

Part Three

December

Jackson sat on the stairs of his house impatiently, looking down at his watch and waiting for the alarm to go off. "Come on, come on, come on." He muttered, starting to rise off of the step. "Come on..."

Only letting a singular beep out as the alarm went off, he turned the alarm off, standing up fully and looking around. "Late. He's late." He laughed triumphantly, walking to the side to peek. "Jasper? You're late..." He started to walk around his house, raising his eyebrow. "Jazz..." He called teasingly, doing a full lap around the house before his playfulness was replaced with concern. "Jasper?"

The dark-haired boy glanced down at his watch as the time struck two minutes past, placing his hands on his hips. "I wonder where-"

Sneaking around the corner quietly, Jasper crept up to the boy, suddenly placing his hands on his back. "Boo!"

Yelping out in surprise, Jackson turned around swiftly, grabbing the blonde by his shoulders with wide eyes. "Oh...Jesus! You scared me."

"I know. I planned it." Jasper smiled cheekily, stepping back from him. "So. I'm here with my backpack like you asked."

"Because..." He headed to the door, pushing it open. "My parents are gone all weekend. And Christmas is next week...so I figured we could have an early Christmas together. Since you know...you won't really get one."

Eyes lighting up warmly, Jasper hugged the dark-haired boy. "You're the sweetest, Jackson."

"Only for my best friend." Jackson hugged him back snugly, laying his head on his shoulder. "I know you think it's dangerous, but can you stay just one night?"

"Mmm..."

"Please, Jazzy."

"I mean..."

"Pleeeeeeeeeee." Jackson nuzzled his face into his shoulder. "Pleeeeeasseeeee, Jasper, please."

"Fine. Just one night."

"Yes!" Jackson picked him up happily, kissing his cheek. "Yes, yes, yes." Placing him down, he dragged him inside, pulling him to the kitchen. "I made cookies!"

"You made...cookies?" Jasper set his bag down, eyebrows furrowing with a smile. "You made cookies, Jackson?"

The darker-haired boy held them out to him, smiling brightly. "They're chocolate chip and oatmeal!"

"I'm surprised you made cookies..." Jasper grabbed one, breaking it in half to eat one piece.

"Yeah! And I made rice krispie treats, and...I just...I want this to be special. I was thinking we could take the sweets and snacks out to the park and eat, and you could open your gifts there."

"I...gifts?"

"Yeah...I...I got you some stuff!" Jackson ran to the living room, setting the cookies on the coffee table and grabbing a couple of wrapped presents from underneath. "There's three!" He showed him the various sizes of gifts, smiling brightly.

"I...I wish you'd told me, Jackson." Jasper grabbed his face, sighing softly. "I would have brought you a gift."

"No need...you deserve the gifts, Jazz..." Jackson placed them in his hands. "Let me grab the snacks, and we can go to the park...?"

"I...yeah." The blonde looked between the gifts and the other, a smile growing on his face.

"Alright!"

Jasper watched as he started to pack the backpack, glancing down at the gifts. "I can't believe you got me so many..." He muttered, examining all the different boxes.

"It's nothing, really." Jackson grabbed a set of keys off of the counter and started to head out. "Come on."

"Keys?" The blonde watched him confusedly.

"They left a truck with me this time." He opened the garage door, unlocking the truck and starting to climb in. "Come on, Jazz."

"You know how long it's been since I was in a truck?" He hopped in the passenger's, putting his presents in the backseat. Upon putting his seatbelt on, he looked up from it. "Wait...you have your license, right?"

"Uh...I have my learners." Jackson turned and looked at him with a bright smile.

"So...what does that mean, Jackson?"

"How much do you trust me?"

"You can drive, right, Jackson?"

"Yes." Starting the truck, the darker-haired boy started to pull out of the garage. "Yes, I can."

"Should I start praying now or later?"

"Don't pray at all."

Jasper sunk down slightly, clasping his hands together and closing his eyes. "Dear Heavenly Father..."

"Shhhhhhhh...I promise I'm good at driving."

Watching him pull out of the neighborhood, Jasper sat up and exhaled softly, laying his head on the window. "Just don't kill us. I'd like to open my gifts."

"I will not. I promise." Jackson held his pinky up, linking it with Jasper's. "So...we're gonna head to the park, eat all this great food I made, and then you'll open your gifts. Sound good?"

"No one you know will be at the park, will they?"

"I don't know anybody besides me parents, Jazz."

Jasper started to snort at him, dropping his face into his hands. "Okay, Pirate Jax."

"Some days, I feel like you giggle at everything I say, Jazz."

"Some days, you're really funny, Jax."

