



Chapter Nine: Stopped for Autographs

I signed three autographs before walking into the airport. Jasper escorted me like I was the president. He never looked more like an agent. Once again, I didn't feel worried, though. We had only informed a couple of people where we were going and when, and none of them told anyone else. Even if they followed us to DFW, they wouldn't be able to get past security without buying a ticket. It was a lot of steps to stalk someone.

While we were waiting for our flight, I read a book on scriptwriting. It was one of three I had brought with me, though I had purchased more. It was like cramming for college. Nibbling on my nail, I glanced over it at my husband as a random thought passed through my mind. "Should I go back to school?"

"For what?" He questioned, sitting up straight with his eyes scanning the first-class area. His hands were neatly folded in his lap, his arms stiff. All he needed was to put his shades back on and get an earwig, to let everyone know he was security.

"I don't know. I'm sure there is something for screenwriting. I could probably get my masters."

He waffled his head from side to side. "Mm, I think you could watch an online class and get the same from it. Or a workshop. You don't have to go back to school and get a degree. But I'm sure you'll do just fine, no matter what. Storytelling comes naturally to you. All you need to do is figure out the style. How it's written."

I smiled at his confidence. "You'll have to help me. You know the story better than I do."

Chuckling, he glanced over at me finally. "I'll be an advisor or something. And I doubt that. You could probably recite it from memory."

"Mm, no. But you could. You've read it more than I have, for sure." I leaned my head against his shoulder, flipping to the next page. "I think I'll practice writing one on my own and see what I can do. You'll have to be honest with me."

He took my hand, wrapping his fingers around my palm. "I will be, but I promise I'll love it, darlin," he replied, drawing me into a quick kiss. When I pulled back, he was smiling so sweetly at me. I bumped my forehead to his. They called our flight over the loudspeaker. "Don't stress about it too much. Eric has been helpful at every step. He won't let you fail now. Everyone will help you succeed."

Outside the airport, I was once again stopped for autographs and pictures. Then in the lobby of the place we were staying. It took us forever to get to the counter. It stressed poor Jasper out, but I kind of enjoyed it. No one really recognized me or cared about me in Dallas, except for tourists, but I was something interesting in New York.

After we got checked into the Hotel Edison, we got cleaned up so we could meet with my agent down in one of the restaurants. He didn't want us to have to go out in the cold after traveling all day. I was grateful for that.

He brought me into a hug as soon as he saw me. "Are you okay?" He questioned instead of saying hello. He patted my shoulder as he spoke.

Softly laughing, I pulled back with my hands on his forearms. "I'm fine. Really. How are you?"

Eric smiled, his face glowing with joy. "I am so excited about this movie!" He declared as he sat down beside us at the table. "This is one of the most beautiful offers I've ever seen. This is next-level stuff, Bella. They want you, and they're willing to pay for success."

"Are they really prepared to give a million dollars to someone who's never written a script?"

He shook his head hard, but his gelled hair didn't move an inch. "That doesn't matter," he interrupted. "You've already proven you can write. I've been talking to the scriptwriter they have in mind. He'll also be one of the co-directors and producers of the film. Mr. Von is passionate about the source material. He loves your dialogue and wants to keep it as close to the book as possible. He's an Oscar winner, too."

"Who is he?"

"Felix Von. He's won for the best-adapted screenplay as well as the best original. Both are incredible. He's a big deal in the industry. And I gotta say, he seems like a really nice guy. Sometimes these Hollywood types are real pricks," he continued until the waiter came to the table. Eric beamed. "Hi. I'm starving. Can we start with the short ribs? And your house white for me."

I quickly glanced at the menu. He wasn't the only one that was hungry. "Oh, let's add the mozzarella and figs to that, too," I remarked as I reached over to take Jasper's hand. I knew he would like it. Especially since it came with prosciutto. "Pick a drink for me. I don't know what I want."

His thumb moved over the center of my palm as he looked at his options. "Hm, I'll have a dirty martini with extra olives, and can you get her a Malibu and pineapple," he answered confidently, squeezing my fingers back. I smiled to myself.

"So, where did you end up going out of town?" Eric asked casually as he read over his menu. There were so many wonderful choices. I was having a hard time deciding between steak and pasta.

"Vegas."

"Oh, I love the Strip!" He eagerly declared. "I'm terribly unlucky, but I love the lights and the gaudiness. Have any luck?"

I put the paper down. I would switch it up with seafood linguine. "Well, we didn't play that much. Jasper got a little ahead when he played blackjack, and I broke even. Though, who knows how much I lost putting money in random pretty slot machines," I laughed. "Oo, bright colors, make the lights go blink-blink," I joked.

Snorting, he shook his head. "How can you not gamble that much in Las Vegas? What else is there to do besides that and get married?" He teased. We said nothing, both of us looking at him with a slight smile. "You got married. YOU GOT MARRIED! Did you really? Oh, my god!" He gasped. "Why didn't you tell me?!" He looked off into the distance suddenly. "I need to get you a wedding gift now."

“Don’t,” I giggled. “That’s part of the reason why we eloped. We don’t need anyone to get us presents.”

Pouting, he pretended to get teary-eyed as he waved his fingers in front of his face playfully. “Aw! Congratulations! That is so incredible.” He stood from his seat to give me a big hug. He shook Jasper’s hand next.

“You know, come to think of it, you’ve already given me a gift. I wore the dress from the photoshoot. So, there you go,” I informed him jokingly once we sat again. The waiter came with our drinks.

“Really?! Ah, I can’t wait to see pictures!”

“I’ll put some up soon. I’m enjoying keeping it kind of quiet, though.” I looked over at my husband with a grin. “I love springing it on everyone. It’s fun.”

