



I love you Jasper's Point of view

I put in for a few positions out of Dallas/Fort Worth the following day. That was step one. What I didn't expect was to get a call the next week.

"Hale," I began, absently bringing my phone to my ear as I looked over some pictures of a crime scene that we were at the night before. I was looking for particular ones.

"Hi, Dr. Hale, this is Dr. Irina Anastas, calling from the Dallas office."

"Yes. How may I help you?" I taped the picture of the girl's body onto the whiteboard. We didn't even know her name yet. She was in a cheap fake leather dress and had a collar with a large O ring. Her neck was bruised as if he led her around like a dog.

"I was calling about your application. You put in for the position with the Behavior Analyst Unit?"

I quickly placed the file down. "Oh, yes. I did. What can I do for you?"

“I was rather hoping that you could come to work for me. Well, with me. You applied for my current role, and I will be taking over as the lead. I’ve been reading all of your files, and I have spoken to some people here, and I have to tell you that I am very impressed with your record and credentials. It isn’t opening until mid-January. Is that a problem?”

For a long second, I let the information sink in. “No. Not at all. That would be great. That would give me time to make a clean transition. I’m elbows-deep into the I-90 Tracker-”

“I know!” She said excitedly. “What a thrilling case! I’m surprised you would wish to get away from something like that. This is the kind of work that makes careers and puts your name in books.”

“That’s the last thing that I want. I am so ready to get away from it. Honestly, I need to get back to Texas. I’m sick of traveling, and I’m tired of the hustle. I need a home base.”

“Well, that’s great news for me!” She almost giggled. She sounded young, but it was hard to tell over the phone. It didn’t matter. I would respect her as my boss. “So, do you want the job?”

“I’d like to hear a few more details before I agree to anything if you don’t mind.”

“Yes!” Dr. Anastas replied cheerfully. “Good. I hoped that you’d say that. Never agree to anything without knowing as much as you can first.”

I spent an hour speaking to her before I finally accepted. I knew that I was from the beginning, though, but so did she. She still made the sale’s pitch.

Then it was time for the next step in the plan. I had to get back to Texas and beg Bella to forgive me. Which was the hardest part.

Jerry, my boss, was a prick, and he hated me. And I never understood why. I wasn’t nipping at his heels for his job. I didn’t want it. It was hard to respect him when he looked down at me. As much as he could from his short height, at least.

Knocking on his door, I waited for him to call me in. He didn’t look up from his laptop. He was typing with only his middle fingers, maybe managing ten words a minute. “Dr. Hale. What do you need?”

“I need to take a few days off.”

Finally, Dr. Marcus peered at me. “Why?”

“Personal reasons.”

“That’s not good enough.”

I tilted my head to the side slightly, his tone striking me wrong right away. “I don’t feel like that is any of your business, sir.”

“Well, if you want to take days off, I will have to use your reason to decide whether to give it to you-”

“With all due respect, sir, this is not a request. This is me telling you that I am taking time off. I don’t really need you to ‘approve’ it.”

He shoved his glasses up his slender nose with his middle finger. “And if you leave without-”

“I will go above your head if I have to. It won’t be a problem to do so,” I spoke as calmly as I could. Frankly, I would quit on the spot if he denied it. Over it all, I didn’t even care if I got the job in Dallas anymore. I had enough money to support myself until I found another one if I had to.

Jerry scoffed at me, pushing his chair back so that it squeaked angrily against the cheap tile floor. “You’d regret that.”

I pulled my phone from my pocket and dialed one of the few numbers that I had on speed dial. He picked up within just a second. “Dr. Hale!” Dr. Aro answered brightly. He was the head of the entire BAU for the whole of the FBI, and Marcus was terrified of him.

He loved me, though, because every year I bought him a very expensive scotch as a Christmas present. I had learned from a young age from my parents that big gifts win hearts.

