

**Fanfiction Based On Characters From Stephenie Meyer's Twilight Series
Rated MA for Mature Content. Strong Language & Sexual Content**

The List

By Laura Cullen



Summary: Four weeks before her wedding to Edward, Bella is frustrated. She knows there's little-to-no chance of getting him to bend his rules and boundaries now, but there's no harm in fantasizing about what could happen later. So she begins compiling a list...

~*~

One you've and enjoyed this story, why not show the author some love, and review

http://www.fanfiction.net/s/4934524/1/The_List

~*~

Chapter 1: Frustrated

"Argh!" I vented my frustration into my pillow, hoping Edward was far enough away not to hear. Emmett and Jasper had just come to claim him for an overnight hunting trip, but not before we had spent the previous hour on my bed, kissing me into a frenzied state of arousal. I had no idea how I would possibly make it through the next four weeks until the wedding without literally exploding.

Something needed to give.

Don't get me wrong. I *love* Edward's kissing. I love kissing him. And he has been willing to push his boundaries, even if only a little. The first time he let me take his tongue into my mouth, for example, I almost passed out. Having not only the sweetness of his breath but the incredible nectar of his taste inside of me caused a nearly overwhelming sense of euphoria. The first time he licked me from collar bone to jaw my heart threatened to pound out of my chest. One time he even wrapped his lips around his teeth and nibbled on my ear. This was all unbearably good.

But then, there was always that point when Edward would pull back. And he'd either leave to go hunting, like he had tonight, or wrap me up in a cocoon of blankets, effectively separating our bodies. Either way, I'd end up wanting more, *much* more. And feeling frustrated.

I understood his rationale completely. I know he's afraid of hurting me. And I know he is committed to his early twentieth century sense of morality. And I love both his protectiveness and his gentlemanliness.

But, seriously, there's only so much a girl can take.

As I lay there on my bed, I couldn't help the fantasies that started to play out like movies against the insides of my closed eyelids.

In one, I came into my bedroom from just showering. Not realizing Edward was there, his presence startled me, and I dropped the towel I had wrapped around my body. In my fantasy, I wasn't at all self-conscious about Edward seeing me naked, and no longer able to control himself, he lunged at me—in a good way, of course—finally claiming me for his own.

In another, I managed to coax Edward *into* the shower, just so we could get used to being naked around one another, you see. I convinced him to wash my back for me (I couldn't help myself—I snorted—I could so tell this was a fantasy—Edward was touching my naked body!), and finally he couldn't help himself, and he pressed me hard up against the cold tile and entered me. Ungh, the very idea of the cold hard tile pressed *behind* me at the same time as Edward's cold hard body pressed up against the front of me. It was almost like being with two...

Oh God, there's something wrong with me.

In yet another, Edward got jealous of Mike Newton's advances at my work, and took me from behind against the check-out counter while Mike watched from the back of the store. Wait. *What?* Where did *that* come from?

I sat up in my bed. My brain was *not* helping the situation between my legs.

All of a sudden, an unbidden thought occurred to me. There was a way I could make this better.

Could I really? Despite being eighteen years old, I was not particularly familiar with sex in *any* of its forms. Years ago, I experimented with pleasuring myself. But I was never completely comfortable with doing so, both because I was often left with a painful sense of longing *down there*, and because one time my mom came into my room right after, and I swear she knew. I didn't want to chance it again.

But, maybe, it was worth trying again. The benefits seemed manifest. First, I could avoid exploding. I think anyone would agree that was something to be avoided. Second, I could avoid pushing Edward beyond his (limited) comfort zone. He would probably appreciate that. Third, maybe I could release some of this pre-wedding stress. Alice's list of 'decisions that needed to be made' was driving me completely insane. And, fourth, I could avoid exploding.

Clearly, between my make-out sessions with Edward and my overactive brain, I had plenty of material to, um, stimulate any such efforts.

Screw it. I slid off of my bed and walked into the bathroom. Charlie was long asleep but there was little chance of the shower waking him. It would take a freight train running through his room to have even the chance of rousing him.

I locked the door behind me—just in case—and turned the shower on, adjusting the water to the perfect warmth. Stripping off my clothes, I stepped in, feeling a little silly now, but even more, feeling incredibly aroused at the very idea of some release.

I looked up. *I can't believe I'm going to do this!* I was both incredulous and excited. Gotta love those removable showerheads.

I pulled the showerhead down and adjusted it to the firm massage setting and held it against my neck and shoulders. The pulsating water felt wonderful on my back and relaxed me immediately. *If nothing else, I*

should do this more often. I could already feel some of my tension melting away. I bent over slightly and moved the nozzle down to spray on my lower back and felt my body relax even further.

Slowly, my movies started playing in my head again. I moved the showerhead around to my front. *Oh!*

This was better than I even imagined.

I let all the movies play out again, several times through, and even came up with a couple more: me finally getting to have Edward in my mouth; Edward taking *me* in *his* mouth (ungh); Edward pressing me up against a tree on the side of the meadow. The possibilities were endless!

But then I felt the frustration again. I was *so* close. But I couldn't quite get there. And then the water started to run cold. Great. I guess this little experiment is over.

But then, something happened. I liked the cold water. The cold water was *good*. The cold water...*felt...like...him*.

And with that image of him pressing me up against a tree in our meadow still fresh in my mind, I finally found my release.

I threw one hand up against the tile to avoid falling over, the orgasm that finally found me being so strong that it almost knocked me to my knees.

At least a minute passed before my brain fully returned to me. I was still breathing hard, and started giggling. Holy crow! If that was even a fraction of what it would be like when I was actually *with* Edward, I was going to die. And I couldn't freaking wait.

I shut off the water, now freezing cold, and towel dried myself. I was shivering, whether from the cold water or the aftereffects of my little experiment, I wasn't sure. Either way, it wasn't unpleasant.

Returning to my room, I threw on a pair of flannel pajama bottoms, a tank top, and a sweatshirt to try to warm myself back up. I crawled into bed, actually feeling like sleep was a remote possibility this time.

I looked at the clock. It was 12:30. Edward would likely be back in about six hours. I needed to get some sleep or I would be a zombie tomorrow. I couldn't help giggling at that. *Like we need anymore mythological creatures in this town.*

My body was sated now, but my mind was on a mission. Those fantasies had done the trick. They had gotten rid of my frustration, kept me from exploding, and ensured that I would be a much happier Bella tomorrow when my love returns. I needed a stockpile of such ideas to keep me going for the next four weeks, and as I drifted off to sleep, my mind was busy conjuring up more ideas for the next time.

~*~

Chapter 2: Brainstorming Interrupted

I awoke with a start, half sitting up before my confusion lifted and I realized it was morning and I was in my bed. I smiled softly to myself and settled back into my pillow, laying one arm across my forehead. Light was just starting to brighten the room. I turned to my side and looked at the clock: 5:53. It was too early to be awake. I closed my eyes and tried to convince myself to fall back asleep for a while. But then images of my midnight shower sprang to mind, and I was awake whether I wanted to be or not.

I smiled into my covers. *God I haven't felt this relaxed in...ever?*

I ran through the fantasies I had created last night. I kept coming back to the one of Edward taking me against the tree at our meadow. He would be rough, and commanding. He would hold my hands above my

head against the tree with one hand, and hold my ass to him with the other so I could wrap my legs around him. He would just be urgent and needy and vocal about it all...

God. That's hot.

Okay. We are *so* doing that. Hmm...the tree...maybe that would be something better left until I was a little more durable. In a fantasy, it sounds great. But wouldn't a tree hurt my back? Maybe not if I left my shirt on...

God, there is truly something wrong with me.

Still, we're doing that.

I turned back over. *What else do I want to be sure to do?*

Just then, an idea came to me and I slipped out of bed, rifled around on my desk until I found the small spiral notebook and a pen, and hopped back in bed. I kept this notebook on hand to write down story ideas that came to me. Sometimes I liked to write short stories, although I hadn't made time to do so in a while.

I flipped to an empty page about one-third into the journal and smiled to myself as I wrote "TO DO" at the top. I underlined it for emphasis.

1. Against the tree by the meadow

I thought for a minute. Not everything had to be the actual act. There were so many things short of the act we hadn't done and that I so desperately wanted to do.

2. Feel his full weight on top of me

3. French kiss

4. See him naked

I was somewhat less thrilled with the flip side of that, him seeing *me* naked. But it would be worth it if it meant he would be sans clothing too.

Okay. What else?

5. Shower together

6. Against the cold tiles in the shower

Oh yeah. That brought the full brunt of last night's little experiment back to me full force.

7. Wow. This is going to be a long list. *Immortality is so going to be a good thing.* I stifled a giggle. There is something wrong with me after all, since I, as a general rule, am not a giggler. But this whole scenario was giggle-worthy. I just couldn't help myself.

7. In his car

8. On our lab table

He could get us in there, couldn't he?

Just then, a noise at my window broke my train of thought. I shoved the notebook under my pillow. My heart was thundering in my chest.

He jumped lithely through the window and looked over at me, surprised to find me awake. A smile brightened his beautiful face and he took a step towards me and froze. A strange expression shadowed across his face.

"Hi." I smiled up at him, wondering about his behavior. *Does he know what I was...no...how could he?*

"Hi," he said, not breathing.

I pushed myself into a sitting position. "Are you okay?"

He nodded and his face softened. His mouth opened but then closed. He was starting to worry me. I pushed the covers off of me and sat up on my knees to get closer to him. "Edward, what happened? What's wrong?" His eyes dilated and he seemed startled.

"Bella...um...." Before he finished his thought, he was on me. He wound one arm tightly around my waist, pulling my body hard against his. He threaded his other hand into my hair, allowing him to press his mouth against mine hungrily. I closed my eyes and while I still had brain function could easily imagine this as the kind of kiss that would land us urgent and panting against that tree.

I moaned into his mouth and, deciding it was going to end too soon whether I was cooperative or not, I fisted my hands into his hair and held his face to my own. My heart skipped two beats when he didn't pull away. Instead, he ran open-mouthed kisses across my jaw to my ear, allowing me to catch my breath, and then down my neck to my collar bone. I scratched my nails across his scalp and down his neck and he moaned.

I didn't hear that sound often, but when I did I thought I would die from the rawness and honesty of it.

I had no idea what had gotten into him, but I wanted more.

He kissed his way back up my neck and offered another fiery kiss. He pulled away slightly and looked at me. His eyes were dark and heavy lidded. I leaned forward and kissed him softly on the cheek. I placed my hands on either side of his neck and, hesitating for a just a moment, stuck my tongue out and brazenly licked the length of his jawline—the strength of which I had always admired—to his ear. Upon reaching my destination, I whispered, "You taste amazing."

Before I knew it I was on my back on my bed and Edward was hovering above me. Was this really happening? Was Edward really giving in? What had brought this about?

I was about to ask when his lips met mine again and all thought fled my brain. I shifted my legs around him, forcing his body more centrally between my legs. He was rubbing his right hand up and down my bicep while he kissed me, and when his wrist brushed across my breast, my hips jerked in response, brushing against his now obvious arousal. He froze.