"I'm glad you find me funny, Jasper. Anything that can make you laugh or happy always makes me happy."

"You're so mushy sometimes." Jasper sank back in his seat, chuckling to himself.

"I like your laugh, and your smile and your face."

"And what else?"

"And your hugs, and your hands, and-"

"Alright, alright, I get it. It's almost like you have a crush on me." The blonde looked at Jackson, watching him glance back at him. "Focus on the road, you dork."

"Hey, at least I know how to drive."

"Who said I didn't know how?"

"You didn't offer."

"You didn't ask."

"So do you?"

"Yes."

"So...wanna drive us back home?"

"No."

"I don't believe you then."

"You don't have to. I don't need your approval."

"Aww...you don't care about my opinion?" Jackson grabbed his heart dramatically.

"I mostly care about making it to the park."

"We're basically there. But what about my opinion, Jazz?"

"I don't care for it."

"Aww..."

"I care about you."

"You...care about me?"

"I do."

Jackson pulled into a parking spot at the park, turning to him. "You're gonna love what I got you then."

Jasper turned to him and smiled brightly before gesturing to the backseat. "Can you help me out with the gifts?"

"Of course, Jazz." The dark-haired boy hopped out happily, opening the back door. Grabbing the presents, he started to stack them into Jasper's arms, putting his hands on his shoulders afterward. "You got 'em?"

"Mhm."

"Great." Jackson grabbed the baskets of snacks and a blanket and started to walk towards the grassy part of the meadow, motioning for him to follow. Laying the blanket down, he set the basket on one corner, grabbing the presents from him so he could sit.

"This is a very empty park. I thought you meant the other one." Jasper sat on the blanket, crossing his legs underneath him. "Very peaceful and calm."

"Just what you like." The dark-haired boy smiled softly, opening the basket. "I tried to bring and make stuff you like. I have tuna sandwiches, your favorite chips, a couple of Sprites, your favorite candies, and my sweets, of course."

"You really thought this through..."

"Of course I did." Jackson started to unpack the basket, only momentarily glancing up from it to look at him.

Staring at him as he unpacked the basket, a warm smile grew on Jasper's face, and he rested his head in his hands. "You're...so sweet, Jackson."

"Oh, hush." Handing him his food, the dark-haired teen scooted to sit next to him. "Cheers?" He held up his tuna sandwich, smiling softly.

"Cheers." The blonde grabbed his own, bumping it to his. "I still can't believe tuna is this cheap, and I was missing out."

"It's so good, right? So simple, but so yummy."

Chuckling at him, Jasper nodded with a small smile, leaning against him. "So...I've been kinda doing small jobs downtown."

"Mmm?"

"Yeah. Easy stuff. Mostly clean work. A little dirty, but hey...money is money, and I gotta keep the lights on."

"Careful. I don't want you to get hurt."

"Money is money, Jackson."

"Still...you know why I worry?"

"Why?"

"Because you're my best friend." Jackson smiled down at him, resting his head against his. "And I worry about you."

"Dirty work gets you more money."

"Yes, but just...be careful, please?"

"I will."

"Thank you."

"Yeah, yeah..." Jasper finished his tuna sandwich, laying back softly to bask in the sun. "If I eat too fast, I'll make my stomach hurt."

Jackson hummed in response, eyeing him with a small smile as he closed his eyes. "You're like a cat."

"A cat?"

"You lay in the sun. You're...hot and cold. In fact, your temperamental attitude is very cat-like. It's like I've spent two months trying to gain your trust. Just like cats."

"And you're puppy-like."

"Oh? Loveable and cute and fluffy?"

"You follow me around everywhere; you're already dedicated to me, and you get sad whenever I leave you. And I'm pretty sure you piss on the floor sometimes."

"...what about the things I said?"

"Yeah, I guess you're those too." Jasper opened an eye, smiling at him. "I feel like we're kinda like a little puppy following around a cat that doesn't seem too fond of him."

"And what does that mean?" Jackson turned to lay on his stomach, hovering his head over the others'.

"The puppy is interested, adores the cat, and follows him around all the time. The cat is nonchalant or uninterested, it appears."

"It appears. So how does the cat really feel?"

"The cat...wants the puppy to be safe and wants to take care of him..."

"Awww...that's very sweet."

"You know what else is sweet?"

"Cookies?"

"You." Jasper sat up slightly, grabbing his tuna sandwich to finish it.

"Cookies are also sweet?"

"They are, but you're sweeter."

"Aww...am I the sweetest boy you know?"

"...I guess."

"Sorry."

"It's the truth, but..."

"I gotta stop asking?"

