



Chapter Forty

The following day, I called my father to discuss some things with him. I didn't think it would be a pleasant conversation, but it was one I felt I needed to have with him.

I stretched across my couch, looking at the ceiling as I listened to the dial tone. He picked up on the fourth one. "Hello?"

"Hey, Daddy," I spoke as pleasantly as possible. "Happy New Year. How are you?"

"Good, you?" He answered roughly, his voice full of suspicion. I had overdone the cheerfulness, and he was onto me. I knew it would just be best to come out with it.

"I'm great. Awesome, actually," I told him quietly before clearing my throat with a heavy cough. "So, I'm moving in with Edward."

"Excuse me?" Charlie began slowly, but I wasn't about to let him rain on my parade.

"I'm going to live with my boyfriend. We've been talking about it for a little while, and I finally agreed. Anyway, I was going to see if maybe you'd like some of my furniture. Some of it's in better shape than yours. Also, I wanted to talk to you about what I thought I'd do with the trailer."

All of this caught him off guard, and it took him a full minute to recover. “That would be nice, I guess. I’ll let Sue come take a look at it and see what she thinks. I’ll be moving in with her once we get married.”

“Of course,” I replied, nodding. I had almost forgotten about that.

“So, what were you planning on doing with the place?”

“Well, I mean, I know it’s not in fantastic shape or anything, but it’s not bad. Everything works. And it’s in a decent part of town. I’ve seen where Seth lives...”

“Yeah, it’s an awful area,” he muttered. “A lot of crime.”

“Exactly. So, I thought I’d offer it to him as a starter place. All he has to do is pay for the electric, water, and maintain the insurance on it. He’d save quite a bit of money, and maybe he can buy himself a house in a couple of years.”

“That’s very nice of you, pumpkin,” he remarked softly, and I could hear the emotions in his voice. It made him really happy I was getting along so well with his new life.

Perhaps he would keep that in mind while dealing with mine.

“So, you think it’s a good idea?” I asked, just to make sure.

“A great one.”

“Awesome! You guys come over whenever you want to look at the furniture. I figured I could give whatever you don’t take to Seth. Most of his shit he found on the side of the road, I think,” I laughed to myself.

“When are you moving in?” Charlie asked rather suddenly, his voice serious.

I looked at the folded up boxes on my table. “Uh... I kind of figured I’d start tomorrow, actually.”

Edward was taking the day off, anyway. His family was heading back to Chicago finally. They would have stayed longer, but everyone was working on the Greece merger. There had already been some talk about him going over in the spring to work some things out. Emmett would be moving there for at least a few months to oversee the project by the end of January.

“Alright. I’ll be over in the morning to help you. Say around seven?”

I sat up quickly. "What?" That was not what I was expecting to happen. It was not the intention of my call either. I just wanted to let him know. It was polite, and I didn't want him to, you know, kill my boyfriend. Renee would be insanely pleased with my moving in with him. She had fallen in love with him on her blessedly brief visit.

"Is seven too late? You know when you move, you need to get started early before the sun gets too high. Makes it hot work, even in January. Six then?" He asked like he didn't understand my question. I knew him better than that, though. So well, in fact, I knew I would not get out of him helping. If I fought it, it would be worse. But, he had a truck, and it would make things go by quicker. Edward was going to come by in the morning after he dropped off his family at the airport to help.

I wasn't exactly sure why Charlie wanted to, whether it was to see where I would live or maybe to question my man himself. Either way, it made me nervous.

Sighing, I rubbed my right temple with my fingertips. "Make it seven-thirty. Edward won't be over until around then, anyway. He likes to see his family off whenever they visit. Can you bring doughnuts? I'll make the coffee."

"Sure, sounds great," my father said almost overly bright, matching my tone from earlier.

"Fantastic," I tried to sound pleased, but I couldn't quite manage it. "Love you, Dad. See you in the morning." When we hung up, I muttered to myself, "Crap."

I had Sunday evening to myself to work, but Edward and I kept texting back and forth. I packed a lot of my clothes, bagging the others to give to charity. Same for my shoes. I only left out a pair of jeans, a long-sleeved shirt, and boots for the next day.

Most of my clothing I originally got because of my boyfriend or from Alice. It was a simple boxful, not too much. I even had room to set my tiny jewelry box safely inside.