Dammit!

He leaned his forehead against my own, keeping his eyes closed.

I gently brushed the hair back from his face with both of my hands. He was so beautiful.

He opened his eyes and placed sweet but chaste kisses on my forehead, nose, and lips before rolling off of me and laying alongside of me. He propped his head up on his fist.

I looked at him expectantly. And he always said that *I* was the one doing unexpected things.

For the first time since he said my name earlier, he finally spoke. "Bella? Would you promise to do something for me?"

I was still dazed from our kisses and the lustful adrenaline coursing through my body. "Um...yes?" It came out as a question.

"Tell me, what were you thinking about when I came in?"

It took me some effort to even remember for myself. "Um...." Then my face flushed the reddest it's probably ever been.

The corner of his mouth turned up and his eyebrows rose expectantly.

"Um. You." I twirled a piece of hair around my finger. He caught my hand in his and brought it to his mouth. He kissed my hand softly.

"What about me?" His voice was low but clear.

"Can I have a human moment?" I started to swing my legs off the bed when I felt his arm around my waist.

"Nice try." He pulled my body back against his. His chest was pressed into my back and his breath raised the hairs on the back of my neck. I whimpered and I felt his mouth curve into a smile behind me.

"What?"

"What about me?"

"Just...you know...."

"No, Bella, I don't know." He was running little kisses on the back of my neck and my shoulder. My whole body was covered in goose bumps.

"About being with you."

"I'm with you now."

"Umhmm." I couldn't see his face, so I didn't know for sure, but it occurred to me that he was being purposely dense.

Fine. If he wants games, I can play games.

I scooted myself more firmly against him, making sure that my rear came into full contact with his hips.

He sucked in a breath behind me.

Innocently, I questioned, "Why do you ask?"

He didn't respond right away, and I got curious, so I turned my head to try to see his face over my shoulder. When our eyes met, he whispered with intensity, "Because when I came in here, you smelled...phenomenal. I was immediately...intoxicated. I think having just hunted heightened my instinctive reaction." My eyes widened in response, still not fully understanding. "To your body, Bella. Not your blood."

I smelled...different? I smelled...oh. Oh! *Oh God!* My blush continued down my neck from my face and over my chest it was so intense. *Of course he would be able to smell...*

He chuckled and pulled my body around so I was facing him. He placed small kisses on my face, which slowly cooled me back down again. "Bella, love, look at me. I love you. Everything about you."

I nodded. I was torn between feeling embarrassed and feeling desirous. *Dammit! Being aroused by my fiancé is not something to be embarrassed about!*

"It's just...Edward...I need you. I want you. I think about you...all the time." I bit my lower lip.

Edward opened his mouth and then furrowed his brow. "Oh, for the love of all that is holy."

"What?"

"Hi Bella." I jumped a little at Alice's voice as she climbed through the window.

"You know, we have doors."

"Yes, but your window was open." She stood at the foot of my bed with her little hands on her hips. "Bella, you didn't forget our appointment with the caterer at nine, did you?"

"No, Alice."

"Well, then, perhaps you should get dressed?"

"Yes, Alice." I sat up and Edward chuckled. I had half a mind to grab my pillow and swat him with it. But then I remembered there was something under it.

I had to find a way to get him out of that bed so that he didn't find that notebook.

Before I had time to think, Alice suggested, "Edward, would you make Bella some breakfast while she's getting dressed?"

"It would be my pleasure." He sprung out of bed, smirked at Alice, kissed me, and headed downstairs. "Eggs?" he called as he was going down the steps.

"Yes, please."

I moved to go to my closet. Alice waved me away. "I'll pick out an outfit, you go get in the shower."

"Okay." I yawned and headed towards the bathroom.

"Oh, Bella?"

"Yeah?" I turned to look at her.

"You might want to hide that notebook before you guys come back here tonight."

~*~

Chapter 3: Accomplice

By the time we got to the caterers to taste-test items for the menu, I was a nervous wreck. It had nothing to do with the wedding planning. It had everything to do with my damn omniscient best friend and soon-to-be sister-in-law. *Alice*.

Oh, there didn't seem to be anything to be nervous about. Alice was her usual cheerful and chipper self, making perfectly pleasant conversation about the guest list and our wedding registry and an upcoming shopping trip and my bachelorette party. But the whole time I kept waiting for the other shoe to drop. *WHEN IS SHE GOING TO START GRILLING ME ABOUT THE DAMN NOTEBOOK ALREADY?*

At least I wasn't nervous about the notebook itself. Anymore. After my shower, I had shoved it three feet in between my mattress and box spring. Not the most creative hiding place in the world, but I felt confident Edward wouldn't find it there. He would have no reason to look.

A nervous stomach was not the best for taste testing, especially since Alice couldn't help me, but soon I had made my selections and I was quite pleased with them. Having selected the menu myself also had the unexpected benefit of making me feel like I was in control of something related to the wedding, which made me feel exponentially better about it, more relaxed. Or maybe that was still the shower.

After spending the past several hours with Alice without her saying anything, I had finally relaxed. We were on the way back to her house when the sun broke through the clouds. After all these years, the effect of the sunlight on their skin still delighted me, and as I watched enraptured as the light reflecting off Alice's hands threw prisms across the roof of the car, she giggled.

I looked at her with a smile, wondering what had amused her. She had her hand across her mouth, trying to restrain herself.

And then my weight was thrown against the seat belt as Alice jerked the car onto the shoulder and parked.

“Alice, wha—”

Her laugh finally burst out full force.

I blushed furiously. I knew she wasn’t going to let me off the hook. I glared down at my hands in my lap.

“Oh, come on, Bella. Don’t be like that.” She took one of my hands in hers and squeezed.

I looked out the front window. We were at least a mile from the turnoff to their driveway.

“Why did you stop? I thought your vampire brain allowed you to torture me and drive at the same time?”

That elicited another round of laughter, and she let me pull my hand from hers. I crossed my arms across my chest.

“It does, silly. I stopped so that I could talk to you without Mr. Big Ears hearing.” I waited. “It’s sunny out.”

“Yep.” *Where is she going with this?*

“It would be a nice afternoon to have a picnic in the meadow.”

And my blush intensified.

“Oh, come on, Bella. I want to help.”

“Huh?”

“Well, I can see that Edward will hold firm on consummating your relationship until after the wedding, but I believe it would be possible to push his boundaries in other ways beforehand. He just needs a little encouragement.”

“Encouragement.” *La, la, la. Conversation not happening. La, la, la.* I resisted the urge to plug my fingers in my ears like a child.

“Yes. And I think we can make some of the things on your list happen, at least partially.”

I groaned in embarrassment at her actually verbalizing the existence of the list.

“Listen, I don’t want to make you uncomfortable....” I glared at her. “Well, okay, maybe I enjoy it a little.” She giggled. “But, just think about it, if this works it could be Edward making you feel more relaxed instead of you having to do it yourself...which I’m completely in favor of by the way. It certainly took you long enough....”

But I didn't hear her, because my head was now laying on my knees and with my arms wrapped around it. I was trying to disappear into the seat beneath me with no success whatsoever. I felt her hand on my back.

Just when I thought it couldn't get any worse, I tuned back in to her chatter in time to hear her say, "Jasper is going to be so glad that at least one of you isn't as frustrated."

I whimpered out loud and she looked down at me as she brushed the hair back off the side of my face. I peeked one eye out to look at her. "Jasper...knows...too?" It came out as no more than a breath.

"Well, no, sweetie. Not yet."

Not yet? Not. Yet. "You mean he'll KNOW?"

She at least had the decency to look sheepish. "Well, oh, don't worry about it, Bella. He understands just like I do. You can't help how you feel. And he can't help feeling how you feel—"

"Alice, I can't go to the house...."

But she'd already seen my decision. "That's nonsense, Bella. Jasper will not care. In fact he'll be relieved. He actually proposed the idea several weeks ago of having me talk to you about...taking matters into your own hands. But I could see you wouldn't be open to the idea if I proposed it. You have made things much easier on him. His main reaction is definitely going to be relief."

When I went to protest, she continued, shifting in her seat so that her small body faced me. She took my hand again, forcing me to sit up and look at her. "Look, Bella. I *am* sorry you're uncomfortable. And Lord knows I don't want to see these things about my brothers and sisters. But here's a reality you are going to need to learn to deal with now that you're a Cullen." It endeared me to them how they all already thought of me as part of the family. I softened to her words, just a little. "None of us has any privacy. Between Edward's telepathy, my psychic abilities, Jasper's empathy, and all of our amplified hearing, it's just not possible. We do what we can to give one another privacy. But, though we try not to intrude, we also just accept the reality. And we do so in part because the things we do with our mates are natural. They're a natural expression of the love we have for each other. And so there's no judgment, no sideways glances, no embarrassment. There's just acceptance. And love."

I nodded. Edward had said similar things in the past.

"So, do you think you could be comfortable talking about this with your sister without being so embarrassed? I won't force you to."

I took a deep breath, and I was suddenly reminded of the thought I had this morning when Edward revealed his knowledge of my arousal. *I have no reason to be embarrassed about being turned on by my fiancé.*

Alice squealed in delight next to me. I had apparently mumbled the words out loud that I had thought I was only thinking. "Good for you, Bella. I couldn't agree more. Oh, this is going to be so good. I'm so happy for you!" The car was vibrating with her excitement.

I couldn't help but giggle nervously. It helped release the worst of my embarrassment.

"Shoot. Okay, my damn brother's getting impatient for our return. So we need to hurry a little before he decides to come looking and overhears us. So, remind me what's on the list so far."

I swallowed thickly and took a deep breath. *Screw it. If Alice can help make any of this happen, I'm down with having an accomplice.*

"Okay, the list so far includes number 1, against the tree by the meadow; number 2, I would love to just feel his full weight on top of me." I peeked at Alice to see how she was reacting, and she looked completely enthralled. "Number 3, I want a real French kiss; number 4, I want to see his whole body—do you realize I've never seen anything besides his chest?" Now Alice was looking thoughtful. "Number 5, I would like to take a shower together; number 6," I blushed, "um, well, I would like to...be with him in the shower; and, um," I blurted the rest quickly to just be finished with saying it, "."

I was biting my lip waiting for some response.

"Okay. I can work with this. First of all, you can get fairly close to accomplishing four, five, and six next weekend when you stay over at the house. Let's just say that you're not the only one thinking about the shower. Edward can barely contain himself when you shower at our house." She giggled at the shocked expression on my face. Then her eyes glazed over momentarily as a vision gripped her. "Yes, you're going to need more items on your list, Bella, because we can get you pretty close on these three. I just need to pick a few things up and you'll be set."

"Are you being purposely cryptic right now?"

She smiled. "Yep." She popped the 'p'.

"Damn." She started the car and eased back out into the lane.

I looked at her questioningly as she pulled out her cell phone and tapped out a text message: "We'll be home in 5."

"Okay. I gotta talk quick because he'll be able to hear us soon. Do you mind a suggestion?"

