



On Television

When I woke up in the morning, my whole body hurt. I felt it before I even opened my eyes. I groaned.

“Oh, fuck,” I whined, rolling flat on my back. My neck cracked loudly as I stretched my chin up. “Oh, god. Why am I old?”

I heard Jasper softly laugh. Slowly, I looked over at him, just moving my head. He was lying beside me in the nude, smiling. He was covered in hickeys.

“I don’t think that your aches and pains have anything to do with your age, darlin,” he teased seductively, his fingers moving over my hips. A small thrill went up my spine at the memory of the night before.

“You didn’t do anything to my neck,” I replied dryly, yawning and stretching as I did. “Everywhere else is fine.”

“Liar,” he chuckled.

“No. I feel amazing,” I promised, smiling at him brightly. I wasn’t lying. Everything was perfect.

“You couldn’t do another scene like that tonight even if you wanted to. It’s probably a good thing that we’re switching,” Jasper joked as his fingers moved over a bruise across my chest. I had dozens streaking the front and back. He had spent a good bit of time rubbing me down the night before with a soothing cream after a long hot bath with Epsom salt.

“Yes, I could,” I instantly argued, holding my chin high. “But I still wanna switch,” I added quickly. “By the way, make sure that you leave those handcuff keys somewhere handy.”

“They’re on the dresser already... Mistress.”

I laughed, closing my eyes as I smiled. A hot flush spread out across my cheeks. “You put so much thought into yesterday, and I’m not totally sure what I’m going to do tonight. It’s been forever since the last time that I was in control.”

“Don’t worry. We’ll figure it out,” he said smoothly before leaning in for a kiss. “Would you like to order some breakfast? I am starving.”

“Anything you want, sir,” I mumbled as I finally rolled into his arms. He chuckled again quietly as his fingers danced over my tender ass. Slowly I brought my thigh over his hip, his morning erection poking against my leg. Rolling my hips forward, I rubbed him precisely where I wanted him.

Jasper pushed me onto my back and moved on top of me with a playful smirk on his full soft lips. “In that case... I think that I would actually like to have you first.”

We didn’t end up having breakfast but instead a late lunch after two rounds and a shower. Settling into the bed in our pajamas afterward, we both got our laptops out to work on emails. He was ignoring work ones until the next day, mainly replying to messages from his family with New Year’s greetings.

I didn’t have anyone beside Alice, and I knew that she was hungover or drunk still, probably. If she was awake, she wouldn’t be in the mood to chat. So instead, I worked on my research some more. I decided to look up Bree Tanner once again. I felt like I could have studied the case for weeks.

“Whatcha up to? You’re looking really serious,” Jasper mused when he glanced over at the screen. His glasses were perched on his nose, his wild blond curls tousled. He looked so relaxed.

I bit my lip, sighing softly. “Remember how I was doing research on the Tracker case for the book? Well, I pretty much spent yesterday on a tangent of that.”

“Which was?” Jasper asked curiously as he settled more comfortably beside me in the bed.

I paused, thinking about it for a moment. I wasn’t sure how seriously he would take me on the subject. He was a doctor in the field, and I was just a bored writer goofing around on vacation. “I started looking at missing cases of black girls in his preferred age range, and this one girl from Rochester kept coming up. I wanted to lookup more about it. It’s pretty terrifying. It’s almost the same MO, but there was an arrest in the case. I get this... mmmm... this weird vibe, if that makes sense. This just sounds like him.”

“Oh?” He looked over at me in real interest, his head tilting to the side as he brought up a search engine. “What’s the name of the missing girl?”

“Bree Tanner.”

“Hm,” he hummed. “Name doesn’t ring any bells.” He began to type into Google. “How was it similar? What do you mean?”

“Well... She wasn’t a sex worker, that’s different. But what he did to her was similar. Anyway, she went on a date with this creep, and he kidnapped and kept her as a sex slave for a couple of days before she escaped. He tied her up and cut her with several different knives. She led police directly to the apartment and gave them his name.”

