



Chapter Forty-four:

I was so glad to be going home. Though I was in a considerable amount of pain, the relief was overwhelming. Being in the hospital sucked so much.

I wasn't certain which was the worst experience, the surgery, finding out I was allergic to certain medications by violently vomiting all over myself, the embarrassing gas, or the even more terrifying fact that Edward had to help me in the bathroom. I think the embarrassment was worse than the pain. The meds that made me feel strange and more than a little out there didn't help either.

The first time they forced me out of bed, after puking because they had to change the sheets, I had felt nothing like it before. I gritted my teeth and groaned, refusing to budge. I told the nurse that I would rather lay in my upchuck than move.

She just laughed at me.

Edward was the best cheerleader, though. After he and the nurse got me out of bed, he forced me to walk down to the nursery so I could see the babies. It was only twenty feet or so from my room, but it was the longest walk of my life. The doctor told me I would have to move so I could heal faster, but that felt as if it would never happen.

But my boyfriend wouldn't allow me to wallow. He urged me to walk for at least a few minutes every couple of hours after that. I was completely hunched over, the pull in my stomach tugging me down. I felt like an old woman with a massive hump on my back. My sweet man allowed me to hold on to him with all of my weight against his side and took it without complaint.

Looking at the babies made me feel better. I realized my freak out was unneeded. He was right. The surgeon said I could still get pregnant. I was healthy otherwise. And we could adopt. Or get some sort of treatment or a surrogate. There were so many options. And neither Edward nor I would love the child any less.

So, the first stop on every stroll after that was the nursery. In my mind, it was good juju.

Eventually, I could comfortably make it to the gift shop and the cafeteria on the bottom floor, as long as I could take a rest before I tried to make my way back to my room.

The cancer appeared to be completely gone, which was a relief. I made a promise to myself that I would never ignore my pain again. I knew it was strange, but I disregarded it. There was no way I could put my beloved through something like that again. It would be too cruel.

A nurse removed my staples before I left the hospital, and it was the oddest sensation I had ever experienced. It wasn't painful... it only tugged. It was quick enough, but Edward didn't like that I made him leave the room for it. He had seen enough of my scar for the week, and I didn't want that image in his mind.

At some point in the future, I wanted to have sex. I didn't want him thinking about that when we finally got to again. But it would be at least five weeks before that happened. I didn't like that at all. He marked it on a calendar on his phone. The next check-up I had, I would get the okay.

Angela was an amazing help, getting things for Edward when our family or friends couldn't or didn't. Including food, whether or not he asked for it. Usually, only with my encouragement did he eat, and most of the time, we shared his meal.

The hospital's food was disgusting. Awful- I mean, just terrible. I wondered if they made it that bad to encourage people to leave faster.

The thing I was probably most excited about was having a good supper. My boyfriend promised he would get whatever I wanted. I wouldn't be too hard to please. I wanted some chicken fingers and coleslaw from Cane's. And he could literally walk to it if he wanted. Though, with our full house of people, he would have to take a truck if he wished to get food for everyone.

My mother was still in town, but thankfully she would only be staying a few more days before she had to head back to Florida. Phil broke his leg, and he was staying in a rehab center, but he would get out soon. I felt guilty that she left him there alone, but he was the one that encouraged her to go. He wasn't dying or anything. Just lying around in a bed and watching television. It sounded a lot like what I was doing, but my ailment was more dramatic.

I spent more time with my father than I had in years. He stayed at the hospital for a few hours at a time, usually bringing the perky Sue along with him. Apparently, Edward gave her a credit card to get me things I might need, like nightgowns, robes, and slippers. She was bringing me something new every single day. Though if she kept bringing me cakes and pie, I was going to gain two hundred pounds. They were just so good.

Carmen and Esme were still in town, and Carlisle, Eleazar, and the girls were coming to see me and stay for a week. His stepmother had already arranged to remain at least two more weeks to help take care of me.

My boyfriend cleared his schedule for a month. I told him that wasn't necessary, but he wouldn't listen. He would not let me out of his sight until he was sure. Of what, I wasn't certain. He was so careful around me, as if I was crystal.

Seth was doing the same. He was running Edward and me home from the hospital, and his driving made me roll my eyes. But he just wanted to make sure I was alright. But he was acting like an overprotective brother. He was probably going twenty miles under the speed limit. We were getting passed left and right. I had a pillow pressed against my stomach the entire ride, every bump causing me to cough. I was getting really tired of it, but I was handling it all pretty well.