"A suggestion?"

"Yes, for the list."

"Uh, oh. I...guess not."

She chuckled. "I realize these are supposed to be your fantasies, but I just thought I'd throw my poor brother a bone and suggest you work into your list taking him on his leather couch."

My eyes widened. "Um, really?"

"Yes. Ever since your first day at our house when he tackled you—do you remember?"

I smiled at the memory. Edward playfully punishing me for telling him I wasn't scared of him.

"The leather couch." *Hells yeah.*

Alice smiled at me.

"Okay, then. That's number nine. *Thank* you, Alice."

"You're welcome, Bella."

Just then we pulled up in front of the house, and before I knew it my door was open and Edward was listing me out of my seat.

He kissed me warmly. "Missed you," he breathed into my neck.

"Missed you too," I smiled against his chest.

Being in his presence alleviated the last of my embarrassment.

He looked between Alice and I. "Number nine?"

"Oh," Alice replied easily, "Bella was listing the songs she would like to dance to with you at the wedding."

Edward smiled broadly. I blushed furiously and nodded, looking down. "Really? Well, we should practice."

Poor Edward. Alice and I both started laughing. She blurted out, "Yes, you should," before instantaneously disappearing into the house.

There were days when I wished things like garlic and holy water and crucifixes worked. *I am going to kill her.*

Edward looked at me with one eyebrow raised and I shrugged. He kissed my forehead, wrapped one arm around my shoulders, and led me into the house. "Are you tired? Or would you be up for a trip out to our meadow?"

"Let's go to the meadow. Definitely."

"Great. I was hoping you would agree. I packed some things to take with us. Let's go in and get them and then we can leave."

I nodded. Edward disappeared into the kitchen when we came into the house and I went upstairs to use the bathroom and freshen up. Curiously, lying on the counter of Edward's bathroom was an object on a piece of paper. I picked up the pocket knife in my left hand and the note in my right. Alice's script wrote out, "Thought you might need this for number one."

Huh? Why would I need a knife in order to have Edward against the tree in our meadow? I shrugged my shoulders and slipped the small tool into my pocket.

When I came back down, Alice, Jasper, and Emmett were sitting in the living room. I didn't think anything about it until my eyes met Jasper's, and then I blushed furiously. And it wasn't his fault at all. His expression

had been perfectly neutral. But all of a sudden my conversation with Alice came flooding back to me when I saw him. If he didn't know something was up before, he did now.

The worst of it, though, was that Emmett noticed the blush. And he knew me well enough by now to know that a blush of that intensity could only be related to one topic. "So, I'll sis, have you made a man of my baby brother yet?"

I looked to Alice for help, but Edward was by my side instantaneously. He took my hand and squeezed. I smirked at Emmett and we began to move towards the door. I stopped, looked back at Emmett, and from out of nowhere got the balls to say, "You know, Emmett, one day soon I'm going to be stronger than you." Then I turned like nothing had happened and stepped out the door.

The house was roaring with laughter behind me. A beautiful high-pitched laughter was even coming from the garage—*Rosalie?*

Smiling, Edward scooped me up in his arms bridal style and kissed me full on the mouth. "I love you. Only a truly dangerous creature would threaten the strongest vampire in my family."

I bit my lower lip and kissed him back. I loved that I could at least occasionally hold my own in the unceasing banter between them.

We drove out to the end of the road where the non-trail trail to the meadow began. Moments later we were in the meadow. Edward cleared a small area of the waist-high grasses that now covered the opening so that he could spread out the blanket he brought. I sat and ate the lunch he packed for me and he read poetry to me while I watched the sun sparkle off of his skin.

When I went to roll over to lay on my side, I felt a hard bulge in my hip pocket. *The pocket knife.*

While Edward read, I let my eyes wander around the meadow. There, about thirty feet from where we lay, was a large maple tree with a thick trunk. *My. Tree.*

I leaned forward and brushed a kiss on Edward's forehead. "Keep reading. I'm listening," I whispered.

I hopped up and walked over to the tree. I felt Edward's eyes on me the whole time. When I pulled the knife out of my pocket, he fell silent.

Alice is a freaking genius.

It took me a minute to lift one of the blades out of the handle, but I finally managed it. As I put the knife to the tree, I felt rather than saw Edward moving towards me.

I had to give him credit. Though it took me five minutes before something obviously resembling a 'B' was visible, he didn't immediately ask me if I wanted his help and then he didn't offer again after I told him this was really something I wanted to do. I could tell he was just waiting for me to slip and cut myself.

Fifteen minutes later, I had managed to successfully carve:

BS

-n-

EC

I turned to him. "My hand's too tired to do it. Would you carve a heart around it?" He looked at me with relief, gratitude, and love in his eyes.

Less than a minute later, he encased my crude carving with a perfectly formed heart. He flipped the knife closed and slipped it into his pocket.

I turned back to admire our masterpiece, running my fingers over the letters.

When I turned back to him, his eyes had darkened considerably. He took a step towards me, then another. I matched his steps with backward steps of my own, until I found myself pressed back against the tree.

He placed his hands on either side of my head and leaned in. At first his kiss was tender and sweet. I think he was truly moved by my public declaration of affection, despite the fact that no one but us would ever see this tree. But quickly his kiss became urgent and needful. When he sensed I needed to breathe he would work his way with open-mouthed kisses back to my ear or down my neck. My hands were simply itching to grasp him and pull his shirt off.

"Edward," I rasped between kisses.

"Bella." His voice was husky and low.

"If you want my hands to be controlled you need to hold them."

He looked at me curiously for a moment before taking my hands in his at my side.

I shook my head back and forth as we kissed. "No...Edward." He deepened the kiss momentarily and I lost my train of thought. When he pulled back to let me finish, I continued, "Up...against the tree."

His eyes dilated and further darkened. His nostrils flared almost imperceptibly.

He dropped my hands and placed his hands on my waist. I frowned momentarily, before his hands started making their way up my body. His breaths were coming heavier now. Firmly, but not too firmly, Edward ran the palms of his hands up my ribcage, against the sides of my breasts to the crook of my arms, where he then forced my arms to lift up, slowly, above my head.

Before I knew it, the basic premise of my number one fantasy was unfolding before my eyes. Edward stood, his body pressing me against the tree, his eyes black with his desire, his arms holding mine, holding me open to him. He kissed me repeatedly, sucking on my bottom lip with his, allowing me to take his tongue into my mouth, running kisses on my face, ears, neck, collarbones, and shoulders, bare from the thin-strapped tank top I was wearing.

And it was exceedingly wonderful.

And. Then.

And then he slid one of his feet in between mine and pushed my left leg further to the side, spreading my legs. When I was open enough for his body to fit fully between, he took a full step forward, bring the front of his body flush with the front of mine. But since he was so much taller than I was, his hips weren't hitting me where I wanted them.

"Edward...oh, God...Edward," I breathed as he continued to worship me.

"Yes, love?" he said as he kissed the corner of my mouth.

"I know this won't go much further today, but, *please*, could you please pick me up and let me wrap my legs around you?"

"Bella—"

"I know. But, just, please?"

His eyes were now completely black. They were incredibly erotic.

I felt his hands leave mine. But when I went to lower my hands as well, he stopped me. "Keep them up against the tree." It was a command, roughly spoken. I almost lost it right there. I whimpered and his mouth twitched.

His palms made the same journey as before, except now on a southerly course. And they continued past my waist to my hips, before wrapping around the back of my body and sliding down to cup my ass. I couldn't have been more thankful for the short canvas shorts Alice picked out for me to wear this morning.

He kissed me roughly, moaning into my mouth. I reciprocated.

Then I felt him lift me, and I automatically wrapped my legs around his waist, just barely able to lock my ankles together behind his back. He pressed his weight against me into the tree. I moaned louder.

"I just...just want to...I just want to feel you...Edward. Just...feel you," I rasped between kisses.

He was slowly rocking his body into mine. His arousal was gloriously obvious. And each time he pressed a kiss into me, he would press his erection against my now very wet center.

"Oh, God, Edward. You feel so good."

"Bella. God. Mmmm." I pressed my heels into his ass. "Oh, *fuck*."

I felt him flinch, uncertain how I would receive his curse, but my responsive moan apparently reassured him, because he was at my mouth again, stealing my ability to think with his intoxicating breath, skilled tongue, and soft lips.

All of a sudden I realized I was very close to coming. I had no idea how he would feel about it. We had never done this before.

But hell if I was stopping now.

"Edward, ungh, oh....uh...please...please, Edward."

"Please, what, baby? What?"

Forgetting his earlier command, I brought my arms down and wrapped them around his shoulders, wanting every bit of leverage I could have to grind myself closer to him. I fisted the back of his shirt in my hands so tight that I heard a shoulder seam rip. "Oh, God, Edward. *Please.*"

"Anything, Bella, anything. God."

He was kissing me everywhere, and while he was still holding my ass with his left hand, occasionally squeezing and kneading it, he had slipped his right arm around my back to protect my shoulders from digging into the tree.

"Oh, Edward," I bit my lower lip, hard. "Oh, God, Edward, I'm...I'm gonna...."

"Yes, Bella." It came out as a growl.

I released my lower lip. If I kept that up, I was going to break the skin, and I had just enough brain function at that moment to know that wouldn't help my cause. But I needed something in my mouth. Bad. I ran my teeth over his shoulder, grabbing his shirt between my teeth. He moaned loudly at the feeling of my teeth on his body.

"Oh. Don't...don't stop, Edward...I'm...oh, God...gonna...oh...."

"Come for me, Bella. Come now." He ground into me.

I released the shirt from my mouth and threw my head back. "Oh! Ungh! Uh! Edward!"

My heart was thundering in my chest and I was covered in sweat. I wrapped my arms around him and squeezed as hard as I could. Breathily I said, "I love you so much, Edward."

"I love you too, Bella. You are mine."

"Yes."

"Only I can make you do that."

I opened my eyes to look at him. They were still pitch black. "Yes, Edward."

"Bella, you are...simply exquisite."

Holding me tight as he was, I could feel that his arousal hadn't abated at all. I wriggled one arm down from his shoulder and began to snake it down his front. When I reached his stomach he stilled my hand with the one that had been around my back.

"I want you to. More than you can know, Bella. But we can't. I can't. I don't have...I just...I won't be able...."

I cut him off with a kiss. "It's okay. I understand. I just...just know that I want to reciprocate. But I'll wait until you're ready."

Instantaneously, we were laying on the blanket again. He deposited me on my back and he was laying next to me, but we were no longer touching. He was still breathing heavily. He was looking at me like I was the most precious thing he had ever known.

Alice, I am going to buy you a present.

And I knew, in a big white house not too far away, somebody was squealing in delight.

~*~

Chapter 4: Additions

EPOV

We were both still breathing hard as we lay on the blanket in our meadow, the sun having now significantly receded in the sky. Bella looked beautiful laying there, her face exquisitely flushed from...*fuck*.

I can't believe I just did that to her. Against a tree. Outside. She deserved better. I am a shit.

