



After the Slap, Jasper's Point of View

As soon as her hand connected with my face, I wanted my heart to stop.

“You don’t have permission to touch me anymore!” Bella hissed angrily, spitting the words at me with more venom than I had ever heard her use before. Not even towards Edward when he touched her.

It was done. I had achieved what I had set out to do. I knew what I would accomplish when I punished her, how it would make her furious. My treatment had been purposeful and cruel. I had just expected her to stop me before we got to this point. But in my mind, she could now move on, and so could I. It was the only way that I could keep myself from going back to her time and time again to use her body like the selfish monster that I was.

But I was more than that. I was a fiend, degrading her for my pleasure. I deserved that slap and a million more.

She rushed away, slamming the door in my face.

Holding my cheek in my hand, I stood motionless for maybe ten full minutes. The sting faded, but the pain in my jaw lingered. She wasn't a dainty little thing. She could easily hold her own, and she didn't hold back when she gave me what I earned. I would have a bruise for sure.

Finally, I just crawled into bed. But I couldn't sleep. Time lost all meaning as I stared at the ceiling. The hit replayed over and over in my mind. When my phone beeped, I jumped. Usually, I wasn't a nervous person, but my heart started to thunder in my chest at the tiny sound. My stupid brain wanted it to be Bella, but I knew it wasn't.

It would never be her again. My spirit shattered. It took a few moments to bring myself to look at the screen. The message that was waiting surprised me a little.

It was an email from Edward. He titled it, 'You are a worthless piece of shit.'

"Just in case you deleted this, I wanted to make sure you saw that. You are the worthless piece of shit. What the actual fuck did you do to that girl? I was an idiot, sure, but I had no real intentions of hurting her. You fucking saw how she felt about you and you... I don't even know! She won't tell us. And she's been miserable for weeks now already. She's barely eating or coming out of her room. Tanya says she has lost weight. So you've been dragging this crap out to hurt her a little more, I guess? And I thought I was sadistic. Sick bastard.

Bella was so hysterical that she fainted. Just blacked the fuck out in the middle of crying. I honestly think that she went into shock. I had to carry her to bed, and she barely registered it. So, I will stay up and check on her every hour or so for my sake of mind as a doctor. Because I care about her more than either of you give me credit for. I have known her for two years, and I am human. Which is more than I can say about you.

If I find out that you physically hurt her, I don't care what threats you hurl my way. I will make you pay. And I won't use my bare hands. But I won't kill you. I will knock your pathetic ass out, give you massive breasts, and a tiny nose that Michael Jackson would have been proud of, so everyone will know what kind of freak you are for the rest of your life. For every scar you gave her tonight, I will provide you with one to match.

She says that she hit you. Fantastic! I hope it fucking hurts. I don't know what happened between you, but I know Bella well enough to say that she doesn't deserve whatever you did. There is nothing she could have done that would make it okay to abuse her this way. Nothing. She's a good girl. A genuinely decent person.

She's in love with you. You have to see that. You'd have to be the worst fucking detective in the world not to figure it out. Does that mean so little to you? I don't understand what you're doing. You're too old to be such a fuckboy. Grow the hell up.

I don't care if you hate me, or ignore me, or whatever, but you better make things right with her. Apologize like a real man and disappear from her life because you don't deserve to breathe the same air as her.

Rot in Hell.”

Bile churned in my belly. I had made her blackout. Her reaction was so strong that she-

I ran into the bathroom and threw up in the toilet, emptying the entire contents of my stomach. There wasn't much. I had skipped lunch because of my nerves, and breakfast was hours before. I dry heaved for a couple of minutes, snot dripping from my nose onto the seat.

When they finally stopped, the tears started. Laying on the floor on a stark white towel, I sobbed like a child. One arm curled around my aching stomach while my other hand went to my mouth.

'Bastard' wasn't the right word for me. I was worse than that. Monster and fiend were too mild.

