



## Episode Ninety-five

I got up before dawn with Edward so that I could go to the farmer's market and grocery store to get the cooking supplies for the day. When the boys showed up at ten, I was busy taking pictures of all the fresh fruit and vegetables for thumbnails. We were going to film ten videos worth of content in one day. A lot of them were shorter. Seth and Tyler were going to take turns with me in front of the camera.

It was the first time that I had planned what we would be shooting all on my own. Usually, I just gave Edward a selection of recipes to pick from, and he decided the schedule. First, we were going to do a video on hash browns, then cinnamon roasted bananas, and finally poached eggs before we would take a break for breakfast. After our meal, I would make compound garlic butter and vegetable broth that would be used in other recipes. During that time, I would also prepare the vegetables for the other dishes.

One of the three main entrees that I was cooking for the day was pea and mukimame soup that I was making vegan for Tyler to take home to his always hungry and very pregnant wife. I would also be making her a chocolate mousse with some of the about twenty fantastic looking avocados that I got from the market for stupid cheap. The other meal I was creating was shepherd's pie, and I was fixing her a small one as well, but we weren't filming that. We were making a separate video on the mashed potatoes though that were going on the pie. I was

going to make a few small ones to freeze to have later. Seth would be taking the one we were cooking home for his leftovers. He was very excited.

The final dish I was preparing especially for Edward so that he could have it when he got home from the set that evening. Garlic butter filet steak bites with roasted baby butter potatoes and portobello mushrooms, all cooked in the same massive cast-iron skillet.

"I love how this place always smells like coffee," Seth said when he came in, putting his camera equip down on the couch. Edward had most of his stuff out for them to use as well.

"Coffee is on the table. The schedule for the day is on there as well if you want to check it out. Let me know if I need to allow more time for the setup and stuff," I mumbled, putting my own camera away so that I could go to wash my hands. "It's my first time trying, but I tried to keep in mind how Edward does it."

"No, looks doable," Tyler stated, nodding his head. "You plan more breaks than Eddie does."

"Well, I imagine there is more cleaning involved with this than his normal shoots," I replied, giving him a small smile. "Sorry, you're probably going to have to help me wash dishes. We've got a lot to cook today."

"Meh," he waved me off after making a little sound in his throat. "Your sink is big, and your dishwasher is nice. It's fine," he answered as he walked to the fridge to pick one of the creamers. "Who's going to be in what?"

"You decide."

"Rock, paper, scissors?" Seth asked his friend as he brought him a clean mug. He agreed with a nod, putting the creamer and his own cup on the table. "One, two, three, shoot." Tyler threw up a piece of paper while he was a rock. "Alright. You go first."

"Cool. I like bananas," he commented, pleased.

I was actually glad that Tyler was starting. Since we had been in the video together the night before, I knew how he was going to be without Eddie. I wasn't sure about Seth yet. We had been in other videos together, but always with his boss being the loudest guy in the room.

The gentlemen took over the director's duties when they were behind the cameras. It was so easy to get in the flow with them. They had their own actors' masks. Tyler was good about asking questions that I hadn't thought to answer. Seth was actually pretty handy in the kitchen, especially with a knife. He kept claiming that he wasn't a very great cook, but I didn't think that was the case at all.

We had breakfast by the pool out in the sunshine. I had made more coffee and brought out the orange juice as well. To go with our eggs, I sliced up avocados, fresh tomatoes, and toasted some Italian bread. Tyler destroyed one of the cinnamon roasted bananas before I even got to the table.

"I could eat this every day," he moaned over another one.

"Stop making those noises while shoving something so phallic in your mouth," Seth exclaimed as he made a little face at his friend. Tyler made one back, shoving half into his mouth at once. I giggled to myself at their display as I dashed hot sauce over my eggs.

"Thank you for breakfast," Tyler mumbled, grinning a little, his mouth still full.

"Well, you both certainly helped, and we're all going to get paid a lot of money to do it. So... you're welcome!" I laughed. He chuckled as well.

"You seem to be in a better mood than you were yesterday," he offered, putting salt on his tomatoes. "You seemed a little down."

"I'm just feeling more isolated than I expected. I'm in a new place, doing new things, and I love it. But I miss my friends. And so much has happened lately that is overwhelming. My husband worked a lot, too. He traveled overseas and spent a lot of time in Europe. But I could run to a whole host of people who would happily invite me over to drink and play games. Party. I don't know anyone here. I kind of panicked the other day when it hit me."

