



Episode Eighty-nine-

“Oh, my god! Thank you so much for this!” Lauren gushed the day after I went to the movie studio with Edward. She hugged me tightly, pressing me to her big round belly. We were meeting for breakfast and spending the entire day together. We were going to go shopping for clothes for her maternity shoot that I would be doing that evening with her and Tyler. After, we would go get our hair and nails done to prepare. She asked me to do her makeup.

I squeezed her back, happy to be with a friend. "You're very welcome! It's been so long since I've shot anything like this. I'm actually excited for once because it's someone I like!" I joked.

She was just about to hit the six-month mark, and her belly was already heavily curved. Almost impressively so. We were doing the photos for her gender reveal party that they were having soon. I would be taking more once they got closer to the due date, and at the party as well. It was my gift to them. And, of course, I was going to take some of the baby once it arrived.

We sat so that we could order our meal. It was the first time that we had been alone in this way, but it wasn't uncomfortable. She sipped her orange juice, smiling brightly as she relaxed in the sunshine. We had a spot on a patio table in the middle of sunny Beverly Hills. It was the perfect spring day.

"You look content," I smiled.

Beaming, she raised her face up towards the sun to soak more of it in. "I am. I really am. I feel like everything is perfect. I have a wonderful husband who has a great job, and we have a sweet little house that's just right for three. Everything is exactly how I always dreamed it would be," she replied, rubbing her hand over her bump. "I am so ready for this."

"So, do you know the sex?" I asked with a jesting smirk.

She quickly shook her head. "No," Lauren giggled then rolled her eyes with a sigh. "I can't be trusted with secrets. Tyler knows and is planning everything, though. I haven't even seen an ultrasound yet. He's having a lot of fun being in charge. He doesn't have any tells!"

"I bet he's fun to play poker with," I quipped. She rolled her eyes again more dramatically and shook her head.

It was her turn to smirk. "He's got terrible luck actually, so it wouldn't matter."

I giggled. "Aw, me too. So anyway, I thought we should probably get you at least a couple of outfits. Do you still want to do it at the beach?"

We had discussed it some in texts over the past few days. She only had vague ideas and wanted me to take control. That's why I was coming along. She wanted everything to be perfect for the pictures. Edward had bragged about how good I was at Ava's photos and how I color-coordinated her outfit. Lauren wanted me to do the exact same for her.

Quickly nodding, she took another sip of juice. "Yeah."

"Okay. So, I thought we could do a bathing suit shoot-"

Lauren gasped as she flushed. "Really?"

I laughed at her instant reaction. "Yeah, you're super cute right now. You need to show off that baby belly. I'm thinking bikini, something neutral. Purple or lavender would be perfect. A big floppy hat. Glasses."

"It sounds fun! I just don't know if I'm brave enough for a bikini," she admitted as her blush deepened.

"You're gorgeous!" I assured her quickly. I wasn't lying to make her feel better, either. She was actually glowing with her happiness. It showed on her face and especially her constant

bright smile. I could only hope I was as happy when I got pregnant one day. She was handling it so much better than some of my friends had. It looked as if she was made for this.

She shook her head once more. "I'm fat!" Lauren laughed awkwardly, covering her cheeks with her hands before sighing. "I don't know. We'll see about the bikini, but I like everything else. We'll get some broad shorts for Tyler. Thank you for coming. I'm kind of fashionless."

"You're welcome. Don't worry! We'll find the right one for you. You'll see. And the dress for the sunset pictures, too. Everything is going to be perfect." I was going to try my best to make it that way for her.

"I'm so excited for today," she professed, looking down at her stomach. "It's been so long since I've had a fun girl's shopping day."

"Me too," I replied back honestly with a little sigh. It had been a long time since I had done anything out at all with a female friend. Demetri was fun, but he was intense in his shopping. I didn't think Lauren would be like that. I thought about all the women I wanted to go out with in the future. "I told my sisters when they come to visit, we'll have to shop on Rodeo Drive together. I keep trying to think about a future where all my sisters and sisters-in-law are all together in one place, but I can't. It's so many people."