He started clicking through the search results. “And is this guy still in prison? Do you know? When did this happen?”

“Five years ago, almost exactly. Here’s the thing, he wasn’t even formally charged. The family was a huge deal in Rochester. They own a bunch of businesses, I guess. Not just in Rochester but all over New York. Here, too. They arrested him, and he pretty much confessed before his lawyer walked it back so hard that the cops actually apologized to him and the family for any ‘undo’ stress,” I explained then made an angry face. “This is the part of the justice system that sucks.”

Jasper stopped working on the computer and looked at me with concern. “What was the name of the guy they arrested?”

“Um,” I thought about it, searching through my notes. I couldn’t remember it off the top of my head. “R. R something. It was a real asshole, rich guy name. It made me literally cringe.”

He sat up stark still, his back stiff as a board. His eyes got wider as he looked at me in total shock. "Royce?"

"Yes!" I squeaked in equal surprise. "Royce King." I stopped looking at my laptop and instead at my boyfriend. "Oh, shit."

"I know who it is," he whispered and then threw himself out of bed. Jasper rushed to go get his phone from the dresser and then to the closet to get a pair of pants.

I hurried out after him. "Are you fucking kidding me?!"

He didn't say anything. Instead, he dialed his phone. "Sam, I know who it is. I need you to send a couple of uniforms to pick up Royce Mathews for me. His real last name is King. He's it. I told you that he was a scumbag." He laughed humorlessly, pulling the black slacks up and buttoning them. "Yes, I'm serious. I got a tip. It doesn't matter. What I need you to do is pick him up right fucking now and get me everything you can on the Bree Tanner case out of Rochester. Bravo-Romeo-Echo-Echo, Tango-Alpha-November-November-Echo-Romeo," he used the call alphabet to spell her name. His partner must have been a military man, too.

I rushed to get him a shirt and his tie from his suitcase. He still had the phone on his shoulder after he slipped on his button-down. Jasper started nodding. "Okay. Seriously? Okay. Good. Good. Damn. Good. That'll be enough for a warrant right there. That sneaky little motherfucker. Alright. Call the chief and let him know what's going on. I'll be at the station in about twenty minutes. Yeah, I think so. I'll tell you about it when I get there."

Jasper hung up the phone. "Are you serious?" I asked him again.

"Christ. We've talked to him before. He was living under an assumed name. He kept Royce, though. Dumb fuck. We barely had him five minutes before his lawyer showed up and walked him out. We were told by the DA to look elsewhere because his alibi was rock solid," he mumbled to himself. "Solid, my ass. We just need a DNA sample."

I grabbed his arm. "Jasper, Bree Tanner disappeared soon after the charges were dropped, and they've never found a trace of her. The mother thinks it was Royce. He finished the job."

"If he did, I will find out," he swore.

He just hung his tie around his neck, going to the safe to get his guns. There was more than one. He put them both in his gun holster and put another on his ankle. Faster than I thought possible, he was dressed and ready to go. After I gave him his handcuffs with the keys, all I could do was follow behind him helplessly.

Stopping right in front of the hotel door, Jasper turned to look at me. He grabbed my face and pulled me to him in a furious kiss. "I'm sorry. I need to go."

"I know. Be careful," I begged, terrified. I brought him in for another kiss.

"It'll be fine. I promise. He'll come quietly and lawyer up like before. But this time, we have enough to hold him and get a warrant. I probably won't even get to see the little fucker face to face."

Shaking my head, I quickly kissed him again. I wanted to cry and beg him to stay in bed with me. Let them deal with it. But he was one of them. This was his job. He was more than just a suit.

"I love you."

Jasper put his hand on my cheek. "I love you, too, darlin."