“Dr. Aro. Hello. I’m so sorry to bother you, but I hoped that you might help me with a problem.”

Jerry’s eyes got huge. He hadn’t expected that. I put it on speaker so that he could hear everything that was going on.

“Of course! I am always ready to help one of my brightest stars. What can I do for you?”

“Well, it’s a personal issue. You see, I need to take some time off to deal with some important family matters, and Dr. Marcus is threatening to deny it, even though he doesn’t have the authority-”

“Ah,” he interrupted. “Yes. He is a little man who thinks he’s more powerful than he is. When did you need off? I will arrange it for you.”

“Thank you so much, Doctor,” I grinned. “I’d like to leave on Saturday.”

It was so enjoyable to watch the asshole’s face just turn redder and more sweaty with his anger. And there was nothing he could do. He was already making my life hell. I wouldn’t be working with him much longer. It was worth it.

“Not a problem at all. How many days off do you need?”

“Five altogether. I’d like to return to work on Thursday. I’ll probably have a later start, though, since I’m flying in.”

Aro laughed a little. “Young man, you work a hundred hours a week. I don’t think it really matters when your day begins. Don’t worry. I’ll talk to him if I must,” he said as if it disgusted him. I smirked to myself. “I hope everything is okay with your family, though.”

“Yes, sir. I need to be there in person for something that is very important to me. It’s significant enough that I would have resigned if I hadn’t gotten it, so thank you.”

“No, no! I wouldn’t have allowed it. Especially since I just approved your new position. Alright, I hope that it all goes well. Let me know if you need any more time. You have quite a bit of PTO here from what I see on the computer. Don’t forget to relax every now and again.”

“I won’t,” I promised. “Thank you again,” I answered before we hung up. Staring directly at Jerry in the face, I gave him a long minute to do something if he was man enough to. He wasn’t.

I turned and left without a word.

No matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t think of the exact words I wanted to say to Bella. I knew some of them. The important ones. Apologies and accepting responsibility for my actions, then I would beg on my hands and knees if I had to. I needed her forgiveness. I needed her.

Alice called as I arrived at the airport that morning for my flight. We talked every single evening on the phone. She had gotten Bella to agree to go out for lunch with her that day.

“So, what’s your strategy?” She said instead of ‘hello.’

“Tomorrow, I go to her place, not too early, with a bouquet, and I beg.”

She snorted. “That’s all you got?”

“What else do I have?”

“I really don’t know. Just... be sincere and honest. Tell her the truth. Tell her how you feel as clearly as possible.”

“Yeah, I plan to,” I replied, mumbling out the words as I hurried to my gate. “First, I have to get her to open the door. If I can get her to do that, well... We’ll go from there.”

“Yeah. Okay. Oh, she just pulled up outside. I can see her truck out the window. I’ll try to talk to her, and I’ll text you tonight. Maybe see if I can get any helpful information.”

“Thank you so much. You are a great friend.”

“Yup, I know. Have a safe trip.”

The entire flight, I thought about what I wanted to say. Nervous energy filled my body. The closer I got to Texas, the more anxious I became. By the time I landed, I realized that I wouldn’t be able to wait until the following day. My rental car was already waiting for me when I got there, all they needed was my signature. It was one of my father’s businesses. They all knew me.

I stopped at the grocery store to pick up the flowers. I purchased the nicest bunch they had. They sat on the seat beside me on the drive there. I kept stealing glances at them at every stoplight.

They were not nearly enough. But I didn’t know where else to start. Cake seemed too... Personal. Too meaningful. Just... Too much.

Her red truck was in the parking lot. I parked next to it. My sister would have loved it. She was a vintage mechanic. Everyone was in the car business in my family but me. Emmett was Dad’s top salesman and was grooming him to take over when he fully retired if he could. I doubted it. If anything else, he needed to get away from Mom at least every once in a while.

