in every way better than me, and if I don’t marry her, I don’t know what I’ll do with myself or what I’m doing with my life. Because she’s it, man,” I ended in a resounding huff.

There was a long pause. “Well. Okay then. So, am I at least going to be invited to the wedding?”

I chuckled in relief at his words. “You better be standing right beside me. You’re the only person who I care about being there besides the lovely bride herself.”

“Don’t tell your sisters that.”

“Okay, I’m not stupid.” He laughed genuinely at my words. “I’m going to let you go, so I can get some breakfast and go shopping. The jewelry store is right across from the hotel, so that’s easy, at least. I also need to get Bella a fucking heater. Her place is so goddamn cold.”

“Well, good luck with that. Show me a picture of the ring after you get the silly thing.”

I ate in the lobby, looking up where to buy supplies for the day. I also sent Alice a messaged worded almost exactly how I said it to my best friend.

Just as I was finishing up, she replied by text. “Oh, sure! So, clothes: Shirts, small. Pants, 0s. Leggings and stuff, small. Pajamas, she likes huge, though. Large if they’re for comfiness. She’s a 32DD and small in panties. Shoes she’s a six. Her ears are pierced, she likes her necklaces on the longer side. Ring size five on her ring finger and six on her middle, pointer, and thumb.”

I would have to buy Alice a very nice present for Christmas. She was so eager to be helpful. “Thanks!”

“What are you thinking about getting her?”

“Jewelry, probably.” I decided to be vague.

“So, just an FYI, Bella loves this brand that’s from Texas. It’s mostly silver. She has a ton of pieces from them. Her favorite is this ring that her grandmother gave her. I don’t know if you’ve ever noticed. But it’s James Avery.”

Honestly, I hadn’t noticed, other than she really enjoyed wearing it. She had said that she loved cheap costume pieces. “Oh, really?”

“There aren’t any stores in NYC, though. So you’d have to order it. But it’s still a month until Christmas.”

I looked up the jewelry maker she mentioned. Right away, I could see why she liked it so much. When I had a chance, I would order her something from there. “Thank you so much, that helps a lot. I think I might order her a ring. Some of these are very cute.”

“Oo! Show me what you pick!” She replied. It was the second time in one day that I was told to show someone the ring I was going to buy for Bella. I smiled to myself.

When I walked into the store, the salesman recognized me right away. He perked up from his spot, standing up a bit straighter.

“Ah, come to buy her two more pairs?” He joked with a big smile.

I chuckled nervously. “Um, actually, I was hoping that you still had the ring I looked at the other day.”

He went right to it, pulling out the exact one. "She is a lovely piece. It's sized very small, though."

Stunned, I glanced up at him. "Oh? What size?"

"Five."

Laughing, I covered my mouth as I shook my head. "No, actually, it's perfect. That's the size she wears. She's a tiny girl." I cleared my throat, looking at the ring box. "May I?"

"Yes, sir!" I picked up and felt the weight. It was extremely heavy in my hand. Carefully, I put it on the tip of my ring finger on my left hand. It barely made it past my nail.

"How much?"

He smiled as he realized that he made a sale. It was far less than I was actually willing to spend. I thought it would be more expensive. I went directly back to the room and sat at the table, just staring at it.

After I sent a picture to Jasper, my phone rang again. I brought it to my ear. "Now that is a ring, Tony. Jesus. How much did you just spend?"

"Around five thousand."

"I don't know what that is in American."

"Cheap for a ring this big. Apparently, antique jewelry is the way to go. It's a century old. You'd think it would make it more expensive," I mumbled. "Diamonds, emeralds, platinum. It's going to look huge on her tiny hand."

He let out a little breath. "It's gorgeous. She'll love it, darling. Just... promise me you won't do it this year, at least. She seems lovely, and I know you're in love, but be smart."

"I am," I promised. "I won't. I'm going to make it perfect for her and give her everything she needs. I know that she loves me now, too. It's just a matter of time."

His breath caught, and he drew it in quickly. "She told you?"

I closed the ring box with a little snap, laughing to myself some in embarrassment. "Um, well, not awake. But yes, she has. She has shouted it at my face two nights in a row in her sleep. Calling my name as she does. I think she had a nightmare about Aiden and me last night. She kept telling him no. Then she told me she loved me and needed me. She cried in her sleep. Bella is a chatty thing at night, it seems. I kind of love it."

“That’s got to make you feel good,” he concluded, but his voice was a little distressed.

“Are you okay? Is something wrong?”

“Oh, yeah, yeah. I’m fine, darling. Just exhausted. I should probably go. I’ll talk to you later. Have a good day.”

“Oh, okay. Right. Yeah, you too, love,” I pouted. Then I remember something. “Hey, how’d your date go?”

He chuckled. “Just fine. Got laid, had fun, will probably never call them again. Bye, Tony.”

“Bye.”

Jasper was obviously sad about something, but I didn’t understand what. He wouldn’t tell me either. I knew he was lonely in Sydney, just like I was in Los Angeles. I thought about making him the offer again, but I knew that would cause a fight. Instead, I decided that I would go out and buy him some Christmas gifts while doing my other shopping during the day.