And like that, my lazy day was over, and I was startlingly alone. I put my hand over my mouth, wanting to suddenly and violently scream, but I held it in. Something twisted in my stomach. It was fear and the terrible feeling that Jasper was wrong. He should have been right, that the monster would come without a fight, but I knew in my heart that he was beyond reason now. He had gone into a frenzied killing state and wasn't going to stop until he was forced to.

An hour passed.

Then two.

Three.

Four.

An alert popped up on my phone that made the tears that had been sitting at the corners of my eyes spill out instantly. An unnamed possible suspect in the I-90 Tracker case eluded police and FBI capture, going on the run. There was a high-speed chase before he crashed and escaped on foot into a quiet neighborhood. He took a hostage, a kid in a backyard, and was currently holding out in the child's home. The toddler's mother was believed to have been shot inside the house. Her condition was unknown.

I didn't know what to do. There was nothing that I could do. I turned on the television to the local news station. They had cut into regular programming to watch the live coverage of the hostage situation. They were talking to a police officer somewhere in the background. There were cop cars everywhere, bright lights set up on long poles. I recognized Jasper's rental amongst them.

My hands started to shake. Nothing I could do would make them stop.

Without moving for an hour, I watched the television with my cell phone in my trembling fingers. Over and over again, I wished with all my might that he would call me. But he didn't. I would not be so childish as to text him during something like this.

I did see him, though, pacing between people with a walkie-talkie in his hand. He had removed his jacket and coat and was wearing a bulletproof vest. Sam was there too, along with a few of the other people that I recognized from the bar. They all looked so different with their solemn, scared, and angry faces.

Before the SWAT team showed up, they cut the power to the entire block. The police asked the media to back up, and they turned off every light that they could. A news van set up shop on the corner across from the building. The last time that I saw Jasper, he was carrying a massive black gun that was not his own and speaking to someone in charge that was in riot gear. He was giving directions.

I called Alice. I needed someone, anyone, to talk to. "Look up what's happening in Albany right now."

"What?" She murmured sleepily. It was just before eleven there, and she was already in bed. "What's going on?"

"There's a standoff with the serial killer that Jasper's been looking for. He has a kid. Jasper's there, and he's got a bulletproof vest on, and isn't he just a doctor?" I began to cry. "Why does he have a big ass gun? Why does he need it?"

"He's a cop," she stated like I didn't know.

"A smart one! You don't put the smart ones in front of the criminals with guns!" I shouted hysterically.

She paused, taking a calming breath for me since I wasn't able. "There is a reason that he's a special agent, honey," she tried to reason with me. "You know that. You know that his job is dangerous. It's part of the reason that he's so hot."

I put my hand over my eyes as I tried to calm myself down. "I hate this so much. I know this is what he does. I just want him to call me and tell me that he's okay."

"He will soon."

I shook my head, starting to feel the dread building up in the back of my head again. It was so overwhelming. Suddenly a loud noise on the television got my attention, making my eyes snap back to it. The reporter was talking frantically, but I could hardly understand them. There was an explosion and then several loud pops.

“Suspect opens fire on police, SWAT enters the building after deploying smoke bombs,” started scrolling across the bottom of the screen in a bright red ticker.

Then there was so much gunfire. Pop, pop, pop, over and over again. The media was at least a block from the house, but it was still so loud. The cameras were pointed at the dark home, and faint flashes of light sparked in front of windows. I realized that it was from the bullets.

“Oh, god,” I whimpered, covering my mouth. “He’s in there. There’s gunfire. He was supposed to come quietly. Jasper said he would,” I babbled anxiously.

“I’m watching it now. It’ll be okay,” Alice tried to promise. I had almost forgotten that she was on the phone with me.

The ticker on the bottom changed. “I-90 Tracker Suspect apprehended, at least four members of law enforcement were injured in the shootout.” Ambulances blasted past the reporter as she tried to speak over all the noise.

I only heard her say one thing. “One confirmed dead.”

For the second time in twenty-four hours, I screamed.