



Episode Fifty-eight:

It was stupidly early when we got up for filming. I instantly regretted packing the day with so much. I was just trying to keep my mind busy until she arrived. If I had known, I would have done less. At the very least, I would have skipped the workout with the fancy trainer. Bella didn't seem to mind, though. She let me chatter endlessly about my thoughts for future videos with her in the shower. There were so many she would be amazing in. Every one I had posted so far with her had done incredibly. My fans loved her and how we interacted on the screen.

There wasn't a thing she could do at the gym besides snap pictures, though. I felt bad for dragging her along, but she seemed genuinely pleased to work, even if she wouldn't be in it. She would do it for free, but I was going to make sure she got her part, especially since I knew she would take hundreds of photos for me to use.

While my girlfriend readied herself for the day, I made coffee for everyone. I made each of us mugs, taking it to her while she worked. She thanked me with a grin and a tender kiss. She was making her hair straight, her makeup already done perfectly. It wasn't too dramatic, making her face softer and brighter somehow. It made her eyes seem bigger, the mismatched color standing out. I recognized some of the products I bought for her laid out neatly on the vanity. She hadn't done her lips yet, so she wouldn't mess them up as she drank. When she finished her second cup, she carefully wiped her mouth before smearing it with a soft pink.

Since our first stop was an extreme workout, I was only wearing sweatpants, a t-shirt, and a hoodie. I felt like a slob beside Bella, but it was for a purpose. I packed more clothes to

take with us, as did she, just in case. It wasn't a bad idea since we were eating and playing with animals. I made sure her camera bag was ready and fetched her battery from the charger. It was going to be a long day, and she would need it.

I realized as soon as my friends walked in that I had forgotten to tell them she was there. They both seemed shocked, but not displeased.

"Hey!" Seth yelled loudly as he burst in without knocking. He was holding his arms out at his sides with his eyes wide. "There's our favorite soccer player!"

"Soccer player?" I questioned, looking between the two.

Tyler smirked a little. "Because she's good at kicking balls, Eddie. Please try to keep up," he stated sarcastically before turning to my girl. "How's your foot? No more cast, I see."

I grimaced at their joking. There was nothing about the situation that was funny. My lawyers and Zafrina were certainly taking it seriously. I got updates on it regularly, hoping the son of a bitch wouldn't get another chance. I feared he would somehow get off and find her, but my attorneys promised that wouldn't be the case. I hoped so.

Bella didn't seem to mind, though. Amusement danced in her expression as she leaned forward to look at her foot for a moment. "Yeah, no more regular cast, but it feels like I broke it kicking a racist in the balls," she spoke dryly then shrugged, smirking as she did. "So, just great. Just no high heels for a couple of months. It'll be fine," she waved him off.

The two idiots were so impressed with her. Alice was right. The confident and cocky side of her was going to get her ass kicked someday if she wasn't careful. Though I liked that she didn't take shit, it scared the hell out of me.

Tyler had a sly smirk as he patted her on the back. "That's the price one must pay for sweet, sweet justice."

I shook my head at their exchange. "It was his chin that broke your foot. I don't think nuts can do that kind of damage. I shudder to think of what you did to his," I blurted out.

"If he broke your foot, what did you do to his chin?" Seth made a face as if he was going to be ill. He stuck his tongue out and shivered all over.

I held in a sigh as I gathered the rest of my things and shoved them into my pockets. "According to my attorney, she knocked out two teeth and loosened two more, which were restored at the hospital, broke his nose, fractured his cheekbone, split his lip, blackened his eye, and gave him a concussion. With one kick." I lifted a finger as I gazed at him. "One. Let's just assume his balls were purple as well."

My girl's thick thighs, plus years of practice and training, equaled a strike powerful enough to disfigure a racist permanently. She might have been small, but she was mighty. It was something I thought about a lot. It was almost a cruel and ironic joke.

Bella seemed to be the most surprised by this information. She took a shocked breath, her eyes wide as she gazed at me. "Oh, I didn't know all that."

