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Beta'd by HollettLA

And Francesca has helped me with all things Italian

~CaraNo

Isla de Cullen

Chapter 32

BPOV

"So...Bella."

There it was.

I could see it in her twinkling eyes, and had it not been for the fact that I pretty much loved the woman sitting across from me, I would've changed the topic, but I did love her. And she was the mother of the man I loved more than anything in the world, so...she could ask. I knew it; I had seen it.

This was the will-you-give-me-grandchildren-talk.

"So..." I echoed quietly, placing the napkin in my lap. I raised an eyebrow at her, amused. I expected I would blush, but I was in luck. For once.

Then the waiter arrived. *Thank you.*

Biting down on my lip, I realized there was a knot in my stomach, but I couldn't for the life of me figure out why. I mean, I was prepared. I knew why Esme asked me out this morning for brunch. It was so obvious. Sure, I was nervous. More than a little, in fact, but...I already knew what to say. Yes? Yes. So...why was the damn knot there? I already knew what I wanted...right? Yeah. I did.

After we had ordered our food, Esme didn't waste time.

"I'm pretty sure my son wants to marry you," she said. "He's completely taken with you."

There's the blush.

I sipped my water, needing to cure the sudden dryness.

"I'm completely taken, too," I replied. "And um..." How to say this right? "Edward has..." I chuckled nervously. "He's already told me about his feelings concerning marriage."

She beamed brighter than the sun.

"And what are your feelings?" she prompted.

I flushed. "I'm fully committed," I said, somewhat shyly. "I know he's the one." Jesus, was there any shade redder? I doubted it. "And if he asks me, I will say yes." *Without hesitation.*

"Not *if*, honey," she said, patting my hand. "*When*. It's only a matter of time."

Then I was beaming, too. I couldn't help it, but the thought of being married to Edward...Christ, I wanted it. Badly.

There was even one of those girly, dreamy sighs escaping me before I took another sip of my water.

Yes, I had it bad.

"And children?"

I choked. And coughed.

"Shit," I croaked, wiping my mouth with the napkin. "You couldn't have asked me once the water was back on the table?" I coughed and cleared my throat, throwing Esme a glare as she grinned at me.

She was having fun.

"No," I said. "No children for Edward and me." And there was that feeling again. I couldn't understand it. At all. I shook my head. "Edward doesn't want any, and...neither do I."

In truth, Edward hadn't outright told me he didn't want children, but he had, however, told me that he'd never seen children in his future.

So...yeah.

I frowned internally, wondering what the hell was wrong with me.

I shrugged it off, though, as the waiter arrived with our food.

"You know...you're much like my son," Esme mused. "You're both in denial."

My brows furrowed in confusion. "What do you mean?" I looked down as I cut into my chicken. "In denial about what?"

"Children, of course," she chuckled. "Edward's always said that children aren't for him, but I know he's wrong."

"Isn't that up to him?" I asked, grinning wryly. "I've never gotten the impression that he would want children."

She pursed her lips. "You'll see, honey. You'll see."

We left it at that, thankfully.

Instead we moved on to safer topics.

"How is Isla?" Esme asked. "I have to say I miss it. Carlisle and I used to visit every now and then, but we haven't been in..." She sighed. "A year? Christ, time flies."

I smiled. "Isla's beautiful—I love it there. I can't wait to move there permanently." I smiled wistfully before grinning. "And I miss Carmen."

"Oh, yes, Carmen. I love that woman dearly," Esme gushed. "She's only ten years older than I am, and still she comes off as a mother." She smiled fondly.

"And the bickering between her and Edward—they're too funny sometimes." I snickered. "She's always doting on him, and I swear he's the king of eye-rolls around her."

"I can imagine," she giggled. "He's the same with me. It doesn't matter if he's the almighty Edward Cullen," she puffed out her chest, "always in control of everything." We both laughed. "He'll always be my little boy."

"Much to his chagrin," I chuckled, holding up my glass.

"*Very* much to his chagrin, yes," she agreed.

We clinked out glasses together.

"Well, Carlisle and I will have to come out and visit soon," Esme said. By now, we were almost finished eating. "Now, how about some shopping before we return to Sausalito?"

"Sounds good." I smiled.

"Excellent. I will call Bill."

While she did that, I paid our check. It had taken some time to convince Esme, but after I'd showed her Edward's credit card, she knew very well that he would be mad if she paid. She knew her son. According to him,

women didn't pay. For Christ's sake, he didn't even allow me to use my own credit card. It had to be his.

Anyway, soon we were out of the restaurant, and I smiled when I heard Edward's ringtone. When I spoke to him, he sounded worried for some reason, so I made a mental note to talk to him later.

Then he wasn't the only one worried.