It took a lot more time to wrap up my grandmother's china. It was the main thing I was bringing from my kitchen besides a few tools he didn't have, some cooking vessels in great shape, and my couple of teapots. I wasn't sure where I would put the pretty bone white pieces with light green and gold edging, but I knew I wanted to keep them. He promised he would get something for me to display them in. They were the only things I still had from my grandmother.

My book collection took three full boxes, and they were heavy. I was stubborn enough to carry them, but they made my back ache slightly. Perhaps it was a good thing my father was coming.

I had a box packed with pictures, a small one of the junk from my bathroom, and a decently sized one with my growing video game collection, along with my two laptops.

It was a little sad I could pack all the things I wanted to take with me in an evening. If Seth wanted the place but not the stuff in it, I would have a lot more work later. But I would deal with that when I needed to.

By midnight, I had about fifteen crates in varying sizes filled, and I had found four-fifty dollars in bills and change. I was more pleased with the cash than the boxes- like I had accomplished something by finding it.

My father was there at seven-fifteen with a mixture of doughnuts. His earliness didn't surprise me. He always felt like it was better to be early than to be late to anything. His mother, my grandma Swan, drilled it into him and to me to a point. I wasn't as good at following through with it as I liked to be.

When he knocked on the door, I called for him to come in since I was standing on a stool to dust the corners of the ceiling. I wanted to leave it in excellent condition. I had already gotten up early and vacuumed underneath my couch and loveseat, making sure there was nothing hidden under the cushions.

"You know you shouldn't have done that. It could have been a robber," Charlie grunted as he came in.

"Yes, but I knew my big strong dad would be here soon to take care of it. So, I was covered," I teased with a smile. "Just leave the door open. I want to air out the place a bit. It's so nice and cool outside."

"It's downright chilly," he complained.

"Well, there is some hot coffee in the pot. There are a couple of kinds of creamer in the fridge, and the sugar bowl is right by the machine."

"It's all you've got in there," he said disapprovingly. It was obvious it would be one of those days when nothing would be good enough for him. I knew why, but it didn't make it any less frustrating.

I decided it was best to lie. "Yeah, I cleaned it out last night. There are a couple of apples to snack on in there too."

I had barely eaten at home in weeks besides cereal or toast. When Edward asked me to live with him, I started letting stuff run out, so I didn't have to move it later. It seemed like the best idea.

“Want a cup?” He called, digging through the cabinets to find a mug to drink from. He found it on his third try.

“Yes, please. I like the sweet cream. About three-fourths coffee, the rest creamer. It doesn’t need sugar if you do it that way,” I explained as I whirled my cloth along the edge of the ceiling and wall. “Oh, mine is on the table.”

“Why don’t you come down and get you something to eat?” He asked as he plopped down on the couch with his own cup and a doughnut, flicking on the television to the news.

“I will in a second. I’m almost done.”

Only a few moments later, there was a gentle tapping by my front entrance. Edward peeked in, smiling exuberantly. “Can I come in?”

“Of course,” I said in a laugh as I came down from my stool. I wrapped my arms around his neck and gave him a tender kiss on the lips. He was looking all cute and rough in his torn-up jeans and a long-sleeved t-shirt that just peeked out from his leather jacket.

“So, you’ll come down and hug him?” Charlie asked in a grumble.

I flashed him a wicked look before glancing back at my boyfriend with a smile. “Why don’t you come in and get you something to eat?”

“Oh, we got up early and ate. I’m not too hungry.” He shrugged, trying to grin politely at my father.

“Then go get you a cup of coffee. I’m just finishing up some dusting, and then I was going to get something to munch on.”

“Sounds good,” he replied as he went into the kitchen. I knew exactly what his reaction would be when he saw the box on the countertop. “Oh! Doughnuts! Can I have one?”

I laughed. “Of course.” Charlie made a rude noise, and I flicked my eyes towards him. He smiled at me innocently, shoving the rest of his into his mouth. “You know what? Why don’t you bring me one too?”

We sat together on the loveseat, eating our pastries and sipping the caramel-colored drink as my father watched the news silently. When all of it was gone, I brushed off my fingers on my jeans and stretched out my already aching muscles. It would be a long day, and just the thought of it made me feel sore all over again.

“Well, this is it,” I told the guys, waving to the boxes neatly stacked against the wall. “I think between the SUV and the truck, we’ll be able to do it in one trip.”

“This is it?” Charlie asked in genuine surprise. “You’re not going to take anything else?”

