Out Of The Ordinary

Author: tj_teejay (AO3 – Tumblr – Instagram – Reddit – E-Mail)

Summary: Being in a relationship with Carl Morck was never ordinary. Sometimes that was challenging, other times it was refreshing. It was certainly never boring. A slice of life from the tales of Rachel, Carl and their extended family.

Author's Note: Written in response to an anonymous prompt I received on Tumblr: Can I request more of the sad tragic trauma box universe please? I love their little family

Yes. Yes, you may. So here it is. I hope it does it justice. Title was inspired by Alex Warren's 'Sanctuary'. A big thanks to M and pixie_hood for the beta!

Please do not share or upload this fic anywhere without the author's permission.

+-+-+-+-+

It had become kind of a running gag between them, and Rachel wasn't sure what to do with it.

She and Jasper were still playing their Baldur's Gate 3 co-op run-through whenever they found the time. Jasper would endlessly tease her about her crush on Astarion. Carl would sometimes sit with them, pretending to read but really secretly listening in.

She once asked him if he wanted to play, but he said fuck no. She had a feeling he was a little embarrassed because he didn't know the first thing about video game dynamics and was afraid Jasper would make fun of him. Which was fair enough. From the little she knew about his childhood, it didn't sound like he had grown up in an environment where video or computer games were a thing.

And then, today when she got here after work, there had been an Astarion plushie on her side of the bed, propped up against the pillow. No note, just the plushie. Carl wasn't home yet, so she picked it up, wondering… Had he put it there in the morning? Or was this from Jasper?

She went out of the bedroom, stood in front of Jasper's room and knocked. "Jasper? Can I ask you something?"

He opened the door. "Sure."

"Did you… put something on the bed for me?"

He frowned. "No… That's Carl's sanctum. I know to stay the hell away from there."

"Okay."

"So what was on the bed for you?"

"It's… uhm. Geez, you'll laugh."

He was already grinning a little. “Now I’m *really* curious.”

“It’s an Astarion plushie.”

Jasper actually did laugh. “Seriously? I need to see.”

Rachel went to the bedroom, Jasper followed her. She took the plushie from the bed and gave it to Jasper.

He studied it with a smile on his face. “It’s actually not bad. Definitely looks like your favourite vampire spawn.”

“So then this is from Carl?”

Jasper twirled it in his hand before he gave it back to her. “Looks like it.”

She went back into the living room with Jasper. “What am I going to make of that?”

Jasper shrugged. “I mean, it’s kind of cute.”

“Cute? Carl doesn’t do cute.”

“Apparently he does for you.”

“That’s disconcerting.” She looked at Jasper. “Isn’t it?”

He gave her a small nod. “A little. But, you know, it’s not a bad thing.”

“You think? It’s a little scary.”

Jasper chuckled. “Trust me, this is several steps up from when you first met him.”

She gave a theatrical sigh. “Please. Don’t remind me.”

She sat down on the couch in the living room. Jasper joined her. “No, but seriously. It’s been a lot better since you’ve been around.”

“Does it not bother you, me being here so much?”

Jasper looked confused. “No. Why should it?”

“Well, sometimes it can be a little tricky when something disrupts a certain balance.”

“Truth be told, we didn’t have much of a balance. Carl was always super pissed off and angry.”

“You know that it’s not really his fault, though, don’t you?”

“Yeah. He changed a lot after the shooting.”

“Do you ever talk about it?”

“I’ve tried, but he always refuses to talk about his work. Says he wants to keep that stuff away from me. And, I mean, I get it. But, like, for a long time I don’t think he talked to anyone. And him and Mum getting divorced didn’t help either.”

“It can’t have been easy on you, either.”

“Yeah, it sucked. But they’d been fighting all the time, and—” Jasper shrugged, “—maybe it’s better this way.”

“He really cares about you. You know that, right?”

Jasper looked embarrassed. “Yeah,” he said abashedly. “He beat up that guy who was threatening me. He’d have kicked his head in if I hadn’t stopped him.”

Rachel drew in a breath. She’d seen the videos on social media. “Not quite the right way to show you that, though. He wasn’t in a great place then.”

“Yeah, I know. We had kind of a falling out. All we ever did was yell at each other, so I left. Stayed with my gran for a few days. Carl wanted to meet at the ice cream shop to talk. And then… that happened.”

Rachel shifted her position so she could face Jasper better. “What is it that happened?”