Before I knew it, our driver was frantic, shouting about the brakes failing and that "this wasn't how it was supposed to happen". But what I focused on was the steep hill...

And Edward.

Because I saw. Frozen in horror, I saw the intersection down the hill. I saw the cable cars. I saw everything.

Until all I felt was pain.

EPOV

"Fuck."

In any other situation, I would have been surprised to hear my father curse, but not now. Not when his wife could be in danger, not when he was speeding his way through traffic toward the city, and not when I had just told him where Bella and my mother were.

After my moment of shock and horror had worn off, I had filled my father in. Not five minutes passed before we left in his Mercedes. Well, my horror was still very much present, but I refused to think about it. I was a man who took action, and sitting around wouldn't give us answers. My father was the same. So, as he drove, I made the necessary calls to find out where the two most important women in my life could be. And I got the

answer. After a call to Gem Services, I had the GPS coordinates to the driver's car. Therefore, we also knew what hospital they would be taken to in the event of an accident.

"Who are you calling now?" my father asked as I pressed seven on speed dial.

"My PI," I muttered, holding the phone to my ear as I checked how fast we were going. "Speed up."

He did.

"Jenks speaking."

I took a breath. Then let it out. "Cullen here. When did you lose sight of Gianna?"

I ignored Carlisle's frown in confusion. At least for now.

"Um..."

"Answer me!" I demanded, feeling my temper flare. "There's no way you lost sight of her and sent me the text right away."

My knee was bouncing. I ran a hand through my hair.

I knew, deep in my bones, that Gianna was behind whatever this was.

Fuck. Bella. You better be okay, baby.

"W-well, no, sir," Jenks stuttered. *"We tried to find her first."*

I clenched my teeth, closed my eyes, pinched the bridge of my nose.

"When...Did. You. Lose. Her?" I gritted out.

"L-last night," he replied, and chills ran down my spine. *"I'm in San Francisco right now."*

I quickly did the math, counting the hours between her disappearance and Jenks' text; Gianna could be anywhere by now.

If Jenks had told me right away, this disaster could've been avoided, because there was no way I'd have let my Bella out of my sight if I'd known there was a chance Gianna was nearby.

My father's phone rang, and I already knew. I just knew what kind of call it would be.

My blood turned to ice.

"Find that bitch," I hissed to Jenks. "And I will need you soon. Expect my call." I blew out a breath. "And, Jenks? If you fail at this, I will end you."

I hung up and turned to Carlisle as he picked up the call on his headset.

"Carlisle Cullen speaking." He clenched his teeth. "I'm her husband." He glanced at me before he sped up even more. "Got it." I wasn't prepared for the confirmation. I felt nauseous. "Tell me the extent of her injuries." He quickly slipped into doctor-mode. "And tell me if there's an Isabella Swan."

I held my breath.

She had to be okay. She had to. There was no other option.

The last thing I cared about was the short amount of time we had been together. That girl was everything to me. Everything. I knew I wouldn't be able to take it if she...

I swallowed hard.

“Need I remind you of who I am?” Carlisle snapped. I was thankful for his status in the medical field. Regardless of hospital in the Bay Area—as well as in Chicago, actually—everyone knew who my father was. “I...” He trailed off, once again glancing at me. “No, follow protocol, but I need to know. And now.”

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“Thank you.” He looked relieved, which relaxed me, too. “We’ll be there as soon as we can.” He snapped the phone shut, taking a breath before he explained to me. “There was a car accident.”

I sucked in a sharp breath.

The pain was indescribable.

“Esme’s and Bella’s conditions are stable. Bella’s in surgery right now for a broken leg.” I squeezed my eyes shut, praying that was the worst of her injuries. Christ... “We will know more soon. As for Esme-” He choked up, and I felt myself go pale all over again. “She’s in surgery for broken ribs, a fractured collarbone, and a punctured lung. There was also head trauma.” The last words came out in a whisper.

I exhaled shakily.

In my head, I repeated that their conditions were stable. It was all I had to go on. It was what kept me breathing.

Never before I had I felt so powerless.

“All I know about the accident is that they drove into a cable car,” he croaked. “Luckily the cable car was headed in the same direction, and it

was going fast enough to make the impact softer. Had it not been for that..." He shook his head.

I nodded, unable to speak.

I knew I wouldn't be able to relax fully until I could see Bella and my mother with my own eyes.

"Um, Edward," he said hesitantly. "Isabella's parents are still listed as emergency contacts. They have to call them."

I waved him off, not caring. I had no idea whether or not they would fly down here, but if they did one single thing to upset my girl, they would have hell to pay. As long as I was able to enter her room, I didn't care about much else.

Later, it didn't come as a surprise when her parents decided not to come.

~IdC~

Seven hours later, I was a little calmer, though still furious and shaken.

I also knew more.