“There isn’t anything else I need. Besides, if I forget something, I can always come back and get it,” I pointed out. “Oh, that reminds me! I texted Seth and invited him out to lunch to offer him the place. If he doesn’t want it, I don’t know what I’m going to do with it.”

“We’ll figure it out.” Edward tenderly rubbed my spine. “Don’t worry about it.”

“I’m not,” I smiled, and our eyes locked for a moment.

Charlie wasn’t amused by this and scoffed as he stood from the couch. “Alright. Let’s get started. Bella, you’ll have to ride with me so you can show me how to get to this place.”

“I figured,” I mumbled.

And together, we worked silently as we lugged crates outside, first filling Edward’s trunk and back seat before packing up the old red beat-up truck that was now my father’s. We could have probably fit five more into the back of it, but there was nothing else to grab. So, I turned off all the lights and made sure I locked every window and door before turning off the heater.

As I walked out, I felt almost sad. Almost, but not quite.

“See you in a few,” Edward whispered in my ear as he pressed a kiss to my cheek, opening the passenger side for me. “Love you.”

“I love you, too,” I assured him. But the sound was drowned out as the truck roared to life. He hurriedly went to his much quieter ride and backed out of the driveway. Charlie made sure he was well on his way before he did too.

“So, are you going to act like this all day?” I said as I raised an eyebrow in his direction.

He acted as if he had no idea what was going on. “What are you talking about?”

“You might want to wipe your mouth. There is still a bit of bullshit just right there.” I motioned to the corner. In actuality, it was some chocolate from his doughnut, but I think it helped my point.

He reflexively rubbed the back of his fist across his lips. Smirking, I shook my head. My father gave up on trying to look innocent and sighed heavily. “Are you sure about this guy?”

“Yeah, I’m pretty certain.”

“It just feels like you’re rushing into this.”

I thought about it from his position for a moment. To him, it probably did. But so could his proposal to Sue to the outside onlooker. “Dad, it’s not. It’s just right for us. I’m really happy and excited. I think Edward might be the one... you know?”

“I thought the same thing about your mother,” he pointed out.

I rubbed my forehead with my fingers for a moment before telling him to get onto the interstate, then took a second to breathe. “What about Sue?”

“That’s different,” he replied quickly.

“And so is this,” I reassured him. “Edward is selfless. And wonderful. And sweet. Give him a chance. You’ll like him. He’s a good man and more than I ever hoped for in a partner.”

“I just hope he feels the same way about you,” he stated softly.

“Dad, I really think he does.”

We sat in mostly silence for the rest of the short trip, besides me occasionally telling him where to turn and such. When I pointed out Edward’s house, he turned to me. “No. Where does he actually live?”

I laughed. “This is his place. See. There is his SUV. Maybe you can go look at his car collection later. It’s pretty impressive. I think he just bought something called an MGB. He’s having it restored.”

“How much is this man worth?” Charlie asked as he looked up at my new home, stepping out of the ancient truck.

“Not sure exactly, but let’s just say if we have grandbabies, they’re probably not going to have to work if they don’t want to,” I teased as I went to the back to take a plastic tub.

“You’re not pregnant, are you?!” He nearly shouted, making me laugh loudly.

“No, I’m not. I promise,” I insisted. “Come on, grab a box. It’s starting to get cloudy, and it looks like it’s about to rain.”

With each passing moment, the sky got darker, and the temperature dropped. Earlier, neither one of the men had allowed me to pick up any of the heavier boxes. But since we were in such a rush to get it all inside, they didn't even notice.

I had just grabbed my books and was lugging them in when I heard the sound of the box giving way. It was tearing at the bottom, and the only thing I could think to do was hurrying to get them inside. Picking up speed, I was only inside the doorway when the base blew out. About a dozen hardbacks tumbled down to the ground and onto my foot.

"Son of a bitch!" I hissed loudly as I leaned against the wall. One textbook fell at an angle, catching me with a corner. If it had hit anywhere but the thinner fabric of the tongue of the boot, it wouldn't have hurt as much as it did, but it fell just right.

Edward was on the stairs when it happened, and my father right behind him. He was the first to my side, hurriedly looking me over.

"What hurts?"

"My foot," I replied. "I'll be-" I began to say I would be fine, but he quickly swept me off my feet and took me into the geek room. Dad was behind him as he sat me on the couch. He promptly knelt in front of me. "I'm okay," I responded with a frown, and I might have sold it if I hadn't hissed when he removed my footwear. There was already a lump and a bruise forming, the probably ten-pound book I had since college on A++ certification causing some damage.