Lauren giggled softly, taking another sip of her juice. "It's funny that you're thinking about Eddie's sisters as your sister-in-law already," she pointed out to me with a smirk.

I flushed a little. I hadn't realized what I said, but she was right. I had meant them, too. "It's just a matter of time, I suppose. I like them so much. We've been texting in a big group chat, without Eddie," I confessed quietly. "Just small talk mainly. I see where he got a lot of his best and worst traits from. I think he might actually be the quietest one."

She looked at me in disbelief. I just nodded my head, making her snort softly. "Tyler said they were nice when he met them. He told me that they were all alike, too."

"They are! They make the same faces. His grandparents, too! It's crazy! I already know what our children's side-eye is going to look like." She snorted again loudly at my words. "Our kid is going to come out with bright red hair, green eyes, and shouting 'oi,'" I continued. She threw her head back in laughter. "And it'll swim before it walks. I swear the little ones are part fish."

"Aw! Little Aussie Mermaids!" She cooed teasingly. "Maybe you will have a baby with one green eye and one blue, and it'll be just slightly tan," Lauren continued to muse.

"With freckles," I added. "And curly hair. His is too as it gets longer."

“Your babies are going to be so pretty,” she sighed grinningly.

The very thought was overwhelming. “Eddie is so ready for them,” I breathed, placing my chin on my palm. “And, I am too, almost, but it’s been less than six months. You should probably be together longer than nine months before you get knocked up on purpose.”

“Probably,” she giggled. “I’m surprised he wants them already.”

I bit my lip for a moment. “Me too,” I admitted. “He’s so ready to be committed. He loves the very idea of it. Edward sees what his sisters have and…” I sighed a little bit as I trailed off. “He just wants a house full of little girls, but I don’t know if I’ll be able to give him that.”

“Why not?” She asked quickly, surprised.

Taking a deep breath, I decided to share one of my biggest fears. “I don’t know if I can even get pregnant,” I declared, shaking my head sadly. When I was younger, I was grateful for my seemingly endless mistakes to not have resulted in a child. I wasn’t mentally ready. I still wasn’t, but I was closer than I had ever been before. “I really don’t think that I can. I keep joking about my IUD with Eddie, but I probably don’t even need it.”

She made a little face, obviously not knowing what to say then sighed before waving off the sadness. “Eh, he’d be fine with adopting,” she replied brightly.

Lauren was right, of course. I knew that. I nodded my head and smiled at her words. “Yeah, he would. I just want those red-haired babies, too. I want to give him a child that has his crooked smile and brilliant mind and watch him mold them into thoughtful and caring little humans.”

“You will. Don’t worry.” She reached for my hand and gently gave it a pat. “Don’t worry! You’ve got time. You’re both young.”

I nodded, but I didn’t feel it. “You’re right. We do,” I agreed as I picked up my coffee and took a long sip. Our waiter arrived a moment later with our food. I was happy there was something else to talk about.

First, we went to Target. I went to it far too often, and I knew far too many of the employees’ faces for my liking. I talked my friend into buying a ruffly light lavender two-piece with a matching skirt. We also got all the accessories for a beach scene. A blanket, towels, picnic basket, umbrella, a big black floppy hat, bug-eyed glasses, and even swim toys. They all had an ice cream theme to them. The swim trunks she bought for her husband had a mixture of popsicles and ice cream cones decorating them. She even bought him a hat and sunglasses as well. Lauren really got into the spirit once we got started.

We went to a nicer mall to get the right dress. It took a little longer to find the perfect off the shoulder navy blue maxi that dragged the ground. It was covered in hot pink roses, its skirt loose-fitting and comfortable. She had to try several, much to her dismay. She was having trouble getting them over her belly.

Once we were done, we had lunch at the mall because Lauren was hungry again. I would deny her nothing. It was her day. She could eat as much and as often as she wanted. I wasn't ravenous though, so I simply had a small strawberry and spinach salad with a glass of iced tea. She had a salad, a full meal made up of a variety of several side dishes, and a piece of vegan chocolate cake.