"Yeah, you do," Seth countered. "You have friends here."

"You know us. You can call us anytime," Tyler smiled. "And Lauren, too."

I smiled as well. "Yes. You are. You're right."

"I understand what you mean, though," he said, pursing his lips to one side of his mouth for a minute. "Your roommate is like your Seth or Jasper, huh?"

"Yeah," I nodded. "She's making plans to open an office here in a couple of years. I have no idea when all this is going to happen yet, but I know when she gets here, it'll help my sanity one hundred thousand percent. I need my live-in therapist apparently."

"Anytime you wanna come tag along with our videos, you can," Seth offered happily. "If you just want to get out of the house and have some fun. We both love filming with you."

"Thank you. I will keep that in mind."

"We'll send you our shooting schedules from now on, and you can maybe decide in advance what you want to do," he suggested, smiling at me charmingly. "I've got some abandoned places that I'm going to film at soon that I think you'd seriously love."

"Honestly, I'm glad Eddie wanted me to check up on you yesterday-" I turned my head quickly to look at Tyler. His eyes got big. "You did not know that. I should not have said that... I wasn't supposed to. I'm sorry, I mean, I wanted to take you out to say thank you. It's just that I wasn't planning on it yet. But it worked out for the best, I think because the video last night was great and-"

"Dude, you sound like Eddie when you're nervous," Seth snorted. "He can't control his mouth either."

"Shut up," he murmured under his breath. "I don't want to get him in trouble."

"Why would that get him in trouble?" I asked carefully.

"Because he said you weren't too happy about the idea of needing a babysitter." I wondered how much of the conversation he actually told his friend. I gave a little sigh as I tilted my head to the side. "Are you angry?"

"No. I had a great time yesterday, and I'm glad that it happened. I do wish that I didn't need someone to keep me company, but that's a 'me' issue, not his. But I know it's because he cares. Thank you for being a good friend to him. It made him feel better," I replied, giving him a little smile.

Tyler reached over and pulled me into a surprising hug. He patted my back gently. "I had a great time, too. You don't need a babysitter, you need a friend. We all need friends."

"I'm sorry. I must seem insane for whining about anything." I rolled my eyes at myself, shaking my head. "I probably seem like I have this perfect life now where I have everything."

"Nah," Seth answered, shaking his head. He was talking with his hands, a piece of toast in between his fingers. "I mean, if people were just looking at the BuzzFeed articles, they might think that. I don't know what all you went through before I met you, but I know it was no cakewalk. You're one of the strongest, toughest ladies that I've ever met. I think a lot of your walls have started to come down, though."

"But that's not a bad thing," Tyler added quickly.

"No, not at all. Walls have to get torn down so that new things can be built. It's just the deconstruction process is usually really messy," he answered wisely. "Yours has got to be crazy

chaotic. I can't honestly imagine thinking your entire life, 'I've gotta be super hard because no one gives a fuck about me' and then finding out that not only you were wanted by a father that appears by all accounts like the perfect dad, but the people who didn't care... just fucking hid you out of... what, racism? Spite?" He stabbed the corner of his toast in this poached egg. "Assholes."

"Seth," Tyler whispered, looking down at the table with huge eyes.

I swiftly shook my head, blushing a little. "No, it's fine. He's exactly right. I was hidden away, and I worked my ass off to please a grandmother who was bitter and angry. It was only out of some obligation that she kept me. Most of the extra things that I did as a child were because of my best friend's mom. Because she loved me more. She sponsored my gymnastics, my dance. She'd buy me clothes and give them to me every time that I would visit because my grandmother bought me so few new ones," I overshared some of my life story with them. "I've never been away from Alice this long. It helped to see her in Washington. Eddie was so great about that."

Both of our friends smiled. "He would do anything to make you happy," Seth said, grinning at me a little more before it turned into a smirk. "Man, I wanted to ask for your number so bad when I first met you. Dude literally growled at me," he laughed.

"You did not," I laughed awkwardly, surprised by his admission.

His face scrunched up. "Uh, yeah? You make me feel tall, and our kids would probably have the nicest tan," he joked. I snorted, looking away from him. "Nah. It's cool, though. It probably would hurt my ego to date someone who knew more about serial killers than me."

"Who are you complimenting or insulting there?" Tyler asked, raising his eyebrow before shaking his head. He took another bite of bananas. "I'm glad that I know how to make these," he mumbled to himself.

