Limits 229

Chapter 229

Jack had no idea what was going on, but seeing Bella suddenly take off, he instinctively chased after her. Suddenly, she let out a yelp and stumbled, collapsing onto the ground while clutching her ankle.

Jack rushed to her side. "What happened? Are you okay?"

Bella looked up at him, her expression pitiful as she rubbed her ankle. "I twisted my ankle... Can you help me massage it?"

Jack helped her up and guided her to sit on a nearby rock. Then, he carefully lifted her foot and gently kneaded her ankle.

It wasn't the first time he had done this for her, but every time he touched her delicate skin, he could feel his heartbeat quicken. His face grew warm, his ears burning slightly.

As he worked, Bella suddenly lowered her head, her bright eyes shimmering with expectation.

"Big Bun, do you think my feet are pretty?" she asked softly.

The question caught him off guard.

Without thinking, Jack blurted out, "Yeah, they are."

The moment the words left his mouth, he realized how blunt they sounded. But when he saw the delighted expression on Bella's face, a strange warmth filled his chest. Without warning, she wrapped her arms around his neck, pulling him close.

"Big Bun, I want to talk to you about something," she murmured. Her voice trembled slightly, her sincerity unmistakable.

"Do you remember the things I told you before?" she continued, gazing into his eyes. "I... want to be with you."

Her eyes were full of love and longing.

Jack's entire body tensed.

For a moment, he saw nothing but her her stunning eyes, her slightly parted lips, and the genuine emotion in her voice. But then, memories came crashing back.

He remembered her playful, mischievous side. He remembered that conversation with Gigi, the words that had cut through him like a knife. A cold feeling settled in his chest, and his expression darkened.

Taking a deep breath, he finally said, "Bella, you're an amazing person. I won't deny that I've been drawn to you before. But... this isn't going to work. Instead of wasting your time on me, you should go find someone who truly deserves you."

Bella's eyes widened, searching his face for any hint of hesitation. She could feel him slipping away.

Desperation crept into her voice as she pleaded, "Big Bun, after everything I've done for you, do you still not understand how I feel? If I didn't like you, would I have spent my entire summer learning to cook just to make you happy? If I didn't like you, would I be out here alone with you, dressed like this, in the middle of nowhere? If I didn't like you, would I have introduced you to my father?"

Jack didn't know how to reply. Because everything she said was true. He couldn't deny it her feelings were real. But the words he had overheard before had stuck with him like a thorn in his throat. He couldn't forget them.

As if reading his mind, Bella bit her lip, her eyes brimming with unshed tears.

"You're still hung up on what I said to Gigi, aren't you?" she accused, frustration leaking into her voice.

"That was just an excuse to brush her off! What was I supposed to say? Should I have told her, 'Not only did I not trick him, but I also completely fell for him myself"?"

Jack knew she was telling the truth now. No girl would go to such lengths just for the sake of winning some petty argument. Even if it had started as a game, her feelings had long since turned real.

But even so... Jack frowned, his mind drifting elsewhere. A vision of another girl appeared—elegant, graceful, and almost untouchable, like a star shining in the night sky. And in that moment, he made his choice.

"Bella," he said firmly, "you can find someone better than me."

Because deep down, he already knew. He was already drawn to someone. Ever since he played several songs with Phoebe, Jack knew deep down that he was completely enchanted by her, as if her presence had captured his soul, and he couldn't escape it.

He understood that pursuing Phoebe might lead to an uncertain future or maybe no future at all—but he still wanted to try, just so he wouldn't have any regrets.

It was like when he confessed his feelings to Feena all those years ago.