"Okay, thank you so much, Ang," Edward spoke into his phone before putting it back into his pocket. He turned his attention to me. "She's picked up all your medication, and she'll be back to the house in about thirty minutes."

"Oh, awesome. You know, you'll have to give her a raise or something."

"Already done," he smirked, leaning his head back against the leather seat.

He looked so tired. He hadn't left the hospital in a week. I wish he had. It bothered me how he hung around the way he did. He seemed so sad and worried, even though I was recovering just fine. The circles underneath his eyes were becoming near black, and he had a full-out beard. It was thick and curly.

I could not WAIT for him to shave. It tickled my nose and made me sneeze, which was painful. But I wouldn't tell him that.

“We should get you right to your room so you can take a nap,” he commented. He had arranged for my things to be moved into a bedroom downstairs until I healed up more. Stairs weren’t exactly something I was good at yet.

“Edward,” I sighed at his mothering. “I’m fine. It’s barely noon. I haven’t even been released for twenty minutes.”

“But-” he began, but I shook my head to cut him off.

“I’m not that tired. I’ll rest in the geek room. Besides, I haven’t eaten, and neither have you. I’m hungry.”

“Of course.” He gave me a forced smile. I reached over and gripped his hand, urging him to look into my eyes. “I know, I know. You’re fine.”

“Stop worrying.”

“That’ll never happen,” he breathed softly, squeezing my palm.

I had a feeling that was the absolute truth, and I didn’t know what I could do about it.

When we pulled up into the driveway, Seth made sure he got as close to the sidewalk as possible. Edward rushed out of the car to help me up. Though getting out of it was harder than I would have liked, I probably could have done it by myself. Honestly, the only thing I needed help with was sitting up out of bed when I was laying flat. My stomach muscles hadn’t exactly adjusted to that yet.

Charlie, Renee, Sue, Alice, Jasper, Carmen, and Esme were already there and opening the door for me. There were flowers and ‘get well soon’ balloons all about the foyer. A grin grew on my face. I took Edward’s arm as I stepped inside, the heavy pull constantly on my mind.

“You guys are too much.”

“We wanted to make you smile!” Carmen said brightly. “Alright. Where do you want to go? Bedroom? Library? Geek room?”

“Geek room. I need a good movie and some food,” I replied as I let go of his hand and made my way in that direction. He was instantly at my side with his palm resting on the small of my back as if he would catch me if I fell.

The whole thing was a circus, and I felt like the star clown. I plopped down with a heavy sigh onto the couch and propped my feet up on a pillow. Edward stood there a long moment

and just stared as if he was worried I would suddenly explode. Finally, he was satisfied I wouldn't.

"What would you like?"

"I'd like for you to sit down a minute and relax," I replied as I patted the seat beside me.

Seth picked out a movie for us, and Carmen and Esme left to go to the airport to pick up the men and kids. Jasper and Alice went to pick up food with Edward's credit card. They were going to get enough greasy chicken fingers to kill a horse.

Sue and Renee were getting along now that my mother saw how well she treated me. I think it bothered Dad because he sat silently on the other side of me with his arms crossed, and his lips pursed in a pout as they discussed wedding details. It was rather laughable. He didn't want them to hate each other, but he didn't want them to get along either. Men were odd sometimes.

"After lunch, I would like it if you took a nap," Edward whispered in my ear as he stroked my arm with his fingertips.

"But the girls will be here in a couple of hours, and I want to see them as soon as they get in," I pouted. If I took a pain pill and laid down, I would sleep for at least three hours. I had already proven that in the previous days.

"But you've done so much today."

"I don't feel tired," I assured him as I dragged my fingers over his jaw gingerly. "What I would like to do is take a shower later. A real one." I leaned in close and pressed my lips to his ear. "Would you mind helping me?"

I saw him swallow heavily as a blush spread over his cheeks. It was nice to know that he still thought I was attractive, even if they sliced me down the middle. He bit his bottom lip, trying not to look at Charlie as he answered. "Of course. I'll help you with whatever you need."

"I want to take it in the big one. I may need help up the stairs."

"I'm not sure-" he began, but my stern look stopped him.

"I need to at least start practicing. If it becomes too much, I'll go back downstairs and take it in the guest shower," I promised. "I've got to move around some more. And I need to get some sun. I've felt like a vampire for the past few days."

“You’re just about as pale as one,” he teased. It was the first time he had since I went into the hospital.

