



## Episode fifty:

Alice and I took an Uber to the hospital, following right behind the ambulance that took Bella to the nearest emergency room. It wasn't that far. When she came out of the rear, she was covered in a silver blanket. Her head was resting against the back of the stretcher with her eyes half-closed. They already had her foot wrapped in ice packs and raised.

Her best friend had both of their purses, charging after her quickly. It was hard to keep up. She pushed past people to get beside her.

"Hey there," she cooed. Bella looked at her slowly. "We're right here."

She smiled slightly. "Don't be dramatic. It's not that bad."

Her eyes rolled before glancing at me. Alice said nothing, just sighing. She shook her head a little, taking her hand.

They got her arranged in the room, moving her over to the bed. My jacket was still around her, but she was trembling. A doctor and a nurse were waiting by the door for the paramedics to finish, reading the chart they had started.

“Hello,” the physician said as he came towards her. “So... There was a fight?”

“Not so much. Someone attacked her, and she defended herself. She kicked him twice,” I explained, gripping her hand. She wasn’t up to talking.

“Okay. I’m very sorry that happened. The police will want to speak to you once we get her settled,” he revealed. “Ms. Swan, can you tell me your pain level right now? ‘Zero’ being fine and normal, ‘ten’ being the worst you’ve ever felt in your life.”

“Mm...” She hummed and swallowed. “I’d say it’s a five or six. And I can’t move my foot at all. I’ve broken toes before, but this is worse.”

“Are you allergic to anything?” She shook her head. “We’re going to start an IV line, just in case we need it, and we’ll give you some medication through that. We’ll do that first, and then we’ll get X-rays,” he informed us before looking back at the nurse that was assisting him. “Morphine. I can tell from here her foot is swelling pretty good.” She nodded and went to work getting the things she would need for that. “I’m going to take a closer look.”

This finally pulled Bella out of her daze. She squeezed my hand, fat tears rolling down her cheeks as she held in her sobs of anguish.

It broke my heart. Leaning my forehead against her temple, I pecked it lightly to comfort her. “Shh... It’ll be okay. I’m here.”

She pressed her nose against mine, closing her eyes. “I know.”

Alice held her fingers until the nurse put the needle into the top of her hand. It only took a couple of moments. She already had the bottle and syringe ready. They also had a mild sedative for her. The doctor prepped it when it was time, flicking the tube to get the air out before pushing it into the IV line. Bella melted instantly into the plastic mattress, sighing in relief.

“That should only take a few minutes to kick in. We’ll be right back,” he explained before sweeping out of the room.

“Oh, that’s better,” my girlfriend mumbled. “It’s so warm.”

“They gave you the good stuff, didn’t they?” Alice inquired with a smirk as she pushed Bella’s hair out of her eyes. She nodded with a slight smile. “Aren’t you a little old to get in schoolyard fights?”

Her grin was funny, her head weaving. "Apparently not. He started it. Tell me to speak English, pendejo," she muttered. "I finished it, though."

"You sure did," she grinned encouragingly. "Teach him not to fuck with little women."

"That's right."

They were joking, and I was positive that I was having a panic attack. I could barely think, let alone talk. Alice looked over at me. "Eddie," she called my name calmly. "How are you feeling?"

Clearing my throat, I sniffled. "Um... I'm okay. I'm fine. Don't worry about me."

"Are you sure?" Bella worriedly questioned as she looked at me. Her face had relaxed some. Limply, she brushed her knuckles over my cheek. "You don't have a fever."

I took her hand, then kissed her palm. "I'm alright," I promised. There was a knock at the door. It was the nurse with some big machinery. There were also two cops. My heart was in my throat.

"I'm going to need everybody to go outside," she declared as she came in. "Except for you. You don't go anywhere," she directed at Bella.

"I'll be right out there if you need me," I said as I kissed her forehead. I moved into the hall, and one of the officers smiled at me. "Hi. I'm guessing you need to speak to me?"

"Yes, Mr. Cullen," he began brightly. He was young. I realized he recognized me. "We need to ask you a few questions if that's okay with you," he finished politely. His partner rolled their eyes. He was an older, fat gentleman.

"I'll answer anything," I replied right away, forcing a smile.

"Can you tell us exactly what happened?" He questioned, pulling out a phone to record it. His colleague had a pad and a pen out to write. I went over everything I knew, which didn't feel like much. He asked several follow-up questions. No, we didn't know each other. No, I had never been attacked before. And no, I had never been arrested.

They questioned Alice, but she knew even less than me.

The X-rays were done by the time the police were finished with me. We walked back in with the doctor. He put the black film onto a lighted board. "Well, Ms. Swan, it looks like you broke two of your toes and cracked the top of your foot."

“Holy fuck,” I whispered.

“That was some kick, Bells,” her friend breathed, looking at the broken bones.

“If you didn’t have so much padding, it would have been much worse,” he mused. “We’ll put you in a cast for two weeks before we switch you to a removable one. It won’t be that bad.”