When I got to her apartment, I glared at the door for a long time. My hands were trembling. Finally, I swallowed my fear and knocked quickly. It was so soft. I didn’t expect her to hear it and was about to do so again when it opened just a crack.

Anticipating that it would go further, I took a step forward. It didn’t, and I rocked in place with my quick halt. I couldn’t even tell who opened it.

“Um, hi.”

“Jasper?” Bella’s voice questioned from on the other side.

“Bella! Hi! Um... Can- Can I please talk to you? I- I really... I’m- Please?” Idiotically, I babbled. In my head, I cursed myself for sounding so stupid.

“You’ve ignored me for a month-” She started right away strongly. As she should have.

She was right. I put my hand on the frame to keep myself stable. “I wasn’t. I was scared, and I knew that I couldn’t do this over the phone. Please? Will you at least open the door? I realize that I don’t deserve even that, but I want to at least try to-” I stopped when I realized that I was rambling again. I tried to take in a deep calming breath. “Please?”

There were several moments of silence before she unhooked the chain and pulled it open. The door slammed against the wall.

Standing in front of me was the most beautiful woman in the world, under a layer of... goop? Honestly, I had no idea what the hell it was. Certainly, it was beauty products, but it was in her hair and on her face. It looked as if she had gotten in a food fight at Willy Wonka’s chocolate factory.

She gestured with her hands in front of her. “Well, come in,” she growled, unamused already by the situation. Not that I could blame her.

I dropped my eyes, trying not to stare at her as I came into the apartment.

“I have imagined this going a thousand ways, and not one of them started like this.”

She laughed, but it was a little mean. She walked a few feet in front of me, crossing her arms over her breasts as she did. Bella was self-conscious about being only in her robe.

“All of this shit comes off in a few minutes. So, you have until then. Better talk fast.”

I didn’t really think she would let me get this far. Taking a deep breath, I tried to remember all the things I wanted to tell her. They kind of slipped away from me. I had never been more ashamed and frightened in my whole life. I couldn’t even look at her.

“I’m sorry. I am worthless for making you feel this way. I want you to know that everything you said that night was true. You don’t deserve this. You deserve so much more than me. And you deserve way more than two nights a month,” I began. She said nothing. “And that’s why I didn’t tell you how I felt after the movies and why I didn’t say anything after. Because you deserve more than what I can give you. And I tried to convince myself that you’re better off without me and that, maybe, hurting you, so you could move on, was the right thing. But it

wasn't. It was cruel and weak. And I will regret that for the rest of my life." My voice became thicker, and my emotions got the better of me. My eyes darted away again with my humiliation.

"But I'm selfish," I admitted to her. I wouldn't lie about that part of myself. She needed to know that. "And I want you. I've wanted you for months. And I know that I don't deserve you." I looked at the inadequate roses. "I knew that I couldn't do this over the phone."

Her face scrunched up, making the drying goo wrinkle in places. "What do you mean, you want me? What is that even supposed to mean? You had me."

"And I wasted that precious gift. I realize that. I want you, Bella. I want you to be mine. In every way."

Once again, she laughed bitterly. She glanced away, her fingers curling around the sleeves of her robe. "I know. Look, I know. I am so sorry. I am willing to beg. I've wanted-" Pausing, I chuckled darkly, and I shook my head to myself. This was me being the most brutally honest that I had ever been in my life to anyone. I knew that I was a closed-off person. But if she forgave me, I would make her understand. "Every time I see you, I just feel in awe of you and unworthy because, Bella, you're so brave and strong. And smart. And I knew that you deserved more than what little time that I could give you so, I held back. Or I tried to. But I want more. So much more. I want to give you everything, and I knew that I couldn't come to you without real proof of my feelings and my intentions. So, I put in for a transfer for a permanent position here in Dallas."

Bella's eyes got massive, a tiny breath escaping past her glistening lips. They were sticky. "But you love your job!"

"No. I like my job. I love you, Bella."