"Bella, I'm so—"

I was startled to feel three of her fingers against my lips, causing the words to die in my throat.

Her brow furrowed seriously. "Edward Cullen, I swear to God. If you apologize I will...," she sputtered as she strained to think of a viable threat. "Okay, *fine*, I don't know what I'll do. But you won't like it." She rolled onto her back and crossed her arms over her chest. I started to worry when I heard the most beautiful sound. She was giggling.

I leaned over her and stared in wonder. I couldn't help my smile; her laughter was infectious. "What?" I asked, softly.

"Edward, that was incredible, *fantastic*, even. Thank you for...going along." She blushed lightly.

"Bella, I didn't 'go along'. I want that—you—so very much. I just...I'm so...Bella," he rushed the words out this time, "I'm sorry, but are you okay? Did I hurt you?"

"God, no, Edward." Her body language softened as she looked at me, and then her eyes darkened mischievously. "And, really, now you're going to pay for apologizing when I *expressly* told you not to. Did I sound hurt to you?"

"No, you sounded fucking amazing to me." I was instantly mortified. *What is wrong with me today?* First, I attack her in her bedroom this morning. The scent of her arousal just absolutely drained my brain function. Then, I grind myself into her against a damn tree. And then I can't seem to control my verbal diarrhea.

As I was browbeating myself, a sound caught my attention. Her heartbeat. Racing.

When I focused on her eyes again, the hunger I saw there caught me off guard. She kissed me deeply, then pulled away. She smiled to herself and, *God*, did I want to know what she was thinking.

Before I had a chance to try to dazzle the information out of her, she sprung to her feet. She put her hands on her hips and looked down at me. I couldn't shake the feeling that she was somehow amused. "Charlie will be wondering where I am, Edward. I should probably be getting back."

I rose next to her and circled my arms around her. The heat radiating off of her was intense. And that close to her body again, I smelled her again. She was aroused. Her scent was intoxicating. I felt the venom flood my mouth and swallowed thickly, stepping back. I nodded. "Love, after," I indicated towards the tree, "I should probably hunt after I drop you off."

"Okay," she said softly, brushing a kiss on my cheek. "Will I see you later tonight or in the morning?"

"I'll come as quickly as I can." Her face blushed brilliantly and I looked at her curiously. I wasn't letting her off the hook this time. "What?"

She was biting her bottom lip hard. I growled. "I swear, Isabella Swan, tell me what's going through that beautiful head of yours right this instant."

She pulled her shoulders back and took a deep breath. I hissed when she swatted me on the ass. "Not a chance, Cullen." Then she slipped out of my arms, picked up the blanket, and calmly began folding it.

I watched her intently for a moment. She was specifically attempting not to look at me. I ran our conversation through my mind several times before my brain finally clicked. "*I'll come as quickly as I can.*" *The little vixen*. I crossed my arms. *Time to make her squirm*. I struggled to make my tone innocent. "Bella?"

She finally allowed her eyes to move in my direction. "Hmm?"

"Coming agrees with you. You have never looked more ravishing than you did then, and now."

It took every ounce of discipline I had not to react when she whimpered and nearly dropped the blanket. Clearly after today's lapses, I needed to rein myself in. But suddenly I felt willing to engage in this verbal foreplay with her. Although, as I gave myself permission to do so, the four weeks until our wedding seemed like an excruciating amount of time.

I stalked over to her, purposely allowing the predator inside of me to guide my movements, and I heard her heart begin to thunder and smelled her scent intensify. I brushed my shoulder against hers as I passed a step beyond her and then leaned down. I looked over my shoulder, "Ready to go, love?"

She made a choked noise, handed me the bag with the leftover lunch items and blanket, and threw her arms around my neck so I could lift her and run us back to my car.

When we got back to the house, Bella excused herself to use the bathroom and I flopped onto the couch with my siblings who were engaged in watching a movie.

All at once I was battered with teasingly smug thoughts and stifled laughter.

Nice afternoon at the meadow, Edward? I glared at Alice. Suddenly I knew she had given Bella my pocket knife. At first I thought she simply found it in my room when she had gone up to use the bathroom earlier.

I'm glad Bella's feeling a little more...relaxed, brother. At Jasper's comment, I threw my head back into the couch cushion and pinched the bridge of my nose.

"What? What am I missing?" Emmett always managed to become observant at the most annoying times.

"Nothing." I rose as I heard Bella's footsteps making their way downstairs. I distracted Emmett with an invitation. "Want to go hunting later?"

"Sure, dude." I could hear the question forming in his mind—we had hunted last night. I snatched Bella up and flew with her out of the house before he could vocalize it. She choked out a "bye" as we were moving down the front steps.

"What was that about?" she said breathlessly as I settled into the driver's seat.

I unleashed the full force of my smile and my eyes on her. "Nothing at all, love. I just couldn't wait to get you alone again."

The predictable flush colored her cheeks and she smiled. We held hands in companionable silence as I drove her home. I couldn't read her thoughts, but if they were similar to mine, we were both still in the meadow, against that tree, feeling each other's bodies for the first time in that way, leaning against Bella's public and permanent declaration of her love for me.

BPOV

Having now experienced *that* with *him*, my body was literally aching for his presence after he dropped me off at my house. I ran inside and got dinner started for me and Charlie, willing myself to calm down and act more natural before he started looking at me funny and asking questions. Time crawled. I was literally counting the minutes until it was a reasonably late enough time that I could excuse myself to my bedroom for the night.

The minute I was upstairs I fished under my mattress, found the notebook, and flopped on my bed.

The afternoon had given me new ideas, beyond the one Alice suggested. I searched for and finally found a pen, then kicked my shoes off not caring where they fell. I settled on my stomach and reread my "to do" list.

To do! Ha! To do: Edward! I kicked my legs excitedly against the mattress before forcing a deep breath and concentrating.

1) Against the tree by the meadow

2) Feel his full weight on top of me

- 3) French kiss
- 4) See him naked
- 5) Shower together
- 6) Against the cold tiles in the shower
- 7) In his car
- 8) On our lab table

I thought about drawing a line through or checking number one, but since we hadn't done *it* against that tree yet, I was keeping it on the list. I got distracted by a whole train of thought worrying how sturdy that tree was and how I would hate for anything to ever happen to it when I finally shook my head to try to focus.

- 9) On his leather couch

Thank you again, Alice. That is a freaking excellent one.

I thought about the end of our time against the tree. I had wanted to touch him so badly. I wanted to see him writhing the way he had made me.

- 10) I want him to come in my hand

- 11) IN MY MOUTH

I underlined and capitalized that one for emphasis. Imagining what his considerable length, judging by today's experience, would taste like caused a shiver to run up my spine.

- 12) His mouth on me

Feeling the need to clarify, which was stupid since this was *my* list and I know what I meant, I added

- 12) His mouth on me, *there*

- 13) Whatever it takes to get him to say FUCK again

Oh! Even better:

- 14) Get him to talk dirty in general

The downside to that one is my brain my melt. So. Worth. It.

I thought back over his command for me to keep my hands against the tree. I felt myself getting wet again. I knew something that absolutely had to be on the list.

15) Submit

I thought about that one for a moment. I felt sort of funny about it. It was 2008. Women were equals. I shook my head. That didn't keep me from wanting him to dominate me completely, at least some of the time.

Wow, yeah, this is going to be a long list.

16) See him hunt

I wrote that unthinkingly. *Wait. What does that have to do with my sexual desires for Edward?*

I thought about it for a moment. I still had difficulty actually picturing what it would look like for Edward to...hunt. But what I *imagined* involved an Edward that would be *completely* free. Completely driven by *his* needs. Completely *animalistic*.

Fuck. There was no denying it. That side of his nature was a huge turn-on for me. He could never know that. It would probably freak him out to no end. But that didn't make it any less true.

Thinking of him hunting and about his needs, his most base, primal needs, brought another thought to my head. This one actually shocked me. I tried to shove it aside and think of something *reasonable, possible, and significantly less macabre* for number seventeen.

But I couldn't get this thought out of my head.

17)

I wrote the number with a shaking hand.

17) Have Edward taste my blood

I noticed several things about myself at once. First, I was now shaking all over. Second, my jeans were now uncomfortably wet with my own arousal. And, third, I *absolutely* wanted to try to find a way to make 17 happen.

Edward had told me how he and all vampires had one desire above all others that was never completely fulfilled: the desire for blood. My to-do list was about my needs that I desperately wanted him, us, to fulfill at some point. And I knew he needed me in these ways too. But I could fulfill his most basic need. His need for blood. And, for my blood above all others. And this time in a way that would allow him to derive pleasure from it. The question was how.

That's not the only question. Would Edward even consider it? Would he be completely irate at even the suggestion? I knew the answers to those questions: No. Yes.

Still, 17 continued to lurk in the back of my mind, waving its hands to grab my attention at odd and unexpected moments. Seventeen was proof of how unconditionally I loved and accepted Edward Cullen.

The process of thinking through the additions to my list, particularly those last two, had not only made me wet between my legs, but wet everywhere. I was literally covered with a thin sheen of perspiration. All these new reactions by my body were fascinating. I reveled in the powerful feelings coursing through my body.

I closed the notebook and shoved it back under my mattress. Even hidden as it was, it felt like there was a huge red flashing neon arrow pointing at it: "Here are Bella Swan's wildest and darkest fantasies. Step right up. A dollar a read!"

I giggled.

I grabbed some pajamas and walked into the bathroom, locking the door behind me without thinking.

I pulled my shirt and bra off while still musing over the list in my mind. But as I unbuttoned my jeans, my heart started racing. In all my thinking about my additions to the list, I had completely forgotten about the punishment I had meted out on Edward for apologizing when I'd told him not to.

My jeans felt so wet for a reason. I had removed my blue lace panties earlier. At Edward's. And folded them up into a neat square. Which I left sitting on the middle of his huge golden bed.

I threw my head in my hands. *Holy crow! What the hell got into me? I can't believe I did that.*

It had seemed like an eminently good idea at the time. I was trying to think what I could do to get back at him. And then he went and made that comment about how coming made me look, and a new trickle of fluids had seeped out of my body at his words. When I went up to his bathroom when we got back to his house, my panties were a wet mess. I was fascinated. *He did this to me.*

I took my panties off at first with the intention of putting them in my pocket—their wetness was uncomfortable. But then I realized that *off* they probably had a stronger scent than *on*, and I couldn't reasonably walk downstairs into a room full of hypersensitive vampires with...but then I couldn't simply throw them away in the bathroom garbage either. I was just about to relent and put them back on when the idea of leaving them *for Edward* slithered its way into my mind. *Who are you and what have you done with the old, unconfident, shy Bella Swan?* I giggled.

And then I thought of Alice. My new accomplice. If she was here with me right now, what would her advice be?

I couldn't believe this was my basis for decision-making now. If I listened to everything Alice thought I should do, I would be walking in four-inch heels, spending countless hours in the mall shopping, and love doing a whole host of 'girly' things that I generally loathed. *But Alice helped make the meadow happen.*

And that decided it for me.

