

Chapter 5: A Day Out in Town

Mila's POV

I woke up the next morning with a smile on my face, and a prep in my step. I haven't felt this good since before Sebastian started hitting me. That was almost three years ago. I walked down stairs, Izzy had already left but she left a note on the fridge...

Good morning Mila,

I already left this morning, and I don't know when I will be back. I will try to visit in about a month to see how you are doing. I wrote down Joseph's number and mine in case you need anything or just want to talk. Best of luck !

Izzy.

I left the note on the fridge, and began making breakfast for Amelia and myself. After everything was set on the table I went up to wake Amelia only to find her standing by the sliding glass door.

"What are you looking at, sweetie?" I asked as I tied her hair back out of her face.

"The big puppy." She replied as she turned around to look up at me. Her tiny finger pointed to the glass and I noticed there was a streak on the other side like it was wet. "Puppy licked glass. Big puppy." When she said big puppy her little hand tried to reach above her head.

"Wow that is a big puppy. Come eat breakfast, we are going with Joey to find mommy a job." I scooped her up and headed down the stairs. I stopped in my tracks when I saw Joey sitting on the couch eating a strip of bacon. I could have sworn I locked the door.

"There is a spare key in the garden." Joey said giving me a toothy grin. He really was a very good looking man, but I'm not going there. He turned his attention to Amelia. "Who is this little beauty? My name is Joseph, but you can call me Joey." He held out his hand and to my surprise, Amelia shook it.

"I Amelia. You cuuuuuute." Oh lord, my child is blushing at a grown man!

"Why thank you Amelia, but believe me you are so much more prettier than me." He kissed the back of her hand and she giggled.

"Okay enough you too, we need to eat." I walked to the table and sat Amelia in the chair. I went to the kitchen to grab another plate for Joey. "Have you eaten?"

"No. The cooks at the house don't know what they're doing. I was going to pick something up in town."

"Nonsense. Come sit and have breakfast, I made plenty." He sat down while I loaded his plate with Pancakes, fruit, scrambled eggs, bacon, and homemade hashbrowns. He almost looked like he was going to drool.

"MMMMMM. This is GREAT!" He dug into his plate like he was a starved man. "I haven't had a homecooked meal in years."

"Thank you. That is one thing I love to do and have been good at: cooking and baking." I smiled as I sat down and bit into my pancakes. Fluffy and buttery.

"You bake too!" I couldn't help to laugh at his reaction. Surely whoever is cooking at their house couldn't be that bad.

"Why don't you come for dinner? I'm making chicken parmesan with a homemade sauce that is to die for. For dessert I'll whip up my famous cookies. I have a secret to keep the inside soft and the outside with the perfect amount of crunch." I smiled but he looked like he wanted to cry.

"Chicken parmesan was my mother's specialty. I haven't had it since she died." His eyes lit up and I feel like my heart broke. "I can't wait to see if you can cook just as good as her. She was the cook in the house and no one has been able to do her memory justice."

We ate the rest of our breakfast in a comfortable silence, and when we were done Joey was nice enough to clean up while I got Amelia and myself dressed. I dressed Amelia in light blue jean shorts with white lace at the bottom and a white spaghetti shirt with blue flowers at the bottom. I paired with a white ribbon bow in her hair, and white gladiator sandals. Joey said to look professional, but not to overdo it since it is a small town. So I wore my favorite black skinny jeans that hugged every curve, black booties, and a white sleeveless button up shirt. Simple yet still businesslike. I let my long wavy hair hang naturally. Make up I kept to a minimum with mascara, and a nude lip gloss. I headed downstairs and Joey gripped his heart.

"You both look great." He smiled, but for some reason he can't stop looking at my lips. Not even Sebastian looked at me like this. "My jeep is outside. You ready?"

"Yea lets go." I held Amelia's hand as we walked outside. We climbed into his deep green jeep which had no top or doors. I loved it.

We drove into town conversating about little things. The real argument came when I said chocolate chip ice cream was way better than cookies and cream. We laughed until we got into town, and I began interviewing for jobs. I mostly tried to find a job where Amelia would be close. I was new in town, and didn't trust anyone to babysit her without me being able to check that she was ok.

I interviewed at two daycares, a gym, and a pre school. I was told I can take a few classes while training as a teacher's aid until I graduate and get my own class. I really love kids, but my heart was cooking. The whole time I was in the job interviews, Amelia was talking Joey's ear off. We were headed to go get ice cream when Amelia told Joey about the big puppy she saw.

"Big puppy with blue eyes. Pwetty brown with white feet." Amelia decried. I really hope we didn't have wolves near by. I wanted to enjoy the outdoors with Amelia, and I couldn't do that if I was worried we were going to be eaten.

