



Chapter Eight: A Restroom in a Club

Five hours later, we were both stuffed with fantastic food and half tipsy. We had fun just hanging out and pampering ourselves before we killed our feet for the evening. The limo driver opened the door for us. It was already filled with probably fifteen women and a few guys. Tanya grinned when we got in.

“Tonight will be amazing!” She beamed at us. My roommate looked even better than she did in the morning. She had professionals do her makeup, and it showed.

The music was loud as soon as we got inside. A host led us to the VIP area enclosed with velvet ropes and bouncers, and only those with the correct bracelet got in. More of her friends would show up on their own. Probably every person she ever met. My roommate had been talking about the party for a month solid leading up to the event.

“Who’s ready for shots!” One of her buddies began straight away.

Three Jagermeisters, two bottles of Patron, and a Grey Goose later, the room was crammed with drunk skinny women. Alice and I kept mostly to ourselves, though Tanya kept

checking on us. Whenever she did, she brought us another shot. We would throw it back with her like we were all college girls, not adults nearing middle-aged. It was almost enough to make me forget everything that was going on in my life at that moment.

We were silly, having way too much fun as Alice and I moved together. We held our hands over our heads as we giggled and swayed. Clapping, we sang to each other, even though we were too drunk to know the words or to have any rhythm. My feet and body would hate me the following day.

“I gotta pee!” She yelled at me after a few songs.

“I need to sit for a minute,” I admitted. I also needed some water. The room was spinning, and I was sweating my ass off.

We walked towards the VIP section together, lifting our wrists to show the massive bouncer our blue bracelets. It had its own exclusive bathroom, so there wouldn't be much of a line. Looking around, I realized that there were so many people there I didn't know.

“I'll be back in a few,” she mumbled before she made her way in the right direction. I went the other to find a place to plop down.

Thankfully, there was a couch in the corner that was surrounded by a few empty chairs. It was dark and hidden against a brick wall. I flopped onto the sofa, closing my eyes as I leaned my head back.

“Are you alright?” Edward curiously asked. I hadn't even realized he was there across from me in one of the chairs. My head snapped up in surprise. He was wedged up into one corner of it, his expression blank as he took a slow sip of whiskey. He looked like he should have been in front of a fireplace in a quiet library, not in a noisy club.

“Yeah. Just... hot. I don't party a lot.”

“Mm...” he hummed, glanced off into the VIP lounge. “We do almost every weekend.”

“I couldn't do that,” I breathed, sitting back some. Ungracefully, I wiped a little sweat from my forehead. “My liver would hate me.” He chuckled some, but it was hollow. “Where's the birthday girl?”

Edward shrugged, not looking at me as he did. “She's fighting with someone I can't remember the name of for a reason I have yet to be told about. In the bathroom.”

“Oh. Well, Alice is in there. Maybe she'll hear something,” I babbled because I didn't know what else to.

He rolled his eyes, shaking his head. "It won't matter tomorrow." Edward sighed and put his empty glass on the table in front of us. "It's something petty, I'm sure. Someone insulted someone's hair or makeup. Someone 'stole' a job or whatever. It's always the same four or five fights."

"Oh," I repeated. We were both quiet for a tick. "You look so... bored," I concluded. I didn't know how else to describe it. He wasn't frustrated, just done.

For a long moment, he stared at me. It was like he was considering what he wanted to say. "Yeah, I am. I am bored. And disappointed. It's always something like this. Is this what I have to look forward to for the rest of my life? I love Tanya, I do. I even have a ring, but something is stopping me, and it's shit like this."

Sighing, I looked away. I wasn't exactly sure what to say. "I mean, she's a party girl. You knew that going in. What you see is what you get."

"Perhaps that's the problem. I know you're more than what you seem."

"Don't flirt," I breathed.

Looking down at his lap, he appeared almost pained. "I'm not." He peered off again before glancing back. "You don't know how much I regret getting off on the wrong foot with you how I did. I was so fucking stupid and over-confident. And I didn't appreciate how you might have felt. I didn't see the signs in front of me and didn't respect your boundaries. I am a terrible Dom, and I didn't deserve your submission," he finished, his voice low so no one could hear the last sentence.

Once again, I was speechless. He seemed so sincere. I wanted to beg him to stop, but he was opening up to me. But what he did wasn't okay, and I wouldn't say that it was. "I'm sure you're not terrible. You just weren't thinking."

"No, I wasn't. But I've certainly been reflecting on all the things I did wrong since then," he grumbled, widening his eyes. I laughed softly, shaking my head. "I don't suppose you'd like to dance?" Edward suddenly questioned.

"That's not a good idea," I said automatically.

"Why?" He inquired almost innocently.

I laughed once more, shaking my head as I looked at him as if he was stupid. "You know why."

“I’ll be a gentleman, I swear. We’re friends, correct? You’re right, I am bored, and I’d like to dance at least a little tonight. I’d honestly prefer it was with my girlfriend, but-” He waved his hand in the general direction of restrooms. “I understand if it would make you too uncomfortable, but I would like to move forward. If we can.”

I almost hated how adult he was about the whole thing. My drunken brain couldn’t think of a reason to turn him down. Sighing, I stood. “You will leave room for the Holy Ghost, or I’ll make sure Tanya won’t be getting birthday sex.”

“Damn,” he laughed as he stood to his feet, too. “Yes, ma’am. I have to say, I appreciate the creativity of your threats.” I giggled, making him genuinely smile.