So I neatly folded the blue lace, walked over to the huge bed, and laid it square in the middle.

Then I returned to the bathroom and washed my hands furiously, trying to remove any suspicious scents so that Edward wouldn't get a hint that I was up to anything.

I remember thinking at the time: *Damn! This is fun!*

But now, as I stood in the bathroom staring down at the pile of clothing—seeing three pieces where they would normally be four—I was nervous. I had no basis whatsoever for imagining how he might react....other than the previous two years of chasteness. *Damn! I'm screwed!*

I stepped in the shower, stressed and aroused beyond all imagination. I quickly washed my body and hair, noting the electrical tingling sensations that erupted when I washed the area between my legs. And I knew what I had to do, what I needed.

This time I didn't wait for the hot water to be wasted. I turned the water to cold, grabbed the damned showerhead, and within three minutes lay panting and spent on the bathtub floor, an image of a beautifully dark gothic Edward with a single trickle of blood rolling from the corner of his mouth still fresh in my mind.

~*~

Chapter 5: Consequences

Jasper POV

The house was relatively quiet tonight. Edward, Emmett, and Rosalie left to go hunting around nine and Carlisle was at the hospital. I hadn't seen Esme in hours. That was as close to alone as we ever got. I tossed the book I had been reading onto the coffee table and marched upstairs at a leisurely pace, anticipating the time with Alice I was about to have. The level of Edward's and Bella's sexual tension and frustration was starting to wear on me, and I needed a release before I exploded.

As I passed the stairs to the third floor on the way to our room, an unexpected scent blindsided me, causing a rush of venom to flood my mouth. *What the fuck?*

I was pulled in equal parts by my desire to get to Alice and my desire to investigate the scent. My curiosity got the best of me, and almost unthinkingly I was moving up the steps towards Edward's room.

I knew what the scent was. I recognized it. But I didn't understand it, that is, I didn't understand why it would be here, so strong, *now*, when no one was around.

I approached Edward's room slowly, almost as if there was an unknown threat within that I was trying to catch unawares. When I reached the doorway I paused. The scent was more concentrated now, intoxicating really. The venom in my mouth flowed in an uncontrolled stream. *God, I thought her blood smelled good.*

The scent was causing my brain to fog with desire and lust. I was having a hard time focusing. I reached to my left and flicked on the light switch. In the second it took my eyes to adjust, all of my senses drew me to the center of Edward's bed.

Without realizing I had moved, I stood with the front of my thighs pressed up against the side of the bed, completely mesmerized by the folded blue fabric placed, clearly quite purposefully, in the center of the bed. *Ungh, I cannot begin to fathom how he resists that.*

I managed a small smile to myself. *My little sister is going to be a force to be reckoned with.*

Mystery now solved, I shook my head to try to cut the fog that had descended around my brain. One thought soon dominated all others: *Alice*.

In an instant, I fled through the house to our room, barely controlling the force with which I opened our bedroom door. It vibrated the whole wall when I slammed it shut. Alice lay on her back in the center of the bed, her arms folded underneath her head in a pose of complete relaxation. She was wearing nothing but a pair of blue lace panties. Her eyes followed mine as they focused intently on the small piece of lacey lingerie. She slowly slid her legs apart to reveal the panty's best feature: they were crotchless. *Mother of God*.

Within seconds my clothes lay in a ruined heap at the foot of the bed. I groaned at the realization that Alice was completely ready for me. I filled her in one hard thrust and she screamed my name. I fully opened my emotions to her, setting her awash in a sea of lust raw and primal. She moaned and offered up a continuous stream of vulgarities and gibberish that only heightened my need.

Alice returned my emotions, desire for desire, need for need. I reveled in her sounds as she screamed through two intense clenching orgasms, the second of which pulled me along with her, and then mewled her way through a third as I licked her pussy clean of our juices. After what I had smelled earlier, there was no way this night could end for me without a taste.

An hour later we lay intertwined with one another on the bed, our breathing finally normalized and our emotions more reined in. Alice was the first one to find her voice, and in true Alice fashion, she made me laugh.

She kissed me hard on the mouth, ran her hand lovingly through my hair several times, then whispered, "Remind me to thank Bella tomorrow."

EPOV

We got back to the house around 4:30 a.m., which would allow me enough time to shower and change before driving over to Bella's house. It had been a good hunt. We went further than we normally do into Canada, allowing us to pursue some bigger game.

When we came into the living room from the garage, we found Alice and Jasper laying on the couch staring into a low fire. Jasper was laying on his side in between Alice's legs with his head on her lap, and she was gently stroking his hair. The love those small actions radiated heightened my need to get to Bella.

But then their minds captured my attention. Usually, in a moment like this, their thoughts would be characterized by a random flow of miscellaneous thoughts as they let their minds relax. Instead, Alice was reciting the names of colors in her head (*Shades of blue include royal blue, sky blue, turquoise, navy blue, midnight blue...*) and Jasper was running the specs for the Confederate ironclad ship *Virginia*, more popularly known as the *Merrimac*, through his head.

I had half a mind to interrogate them until Alice turned her face towards me and with a half-relaxed, half-amused expression that made it clear such an effort wouldn't be successful.

I shook my head and turned towards the stairs, taking both flights three at a time until I was walking down the hallway to my room. I froze. *What is...Is that...Where...?* I pushed my door closed behind me as I stepped inside. My bed was empty. *So why I am smelling her?* I swallowed a mouthful of venom and hit the light switch.

I heard the laughter from two stories below.

I instantly understood what I was seeing. There, on the center of the bed, Bella had left me a memento of yesterday afternoon's activities in the meadow. The blue lace called to me and I moved silently across the room. I reached my right hand out and laid it on top of the lacey fabric, which seemed to sear through me. Unthinkingly, my hand balled into a fist around the panties. My free hand had clenched into a fist as well. I felt the change in my eyes as the obsidian cloaked the topaz.

I brought the blue fabric up to my face and inhaled deeply.

Fuck.

I moaned. Competing thoughts assaulted my brain:

This woman is going to be the death of me.

This woman is going to be my WIFE.

This woman is making me the luckiest man that ever existed.

I need this woman in ways I never expected and never wanted to admit I needed and in every way a man needs a woman.

This woman. This woman. THIS WOMAN.

I had to get to Bella. Now.

My Bella. *My Bella left her panties on my bed for me to find.* What in the name of all that is holy possessed her?

All of a sudden another realization hit: *when I took her home last evening she didn't have panties on.* A muttered "fuck" escaped my lips at the thought.

I had to get to Bella, but I was so aroused, so needful, *so full of lust*, that I didn't think I could see her without taking her. And I was both thrilled and terrified by the intensity of my desire. *I can't hurt her. She is my life.*

I stood there, stone still, eyes clenched closed in concentration. I thought about anything I could force into my brain to distract me. Nothing worked. Something needed to give.

I strode into the bathroom and turned on the shower. I whipped my clothes off and threw them into a pile in the corner. It was only when I stepped into the shower that I released the panties from my right hand, hanging them over the towel bar on the outside of the glass door.

I washed my hair and body roughly. I never took my eyes from the panties.

I stepped out from under the direct spray of the water and opened the shower door. I leaned my body out and took the panties in my hand. I deliberately placed my thumb on the crotch. The texture of her arousal was evident under my thumb. I moaned and leaned my head against the tile.

I dropped the panties to the floor and closed the shower door again. I looked down at my body. My erection was *aching*. Keeping my eyes trained on the dangerous pile of blue fabric, I wrapped my right hand around the base of my cock. The small amount of relief that touch provided caused my eyes to momentarily roll up into my head.

I wasn't averse to relieving myself, although it wasn't an urge I gave into frequently.

Tonight, though, I knew I wouldn't last long.

I glided my fist along my length, loosening and tightening my grip as my need dictated. I allowed my thumb to flick my head at the end of each stroke. I never removed my eyes from Bella's panties. I locked my jaw as I neared my release—it was bad enough Jasper would probably know what I was doing already without broadcasting it to the others. I threw myself over the edge by bringing my left hand into the action as well, fully encompassing my length within the shower-warmed skin of my hands.

I leaned my head against the tile with the water cascading down my back and closed my eyes. The water started to run cool, so I turned the knob to shut it off. I leaned there for a minute in an unthinking stupor. When I opened my eyes, the first thing they latched upon was those blue panties.

I wrenched the shower door open and grabbed the large white towel hanging on a side hook. I made a cursory effort to dry myself off before discarding the towel and marching into my closet. I grabbed a pair of black jeans and a short-sleeved grey t-shirt. I shoved my feet into socks and shoes and walked back into the bathroom. Looking in the mirror, I ran my hands through my hair in a vain attempt to tame it.

I bent down and picked up the panties. I folded them gently, as if they were something precious, and stuffed them into my right front pocket.

Isabella Swan had just caused me to fall the fuck apart without evening being in my presence. I smiled darkly to myself. Someone has some explaining to do.

I ran through the house as the sun was rising. I registered the teasing thoughts of my siblings but I was a man on a mission. I had originally planned to drive, but the morning's events had necessitated I burn off some steam. I took off in a full-out run through the forest.

I would be in Bella's room when she awoke.

~*~

Chapter 6: Unexpected

EPOV

As I approached Bella's house, I was feeling significantly more composed. I walked the remaining distance, just taking the time to ensure I had myself under control. The anticipation of talking to her about her little stunt with the panties was buzzing under my skin. I knew I needed to be careful.

As I jumped to her window a sound caught my attention. I groaned and rested my head against the glass of her window before pushing it up. I braced myself for what I might see.

I slipped in through the window, stealthy as always, hoping to catch Bella in the middle of whatever was causing her to emit those sounds. She was moaning softly in high-pitched pleading tones. Standing at the end of her bed I studied her. She was asleep. *Sweet God she's having an erotic dream.*

She lay on her back, her bedspread kicked to the floor and the sheet twisted over one leg. Her hair was splayed around her head and shoulders, framing her face and highlighting her porcelain skin. Her white tank top had ridden up in her sleep, exposing her lean torso. A moan started low in my throat when I saw her white cotton bikini underwear. They had a small satin bow in the center. She looked like an angel all in white.

I was frozen where I stood at the foot of her bed. Her sounds, movement, and *oh God her scent* held me enraptured. I was instantly hard.

My hands literally ached to reach out and touch her. I pulled her blue panties out of my pocket and balled them in the center of my fist, trying to distract my hands' need to feel her.

Some part of my brain was chagrined—I had come here to make Bella squirm over the panties, and right now she was so in control of me that I would have given in to any request she made of me. All this, and she wasn't even awake! *I am powerless to resist this woman.*

If I thought the sound of her moaning so needfully wasn't seductive enough, when she starting moving and speaking I thought I'd either have to leave or take her, so tenuous was the hold on my control. The only thing that kept me in place was how enthralled I was with the picture unfolding before me. The anticipation of what she was going to do next was excruciating.

I stood there, squeezing her panties in my left hand, watching.

"Edward."

There was no denying it. Hearing my name on her lips in her sleep remained one of my favorite sounds in the world.