Next was our trip to the salon. We were having our hair and nails done while we were there. She was having her short blond curls styled in a twenty's style as well. I didn't really need my haircut, so I just got a nice blowout. I had it done just the week before with Demetri. It was still fun to be pampered.

While I was getting a pedicure, I received a text from Zafrina. I never had before. For some reason, I began to panic. *"Hi! I was hoping I would be able to touch base with you soon to discuss the media coverage of the award show."*

The anxiety prickled at the base of my neck. *"Is everything okay?"*

"Everything is fantastic!" She answered back quickly. *"I know Eddie doesn't care about any of this stuff, but I figured you might be interested. We should discuss what kind of role you would like me to play anyway with this sort of thing. When would be a good time for you?"*

I felt instantly relieved. It was probably silly to become alarmed in the first place. I was sure if there was a real problem that she would have called me. We really hadn't talked that much. I had let Edward take care of everything because I knew that he knew what he was doing.

"I have a photoshoot today. I'm free anytime tomorrow. If you would like, we can make it another breakfast meeting," I replied.

"Damn. I have a breakfast meeting already. Lunch?"

It made me feel even better to know I would have something to keep me busy in the morning. *"Perfect. Any requests?"*

"Surprise me. Though I do enjoy spicy food."

I smiled to myself. *"I can do that."*

"I'll have my secretary text you later with a good time. I'm in the car right now driving. See you then, Bella."

Closing my eyes, I laid my head back in the chair as they continued to paint my toes matte blue, willing my nervous heart to slow down.

"All done!" Lauren chirped when she popped out of her chair, about an hour later. "Girl, you look good!"

"Aw, thank you." I shook my hair out playfully with a smile to show it off while I batted my eyelashes. "Come on. Let's go get your makeup done and make you even more beautiful before Tyler gets home. We're kind of cutting it close."

We were, but thankfully, her husband was late. He was out filming with Seth all morning for the channel. They were working on their own stuff, and soon enough they would be helping me while Edward was busy on set. I wasn't sure how I would do without him. Seth and Tyler were going to take turns being in videos with me, so at least I wasn't alone.

The beach wasn't too far from their house, so we still got there in plenty of time to take pictures in the sunshine on the sand of them together before sundown. Some were sweet, others playfully. They looked so blissfully happy together. But I was most excited about the golden hour, the magical time at sunset with the perfect light.

Lauren went off to get changed in her pretty dress and to freshen up the makeup that I had done for her with a new coat of lipstick in a different shade. It had been purple to go with her swimsuit, but we had gotten a bright pink to match the roses on the dress. She also took off her hat, which we had pinned to her hair with care as well so that it wouldn't fly away in the wind. It still looked perfect.

When Tyler saw her, it was hard to describe his expression. A thousand emotions went through his eyes at once. He had changed much more quickly into nicer slacks and a button-down, and we were waiting for her together. His chest swelled, and he smiled as he watched her walk towards him from the changing rooms. The wind whipped her dress around her as her bare feet crunching in the sand. She grinned back at him, holding the bottom of her skirt as she hurried towards us.

Surprisingly, he began to cry.

And I caught it all on film.

I had never seen him so emotional before.

"You're so beautiful," he breathed, covering his mouth with his big hand. His eyes all but disappeared as he sobbed softly.

"Don't do that!" She laughed then sniffled loudly to keep in her tears. "Don't make me cry! I'll ruin my makeup! Bella worked so hard on it!"

Tyler shook his head, trying to get it under control. "I can't help it! I'm just so lucky," he said as he took her hand in one of his and touched her belly with the other. "I love you all so much."

She looked up at him adoringly, her eyes glistening. "We love you, too," she promised. Then they kissed. No one else in the world mattered to them at that moment. No one else existed. Not even me.

I might have cried a little too as I took hundreds of photos.