Quietly, I scoffed to myself. It was an event I wouldn't ever stop thinking about. It would always be on my mind, in the background. I would constantly be waiting for the next xenophobic twat.

"It's almost as if you had been dancing and kicking three and four hours a day for three weeks solid just before. And you don't believe in destiny," I finished with a lame joke.

Seth was in a mood. He came up beside my girlfriend, putting his hand on her shoulder as he did. "Your skills were perfectly honed. Fate and karma came walking in, hand in hand, gloriously together," he began in his best announcer voice. I rolled my eyes. This was why his cheesy ass was perfect for YouTube. "Bringing you to the exact right moment for you to punish this limped dick, pea-brained, ugly, toothless mouth breathing, sister fucker!" He laughed like a madman, vibrating in place during his little act.

I stared for a tick before I pointed at him. "Alright. No coffee for you."

"Hey!" He snapped in annoyance, then realized how loud he was and shrank back some. "Okay, maybe I have had enough already."

Tyler walked into the kitchen to make himself a mug. "We stopped at Starbucks, but yours is better. He's already had a triple shot venti iced mocha with extra mocha this morning."

"Eddie made it," she informed them. This seemed to impress him, nodding in approval.

My other friend turned towards me with a smirk. "Then why don't you make us coffee, asshole?"

"I obviously like her more than you," I responded wryly. Snorting, he rolled his eyes as he shook his head.

Nodding the whole time, Tyler took a sip. "Yeah, that's fair. Good coffee, though, boss."

I shook my head at their silliness. They were both weird, hot messes, and I completely understood why we were such good friends. "Let's go."

The entire ride there, I was thinking about the bastard that attacked my girl. I knew he would go to court in a few days. It got my anxiety going, my heart pounding in my chest. Just imagining him walking out of the courtroom free made my stomach turn. The incident played out

repeatedly in my mind. She was so brave, and I felt like a coward for not doing more. I wasn't afraid of him, and I should have taken charge of the situation and thrown him out. But everything happened so fast I wasn't sure how I could have. I wasn't certain of what I could have done differently.

When we arrived, the trainer we were going to film with was waiting for us in the lobby by the juice bar. He grinned, clapping his hands together loudly. "Hello, gentleman. I hope you're ready to sweat!" He sounded like every health guru in an infomercial. Then he noticed Bella tucked behind me with a walking cane. He tilted his head to the side as he took her in. "Well, hi there," he changed his tone, so it was softer, almost gentle. "I'm guessing you are not here for the workout."

Laughing, she shook her head quickly. "Nope. I'm just the photographer today," she smiled as she accepted his handshake. "I'm jealous. This looks like fun. I used to take classes like this all the time in Manhattan."

"It is a lot of fun!" He leaned in, trying to sell it too hard, in my opinion. "Well, when you're up to it, you'll have to come back and do it again." He winked at her.

I cleared my throat to get his attention. I wasn't enjoying the act, but I wouldn't let it show because I was a professional. "So, to get started, we're going to get some shots of the gym for the video. And you and I will chat a bit before I get all sweaty. We'll talk about what it's all about. I'll ask questions, and we'll go back and forth- that sort of thing. And then you do what you do on a normal day, and we film it. Sounds good?"

The man grinned. "Sure. Just let me know what to do."

Tyler and Bella went around while Seth filmed me with the owner. We were on a tight schedule, and we didn't want to waste any of the time we had. My girlfriend kept sitting down on the equipment to take shots from different angles. Sometimes she would lie on her back, her long hair dragging the floor as she took pictures of the bars and weights. When I caught it out of the corner of my eyes, it made me smile.

After we wrapped, my friend ran to the bathroom before we started our exercise. He wanted to get changed into more comfortable clothing. All I needed to do was take off my hoodie, throwing it on top of my bag. After I did, I stretched my arms over my head and popped my back.