“We’d like to ask you a few questions, Ms. Swan,” the younger officer said to her once the doctor left the room for a minute. “In private,” he glanced at me and smiled. “It’ll just be a couple of minutes. We won’t bother her much.”

“We’ll be out here,” Alice called to her. Nodding, she adjusted my jacket around her body.

I flopped against the wall beside her door, pushing my hands over my eyes. Suddenly, I was being hugged tightly. I wrapped my arms around her and pushed my face into her soft hair. My fingers curled into her coat.

“She’s okay. It’s okay,” she chanted into my chest. Sniffing, she peered up at me. She had started to cry. “Are you alright?”

Squeezing her, I nodded. “Yeah, yeah, yeah. I’m-” I let out a shuddering breath. “What the fuck just happened?” I questioned, swallowing the bile that had come up from the pit of my stomach.

She shook her head. “I... I don’t know. Jesus.” She pushed her face into my shirt. I rubbed the back of her neck as her fingers twisted into my hoodie. “Why is she so fearless at the worst times? Fucking racist.”

“I can’t believe she... she took him out like that.”

She snorted. “She’s tough.” Alice blew out a long breath. “I don’t know if I can keep calm. I’m feeling like I’m having a panic attack. Fuck, I hate hospitals.”

“Can I do anything?”

Shaking her head, she finally pushed away from me and leaned against the wall. “No. Honestly, I just want to get out of here. That’s so terrible.”

“I’m here. I get it. If you can’t handle it, I got it,” I swore. “Um... Here...” I pulled out my credit card from my wallet. “She’ll need crutches and a wheelchair. Could you go to get one? I don’t know where and I don’t-”

“Yeah,” she grinned, taking it from my fingers. “I can handle that.” Palming it, Alice ran her fingers over the numbers. Her eyes moved over them repeatedly. “This is why we didn’t make it as a couple,” she blurted out. “I could never deal with this kind of shit. Bella needs someone, and I’m running away. How... How awful a friend am I?”

“You’re not. You’re getting the supplies she requires to get through this,” I countered. She forced another smile. “I’m here, and I got this. She’s okay. Her pain levels are under control, and she seems comfortable enough.”

Hugging me again, she lifted on her toes to kiss my cheek. “I’m glad you’re here for her.”

“Bella literally just took care of me for the last few days. I’d be a prick if I didn’t.”

Snorting, she shook her head. “That’s true, but it’s more than that, and you know it. Is there anything else I need to get?”

“No.”

“Call me if you think of anything else.”

The officers came out. Alice pushed herself off the wall and went into the room to tell her where she was going.

“Is there anything else you need from me?” I asked softly.

The older cop shook his head, but the other one smiled. “Could I get a picture?”

I was beyond not in the mood, but I wouldn’t tell him that. I cleared my throat. “Yeah, sure.”

He pulled his phone out within a second, ready to go. In an instant, he was in my face. He held up a peace sign, and I tried to grin like I was happy to be in the hospital after my girlfriend and I were attacked by a fucking racist.

As soon as he put his mobile away, his partner smacked the back of his head with a thud. “What the fuck are you doing, you mook? He doesn’t want you up in his mug. Insensitive. I am so sorry, sir. He doesn’t know how to be professional.”

“No, it’s fine,” I promised. “Thank you for...” I trailed off.

“Yeah. Um... So, just to let you know what’ll happen. The restaurant has decided to press charges against him for trespassing and property damage. He’ll also be charged with the possession of an illegal firearm and narcotics.”

“An ungodly amount of meth,” the younger officer added, shaking his head.

“And he’s being charged with assault. He’ll have a lot to talk to the judge about.”

“Will we need to go to court?”

“That depends,” he replied. “You’ll be notified if you need to in advance.”

I nodded in understanding. We were quiet for a minute. “Is it alright if I go in there now?”

“Yes, sir,” the older man replied. “We’ll contact you if we need anything else.”

I pulled out my card and handed it to him. “Just to make doubly sure you have my information.”

“There he is,” Alice said when I came into the room. It was bright and bubbly. “There’s your man. I’m going to get those things for you. Let me know if you think of anything else you need.”

“Okay,” Bella replied. She held out her hand to her, beckoning her to come closer. She kissed her cheek, then smoothed away the lipstick. “I love you.”

“I love you, too.” She pecked her forehead. She smiled sadly as she walked past me. I patted her shoulder before she left.

For the first time in a couple of hours, we were alone. I felt overwhelmingly tired, and my body ached all over. My girlfriend grinned at me and reached out with her hand. Wiggling her fingers, she bit her bottom lip.

I smiled as I walked to her. Taking a deep breath, I sat in a chair beside her bed. We were quiet for a while as I played with her curls with one hand and held her palm with the other. I needed as much contact as possible.

“What a fine week this has been. I’m sorry. I should have protected you,” I blurted out.

“Obviously, I don’t need protecting,” she calmly replied.

“Obviously, my little fighter,” I agreed sarcastically. “Is there anything more beautiful than a ballet dancer kicking a racist in the balls?” I tried to joke, but there wasn’t anything funny about

the situation. "Christ, Bella. He could have really hurt you, though." Tears stung my eyes, burning my nose. I swallowed them back.