It was the middle of the song when we got to the dance floor. It was a fun, bouncy tune. I didn’t know it, but it had a great beat, and it was easy to move to. Edward stayed at least six inches away from me. Then he took my hand before placing the other on my waist. He was looking down at me with such an intense expression, his lip between his teeth.

Suddenly, it felt like one of the many fantasies I had of him when I used to have them. Us in a thumping club, doing something we shouldn’t have been. Tanya wouldn’t care. But Jasper would want to strangle him. Even if we were just friends, and we weren’t doing anything wrong. And nothing ever would because I didn’t want it to.

I tried to pull back, wanting to run away from the emotions. Edward was holding onto me, though. I almost tripped backward, but his arms wrapped around me.

“Whoa! Careful there,” he murmured.

With my hands braced on his chest, I gazed into his deep green eyes. I wanted to get as far away from them as fast as possible. My head was swimming, the music far too loud. I needed it to stop.

“This was a bad idea. Sorry,” I muttered as I corrected myself. As quickly as I could, I tugged away from him.

“Bella, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean-”

Rushing towards the VIP lounge, I knew he was behind me the entire time, but I couldn’t look back. I didn’t see Alice, so I went to the bathroom. He stopped at the door with a huff. She, Tanya, and about four women were gathered around the mirror. One of them was drunkenly crying. They all looked at me in confusion at my abrupt entrance.

“Everything okay?” Tanya asked me slowly.

Panting, I frowned. No. It wasn't, and I was annoyed with her, but I wasn't sure why. "Look, I don't know what the hell is going on, but your boyfriend is miserable out there. What are you doing in the bathroom on your birthday? This is some high school shit."

"Ugh, it really is," she agreed with a roll of her eyes. "It's just that Brenda took my—"

"Tanya!" I interrupted her. Edward had been correct, and it made me feel pity for him. "It's your birthday, and he spent a lot of money to make you happy. And you're in the smelly ass restroom making someone cry." I looked at Alice with a frown. "I'm sorry, but I'm ready to go. Do you want to get an Uber?"

We made it back to my apartment by one in the evening. Alice explained all the stupid drama they were trying to convey to her. She didn't mean to get roped into it, nor did she intend to leave me alone with Edward. Everything was as juvenile as expected. It made me feel exhausted.

"I'm going to go talk to Jasper and head to bed," I grunted once we got inside. "Sorry about tonight."

"It's alright. I'm going to get cleaned up and crash on the couch. Is it okay if I take a shower?"

"Go for it," I replied, texting him as I did. "I did something stupid," I informed my boyfriend.

The phone rang instantly. It was as if he was waiting for me. "I realize you're probably just drunk, but are you okay?" He tried to say as calmly as possible, but I could hear the worry in it. And it made me feel worse.

I opened my mouth to answer, but I whimpered. "I-I danced with Edward for maybe ten seconds because he was all pathetic and sad. Because Tanya ignored him all night. Saying we're friends and how he wanted to move forward like a mature person. But then I realized I didn't even want to do that. That I couldn't. And I just ran away from him like a fucking coward. Then I told Tanya off on her birthday because she was in the bathroom trying to stir up shit with her friends instead of grinding on her man. Like she should have been. And I don't know why I agreed in the first place, and I only want to be with you. I miss you," I finished, starting to cry. "I'm sorry."

My boyfriend sighed. "Where are you right now?"

"The apartment."

"Good. And how much have you had to drink?" He asked gently.

"I don't know," I admitted, sniffing loudly.

"Where's Alice?"

"Taking a shower."

He sighed again. "Isabella, go get a glass of water. Right now." He wasn't mad. He was just taking control of the moment and knew I would listen to him when he said my name like that.

I sucked in a quick breath. Automatically, I stood to go do that. "Yes, sir."

"I'm glad you exited the situation when you did, darlin. Did he make you uncomfortable while you were dancing?"

"No. It was literally seconds. He did nothing wrong. Edward was fine. I feel awful for him. It was me. I- I-" I stuttered. "But I didn't want him touching me anymore because it felt like one of my-" I stopped myself from saying the word out loud. "Because he wasn't you, and I didn't want anyone else to look at me like that. I'm yours, and I only want to be yours."

I got a bottle of water from the fridge and took a big swig as I leaned against it. "Good girl," he soothingly cooed in my ear as I did.

"I shouldn't have-"

"Isabella," he interrupted me. "I trust you completely. You could have danced with him if you wished, but I have to admit I would prefer if he jumped off a cliff. But it would have only been a dance because you're mine and nothing changes that. I know that. Now, take another drink of water." I did as I was told, panting as I plopped onto my bed. I don't know how my feet carried me there.

"Punish me when I get to New York," I begged.

"I will," he responded right away, "but for your excessive drinking this week," he said before clicking his tongue in fake disappointment. He was teasing me, showing that he wasn't upset. "You become a wild thing when I'm not there, it seems."

I laughed at his words. "I'm sure the liquor will punish me for that first."

"Well, your ass will pay for it one way or the other. How many spankings should I give you, hm?"

“Is this how you’re going to distract me from my drunken panic attack?” I asked in a soft breath.

“Yes. Now answer my question.”

Biting my lip to hide my small smile, I looked down at my cold bottle of water. “I don’t know, sir. A lot.”

“You would say that no matter what you did,” he replied jokingly. “Bella,” Jasper breathed my name, getting more serious. “Don’t worry. I’m not upset. You didn’t handle the situation perfectly, but that’s okay. I love you and trust you. We’re fine, I promise, and in just two days, we’ll be back together again. And none of this will matter.”