"Your photographer is super hot," the trainer, who was still standing beside me, muttered after a moment of silence. "Great tits and ass. Is she single?"

I chuckled darkly as he confirmed my notion he was flirting with her before. "No, and you would have to get behind a long line of men and women to even get a chance."

He scoffed then smirked, crossing his arms over his chest as if I had given him a challenge. She was bending over with her back to us, snapping photos of the kettle weights in a neat row. "Huh, I wonder if she's faithful. If you know what I mean," he snickered. I turned to look at him and cocked my head to the side to glare at him. Men were fucking pigs. Clearly, I had to worry about the guys who liked her as much as the ones that hated her. Finally, he realized. "Oh, you're her- Uh, I'm sorry," he drew out stupidly. "I'm just joking around. I don't mean-" He chuckled. "Shit. I wasn't serious."

"I don't believe you," I coldly replied.

Seth showed up with a smile on his face in his workout clothing. He didn't know he was probably saving a life. "Ready to go! Let's get started!"

The trainer said nothing as he hurried out onto the floor with us trailing behind. I could be professional for another hour, and then we would never have to see him again. It made me seriously consider not putting the video up at all, but that was childish.

The three of us all enjoyed exercise, but it was in different ways. Tyler liked yoga and swimming, low impact with lots of meditation elements. Seth biked. A lot. He loved riding the trails around LA. But it prepared none of us for this bullshit. I tried so hard to not look as if I was suffering, but halfway through, I was dying. Sweat poured down my face as I moved through sit-ups, push-ups, burpees, and jumping jacks in rapid succession. And I thought my movie routine was tough.

We were almost done when I heard a gag from beside me. We had maybe five minutes left. My friend dashed off into the bathroom again, throwing up a little behind his hand as did. We stopped to stare at him. Tyler didn't even ask, he just followed him with the camera. It wasn't out of concern, but for the desire for funny and embarrassing content for the video. And to mock him for drinking sugar for breakfast, then spewing like a shook can of soda.

"Is he okay?" Bella asked curiously from her seat on a weight set. Her leg was propped up on it with her camera in her lap.

"You'd be surprised how often it happens," the trainer explained to her. "This isn't for the faint of heart, but I bet you could handle it." He then turned and looked at me, smiling awkwardly. "Your, uh, man seemed to do well." He nodded as he spoke, nervously bobbing his head.

Grinning, she bit her lip as she gazed at me. "That's because my boyfriend knows how to handle himself."

"She's a dancer, and she could do literal circles around all of us. On the very tips of her toes," I replied, not looking at him as I spoke. We were peering into each other's eyes, and it was hard to look away.

“Former dancer. Very former.” She lifted her foot and pouted.

Her expression made me laugh. “You danced in a show a month ago,” I called her out. She just rolled her eyes. “The doctor said you are doing well, and you’ll be back to normal soon. You’ll be back to-” I paused and hummed. “I don’t know any ballet terms. What’s the thing where you stand on your toe and bend your leg back?”

“Arabesque or attitude,” she remarked, playing with the end of her shirt. “It depends on how far it’s bent.”

I smirked. “You’ll be back to getting into the attitude position in no time.”

She giggled a little, lifting her camera to take a picture of me. She wasn’t even looking at the man who was disgusting earlier. It was as if he didn’t exist. “That sounds like how a short, angry woman would stand.” Balling up one fist, she playfully brooded as she put it on her hip. It was so cute, making me laugh. “Or maybe a BDSM thing,” she jokingly added. Her eyes drifted off purposely.

Snorting, my head fell back. “Standing on one toe seems like torture either way.”

It was fun to ignore the toolbag while we flirted. It was good for my ego. He was in shape- being a trainer. And he was decent looking. But she didn’t even glance at him. She was there to work and to spend time with me. The kid in me wanted to stick my tongue out at him, but I was better than that.

Finally, Seth came stumbling out of the locker room. He was covered in a flop sweat and smelled like the worst thing that could happen to coffee. Grimacing, I took a step back. He probably regretted the whipped cream and shit he put in it. His lactose pills did little to help when you stirred everything around like a blender.