Something unpleasant flitted across Jasper’s face, his eyes clouding over with the memories. Rachel added, “Sorry, you don’t have to talk about it if you don’t want to.”

But Jasper steeled himself. “This guy came in before Carl arrived. He started threatening me. Kept talking about… how he knew people who would pay money to see me being raped. He grabbed my knee. It was super scary.” Jasper visibly swallowed, a deep furrow in his brow. “Wanted me to tell Carl what he’d just told me.”

Rachel was horrified. She’d never asked Carl about what had provoked him that day. Things between them had been a lot more tentative at the time, and it had never really come up in conversation until now. But she could see how it would have sent Carl flying into a violent rage, especially knowing his state of mind back then.

“I’m really sorry, Jasper. That’s horrible.”

He looked down at the hands in his lap. “Yeah. But, you know, things got a lot better after that. Carl and I talked about it. And then he took those three months off, and I think he likes running the new department, so that’s also helped.” He looked at her, indicated her with his hand. “And, you know… you.”

She smiled. “Yeah, funny how that all fell into place, eh?”

Jasper stayed quiet for a long moment, then met her gaze. “Can you… Do you think you can help me with something?”

She frowned. “Sure, if I can.”

“I’ve been thinking that I’d like to get into paramedic training, but I’m not sure where to start.”

Paramedic. Wow. She hadn't necessarily pegged Jasper to go that route, but getting to know him better over the past few months, it made sense to her. When Carl had come back from Mhòr with his arm in a sling, Jasper's sharp look of worry hadn't gone past her. And Carl working as a detective, the drive to help people was a predominant theme in their household.

"I can't say that's my area of expertise, but I can help you look into it. Have you talked to Carl about this?"

Jasper shook his head. "No. He's gonna go mental."

"Why do you say that?"

"I mean, you know, getting protective and shit."

She smiled. Jasper knew Carl well. "You mean he wouldn't want to see you in a job as a first responder?"

"Yeah."

"But if this is something you want to do, you'll have to talk about it."

Jasper sighed. "Yeah, I know."

"Do you want me to talk to him, warm him up to the idea?"

Jasper looked a little sheepish now. "Might not be the worst thing."

"Alright, I'll see what I can do."

"Thanks." He smiled at her.

They talked a little more after that, and eventually Jasper excused himself and went back to his room. Rachel kept sitting on the couch, thinking about what Jasper had said. He could be right that Carl might not take the idea of Jasper working in the ambulance service very well. Carl was fiercely protective of the people he loved. She'd have to think about how to broach that topic.

It didn't take long until keys turned in the flat door and she heard Carl's familiar footsteps in the hallway.

Carl's keys and phone were deposited on the kitchen table as usual. Rachel met him there, greeting him with her usual, "Hey."

He didn't answer, and she saw he was holding a letter that he was staring at. He pulled one of the chairs away and sat down at the table, fiddling with the unopened letter.

She went up to him and placed one hand lightly on his shoulder. She could practically feel the tension right there in the tightness of his muscles. "Carl, what's wrong?"

He let the letter drop to the table with a sigh. "This is from my aunt in Devon."

"Is that a bad thing?"

“Haven’t spoken to her in years. That side of the family was never good news.” He let his head drop into one hand that he ran through his hair and rubbed the back of his head.

Rachel went to sit down next him. “Are you going to open it?”

He took the letter between his thumb and index finger and tapped the bottom edge of it on the table three times. “Yeah,” he sighed.

“Do you want me to go?”

“No,” he simply said.

His fingers found the lip of the envelope and he slid his index finger underneath it to open it, pulling out a white sheet of paper with neat looking handwriting. Rachel tried not to be nosy, just sat and watched him.

His brow was furrowing, emotions visible in the small movements of his muscles. It definitely wasn’t good news. When he finished, he let his hands with the letter drop to the table. “My father died.”

“I’m sorry,” she said in a low voice.

His expression hardened. “Don’t be. He was a fucking piece of shit.”

She waited to see if he would tell her more. Carl rarely talked about his family. She knew his childhood hadn’t been great and he’d told her a few bits and pieces, but he tended to be tight-lipped about it and she hadn’t wanted to pry.

“When’s the last time you saw him?”

“I don’t know. Decades now. I got out of there as soon as I could. Never looked back.”

“Is your mum still alive?”

“No. Died twenty years ago. Drank herself to death, thanks to her piss-poor excuse of a husband. His fucking legacy was wrecking lives left, right and centre.”

