



Chapter Six-

I woke up at five in the morning and groaned in pain. I laid there in bed for several seconds before I remembered why my shoulder hurt the way it did. It wasn't intense, but my collarbone throbbed a little. Stumbling to the bathroom in the dark, I flicked on the light. It was blinding, and I grunted again in annoyance, my hand flying up to cover my eyes. My hair was everywhere, half of it in a halo two inches around my head. I looked insane with a large pillow indent lines on my face.

Standing in front of the mirror, I carefully removed the bandage for my new tattoo. There was a little ink and blood on the cotton pad but not much. Carefully, with the soap the artist gave me, I washed the tattoo twice, just to make sure it was extra clean. Gingerly I dabbed it with a towel before rubbing the lotion for it into my tender flesh. It would take a few days for the worst scabs to form, but for the moment my bejeweled butterfly was extra fresh and shiny. I made sure to rub the extra lotion on the rest of my ink that I could easily reach.

I loved my new tattoo. It was hyper-realistic and looked like an actual jeweled brooch pinned to my bare chest. I took a half dozen pictures to show Alice later when she was awake with my phone.

I couldn't fall back asleep, so I worked for a while on the pictures I had taken the evening before. Edward took my camera at some point and started taking photos of the shop and me. Some of them weren't terrible, especially with some decent editing. He was so tall that the pictures were from a wildly different angle from my own. I liked them.

In all for the previous day, I took over three thousand pictures. I was giving myself a ridiculous amount of work. So, of course, I gave myself more.

I took pictures of the sunrise over his pool and the exquisite mountains. The sunlight was beautiful as it began to pour over the city. It was perfectly golden and lovely.

I had my coffee outside, enjoying the serenity. You couldn't get that kind of quiet in Queens, probably not even at three in the morning.

After working out, I showered and dressed nicely for the day in my loosest blouse. We would be going to the recording studio that day so that he could do his voiceover for a cartoon series. He would be doing his entire part in just two days worth of work for a whole twenty-episode series. This was his second day, having recorded a couple of weeks before for it already. He had to be there just after noon, Twelve fifteen pm to be exact, and he didn't come out of his room until just after eleven in the morning.

"Sorry, sorry, sorry," he mumbled in a rush. "I should have been up sooner. We'll stop for something to eat on the way," Edward shoved his keys into his pocket as well as his wallet from the bowl on the table in the foyer. He yawned widely before rubbing his thumbs deep into his eyes several times. "I couldn't sleep."

"That sucks. I woke up at five," I said sympathetically.

He looked horrified on my behalf. "*Jesus*, I'm sorry."

"Oh, it's fine. My body is still used to home. Time zone and everything. I got pictures of the sunrise, though. It was gorgeous."

"Oh, well, that's good then. I can't wait to see them," he smiled awkwardly.

The studio wasn't far away. We went to a bagel shop that was on the way. I ordered a blueberry bagel with strawberry cream cheese with fresh fruit and yogurt. I always enjoyed a good breakfast for lunch. Edward bought himself an egg sandwich on an everything bagel. He waited to eat it until we were in the parking lot of the studio, ten minutes before he was supposed to be inside.

"I must seem a little bit of a mess," he said through a bite of his sandwich, looking forward at the building almost nervously.

"Why would I think that?" I offered him a bite of my fruit. He took a slice of melon. All of the fruit was really fresh and sweet.



"I sleep till almost noon every day. I'm not that organized." He took a bite of sandwich. "I'm kind of winging it."

I shook my head. "I don't care when you sleep. You work hard, so you do you. And, you're here early, so I don't see how this is disorganized. I don't judge you for it, you're doing better than me. That's for sure."

"I don't like rushing."

I shrugged, "no one does. And, everyone is winging it. Just so you know."

"I suppose that's true," he said thoughtfully into his hot tea before drinking it down in one long gulp. I hoped it wasn't too hot. Edward just continued to look forward as he slowly ate.

"You really are anxious, aren't you?" I asked him curiously. "That sounds insulting. I don't mean it to be. I mean, I'm anxious, too. I understand how you feel. Don't worry. Don't listen to the little voices, you're doing just fine. I'm not judging you," I promised him.

He glanced over and smiled. "You've been in therapy."

"Oh, for years and years. Can't you tell?" I smiled slightly. "It sucks but I get it."

Edward sighed and then took a deep breath.

"I need to get in there."

"You got this," I assured him quietly, "I'm excited to see you do your work. I have no idea how any of this is done so you'll have to teach me everything."

He got out of the car and opened my door for me.

"It's easy. I stand in a black closet and make crazy noises for several hours straight."



“Sounds exciting,” I said dryly.

“Very,” he opened the front door to the building for me.

The building was rather nondescript on the outside but the inside it was decorated with prints of cartoons all over the walls and insultingly bright carpet. As soon as we walked in the build, there was an assistant rushing us back to wherever Eddie was recording. My presence was already known about because they handed me a visitor's pass with my name on it.

Edward was quickly set up in a room, and I sat on the opposite side of some glass to watch him work. There were several people in there with me of various ages, genders, and nationalities. I took pictures of them, and him, while they were working. I had to be careful not to bother anyone. No one seemed to mind me though. I was quiet and wasn't using a flash.