“You’re one to talk.” I stuck my tongue out at him, and he only smiled as he placed an innocent kiss on my cheek.

Edward was right to have doubts about the stairs. It kind of pissed me off. There were just too many of them. After my second rest break, he made me walk back down, which was much easier than going up. To his credit, he didn’t gloat about it. Honestly, I think he enjoyed babying me. I wish he didn’t so much. But I was stubborn like that.

In our far too innocent shower, he helped wash my hair and back while refusing to let me do the same. I got dressed and laid in bed for a few minutes to get some alone time. I wrapped my hair up in a towel and propped up on a pillow while I watched the television my boyfriend had arranged in my room. I had no doubt he had Sue buy a small one.

When I was just about to doze off, my bedroom door flew open. Tanya happily bounced in with Carmen trying to control her.

“Now, remember what we talked about,” she fussed.

“Yeah, I remember!” She rolled her eyes almost dramatically. “Be careful because she’s sore.”

“And don’t touch-”

“And don’t touch her tummy! I know, Mommy!” She grinned wickedly as she ran to the edge of the bed, her chin just resting on the mattress. “HI, AUNT BELLA!”

“Hi, baby girl. I told you it wouldn’t be too long before we saw each other again,” I beamed. She got very upset when she left at Christmas time. She hated leaving both Edward and me, and it made my heart swell. It also made my desire for children stronger.

“Yup. Whatcha doing?”

“Watching TV. Want to watch a movie with me on the bed?”

Edward came in, his arms crossed over his chest as he leaned against the doorjamb. His features seemed more at peace with his entire family around him, but I could still see the distress in his eyes. I wanted so badly to make it go away.

“Are you sure?” Carmen asked, adjusting Irina on her hip. I heard a little girl squeal at the other end of the house and Seth’s laughter. I knew Kate had found her buddy.

“Yeah, of course.” I patted the mattress. Tanya scrambled up and snuggled beside me with her head resting on my arm. I picked up the remote and switched it to the On Demand channel and selected a children’s show. I wasn’t even certain what it was, but it sure made her happy.

Carmen had to go put the baby down for a nap, leaving us alone with Edward still in the door frame.

“You can join us, but you have to get popcorn first,” I smiled innocently, batting my eyelashes.

“If that’s what my girls want.”

“I want you to lie down with us. The popcorn is for this one.” I pointed at Tanya, who nodded her head with a big smile. He cracked a small grin.

“Alright, popcorn and a drink coming up. I’ll be right back.”

After her uncle headed down the hall, she turned her attention to me. “What happened? Why did you have to go to the doctor?” She asked with childlike innocence.

“Oh, um...” I drew out softly. “Well, there was something inside of my tummy. Something bad. It was making me very sick. The doctors had to take it out so I could get better again.”

“Did it hurt?”

I nodded. “Yes, but I’m okay now.”

“Why was it inside of you? Did you eat something gross?” Her large eyes gazed up at me as she waited for the answer.

“I don’t know,” I answered slowly. It’s something I had thought about before too. “No, it wasn’t something I ate. Sometimes, things like that just happen, and you can’t do anything about it. All you can do is try to be healthy and go to the doctor so you won’t get sick.”

“I don’t like doctors,” the small girl wrinkled her nose. “Except Daddy and Grandma, of course.”

“Of course,” I smiled.

Her expression changed, then slight confusion colored her delicate little features. “Why does Uncle Tony have that stuff on his face? He looks funny.”

I laughed hard. So hard, I had to hold my stomach with my palm to keep myself from bursting open. Or at least that's what it felt like. She had no idea why I was, though. "Oh, it's hair, honey."

"He needs a haircut." Her nose wrinkled again.

I snorted. "Amen."

"Are you two making fun of me?" Edward smirked as he brought in a bowl of popcorn and a couple of cups of something. From the looks of it, it was sweet tea. She took the container and quickly dug in, ignoring his question. He laid down beside Tanya so she was in the middle. He brought his arm over the back of the bed, his ankles crossed.

"She was just asking about your beard there, mountain man," I teased further.

"Oh." He rubbed his chin thoughtfully, almost surprised it was there. "I've hardly looked in a mirror in the past couple of weeks."

"Tomorrow, you're going to work on that." I swirled my finger about an inch from his jaw. "I think you're handsome no matter what, but it feels weird."

"And it's orange," she added. I hadn't even realized she was paying attention to us anymore. I had to push my lips together to keep from laughing again as her uncle's cheeks pulsed pink.