“That sounds pretty horrible.”

“It was. I try not to think about it.”

“Do you… wanna talk about it?”

He looked at her, something dark and painful in his eyes. “No, I really don’t.”

“That’s fine. But I’m here, if you need someone to listen.”

His expression softened a little, but then he slipped the mask back on. “I hope they don’t expect me to go to the fucking funeral.”

“Even if they do, you don’t have to go.”

“And I won’t. I’ll be happy if I never have to hear anything about that fucking bastard ever again.”

“Are you going to tell Jasper?”

“God no. He’s never even met him. They’re dead to me. Well, now quite fucking literally.”

“Has he never asked?”

“Oh, sure he did. But there was never anything to tell then, and there sure isn’t now. So I’d rather, you know… forget about it altogether.”

She had a feeling there was underlying trauma there. Maybe abuse. It was hard to tell, but with how Carl tended to compartmentalise his trauma, she knew he’d wall himself off if she asked, so all she could do was wait and hope the time would come when he’d be comfortable and willing to talk about it. Maybe he never would, and she hoped she could be fine with that eventuality.

“Anything I can do to make this easier?”

He narrowed his eyes, then took the letter, ripped it in four pieces and held it out to her. “Throw the whole fucking thing away.”

She took it from him. “Are you sure?”

His voice was all resolve and zero doubt. “Yeah. Good fucking riddance.”

She nodded and got up to go to the rubbish bin where she discarded the ripped up pieces of paper. She stood by the counter and looked at him. “You hungry?”

He shook his head. “Akram forced something on me earlier.”

She smiled. “Any good?”

“It was alright.”

“Did you tell Akram that?”

“No. I ate it. That should say enough.”

“Geez.” She chuckled. “It’s a miracle they put up with you.”

“They are paid to put up with me.”

“Maybe I should ask for payment.”

He gave her a mock scowl. She laughed, then quickly went into the living room to pick up the Astarion plushie that was sitting there on the table next to the couch. She put it on the table in front of Carl. He looked at it, then looked at her.

She said, “It’s not from Jasper, and it’s unlikely that it’s from Martin, which makes it conclusive evidence that there’s only one other person who could have put it in your bedroom.”

There was a small, amused smile playing on his lips. “Your deduction skills seem pretty sharp.”

“Honestly, I don’t know what to say.”

“You don’t like it?”

“No, I like it. It’s just not… you.”

“No, it’s your little traumatised vampire spawn.” He got up to get a glass from one of the kitchen cupboards.

“This is a whole new side to Carl Morck that I need to get used to. But it *is* very cute, and I’ll leave him here to watch over you.”

As he filled the glass with water from the tap, he asked, “I need supervision?”

She went up to him, gently took the glass from him to place it on the counter, then reached up to cup the back of his neck with one hand and drew him into a kiss. He easily leaned into it, placing his hand between her shoulder blades to draw her closer.

There was still that faint feeling of butterflies in her stomach, and she pulled him closer, feeling him reciprocate.

She broke the kiss to take his hand and pulled him towards the living room, grabbing the Astarion plushie with the other as he tried to follow her. She turned towards him, holding the plushie out in front of her and wiggled it. “Come on, Carl.”

He grinned. “That’s creepy.”

She grinned back, still holding on to his hand, now walking backwards towards his bedroom door. “Only if he’s watching.”

His response was to put his hands on her waist, stopping her and gently pushing her against the wall off to the side to his closed bedroom door. His lips were on hers again, hungry and insistent, his hands fumbling to get under her jumper.

She broke the kiss, muttering breathlessly, “Carl. Not here.”

He kissed her again, his hand now groping behind him to find the doorknob of the bedroom door. It took a few long seconds to open it until it finally did.

Like two lust-drunk lovers, they stumbled into the bedroom, Carl pulling the door closed behind them, immediately working on getting her out of her clothes. Plushie-Astarion was carelessly discarded on the floor and Rachel went all-in to meet Carl’s sudden desire and merge it with her own.

That night, he was a lot more urgent and hungry than he normally was when they gave in to the pull between them. Afterwards, she wondered if it had been the letter, if it was his way of dealing with it, of blowing off steam.

Now he lay next to her, on his back, his eyes closed and an almost-smile tugging at his lips. It was a rare instant when he was truly relaxed, when he didn't think he needed to wear the armour that would repel the onslaughts that life threw at him.

She smiled and relished the moment, deciding that every single one of them with Carl was worth it.