Watching him work was so interesting. He was so talented. His voice did things I didn't quite understand, and it could be so different for one moment to the next. The director, a little black woman with amazing short cotton white hair, had him do takes in several ways and praised each before trying another. At one point he screamed comically for an hour.

They worked for two hours solid before Edward had to stop for something to drink and a bathroom break. He chatted with the director who was talking about a future project they were going to work on together for another television show. I took a picture from my low spot in my corner chair, looking up at them talking to each other thoughtfully about what they wanted out of a character. He was so passionate as he spoke. His movements were extremely animated. The director was clearly engaged with what he was saying too.

I had no idea what he was recording for, he couldn't tell me yet, but his character was hilarious. And, from what I could guess, a terrible *maybe* villain? Or, maybe just the group asshole? I wasn't sure. They worked for another five solid hours before they decided to finally call it a wrap for the evening. If they needed him to record anything else they would call him in later.

It was just after eight in the evening when he was done. Our food from earlier was long gone. Edward decided he wanted to eat right away, having been on his feet all day and already tired. So we stopped to eat at a little family-owned pizza joint. We sat in a small corner at a red gingham cloth covered table under a huge Tiffany style light. It probably hadn't changed since the seventies.

I ordered an Arnold Palmer, an iced tea and lemonade, to drink and he got himself a beer. We ordered a pepperoni pizza, and he ordered wings to start with. I ordered a salad to go with mine. I needed the vegetables. When it arrived, I picked at it with my fork, my cheek in my palm and my elbow on the table. I was exhausted.



“How is it?” He questioned quietly.

I scrunched up my face a little. “It’s fine.”

“You don’t seem very enthusiastic about it,” his voice was just as tired as he appeared and I felt.

“Oh,” I adjusted in my seat. I didn’t want to seem rude about free food. “I don’t know, I miss real food. It’s fine.”

“This isn’t real food?” Edward asked curiously.

“I miss my own cooking, I mean,” I explained. “I’m spoiled to my own food. I don’t usually eat out this much in a row anymore. I do the cooking for me and my roommate.”

“What do you like to cook?” He asked as he sipped his beer.

“I try to do healthy stuff, but Alice and I are working on being fatties. So, lots of carbs and cheese.”

“So, like pizza,” he chuckled.

“We do pizza a lot,” I admitted. “I do a lot of Tex-Mex. Being Texans, it’s one of our great loves, but you can’t get it good anywhere outside of Texas really.”

“What makes it Tex-Mex?”

I laughed quietly as I tried to think about how to explain it. “You see, you stuff it with cheese. Then you deep fry it and then you cover it in a cheese sauce. Then put more shredded cheese on top. Then add salsa and all-you-can-eat chips.”

“Oh, my hips just got wider thinking about it,” he teased in a high pitched Scottish accent. “Oi, I became me Gran there for a sec,” he said in his normally deep voice. I giggled, making him smile. “I eat terribly, too.”

"I've noticed." I eyed his wings.

"It is *literally* the only reason I work out."

I rolled my eyes. "You could afford to pay someone to do that, you know. Cook, I mean."

"For just me? Seems a waste." He shook his head as he ate.

I rolled the cherry tomato around with my fork. "Well, you're worth a lot now. Your health is your greatest asset. The healthier you are, the more you can work. And you may look great, but looks can be deceiving. It's what's inside that counts."

I realized I said too much. I was grateful for our pizza's arrival. I hadn't meant to be rude to him.

"You're right. I guess I have to see myself as a product now," he replied once the waiter had gone.

"That's rather unnerving. But, we're all products in some way. We're always trying to sell ourselves to someone for something. Ugh, depressing." I took a big bite of pizza. It was *fine*. I had much better before. I drizzled some of the hot honey on the table all over my slice. That made it much better. "But, it is always important to care about your health. It's selfish not to."



"Selfish, how?" He questioned softly.

"People love you. Your family. Friends. They deserve the best you so you can do the best for them. You don't have to be a vegan who works out four hours a day. But you can at least try to eat whole, freshly cooked food, and stuff... not salt soaked cardboard. At least, every once in a while."

He drank his beer down quickly and ordered water to drink for the rest of the meal.

Edward looked at his plate with a sigh. "You're not wrong. It gives me something to at least consider. I am going to be so busy soon, too. How do you even hire someone to do that,

you know?"

"Google is amazing," I answered dryly.

He rubbed the back of his neck with his long fingers. Slowly as he nodded his head, he answered, "oh. Duh. Right. True story. There is probably a website."

"Probably a few," I agreed.

"This adulting thing is goddamn tedious. I'm good at getting my bills paid, but I lack all the other skills I need, I think."

I added some red pepper to my slice of pizza. "That's more than some can accomplish. I'll tell you a secret though... it's always going to be *something*. You can't do everything for yourself all the time. It's okay to delegate and to ask for help."

"I forget that sometimes," he said after a long pause.

"Everyone does."

We didn't speak much for the rest of the meal.

When we arrived back to his home I was so tired I went straight to bed. Within moments of my head hitting on the soft pillow, I was out like a light.