"Oh...oh, please." Her back arched slightly at her words. One of her hands came to rest on her bare stomach.

The pull I felt to give her what she was pleading for was phenomenal.

"Unghhh."

I closed my eyes at the sound of her moan. Okay, *that* for sure was one of my favorite sounds in the world. *Soon, soon, I will make it my mission to elicit that sound from her as often as possible.*

"Oh, Edward. I...I need...."

What, baby, what do you need? My thought gave me an idea. I moved to the side of her bed and kneeled down. Softly I whispered, "What Bella, what do you need?"

"Oh, God, Edward." Her hand slid slightly down to her hip bone.

"Tell me, Bella," I whispered.

"I need...please...*touch me.*"

Fuck. I leaned my head down and rested it momentarily on the edge of her mattress. *Think of anything, anything, so that you can keep your hands to yourself.* Because, Jesus Christ, I wanted to touch her so badly.

I lifted my head up when I felt her shift. My eyes widened when she slid her hand between her legs. She whimpered, and then shifted onto her side facing me so that she was leaning slightly on her stomach. Her new position trapped her hand firmly between her legs.

"Oh, God, Edward." Imperceptibly her hips started moving against her hand.

All at once the scent of her arousal got noticeably stronger. I twisted the blue panties in my hand. My empty hand itched to have those white panties too, knowing as I did now that they were equally coated with her arousal.

"Yes, Edward. Oh."

I couldn't help myself. I wanted to prolong this as much as possible, so I encouraged her. "That's right, baby."

"More, *please.*"

Fuck! "More what, love. Tell me what you want," I rasped.

"I want...."

Please tell me. I need to hear it.

"Edward...want...."

Oh my God she is killing me.

"Fu...," I froze at what I thought I heard her say. I had just convinced myself that in my lust I was imagining things when her voice interrupted my thoughts. "Fuck me...please."

Holy fucking hell.

Just then, her hips started moving more urgently, though the movements were still small.

She was whimpering when I noticed her heart rate and breathing pattern begin to change.

I flew to the rocking chair in the corner as I realized she was minutes away from waking up.

I pushed against my erection, aching badly for the second time this morning, hoping she wouldn't notice. I thought fleetingly of leaving to allow her time to compose herself so she wouldn't be embarrassed if she realized what had just happened. But I was so enthralled with her that I couldn't make myself do it. The scent of her arousal was now permeating the room. I felt like I needed it in order to survive.

Minutes later, her body had completely stilled, then Bella shifted once again. She turned fully on her stomach, bringing both hands up under her pillow. Beautiful as her face and hair were in that position, all my eyes wanted to see was her ass framed in those innocent white cotton panties. She had kicked the sheet all the way off in her movements, and the length of her shapely legs looked so sensuous.

"Mmm," she breathed as she stretched her arms out above her. She pushed slightly up on her elbows, her head hanging down as her hands rubbed sleep from her eyes.

"Sleep well, love?"

She jumped and flipped over onto her side, her back coming to rest against the wall next to her bed. "Oh my God, Edward." One hand flew to her chest. "You scared the crap out of me."

I chuckled. "Sorry. I just couldn't wait for you to wake up."

She smiled too, a beautiful blush coloring her face. She laid her head back down and brought her hand up to cover her eyes for a moment, before brushing it back over her hair.

She yawned.

"Sweet dreams, love?" She hadn't really woken up enough to take notice of the way I was looking at her.

"Umhmm." She was silent for a moment before her blush returned tenfold. She propped herself up on her elbows. She was biting her bottom lip. "Um, why? What did you hear?"

BPOV

I was so groggy when I woke up. My sleep had been so restless. Dream after dream assaulted my unconsciousness, leaving me repeatedly awakened panting, aroused, and wet. The additions to my list had set my subconscious afire.

Edward's inquiry about my dreams helped me push the last of my sleepiness away. There was something about his voice. *Oh my God, what did I say?*

"Um, why? What did you hear?"

He didn't answer right away, so I sat up further, although I was still reclined against my arms, outstretched behind me against the mattress. I looked at him. The light was starting to brighten my room enough that I could fairly easily make him out as he sat across the room. My heart began thundering in my chest at the sight of his eyes. They were pitch black. My mind was reeling for an explanation.

"Did...did you go hunting last night?"

"Yes." His voice was low. The corner of his mouth twitched up.

I began chewing my bottom lip.

"Bella?"

"Yes?"

"You still haven't answered my question."

"Oh. Um." The pace of my heart was making me feel a little light-headed. His persistence confirmed that he knew exactly what I was dreaming about. Or at least had a fairly good idea. *Oh God*. I shifted my legs slightly and the new position made me notice how wet my panties were. I knew now there was no way he didn't smell that.

As I struggled to figure a way out of this conversation, my list flashed through my mind. *Hmm*. I could either sit here and be embarrassed that he caught me moaning for him in my sleep, *or* I could see if I could turn this situation in my favor. After all, good as that last dream had been, it had maddeningly ended before the plot...climaxed, so to speak. And I felt...needy.

I took a deep breath. I looked at him again, all prepared to be brutally honest about my dream, when I noticed his hand moving. Over and over again. His thumb rubbing rough circles into...something. All at once I recognized the color of the fabric. *My panties*. A small whimper left my chest before I could catch it. My eyes flew to Edward's face. His gaze was smoldering.

I shook my head and tried to find that confidence I had had a moment ago. "I see...you got my...punishment."

If possible his eyes darkened.

"Yes, but you lied."

I was confused. "What?"

"You told me I wouldn't like it."

"Oh." His intensity was throwing me off balance.

"But the truth is, Bella, I loved it." His voice was husky. "Your little punishment was...inspiring."

Inspiring? What does that...mean? What was he inspired to do? *Oh!* Is it possible?

"How so?" I whispered.

"Nuhuh, your dream, Bella."

I told my brain to stop thinking and I spit the words out. "I was dreaming about you." He remained silent, clearly waiting. "You were touching me."

His lips pressed into a tight line. I was afraid my words were angering him. Perhaps I was pushing his control too far. Finally he spoke. "How, Bella? How was I touching you?" He shifted slightly in the chair.

"Edward, you...your hands...you were all over me." My voice sounded breathy.

He closed his eyes. I saw his Adams apple bob as he swallowed. After that, he sat stone still.

"Edward?"

His dark eyes flashed open. "Bella, I want...lay down."

"What?"

"Lay. Down." His command sent another rush of wetness into my panties.

I slid my arms out from underneath of me, allowing my back to recline into my bed.

"Bella, I don't think I have the control in this moment to do what I want to do. So I want you to do it for me."

I lay there, nearly stunned, eagerly awaiting his next words.

"You remember your dream."

He didn't phrase it as a question. But I nodded anyway.

"Tell me."

The breath whooshed out of me. Could I do this? Then I thought, *hell, yeah*, if I'm not willing to let go and try this, I'll never get anything on that damn list crossed off.

"At...at first you were kissing me. Only...these kisses were different. You were...urgent. Your hands...you were tugging on my hair as you kissed me."

"Don't stop, Bella."

My breathing was coming in shorter bursts now. "You were laying...half next to me and half...on top of me. You ran your right hand down to the base of my neck. And, um, then I asked you," I swallowed, "to touch me. And, oh, God, Edward," I shifted to rub my thighs together, "You did."

"Where did I touch you?"

"You...ran your hand down between my breasts to my stomach. Then you rubbed back up my side. When...when you palmed my breast it felt so good."

"Show me."

"What?"

"*Show. Me.*" My panties were now so wet that the moisture had seeped onto my upper thighs.

"Oh God. Edward, I need you so much."

"Then show me." His voice was raspy and clipped. I had never heard it sound so commanding.

My left hand moved in response to Edward's words. Slowly I dragged my hand down the center of my torso, before running it back up to my breast and squeezing softly. I couldn't help the moan that escaped my lips.

"Harder, Bella. I would touch you harder."

My mind was screaming at me: *Abort! Abort! Oh God, I can't handle dominant Edward.* But then some other part of my brain squished that thought like the pesky bug that it was. *Isabella Marie Swan don't you freakin' stop now.*

I squeezed my breast harder and arched into it. I closed my eyes to better imagine it was Edward's hand I was feeling. Even with my eyes closed, I could feel his gaze burning into me.

"Do exactly what I tell you, Isabella. Do you understand?"

"Yes," I rasped.

"Use your other hand too."

I moved my hand to my other breast and massaged my palm into the sensitive flesh.

"Pinch yourself. Do it."

Oh God. I rolled my nipples between my fore finger and thumb, pinching enough to make my hips jerk.

"What do you want, Bella?"

"I...I want you. Edward...."

I felt the air move around me and I opened my eyes to find Edward kneeling at the side of my bed. I noticed that his breathing had quickened too.

"Edward, *please.*"

He reached out and took my right hand with his. He placed the palm of his hand on the back of mine, and threaded his fingers in between my own. "Touch yourself, Bella. Show me how you like to be touched."

I bit my bottom lip. *Oh. My. God.*

Slowly I lowered my hand down my body. Finally my hand, with Edward's on top, came to rest on top of my panties. I was just about to follow his command when another interrupted my concentration.

"Under."

Under? Oh! I am going to die.

I pulled my hand back a bit and moved our hands under the elastic band of my panties. All at once I was too far gone to be embarrassed, or question what was happening, or even *think* at all, really. I pressed down on my clit and began moving my fingers in slow circles. He was keeping his hand completely still, but that didn't keep me from feeling his cold fingers come in contact with my hot skin. It was like nothing I had ever felt in my whole life.

I started to get lost in the sensation when I felt his hand softly put pressure on my own. He was urging me to move my fingers down towards my now dripping center.

He groaned as our fingers encountered the silky slick moisture of my arousal. That sound only added to my wetness. I moved our fingers up and down through my folds in long strokes. I couldn't stop my hips from moving now. "God, Edward."

"Look at me Bella." I turned my head to the side and lifted my heavy eyelids. Our hands kept moving against me. "In...inside. I need to..." he swallowed thickly, "I have to feel you." He echoed my words from yesterday in the meadow. The restrained longing in his voice was so erotic.

I shifted my hips upwards a little and moved our hands down. I pressed my middle finger against one of his and slipped both of our fingers inside of me, just a little at first, and then more with each motion.

Fuck, Edward Cullen is inside of me.

"Fuck, Bella, you are so wet, so warm."

My eyes hadn't left his face since his earlier command to look at him. I met his eyes. "For you, Edward. I am so wet for you." He moaned and shifted up on his elbow to kiss me.

We moaned into each other's mouths, our fingers still sliding in and out of me. The position pushed the heel of my palm against my clit. I pushed my hips up trying to further the friction. I moaned again when I felt him push his hand down against mine in response.

As I started gasping for breath, Edward's lips left mine and began working down my neck. He traced kisses around the scooped edge of my tank top.

"Oh, Edward. I'm...oh...."

"I want to feel you come on me, Bella."

His words cinched it. "Ungh...ah...Edward...." I felt myself clenching around our fingers.