Stupid two hundred dollar paperweight I refused to part with. What the hell was I going to do with it, anyway?

"Can you wiggle your toes?" Edward prompted, examining my foot like he knew what he was doing. I did easily, but I had to bite my lip. It twinged a bit when I moved my big toe, making the muscles at the top pull. "I don't think it's broken or anything."

"I'll be fine in a minute," I stated, pulling it away from him. The idea of my smelly, sweaty toes in front of his nose bothered me somewhat.

"I'm going to get you an ice pack and some aspirin for the swelling," he remarked as he lifted and pressed a kiss to my forehead. "Water, no ice?" He asked to make sure. That was my normal go-to drink.

"Yes, please," I smirked and sighed. My father was looking at me curiously, his head cocked to the side slightly.

“Oh, Chief Swan, there is a fridge full of sodas and such behind the bar. Please feel free to take anything you’d like,” my boyfriend called over his shoulder as he went into the kitchen to get the medicine.

“No, I’m good. I’ll bring the rest of the boxes in before it rains,” he replied gruffly then swept out of the room.

“I’ll be out in a moment to help!” He announced from somewhere in the house. Just a few moments later, he returned with the little pills and a big blue, oddly rubber ice bag.

Edward carefully propped my injured foot up and put the sack on top. “Thanks,” I breathed after I took my tablets.

“You keep that up. Here’s the remote. I’ll be back in a few minutes. Yell if you need anything,” he spoke worriedly as he pressed a kiss to the top of my head. I rolled my eyes but smiled at his sweetness.

Honestly, it wasn’t that bad. I had hurt myself a lot worse before. But I knew arguing with him would be pointless. So, I just set my feet up and turned on the television to the news. The weather was playing, showing a decent storm system was heading our way. Once it arrived, it would rain for a long while.

The boys got a little sprinkled upon, but the heavy stuff didn’t start until a few minutes after they got the last box inside. Edward went wordlessly to the refrigerator behind the bar and pulled out a cream soda for himself and a coke for my father, the same drink he ordered at the restaurant the night they met.

It was paying attention to those little details that made him a good businessman.

My man carefully lifted my foot like I was made of glass, so he could sit it in his lap. He removed the ice bag. The air stung my skin. Charlie sat at the other end of the big couch, looking at us silently. “How does it feel?”

“I’m fine,” I assured him. “I don’t need that. I think it was more of a shock than anything else.”

“You’re going to have a bruise,” he spoke in a pained whisper as he cautiously danced his fingers around my pink and purple raised marks.

“I always have them. I bump into everything,” I teased, trying to lighten his mood.

I think we both jumped when I heard my father chuckle. It was as if we had forgotten he was in the room. “You should have seen her knees when she was a kid. Good gracious, they

were always black and blue. And she had these random little ones running up and down her legs. Renee and I took her to the doctor because we thought something was wrong with her.”

This was the most relaxed he had ever sounded around my boyfriend. He wasn't rough or sarcastic. He was actually joking. My eyes grew wide in surprise as heat spread across my cheeks.

“I always had them too, but mine were about the size of my brother's fist,” Edward chuckled, sweetly rubbing my ankle. “We beat the hell out of each other. He was strong, but I was fast.”

“You boys fighting? Never,” I scoffed, resting my hands on my stomach as I laid my head back on the couch.

“I know. Shocking, right?” He snickered as he looked at his watch. “It's close to eleven, and I'm starving. How about I order us some pizza for lunch?”

“Sounds great,” I agreed before looking over at my dad, who only shrugged in response. It wasn't a no.

“What kind do you like, Chief?”

“Oh, I'll eat just about anything.”

Edward laughed as he shook his head, standing up from the couch after I lifted my feet. “What?” I asked.

“So, that's where you get it from?” He inquired as he pulled his phone from his pocket. He was quickly scrolling through the numbers, trying to find the one he wanted.

“What do you mean?” Charlie questioned with a slight smirk.

“Oh, just that your daughter said the exact same thing the first time we had pizza together.” My boyfriend smiled, his cheeks flushing slightly as he looked at me. I blushed too, smiling down at my hands.

“He likes his like mine. Add onions to one half,” I eventually answered for him since he wasn't planning on being helpful at all.

“Got it. I'm going to order. I'll be right back,” Edward declared as he strode out of the room, so we didn't have to turn down the television.