For the briefest moment, for the first time since my tenure in the service, I considered suicide. I quickly pushed the thought away because I instantly knew that Bella would blame herself. I could never allow that to happen, even if I just wanted it all to stop. Every single day of my life was filled with death and murder and the memories of my career as a professional killer. And I had snuffed out the only thing that held any sense of hope for the future.

I laid on the floor until I had to pick myself up to go to the airport. Sam backed up a little when he saw me. I was sitting in a chair, slouched down as far as I could. I hadn't even bothered with a tie. My button-down was half undone to reveal my stained undershirt. My eyes were dead ahead.

“Are you sick?” He questioned right away. Slowly, they rose to gaze at his face. “You look... I don't know. Green, I guess?”

“Yeah,” I lied, hugging my stomach tightly with both of my arms. I cleared my throat as my eyes went back down to the floor. No, it wasn't a lie. I was a sick person. Mentally ill. Edward was correct. I was a twisted bastard.

“Can I get you something?” Sam asked, looking around for one of the many overpriced stores that sold that kind of shit in DFW. But we both knew that none of them were open yet. We were always on some of the earliest flights. It was barely seven in the morning. The employees were just starting to come in. The airport was quiet since almost no one was there.

“No,” I snapped. He raised an eyebrow in my direction, sitting across from me. “Sorry. No, thanks.”

He shook his head. “No. It’s fine. I’m a grumpy asshole when I’m ill, too. It’s alright.”

I felt bad for him. He didn’t understand that this would be me for the foreseeable future. There would be no way out of this funk. I had hurt the woman that was my soul-mate, and it seemed like mine would be forever black. It would be more than tarnished. It was that before. It was dying, rotting away in my core and leaving nothing but a shell.

My anger lasted only about two days. It was too exhausting to maintain. The depression set into a degree that made it hard to even get out of bed. Not that I saw it often. I tried to bury myself in my work, which was easy to do.

We just kept finding bodies. Little dead girls scattered like forgotten toys in the gorgeous Northern New York woods. The colors were amazing, the landscape a mix of red, orange, yellow, but brown was taking over. November was bringing colder weather. It made it so much more morbid.

Most people associate black with death, and with good reason. But for me, it was always brown. The rusty color of dried blood, of the dull crunchy leaves under their bodies and mud that speckled their cheeks as their opened eyes stared lifelessly into the void.

When I slept, my nightmares turned into full terrors. More than once, I woke up to pounding on my door because I was screaming like a banshee. Sam once and another time it was a hotel employee, asking if I was okay.

Not long after I destroyed my soul, I received a phone call from Alice. We hadn’t spoken in a while. I almost expected her to not talk to me again, to support her friend. I would have understood. Honestly, I didn’t deserve her friendship, anyway. I was too much of a coward to reach out.

“Hale,” I drawled. I had gone to dinner with Sam at The Gavel at his insistence. It was hard to eat half of my burger, even if it was good. “You can have this,” I murmured to him, pushing it in his direction. I stood and started to walk towards the door to get out of the noise.

“Hey!” Alice began quickly. “Do you have a minute to talk?”

“Uh, yeah,” I replied quietly. We had never spoken on the phone before. We both preferred to text. I just knew that I was about to be told off. I braced myself for it as I went through the exit and walked into the frigid air. It burned my cheeks.

“Are you okay?” She asked in a tiny voice. “I haven’t heard from you, and I’m worried. What happened with Bella? She isn’t talking to anyone.”

I scoffed, resting against the wall. “I fucked up. No. No, I’m not okay.”

“Alright... Well, what the hell happened, huh? How did you fuck up? We’ll fix this. You two are perfect for each other, and I know that she loves you.” People kept saying that she did, but I knew that wasn’t true. At least, not anymore. She might have been before the movies. “I’ll help you.”

I almost began to cry. I hadn’t since that night. Quickly turning the corner to get away from the crowd of smoking officers, I went to the little alleyway beside the building. “You can’t, baby. You can’t help me.”

“Yes, I can! I will help both of you. Just tell me what happened, and we can figure it out.”