"Yep..." Setting the wrapper for his sandwich aside, Jasper hummed in thought. "Actually. Give me the cookies."

"I knew it was coming." The dark-haired boy rolled his head onto Jasper's stomach, grabbed the cookies, and handed him one. "There."

"Thanks, Jax."

"Mhm." Jackson closed his own eyes, exhaling softly. "You've never had a picnic before, yeah?"

"Never in my life."

"How do you feel about it?"

"It's nice and simple. I like them."

"Would you do it again?"

"Probably. Not anytime soon." The blonde reached down and pinched his ear, chuckling when he exclaimed.

“Not like I was gonna plan another one anytime soon,” Jackson mumbled, turning his head to face him.

“You’d better not be, Jackson.”

“Oh, I would never.” He waved a hand as if the other’s idea was ridiculous, scoffing dramatically.

Rolling his eyes. Jasper pinched Jackson’s ear once more, watching the boy wince with a fond expression before tucking his hair behind his ear.

“Ow! Why’d you do that?”

“I wanna open my gifts.”

Jackson popped up, reaching over to grab the gifts with a bright smile. “Oh, you’re gonna love these. Here!” He held out the medium-sized one, nodding. “This one first.”

“I’m horrified,” Jasper muttered, starting to unwrap the gift. Smiling softly as he pulled the hot pink backpack out, he hugged it to his chest, laying his head on top.

“You needed a new bag.” The taller boy smiled at him proudly. “I told you I’d get you one.”

“I know.” Admiring it, he shook his head and pulled it away from his chest to examine it. “What made you choose this color?”

“It reminds me of you.”

The blonde stared at the bag for a sweet moment longer, setting it down softly and frowning at Jackson. “I can’t imagine you getting anything sweeter...”

“You should keep going.” Jackson handed him the largest box, resting back on his own arms.

“This one scares me the most.”

“Open it.” He rolled his eyes with a smile.

Jasper started to tear the wrapping off, closing his eyes as he pushed the box open, leaning forward and pulling the multitude of clothes out. “I...clothes?”

Jackson grabbed the gray hoodie on the bottom, showing that it matched the one he was currently wearing. “I figured you might want some new clothes, and I thought you might want some that matched mine.”

“Thank you, Jackson.”

“Don’t thank me. I’m your friend. You’re my best friend.”

The blonde nodded softly, grabbing the hoodie from him and pulling it over his head. Shaking his hair back into his face, he pulled the hoodie from his head, letting out a small huff. “What’s next, Jax?”

“Last one.” Jackson grabbed the smallest and final box, tapping it in his hand as if hesitant. Giving himself an affirmative nod, he placed it in Jasper’s hands. “I think you’ll like this one a lot.”

“Okay...” Jasper unwrapped the box, looking suspiciously at the cream-colored box before opening it slowly. Pulling out the silver necklace with the hot pink charm, he blinked and looked back at him. “What is this...?”

The dark-haired teen grabbed his hands, clutching the necklace between their hands. "Jasper...will you be my boyfriend? I know...I know that you and I are in completely different situations. But I...I genuinely think you're my soulmate. I've never had so much fun or even enjoyed the littlest moments alongside of you...and I don't think I could trust anyone more than you..."

"Jackson..."

"Will you?" Jackson looked at him, squeezing his hands tightly.

Jasper bit his cheek in thought, turning away from him and closing his eyes. As he contemplated, he tried to ignore the other's eyes on him, knowing that connecting eyes with him could drastically change his final decision.

"I know you have a lot to think about, but...we can wait on so many things. I promise..."

Nodding as he spoke and to himself, Jasper turned back to Jackson, nodding a second time. "Yes...I'll be your boyfriend."

Jackson exhaled softly and hugged him tightly, laying his face on his shoulder. "I'm so glad you said yes..."

Chuckling softly, the blonde laid his head on top of his, hugging him back softly.

Leaning back, Jackson grabbed his face, smiling softly at him. "So...question..."

"Yes, Jackson?"

"Can we-"

Cutting him off before he could ask what the two of them were already thinking, Jasper leaned in and kissed him softly, placing a hand on his jaw.

Seeming to melt into the kiss slightly, Jackson placed his hands on the small of Jasper's back, only pulling away when he did. "That was a nice first kiss..."

"I'm glad you think so, Jackson." Jasper smiled softly at him, leaning in and laying his head on his chest. Reclining back onto his new boyfriend, he rested his ear where Jackson's heart was, finally relaxing for the first time in likely months. Allowing the sun to bathe his face, he reached down and grabbed the other teen's hand, nuzzling him softly.

"I promise I'll make everything okay. I promise."