Dad and I sat in silence for a few moments before he finally spoke again. "Alright. Fine. But the moment he causes you any heartache, I will kick his ass," he announced, crossing his arms heavily over his chest like he was trying to regain some of his cop-like image. I smiled to myself, knowing that was the closest I would ever get to straight-up approval.

"Got it. I'll let him know."

"Oh, I already told him," he smirked, looking pleased. I raised an annoyed eyebrow, cocking my head to one side as he had done before. "What? Did you honestly think I wasn't?"

He had a point there, but I wouldn't give him the satisfaction of a response. Edward came back into the room, announcing the food would arrive in about thirty minutes.

My foot was fine after an hour of being pampered. After lunch, my dad headed out, twenty times friendlier than when he arrived. He finally realized how happy I was and how good my boyfriend was for me. I think the primary reason he didn't like him in the first place was to spite Renee. Now he couldn't deny what was best for me.

Arranging my books in the library, barefoot and in shorts, I changed into something more comfortable and threw my hair up. All my clothes were put away, and Edward was putting my dishes in the dishwasher for me. They were probably clean, but it was never a bad idea to be better safe than sorry. He carried my china to the storage area until we found a cabinet I liked for the dining room.

I sang and danced as I moved, in a fantastic mood. I was for several reasons, but mostly because I felt like I had finally come home. And I had reached a decision. One in which Edward wouldn't be able to fight with me about.

"All done," he said as he swiped his hands together as if he had worked hard. He was so adorable in his torn jeans. He had no idea how good he looked. I wouldn't let that distract me, though.

"Great! Thanks!" I beamed as I went over to the next box, pulling out a paperback.

"So, what else is there to do?"

"I've got to arrange my bathroom stuff, but I'll do that," I replied over my shoulder as I stepped onto the ladder and put the books on an empty shelf. We were running out of space.

"Want me to do that?" He asked as he came up from behind me, holding the steps in place.

“No,” I smiled at him when I climbed down. “Actually, would you sit down? I want to talk to you about something.”

“Oh, I don’t like the sound of that. Am I in trouble already?” He commented teasingly, sitting beside the box. He took out a novel, handing me another set to take up.

“No, but I may be,” I smirked. Climbing up, I shoved my cheesy vampire stories in place. I waited to have my feet on the floor before I continued. “I quit.”

“Pardon?” He asked in confusion.

“I. Quit. I’m sorry, but I don’t want to work from home, and I don’t want to sleep with my boss. So, I quit. Yes, I know, I know... you don’t want me to. Look, things are different now. I’ll be cooking for me too. And I am smart enough to know you’re not going to allow me to pay my share of rent or electricity. Edward, I have a ton of cash saved up, and you’re paying for enough. I don’t want your money.”

He stood and walked over to me, pinning me in place with his hand on either side of the ladder above my head. “Bella...” he trailed off.

“It would be like getting an allowance from my father. I’ll cook and clean, and I’ll look for a legitimate job so I can pay my part, for real.”

“Bella-” He repeated, but I didn’t let him finish.

“Please,” I said quietly. I batted eyelashes as I slid my hands up his chest.

“You’re not paying for a damn thing,” he replied as he rested his forehead against mine.

“At least let me get groceries.”

“No.”

I pouted. “Why not?”

“Because you’re the one cooking them and usually cleaning up afterward. It’s not fair. The house is paid for. There is no rent. I don’t pay any extra for electricity or water with you being here.”

“I don’t believe you for a second.”

He took my face in his hands to make sure I was looking into his big green eyes. “There is someone always here. Sweetheart, no. If you continue to cook and do some washing, I’m not

letting you pay for anything.” I smiled and sighed. “If I have to deal with you quitting on me, you have to agree to this.”

“You had to know it was coming.”

“Yes, but I figured I’d be able to talk you out of it again.” He brushed his nose against mine slowly. “I know when I’m beaten, but you’re keeping the card for anything we need around the house- our home.”

I hummed against his mouth before I kissed him. “Hard-headed.”

“We’re similar like that,” he replied before he rested his forehead against mine again. “I love you.”

“I love you, too.” A happy smile curled at my lips. “Why don’t we go to bed?”

“Oh, in our bedroom? That sounds lovely,” he agreed, instantly tugging me towards the exit.

“You’re going to be using the word ‘our’ a lot, aren’t you?”

He chuckled gleefully. “You have no idea. You better get used to it.”