Jasper rolled his eyes. “If you call what my mother did in that restaurant fun, sure,” he replied with a laugh. “She wailed like a banshee in the middle of a fancy steakhouse in Dallas. God, I wish that woman wasn’t such a bloodhound. It took her less than five minutes to notice that ring.” He shook his head as he looked at Eric. “The entire place stared at us. She cried six times. Loudly.”

“And that’s the main reason why you eloped,” my agent said with a smirk.

“Exactly,” he chuckled.

We gave our order to the waiter once he brought our starters. “So, Felix is going to be in town tomorrow night and would like to have dinner with you to discuss possibly working together. I think we should at least hear him out, even if you’re not interested.”

“I am, though.”

“Good, but let’s not say anything until we hear his deal. Play it cool,” he added, moving his palm just above the table surface like it was gliding over ice. He was a bit of a nerd. “Rib, my dear?” He pointed at the plate. “Dr. Hale.” He waved his hand in his direction.

“Mm, thank you,” he said right away. He passed me one because he knew the answer was yes. He also plucked a fig from the other platter. “If Bella does this, what will it involve? Travel-wise. Will there be any?”

“Felix would like to work with you on it over the summer. He’s based out of Hollywood, and it would presumably be easier if you stayed there for a month or so to focus on it. They’ll

provide food and lodging, too. You'd get the bulk of the work done then, then finish the edits later."

"What about security?"

Eric sighed solemnly. "We can talk about that. It's probably something we need to look into. I've never had to get any for my other authors, except for events."

"I'd like Jasper to be my bodyguard," I added into the conversation. "He's more than qualified. Is there a way to get him on the payroll? I'm sure the publishers want to keep me safe. I'm making them a lot of money." My man's neck nearly snapped in surprise, it shot in my direction so quickly. I had just blurted out my thoughts. He would live off his savings for as long as he could before he took cash from me. This way, he wouldn't have to.

Eric made a thoughtful face as he chewed, wiping the corner of his mouth. He had sauce on his chin. "Actually, that's workable. I'll talk to the bosses about what kind of salary we can offer. I don't think it's going to be as much as what you were making at the FBI-

"That part doesn't matter," he swiftly answered. "I would do it for free."

"But you shouldn't have to. It's an actual job, especially right now. You're going to be with me at all times, anyway. This way, it's official."

"I think it can be done," he smirked as he looked between us. "Who's going to take better care of her than you? Sorry, no overtime, though."

Jasper laughed, almost awkwardly as he glanced away. "Um, thank you."

"We need to figure out insurances since we're married," I continued to think out loud. "I'll pay for your healthcare now that it won't be covered by the bureau. It'll be easier to do it together. We really don't need to worry about the money right now."

"No, you don't," Eric agreed. "Honey, in a couple of years, you're going to have more dough than you'll know what to do with. And soon, The Cop's Story will come out, and you'll have two books in the top ten at the same time."

"Do you really think Rabbit will be up there that long?"

"Projections are good. You are number one by a long shot. It'll take a little while for all of this to quiet down. With what happened to King, it's going to get so much media attention. It's rare something this interesting happens to a decent author." Then another thought popped into his head. "Oh! You've got another paycheck coming up soon, by the way, and it is much bigger than the last."

The last one almost made me faint. “Oh?”

“Think triple, baby.”

Gasping, I put my hands over my mouth. I laughed hysterically for a brief second as my head fell forward. My brain couldn’t handle the amount. Jasper reached under the table and squeezed my thigh with his big hand. “This is really going to take some getting used to. My mind is having trouble with the numbers.”

“That many zeros is a beautiful thing,” my agent sighed, shaking his head playfully. “And this is just the beginning of a very long and profitable career, Ms. Swan.”

“Mrs. Hale,” I corrected him as I lifted my glass. I winked at my groom.

He chuckled, clinking his to mine. “That’s right! Oh, are we going to change what you publish under?” He looked between my man and me again.

I glanced at Jasper. He smiled encouragingly. “No. I’m going to keep it under Swan since that’s what I started as. A lot of authors don’t publish under their real names. It’s fine. I can be Bella Hale in private.” He brought my hand up to his mouth to kiss lightly.

After eating and a few more drinks, we said our goodbyes. My husband was quiet as we strolled to the elevator.

“Why did you do that?”

I didn’t have to ask what he was referring to. “I just blurted it out,” I admitted. “But I think it’ll work out.”

He sighed as he pressed the button. “I don’t need money to protect you.” The door opened.

I walked inside, pushing the number for our floor. “No. You don’t. You need it to pay for things like clothes, food, books, your art supplies. Because you get cranky when I buy them for you. This way, you get paid for your fantastic work watching my body without me doing it under the table.”

He grabbed me and shoved me against the wall so he could kiss me forcefully. I giggled against his mouth as my arms wrapped around his neck. “You had to say that as dirtily as possible,” he mumbled against my earlobe before taking it between his lips. One of his hands went to my thigh, pulling my leg up at the knee to his hip.

“I did.” I pushed him roughly off of me and thrust him against the wall beside us. He moaned against my mouth as I kissed him back just as hard. I didn’t want to give up control too easily. “Also, this way, I won’t be your boss. You’ll actually be working for them. I don’t think you’d like it very much if I was your supervisor,” I finished sarcastically.

“I think you might be very wrong about that, Goddess,” he whispered seductively just as the doors opened.

Shoving off of him, I seized his hand. “Well, let’s go test that. I think I know what we’re role-playing tonight.”

“Oh, I’m about to be a very bad employee, aren’t I?” He questioned dryly.

I threw my head back as I cackled. “You don’t have to be naughty, Dr. Hale. That’s your choice. You can be a good boy.”

He grabbed my ass before unlocking the door. “But where’s the fun in that?”