“Dude, you okay?” I questioned. Tyler was still filming, walking behind our colleague. Bemused was a perfect word for his expression. He loved to see us suffer, which was probably a good thing. He knew what our audience enjoyed. I realized I was going to have to put up the video after this.

My friend nodded weakly. “Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I’m cool,” he sputtered as he waved us off. “I feel better. Just had to get it out, you know,” he said unconvincingly before swallowing. He forced a smile.

“We have enough. If you want to wrap up-”

Seth didn’t even let me finish. “Yeah, sure! I mean, if you think we have enough.”

“Yup.” I turned to the guy. “Thanks for your time. We’ll get cleaned up, and then we’ll head out.” I glanced at my girlfriend. “Hey, gorgeous!” I called to her flirtatiously. “We’re going to hit the showers. If there are any more pictures you want to take before we go, now’s your chance.”

“Okay, boss,” she answered with a wink, standing again with her cane. She brushed her hair off of her shoulder, going back to work.

I glanced at the man beside me, who was putting away the camera. “Tyler, keep an eye on her. Let me know if she complains too much about her foot. I’m worried she’s doing too much on it. She’s not taken a painkiller in ages.”

He nodded in understanding. “Sure thing. I got some medicine in my bag if she needs it.”

Truthfully, I just didn’t want the sack of dicks to get a chance to be alone with her. She hadn’t even noticed he was an unprofessional meathead. And I was going to keep her blissfully unaware of it. Ignorance, in this case, was bliss. If I could keep the dirty thoughts of others out of her head, I would.

“You okay?” Seth inquired once we were in the locker room.

Grunting, I threw off my shirt. I was covered in hickies, but I didn’t care. Thankfully, he said nothing. “That bastard asked if Bella was single, then pondered aloud if she was loyal.”

His entire body turned towards me, his chin tucked in. “And you told him you’d rip his dick off if he spoke to her, right?” He demanded in annoyance. It made me laugh. “Douche canoe. She’d get so bored with a dumbass like that. She needs a smart guy like you to keep up with her... almost.”

“Almost is right,” I snorted. I rubbed my hand over my face before I let out a huffing breath. “Let’s hurry and get out of here.”

“Sounds good to me. Fuck this- hard. I’m never doing anything like this ever again. Tyler is.”

They were waiting for us in the lobby, all the equipment already in the car. She was sipping on juice, looking blasé as she reclined in a chair with her foot up and reading her phone. We were in fresh clothes for our next shoot, which was thankfully lunch. When she realized I was walking towards her, she lit up with a bright smile.

The food truck we were getting it from was by a park. It made for a pretty backdrop. Bella leaned against me as we read the menu for the camera. It was Mexican-Asian fusion- burritos filled with Americanized Chinese food. It was two of my favorite things from America combined into some unholy union created by a stoner.

Jasper would love it, too.

She put her arm around me, glancing up. "I can't believe you decided to get deep-fried burritos after that workout."

"Man, that's the best time for one," Seth answered, holding the camera very close to her. "What are you getting?"

Humming, she bit her lip for a moment. "Crispy rice, veggie lo mein, and the orange chicken. With the sweet chili sauce." She made her eyes wide. "If this is good, I know what I'm making next time we have takeout. What about you?"

"Beef and broccoli with rice noodles and teriyaki potatoes. And a coconut shrimp with the crispy fried rice. And I'm going to try all the sauces."

Tyler slowly turned to look at him, horrified. "I just watched you dry heave for ten minutes and-"

"I'm fine now!" He snapped over him, making Bella laugh. She pushed her face into my chest to hide her giggles. "It was hard!" She nodded sarcastically, patting my stomach as she did. "It was," he whined, then laughed.

I said nothing, enjoying their banter. I would never tell them I was sore all over and that I had to ask Tyler for some aspirin before we left to go to the next shoot.