"Really you don't say?" His hands seemed to grip the wheel tighter. "I bet it was really big, huh." He gave a tight smile. He was keeping his facial expressions under control, but why did he seem mad?

"Real big. Taller than mommy!" Amelia didn't seem scared. Were there wolves that big out here !

"There aren't wolves out here that big are there?" I said trying to keep my worry hidden.

"Nothing to worry about. The wolves are curious, but not aggressive. I'll protect you." He winked. Of course he would take his opportunity to flirt.

We just came out of the ice cream shop when I ran into a chest as hard as a brick wall. I dropped my ice cream on his shoes and he did not look phased.

"Oh my gosh, I'm so sorry." I tried to apologize. But nothing could prepare me for the God like features this man had. He had a chiseled chin, dimples, facial hair that was kept neat, striking blue eyes, and light brown curly hair that hung just passed his ears. He was so damn sexy.

"Joseph. I see you're playing the town guide." His voice was deep and demanded respect.

"Leo. I see you just got done with your meeting with the mayor. Did you have fun playing politics?" Joey's voice was taunting and full of sarcasm. These two men had to be enemies or something.

To my surprise they both dropped their serious glares and smiled and gave each other a huge hug. "I swear I can never stay mad at you. You're too much like a brother." Joey said.

"Same, man. Same." The mysterious man now turned to me. "I'm Leonardo Cruz. Please call me Mr. Cruz."

Joey rolled his eyes. "You sound like a perverted high school teacher. 'Please call me Mr. Cruz.'" I can't believe Joey had the balls to mock this guy. He was at least 6'3 and had muscles everywhere. If he exerted too hard he would tear his shirt !

"I Amelia. This mommy. You have eyes like big puppy I saw." Then she pointed her finger at him and then pointed to the ground. Mr. Cruz kneeled down so he was eye level with her. She put her tiny hands in his hair and smiled. "Hair like puppy too!"

Mr. Cruz smiled and whispered in her ear. She smiled big and gave him a hug. "Our little secret, okay?"

"Okay!" Amelia then stood back next to me.

"That is SO funny. A big puppy with brown hair and blue eyes!" What was Joey playing at? He had his head tilted to one side, and a full grin on his face.

"Shut up Joseph." Mr. Cruz laughed and turned to me. "I hope you enjoy our little town, please let me know if there is anything you need."

"Wouldn't I go to the mayor or someone of high authority? Are you a cop or something?"

He laughed. God, I loved that sound. It was a deep low chuckle in the back of his throat. "Trust me, I'm the highest authority here." He smiled.

"Well do you know any bakeries that are hiring that will be ok with me having my daughter with me?" This was my chance to find a job to do something I really had a passion for.

"You bake?" He seemed surprised.

"And she cooks!" Joey practically jumped. "I was able to join them for breakfast and it was great. She is making chicken parmesan tonight! You know no one makes it like my mother did !"

I almost began to blush. No one has ever been so excited about my cooking, and I never heard such praises. Sebastian always said I was horrible at it, but I never believed him. His family loved my cooking.

"Would you allow me to join you for dinner tonight? If I see that your cooking skills are just as good as Joseph says then I can hire you to cook at the main house. I promise the pay is way better than anywhere you would work in this town."

"Really ! Okay, that sounds great. Just come by around 6pm and everything will be ready !" I turned to Joey with a big smile. "Can you take me to the store. I have to get a few things."

"Yea lets go. See you tonight, Leo." Joey nodded.

Amelia waved goodbye as we walked back to the jeep. "You owe me another ice cream."

"Actually Leo does." He smiled. I have a feeling that Mr. Cruz isn't the type to "owe" anyone anything.

We got back to the cabin around 3pm and I had plenty of time to cook dinner and bake dessert. I won't actually put the cookies in until last minute so they will be ready right when we should be done with dinner.

While I prepped, cooked, and cleaned, Joey was watching Frozen 2 with Amelia, and to my surprise he was singing every word.

I looked at him with a raised brow. "What?" He replied. "I volunteer at the day care sometimes and the kids love Olaf." He shrugged and went back to his musical number.

He really seemed like a good guy. I am happy for the first time, Amelia can have fun with someone. Sebastian never played with her, never read her a book, or tucked her in for bed.

Before I knew it, it was ten minutes to 6pm and I looked a mess. I quickly changed into blue jeans and a green v neck. My hair was hopeless so I just put it in a high bun. There was a knock on the door and I heard Joey open it.

"Hey man, come in." There was a laugh which sounded like it was from Joey. "Don't you look nice."

"Shut up Joseph, I always look nice." That sexy voice filled my ears. God, what is wrong with me?

I walked downstairs, and locked eyes with Mr. Cruz. He looked delicious.