Sitting in the chair next to Bella's hospital bed, I had nothing to do but wait for her to open her beautiful eyes. I needed to see them. I needed for her to wake up. I needed to hear her voice. Even if I knew she would recover, it killed me to see her in that bed. It didn't matter how lucky she was, according to the doctors. To me, she was harmed. A simple paper cut was enough to upset me when it came to Isabella.

Bella had gotten away with a fractured rib, a broken leg, a dislocated shoulder, a fractured wrist, and bruising. But as my eyes travelled over her small form, every bruise and cut, every fracture...I just wished I could take away the pain. Onto myself or...just simply away from her. She didn't

deserve this, and it was my job to protect her, something I had failed miserably at.

I had underestimated Gianna as a threat.

And now both Bella and Esme were injured.

I checked my watch, knowing my mother was still in surgery. Apparently, she had hit her head against the car window as the car made impact with the back of the cable car. She had spent three hours in surgery as the doctors worked on the left side of her head. Then there was a fractured spleen, broken ribs, a crushed kneecap, broken collarbone, internal bleeding, and a punctured lung.

I was numb.

In shock.

Devastated.

Guilt-ridden.

Vengeful.

And furious.

The fury was directed at Gianna and the driver. The only reason I wished for him to be alive was so that he could give the police his statement, tying Gianna to the crime. *It had to be her*. She promised to destroy me, after all—something I hadn't taken seriously.

This was her doing—I was sure of it.

I chuckled darkly. The sinister grin on my face promised a world of pain.

I had already given Jenks unlimited resources.

My father had too, after I had told him.

It was after Bella's surgery that I told him about everything that Gianna had done.

He was livid.

This had been personal from the start, but this was...a whole other level of personal. She was causing physical harm to my family, literally threatening their lives. So no, I wasn't surprised when Carlisle just gave me his nod of go ahead.

Movement caught my eye, and I looked up to see my father enter the room. He looked relieved, thank God. I prayed that meant my mother's surgery had gone well.

"She's better now. They're taking her to her room," he said, answering my unspoken question. "Bella's not awake yet?"

I shook my head. "Not yet. The doctor said it could be another hour or two."

He nodded and checked Bella's chart in the folder at the foot of her bed.

"She'll be okay," he said, reading whatever her doctor had scribbled. "I'd say...with physical therapy, she'll be fully recovered within three months."

Her doctor had said the same, not that it mattered much. Three months was still three fucking months. Time she should spend being well and out of harm's way.

"I'm taking her home," I murmured, leaning forward on my knees. "As soon as possible. I don't want her here...or in Seattle for that matter."

"Sounds like a good plan, son," Carlisle sighed. "The island will do her good."

I nodded, never taking my eyes off of Bella.

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"The driver is in surgery again," he mentioned quietly. "They have to amputate his legs."

I didn't care. Actually, I was glad he was really hurt. I wouldn't need him to have legs to talk to the police.

But thank God Bella and my mother were in the backseat and not the front.

My phone rang, but after having expected Jenks to call, my brows furrowed when I saw it was an unknown number.

"Cullen," I answered.

"*New phone.*" It was Jenks, which I mouthed to Carlisle. He understood. And I understood why Jenks was calling from a new number. "*She's still here,*" Jenks informed me, and this was what I had hoped for. "*I tracked her down—she used her credit card.*" Since he didn't mention names, I was aware that the situation had taken a new turn. Jenks was willing to do pretty much anything—my reason for having him work for me. "*I'm following her right now, and I think she's on her way to the airport.*"

"Pick her up—she does not leave this state," I replied simply. "Keep her someplace safe and wait for me to get back to you."

"*Understood, sir.*"

I disconnected the call.

I stared at Bella's unmoving form.

The wheels turned in my head.

Jenks was here. He was following Gianna. Good. That was good.

"I'm just going to ask you once, son," I heard my father say. I knew what was coming. "Do you know what you're doing?"

"Yes," I answered immediately, eyes still glued to Isabella.

"And..." He cleared his throat and lowered his voice. "And what is that, exactly?"

Tilting my head in his direction, I gave him a pointed look.

I wasn't exactly going to spell it out.

But he got it. With a small dip of his chin—his eyes somber—he gave me his silent understanding.

A few minutes later, Carlisle left to be with my mother, and I sat where I'd been sitting for hours, just waiting for my Bella to wake up.

After a few moments, I stared at the clock on the wall.

Could I be back before Bella woke up?

Because I knew once she was up, I wouldn't be able to leave her sight. Possibly ever.

Running a hand through my hair, I brought out my phone and sent Jenks a text—to his new phone.

Where are you?

Jenks' reply was instant.

With the directions to a coffee shop where he'd meet me, I kissed Bella on the forehead, told her I loved her, and left.