We were both panting hard. His lips met mine again. I tried to move my hand but Edward held us still.

“Edward,” I moaned around the side of a kiss.

“Yes, love,” his voice still sounded strained.

“You...you have to let me return the favor.” I needed to touch him so badly.

Gently he pulled his hand away and I felt a sense of loss immediately. He sat back from me. “Bella—”

I pressed my fingers against his lips, knowing what he was about to say. What I hadn’t paid attention to was the hand I used to do so. I noticed the moisture glistening on the three fingers pressed against his lips. I heard a hiss escape his lips, and his hand flew up to grab my wrist. But then he sat stone still.

My mind nearly left me altogether. I whispered hesitantly, “Taste me.” His gaze was smoldering. He didn’t move at all, and I thought he was going to push me away. But then his tongue snuck out from between his lips and pressed itself against my middle finger. “Fuck you taste exquisite.”

I turned on my side to be nearer to him. “Edward, I need...I need to touch you as badly as I needed you to touch me.” Slowly I moved my hand from his face and placed it on his chest. His hand was still wrapped around my wrist. I grabbed a handful of his t-shirt and pulled him towards me. I whispered, “Lay down with me.”

I couldn’t believe it when he did. I scooted my body back so that he could lie on the side where he had been kneeling. I allowed myself a look down his body as he lay down. His erection was obvious against his dark jeans. My hand was still wrapped in his shirt. I released the material and slowly moved it downwards.

I tried to concentrate on the feeling, but I was so scared he was going to stop me. I was chanting in my mind, *Please number ten, please number ten*. Some part of me hoped repeating that as a mantra would serve as a magic spell that would ensure the fulfillment of my fantasy.

My hand came to rest on his erection and he groaned. I stayed completely still, trying to give him the time to get used to me, trying not to scare him.

EPOV

Oh my fucking God.

As if my mind wasn’t reeling sufficiently from the experience of having been inside her—in itself an almost spiritual experience as I felt an overwhelming sensation of being *home*—she was now touching me. I was about to stop her when she stopped herself. I realized what she was doing. She was letting me get use to the sensation of her touching me. The control she showed in holding still was my breaking point—her control allowed me to lose some of my grip on my own.

She pressed her palm more firmly against my erection. I was at war with myself. Could I let her do this? I was astounded that she wanted to in the first place. But did I have enough control to not hurt her? If I allowed myself to lose a little control, could I hold onto the rest of it?

She slowly began moving her hand up and down my length, pressing the seam of my jeans into me. It was a slow torture.

Her forehead was leaning against my cheek. "I need to feel you, Edward." My words. She was throwing them back at me. I wanted to refuse her, but I knew I wouldn't be able to.

She fumbled for a moment at the button on my jeans, then slowly pulled my zipper down. She stilled again then, pressing her hand firmly against me. After a moment, her fingers gingerly slipped under one side of the open fly of my jeans. When her fingers touched my cock we both moaned. She stilled again.

I need to feel her too.

I reached down and hooked my jeans with my thumbs and lifted my hips to push them down.

She gasped in response. Our eyes met. "Bella, you don't have to—"

She cut me off with a kiss. "I want to. I just...have never...seen a man before." She bit her bottom lip. I felt her fingers curl around me. "Tell me how to...."

"Oh God. Move your hand up and down."

She did and the feeling was incredible. Never in a million years had I thought this would be the outcome of coming here this morning.

I pushed my hips up slightly into her hand. "Grip me harder."

I felt her palm and fingers tighten around me. I groaned. It was heaven, and she was an angel holding me in her hands.

She followed the lead of my hips and set a steady rhythm. I tried thinking about other things to prolong the experience. I never wanted this to stop, but I *needed* this so badly.

"Faster, baby."

"Edward, show me."

Fuck that was hot. I reached my left arm down and carefully curled my hand around hers. Just as we had done minutes before, we worked together, this time over my aroused form.

"God you feel good Edward. I want to make you feel good." Her voice was breathy.

"It's so good, Bella."

"God, Edward. Seeing you is so hot."

“Ungh.” Her voice was going to be the end of me. “Keep talking, Bella.”

“I want to taste you, Edward.”

“God, fuck.” An unbidden image of Bella’s face between my legs made me immeasurably harder.

“I can’t...can’t wait to have this,” I felt her grip me harder under my hand, “in me.”

That was it. “Move your hand, baby.” I still hadn’t had the conversation with Carlisle about whether my semen posed her any threats. She complied immediately. “God, Bella,” I moaned as I came. I used my other hand to catch my cum, then rested both hands against my hips.

I felt her curl into me. “God I love you, Edward.”

“I love you more than my own life, Bella.”

I had never before seriously entertained the possibility of having someone to help fulfill my needs, and whose needs I could fulfill in return. In that moment, the full significance of our impending marriage hit me. If I could have shed tears, I would have. In giving herself to me so completely, Bella was making me whole.

~*~

Chapter 7: Awkward

It was Thursday night, and it had been a long *quiet* week. It had started out with fireworks, but there had been no repeat performance.

I stared down at the notebook in front of me, my eyes glazing over the list, when I suddenly flipped several pages back to a blank sheet. I knew once I was changed I might not remember all of this, and I wanted to. So I began a diary of sorts.

July 14—Edward took me on a date to the meadow. We laid in the sun while I ate lunch and he read to me. It was warm and his skin dazzled me. It was a lovely afternoon. I carved our initials in a tree at the edge of the meadow, and Edward put a heart around it. Then he started kissing me in a way he had never allowed himself to do before. He had me pressed back against the tree, and it was so sexy and needful. I loved seeing him want me. It was the first time I think I truly believed he wanted me that way as much as I wanted him. I convinced him to let me wrap myself around his waist, and oh God, everything about that, about him, felt wonderful. He was commanding and tender and raw all at the same time and the thought of him that day still makes my stomach flip-flop. I had the most incredible orgasm of my life, the only one I’d ever had with another person. I never felt more connected to him than I did at that moment.

July 15—I am proclaiming July 15 as a national holiday, one which we will celebrate every year for years to come. Ha! To come! Edward came to my room I think with the purpose of scolding me for leaving my panties on his bed—oh, that’s another story from the 14th... Anyway, he caught me having a dream about him, and before my mind could even comprehend what was going on he was talking me through pleasuring myself. But then he helped me, he actually ASKED me to show him how I liked to be touched. He joined his hand with mine, and then he asked to be inside of me. My body couldn’t decide whether to cry from the sweetness of it or to

devour him. Having him inside of me was the most fulfilling thing I have ever experienced in my life. Or at least I thought so. Until he allowed me to return the favor. He allowed me to touch him. His body is exquisite, and seeing him let himself go, seeing him allow himself some modicum of pleasure for once, knowing I had the power to bring him that pleasure. That was actually the most fulfilling experience of my life.

I looked up from the page, reminiscing about the week afterwards.

After being together Tuesday morning, Edward had held me tenderly for an hour. Then, all of a sudden, I felt him distance himself from me slightly. He kissed my forehead and then pulled away, swinging his legs over the edge of the bed and pulling his pants up in one quick movement. I felt his loss immediately. He seemed at loose ends, and all of a sudden I started feeling a little self-conscious. I wanted to say something to ease the tension that seemed to cloud the room, but I couldn't make sense of it. To me the morning had been absolutely perfect. The best morning of my life.

He turned to me. "Um, I'm going to run home and get cleaned up. I'll be back in a while?" I couldn't fathom why he phrased it as a question.

My brain was reeling to keep him from leaving. "Why don't you just take a shower here? Then you won't have to run back and forth?"

He looked down a little sheepishly and seemed to debate with himself.

Maybe he thought he couldn't trust me not to push him any further. Maybe I had pushed him more than he was ready to be pushed. My mind wanted to reject all that self-doubt outright, but a nagging pile of guilt still managed to take up residence in a dark corner of my brain. All the same, I felt the need to reassure him. "It's okay, Edward, I won't..." *what might he be afraid of?*, "...bother you. You can lock the door, even." Trying to make light of the situation, I added, "Unlike you, locks actually work on keeping me out." I smiled up at him.

My obvious effort to diffuse the tension seemed to get to him, because all of a sudden his face relaxed and he came back over to the bed. He threaded a hand through my hair and cradled the back of my head with it, then placed a light kiss on my lips. "You could never bother me, love." He kissed me again. "Would you like to go first?"

"Um, no, go ahead. I'm going to go grab a bowl of cereal." He nodded, and left the room.

I got up and pulled on a pair of gray yoga pants. It had been too hot to sleep with them on last night so I had shed them after I got into bed. It occurred to me then that Edward had never before seen me with so little clothing. *Perhaps that explained his willingness to push his boundaries?*

As I stepped out of my bedroom door I heard the water in the shower come on. My hand absolutely *itched* to try the knob to the bathroom door. Not to actually go in, but to see if he had actually locked it. But I knew there was no way I could even put my hand on the knob without him knowing it, so I resisted and forced myself down the stairs.

I threw together a bowl of cereal and plunked down into a chair at the table. I scooped a bite and spooned it into my mouth unthinkingly. Because my brain was still upstairs with Edward. Who was in my bathroom. Taking a shower. Naked. In my shower. The one with the showerhead.

Edward's in my shower Edward's in my shower Edward's in my shower

Wow. That thought all by itself was going to provide enough material for the next time I found myself in the shower and turned on. Actually, I wasn't sure how I would ever take a shower in there again without getting turned on. It was a high price to pay, but somebody had to do it. That thought brought the first real smile to my face since Edward started acting weird. *Thank God he's mine, moodiness and all.*

I wasn't surprised when the water turned off upstairs before I was even done my cereal. I was rinsing the bowl out when he surprised me by wrapping his arms around my waist from behind. He placed several light kisses against my hair on my neck, and then rested his chin on my left shoulder. He was gently rocking me back and forth. I leaned my head against his and enjoyed the feel of him around me.

The moment was so tender, I thought maybe he had gotten over whatever was bothering him. I wanted to talk about what had happened this morning. But just as I was about to open my mouth, as if he could read my mind, he quickly interjected, "Why don't you go get yourself ready too?"

He loosened his grip and I turned around and hugged him tightly, trying to communicate with my arms what he didn't seem ready for me to communicate with words. I nodded and padded up the steps.

I grabbed a set of clothes and walked into the bathroom. I closed the door and rested my back against it for a moment. My sinking feeling about Edward was replaced by my brain's receipt of sensory information from my nose. Edward's mouthwatering scent hung heavy in the leftover steam in the small bathroom. My mouth literally began to salivate. I shook my head in wonder, then stepped to the shower and turned on the water. It ran warm immediately, Edward having just used it before me, so I stepped in and let the water run over me. I looked up at the showerhead—*no need for you today my old friend*—before quickly shampooing and washing. I dried off and threw my clothes on before pulling my damp hair into a pony tail and running downstairs to find Edward.

I didn't see him right away and I began to panic. Then I noticed that the back door off the kitchen was slightly ajar. Through the curtained window, I could make out Edward's form on the back porch. He was holding something up to his ear. I realized he was on the phone. Just as I moved to open the door, he spun to me, said, "Gotta go. See you in a few," then hung up. He quickly replaced an annoyed look with a smile.