“No. I screwed up too much. I don’t deserve it, and it wouldn’t do any damn good, anyway. Even if Bella forgave me, we’d still have the same giant-ass problem,” I explained to her in a rush.

“Which is?”

“That I’m here, and she’s there,” I snapped. It should have been clear to her. We had spoken about it before.

Alice clicked her tongue in disappointment. “Then fucking get here, moron. It’s not that hard. You’ve talked about how you’ve gotten offers from everyone and their Mama. Can you not get a job in Dallas? Or were you just bragging to get laid?”

“What? No,” I questioned, “I-” I stuttered.

“Did it not occur to you that maybe settling down with her is what you’re meant to do? You’ve been complaining that you’re unhappy doing this. You love your job, I get it. And you’re doing phenomenal work. But Bella came into your life for a reason.”

Roughly, I moved my palm over my eyes. “I don’t believe in that kind of stuff.”

“I do! Bella was made for you. She is everything you need! When you were with her, you were happier than I’ve ever seen you. And you bitched about your job more than ever before. Get a clue. Go home to your girlfriend.”

“She was never my girlfriend,” I whispered.

“Then change that! Get a job in Dallas and beg her to be yours because that’s what she really wants. She won’t say that because she’s scared and has issues dealing with her emotions. But she loves you-”

“Has she said that to you? Has she stated that she loves me?”

Alice hummed for a moment. “No. She hasn’t. But I know her. You made her so happy.”

“I wasn’t there enough to do that!”

She bitterly laughed. “Uh, yeah, you were. Now, imagine what you could do if you... oh, I don’t know, actually lived in Dallas.”

Licking my lips, I looked up to the dark gray sky. It was cloudy and I couldn’t see the moon. “You don’t even know what happened. She will never forgive me, and I don’t want her to. I deserve to rot in hell for hurting her,” I mumbled, using Edward’s parting words as I wiped away a stray tear that wanted to escape. “I don’t want forgiveness. I want her to move on and have the life she deserves. Without me.”

“Ugh, you’re an idiot, but I’ll help you no matter. So, call me when you pull your head out of your ass and are ready to work on this.”

And then my friend hung up on me. I pulled it away from my face to look at it in confusion. It wasn’t how I expected it to go at all.

Two days later, for the first time since that day, I picked up her book. I didn’t mean to. It fell from my luggage, my bag slipping off the bed and onto the floor. Cursing, I shoved everything back in, but I saved it for last. It had sunk to the bottom of my things because I felt as if I touched it, my hand would suddenly be engulfed in flames.

When I did, nothing happened.

I just held it for a long time. The word ‘miss’ repeated over and over in my head as I stared at the simple tattered cover. My only piece of her. I missed her. I missed Alice. I missed my family. I missed my friends. I missed her stories. I missed her food. I missed her lips and her vibrant brown eyes. I missed stability. I missed sleep. I missed laughing. I missed her jokes. I missed her voice. I missed Bella. I missed her. I missed her. I missed her. I missed her...

Finally, I opened up the book. Just to read the first page, even though I almost had it memorized at that point. It dropped back to the ground by my feet.

“To my personal FBI agent. I can’t thank you enough for making every moment with you so special. All my love, Isabella Swan.”

I could hear her say it in my ear in her sweet, cheerful voice. It punched me in the gut. I doubled over in pain. There she was, telling me in her own hand that she loved me. I had no idea when she did it.

“Fuck!” I roared, covering my face with my hands. The tears I had been fighting since the airport finally spilled forward. “Fuck.”

It took about ten minutes for me to calm down enough to make the call. My fingers were trembling. Alice answered on the third ring. Thankfully. “Hello?”

“How the hell do I fix this, Alice?” I began right away, panicked and desperate. “I love her, and I need her. And I fucked up too much, and I don’t-”

“Wait!” She promptly interrupted me before I could go too far off the rails. “First, you tell me exactly what happened, and we’ll figure it all out together. And I’ll try to talk to Bella too. Don’t worry. We’ll fix it.”