"I'm fine." The words came out in a sing-song tone. She wrinkled her nose and waved her hand with the IV in it.

"We're literally in the hospital right now," I countered. I didn't know if the cops had asked her the same things they had me, but he had a weapon. They questioned me about it. It wasn't even something I considered a possibility before.

She patted the top of my hand and gave me a slight smile. "I'm sedated. Everything is fine," she reminded me. "I'm hungry, though. Think we could go to the cafeteria, or do I have to stay here?"

"Where are you going on that foot? You've not gotten your cast yet," I chuckled. I realized she was trying to make me feel better by joking around, too. I doubted she was. Honestly, I suspected she felt nothing much of anything at all.

Bella shrugged and looked at me from underneath her drooping eyelids. "I'll hop onto your back and ride you there. It'll be fine." I had to keep from snorting loudly, falling back in my chair. The tears I had been holding in rolled down my cheeks. I tried to wipe them away as quickly as possible, sniffing. "It'll be fun. You could put me on your shoulders, but I'd hit every hanging sign and door frame on the way there," she continued.

Even drugged out of her mind, she was hilarious.

I laughed a little. "I know that's right." I placed both of my hands around hers and brought it up to my mouth. I kissed her knuckles several times. "I'll get you something as soon as they put your cast on, I promise."

"Thank you," she grinned, closing her eyes as she took in a deep breath. "I feel so relaxed."

"Does it hurt?"

"Only when I move it," she answered. "I've broken things before. Not this bad. But I'll be fine in a few weeks."

"I hope so," I breathed.

My girl smirked. "I'm going to be limping around like Tiny Tim for Christmas." I scoffed loudly, shaking my head. She stuck her tongue out a little. "My favorite version of that is The Muppets one."

"I've never seen it."

She put her hand on her heart. "Oh no," she drew out. The words were slurred. "We'll have to watch it. I love The Muppets. I loved the show. It's such a good kids movie. We can at Christmas. When I come to visit you."

"Do you still want to?" She nodded her head, smiling sweetly. I leaned in and gave her a deep kiss on the lips. "I'd love to watch anything you wish when you come."

"I'm so glad I won't be alone for the holiday," Bella said drunkenly. Her eyes were still closed from the kiss, but her face was in my direction.

Kissing her again, I earned a little moan. "Me too."

There was a knock on the door, interrupting our moment. It was the young man from the restaurant. He had a gigantic box in his arms. "Hi... Ms. Swan?"

"Oh, hello!" She murmured as she pried her eyes open.

He looked down shyly for a second. "You never got your food. Um... so we brought everything you ordered, and we threw some extra stuff in there we know you liked. How are you doing?"

"Wow..." she breathed in surprise. Her stomach growled loudly. Apparently, she wasn't kidding about being hungry. "I'll be fine. I'm starving, though. That smells amazing."

I stood up from my chair to take it from him. It was surprisingly heavy. "Thank you so much," I told him in shock. "This is incredible."

"Of course," he waved me off bashfully. He nervously scratched behind his ear. "But, like wow! You kicked the shit out of him."

"She's a former ballet dancer," I informed him. "And she's been training for a charity show recently."

He laughed. "Nice. I found one of his teeth on the floor."

"Ew," Bella whispered. "Well, I lost my nail. Seems fair." She sat up in the hospital bed a little more. "Is there sauce, too?" She pointed at the box. I brought it to her to look at, setting it beside her. On top were plastic containers with green and white condiments. "Oh, my god. You are so awesome. Thank you so much."

“We put one of each of the desserts in there for you, too. And there are your coffees,” he explained. “Whelp, I just wanted to deliver this. I need to get back and help my mom clean up. There is glass everywhere.”

I walked with him to the door. “Thank you,” I repeated her words and pulled out my wallet. I offered him two hundred-dollar bills and my card. “Tell your mother to send me the bill to replace whatever you need, okay? I’m so sorry.”

“It’s not your fault,” he said as he looked at the money. “You don’t owe me anything.”

“No... This is a tip. You’re having a dreadful day, too. It’s the least you deserve.”

He grinned. “Thank you, Mr. Cullen. By the way, I’m a big fan. I didn’t know it was you until the cops told us. I’ve played every video game you’re in. Plexie is my favorite character of all time.”

Flushing, I ducked my head. “Thanks. That’s fantastic. I’ll tell you a secret... He’s mine too.” He smiled. “Thank you again for bringing the food.”

When I walked back in, Bella was already eating something out of a white paper bag. She dipped it in the container of green sauce. “It’s still warm. It’s so good. Do you have a bottle opener? The sodas need one.”

I pulled out my keychain, which had a small one on it. She grinned. “Come sit with me, and we’ll have a picnic,” she suggested cheerfully, her drugs fully kicked in. Bella might have been a little delirious, but so was I.

**This Episode goes with Episode Thirty-three of Imperfect Pictures.**