Seth rolled his eyes, taking another pile of hash browns for his plates. "It's complimenting her, insulting me. I have so much to learn. She's like... the master. By the way, are you ready to get serious about that? Eddie says it's a go once Jasper gets here because he wants nothing to do with it."

I snorted again. Gently, I rubbed my hand over my forehead. "I don't blame him. Yeah, are we going to do something dedicated to killers? Are we really going to do Serial killer storytime?"

"Yeah, it's a start at least. See if they like it and branch out. How many episodes should we do? We can film them all in the same day and maybe do one a week?" He offered up, reaching for the ketchup. He shrugs. "We can see how it goes."

"How are we going to do it? One killer per episode?"

Seth pursed his lips as he thought about it. "Mm, yeah. Let's be focused. We want it to be tight. Probably fifteen to thirty minutes per episode, but we'll worry about that part in editing. That's our job. You just talk all you want."

"You'll get plenty of stuff for bonus content if they like it," Tyler replied as he poured ketchup on his eggs.

"How are we going to do the research?" I asked next, taking a bite of the potatoes. This was the part I was good at.

Holding a finger up, he chewed before answering. "You could do one, I could do one. Split it up. Alternate," Seth murmured as he wiped his mouth.

"Okay," I replied thoughtfully. "We probably don't want to film a ton to start. How many episodes do you think we could film in a single day?"

"Uh... five or six," Tyler offered up. "Spend about an hour or so on each." He was the best at the technical stuff between us.

"So, go with six. I do three, you do three. Do you have any idea on who you'd like to cover? Are we doing strictly serial killers, or are we going over murderers in general?" I pulled out my phone so that I could write some quick notes in our file.

"I hate how weirdly specific it can get," he muttered under his breath, looking over at Seth. "I'm glad Jasper's coming, too. It means I can do less of that shit too. I mean, I don't hate it as much as the boss does, but like, y'all are oddly giddy."

He ignored him. "We'll stick with the serial killer theme, then branch out from there. I've got plans if this goes well. Stuff we can do together. If you wanna keep sharing your crime knowledge with me, anyway."

I smiled widely. "For sure. Alright, we'll look at a list later, and you and I will make our picks on who we want to research."

Seth fist-bumped me, obviously very pleased. Then he shoved an entire poached egg in his mouth on the corner of a piece of toast. I giggled as he made a mess.

"I don't think that I could really write a script for that, I'd go off it too much. So, I think I'll make, like, bullet point note lists with things that I want to cover about each of them. I'll share them with you before the episode, that way you can see if I need to add or take anything out."

"Perfect," he mumbled through his food. His lips were stained yellow.

We had made the broth, butter, and mashed potatoes when I got a phone call from Edward. Tyler was at the sink washing dishes while Seth was changing out SD cards and batteries in the cameras.

"Hello, my love," he said too brightly into the phone right away. "Guess what?"

"What?" I asked in a laugh. I was expecting him to say that he either found a new video game to play while bored in his trailer or that he tried a new food truck with Sarah for lunch that he wanted me to try as well. Maybe he got offered another role.

"The set caught fire today!"

"What?!" I shouted, confused by his cheerfulness.

"Remember the electrical problems yesterday? It was causing shorts. Turns out it was the air conditioners."

"Oh, no! Is everyone okay?"

"Yeah," he chuckled. "But there was smoke fucking everywhere. So, guess what the good news is?"

I shook my head a little to myself. "What's that?"

"I get at least two unexpected days off while they get that fixed. Filming has halted for today, and that's the earliest that they'll have it fixed by. Blew a bunch of wiring on the set. So, still cooking?"

"Yup," I grinned widely to myself, leaning against the island as I bit my bottom lip.

"Oh, may I join you?"

"Mm, you absolutely may."

"Good. I'm fucking starving," Edward chuckled again, obviously in an excellent mood. "I'll be home in a tick. I love you."

It felt like my whole face just lit up, just thinking about how excited he was to come home to me. "I love you, too," I said before we hung up, smiling at my phone.

“Playtime is over. Sounds like the boss is crashing this party,” Seth smirked to his buddy as he looked over his shoulder.

“Nah, it’s fine. He knows how to get down,” Tyler smirked back, starting the dishwasher before drying his hands to help with the set up again. The machine was so quiet that you could barely hear it. He turned to me and smiled, patting me on the shoulder. “What’s next, boss?”