What is going on with him?

How could we be in such different emotional places after the last two days?

I decided to give him space by not pushing for answers. The car ride to his house was mostly quiet. And Alice pulled me into wedding planning moments after we got there. Edward came to check in on me a few times, but otherwise we spent little time together that day.

The last two days had been much the same. His mood had certainly lightened, but something about his posture warned me against trying to recreate any of what had earlier happened between us.

Tuesday night I was confused.

Wednesday night I was mad.

Thursday night I was sad.

In preparation for my spending the weekend at his house, Edward was hunting Thursday night and Alice was to pick me up bright and early Friday morning to take me to their house. Charlie thought I was keeping her company while the others went camping. In reality, the others were going on an extended hunting trip and leaving the house to Edward and me. The weekend alone no longer seemed to have the promise it did a few days ago.

Since I was going to be gone for a few days Charlie had asked me to hang out with him Thursday night, so I couldn't even see Edward before he left to go hunting.

All of this led to my laying on my bed by 9:30 pm, with my notebook in front of me, trying to stifle the tears from falling down my face. The list now seemed to mock me. And despite the fact that I should feel happy that I could now put check marks next to a number of items on the list, all I could see were the ones I hadn't been able to accomplish and now clearly wouldn't for who knew how long.

I was just about to tear the pages with the list out of the notebook and throw them away when the house phone rang. Shortly thereafter Charlie was jogging up the steps. He knocked softly on the door and I batted away my tears and told him to come in. "For you, honey, it's Alice."

"Oh," I reached out to take the phone from him. "Thanks." His look told me he knew something was wrong, but he backed out of the room and shut the door.

I put the phone to my ear. "Bella, Edward is buying you a cell phone this weekend and that's that."

"Huh?" This couldn't wait until the morning?

"You've turned him down every time he's tried to get you a phone, but we need to be able to reach you directly, not go through Charlie."

I was too worn out to fight. "Uh, okay."

"Okay? That's great!"

"Um, Alice, did you actually want something or were you just calling to yell at me for not accepting Edward's gifts?"

"Oh. Sorry. Right. Don't you dare tear that list up."

Oh, for God sakes. I huffed into the phone.

"I'm serious, Bella. The list is good. The list is *working*," she said with a little too much implication. Clearly she knew what had happened.

"No, Alice, the list *was* working. Past tense."

"Sweetie, I know he's being a little distant right now. He's scared. And he's confused."

"Like I'm not?"

"Yes, but you weren't born in 1901."

I thought about that for a moment. "You think he's feeling..., *guilty? embarrassed?...*, "like what we did was...improper?" *Oh Edward.*

"Something like that, yes."

"Oh."

"Yeah. So, I know it's hard that you always have to be the strong one emotionally, but hang in there and don't lose faith. He knows what he wants, he's just afraid to want it."

"Oh."

I could hear a smile return to her face. "Okay, see you in the morning Bella."

"Okay." The line clicked dead but I barely heard it. I was caught up in my own thoughts.

I immediately felt selfish for the way I had been acting. I had been quiet when he had come to me Tuesday night, but I was so confused I didn't know what to try to say to him. And I had been tense when he came to me Wednesday night, but I was annoyed enough that I was afraid if I said anything I would end up regretting it. And then today when we were together I just had this overwhelming feeling of resignation, and it made me feel drained and listless, and I knew he could tell.

In my defense, it never occurred to me that being satisfied in that way wouldn't lead to a sense of satisfaction but instead a sense of increased desire. Or, rather, maybe it was more that I was surprised by how short the sense of satisfaction lasted, and how quickly the need returned. Now that my body knew it could have that with Edward, it's all my body wanted. It was like there could never be enough. It was all-consuming.

I looked down at the list again. I smoothed out the page; it had crinkled where the paper joined the spiral ring where I had gripped it.

Fine, the list stays.

I read it over, thinking about the things we'd accomplished.

- 1) Against the tree by the meadow
- 2) Feel his full weight on top of me
- 3) French kiss
- 4) See him naked
- 5) Shower together
- 6) Against the cold tiles in the shower

- 7) In his car
- 8) On our lab table
- 9) On his leather couch
- 10) I want him to come in my hand
- 11) IN MY MOUTH
- 12) His mouth on me, *there*
- 13) Whatever it takes to get him to say FUCK again
- 14) Get him to talk dirty in general
- 15) Submit
- 16) See him hunt
- 17) Have Edward taste my blood

Numbers 10, 13, and 14 had happened and been every bit as wonderful as I expected. Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 15 had happened at least in part, although not exactly in the ways I had in mind, and so I wasn't willing to consider them *all the way* accomplished. I smiled to myself. *I am greedy.*

I was sitting there musing to myself, not really fully paying attention. So I was a little surprised to look down and see the number eighteen added to the list.

18)

I stared at it for a moment, and then relented. Well, there *were* more things I wanted for us to experience, after all.

I thought about how my words had affected Edward. And about the fact that he seemed to have a hard time allowing himself to let go. I knew what I wanted to add.

18) Dominate

Maybe if I *told* him to enjoy himself he would. Doubtful, but a girl can hope. If he'd only play along.

I thought for a minute. *Oh!* Maybe some of the pressure would be taken off if I wasn't right there.

19) Phone sex

The possibilities for *that* seemed endless!

I remembered my dream, the one that had apparently started the whole thing on Tuesday morning. In the dream, Edward had been relentless, devouring my body with his hands and mouth.

20) His mouth on my breasts, suckling me

I groaned. As it always did, working on the list was getting me hot. And I just wasn't in the mood.

I tucked the notebook under the edge of the bed and clicked the light out. Alice's conversation had eased my mind, and for the first time in a few days I had a restful night of sleep.

I woke up early, expecting Alice around 8:30. With the week that I'd had I hadn't really kept up with my room, and it was kind of a mess. I pulled my laundry basket out of the bottom of my closet and swooped around the room collecting dirty clothes. I grabbed a glass and a soda can from the night before, and trudged downstairs with the whole lot. I passed through the kitchen on the way to the laundry room, depositing the glass in the sink and the can in the recycling bin, and then plopped the clothes basket down in front of the washer. There weren't enough clothes to worry about separating them into colors and whites, so I started putting everything in to the same load. About two-thirds into the basket, I came upon the white tank top I had on *that morning*. I hugged it to my chest, deep in thought, then threw it in with the rest.

I ran upstairs to get showered and dressed. I walked into my bedroom with the towel around my body to get fresh clothes for the day. As I pulled a pair of panties from my drawer, it occurred to me that I hadn't seen the white cotton bikinis I had also had on *that morning*. I hadn't really been looking though.

I threw on clothes and pulled my hair up into a loose up-do. It was already muggy and it felt good to get my hair up off my neck. Then I went back in my room to pack a bag for the weekend. Just as I was finishing up I heard the washing machine buzzer sound. I looked at the clock: 8:20 a.m. Alice would be here any minute.

I grabbed my bag and ran downstairs. I placed it by the front door and then walked back to the laundry room. I opened the top-loading door and began lifting the wet clothes out of the machine and into the dryer. A pair of pink panties reminded me, and I began sorting through the load. *The white bikinis aren't here.*

I ran back upstairs and began searching. I looked in the bathroom, under my bed, in the back of my closet, and in my underwear drawer. Just as I was bending under my desk, Alice's voice startled me, and I banged the back of my head on the underside of the desk.

"Looking for something?" I peaked out from under the desk to look at her. She was smiling.

"Obviously."

"Anything I can help with?"

"No. It's not here....I don't think."

"Something important?"

"No. Yes. No." She laughed and my eyes flashed up to hers. *She knows something.*

I stalked over to her. "Alice Cullen! What do you know?"

"I know many things, Bella." I huffed.

"Do all you Cullens have to be so infuriating?" My rant only seemed to amuse her.

"Come on, let's go." She started down the steps and I followed after her. I watched her like a hawk until we got in the car, and as she pulled out of my street she finally relented and looked back at me.

"Like I said, Bella, have a little faith."

~*~

Chapter 8: Slight Change Of Plans

BPOV

That. Little. Panty. Thief.

Here I've been all week worrying about Edward. Feeling bad for us doing things that made him uncomfortable. Only to realize that at some point after Tuesday morning, he stole the white bikinis I had worn.

I would be royally pissed, if his actions didn't give me an immense feeling of hope. Hmmm...apparently, Mr. Cullen has a panty fetish.

I turned to Alice as we made our way back to her house. "Alice? What time are you all leaving?"

"Why?" She looked over at me with a growing grin.

"I don't suppose we would have enough time to fit in a small shopping expedition?"

She screamed, scaring the hell out of me. "Really, Bella? Oh, I think we can make this work." She called the house and informed Esme we would be about two hours later than originally planned. She was fine with that; apparently Edward hadn't returned from hunting anyway.

She looked at me again. "I'm proud of you, Bella."

Her words surprised me. "Why?"

"You found your faith." She started laughing. It was infectious. Suddenly we were both giggling like two school girls.

Alice tore into Port Angeles within twenty minutes. She found a place to park in the downtown shopping district and began walking with a purpose down the street. In the next block she stopped in front of a large store and motioned for me to enter. It was Port Angeles's only department store. I was just about to tell her

what I wanted to look at when she turned to me with an injured expression and said, "Puh-lease," then marched her way directly to the women's lingerie department. *Alice Cullen is a force of nature.*

By the time I joined her she already had an armful of clothes selected for me to try on. A few I ruled out on sight, but Alice snuck them back into the pile with a quick "Trust me" before shoving me into the dressing room.

I reached blindly into the pile and pulled out the first bra and panty set. It was black with hot pink pin stripes and edging. I was surprised how much I liked it on. It wasn't something I ever would have chosen for myself.

"Hand out the keepers as you decide," Alice said.

When I thrust out the black and pink panty set she murmured approvingly, "Good choice."

I rifled through the pile. "Alice, did you find anything blue—never mind." I pulled the blue bra and panty set out next. As I turned it around, I realized I had been wrong. It wasn't a panty, it was a thong. I had never worn one before and shook my head. *That can't be comfortable.* I was just about to start a reject pile when Alice called over the door, "At least try it on, Bella." It was a beautiful set. A beautiful dark blue with a lighter blue edge and a lighter blue bow on both the bra and thong. The bra did wonderful things for my chest. And since I couldn't really get a good idea of how the thong would feel, I decided to get it based on the bra alone.

In the end, Alice had selected so many perfect pieces that I found it difficult to choose between them. Alice got exasperated at my inability to decide, so she swept the whole lot into her arms and gave me a look that dared me to challenge her.

Just then her eyes glazed over. The vision seemed to end as quickly as it came. "This way," she called over her shoulder.

I had no idea what she was up to, but I followed anyway. Our next stop was the dress department. Alice asked the saleslady to hold the lingerie while we browsed through the dresses. Before long, I found myself in another dressing room with a half dozen dresses. "Um, Alice, what do I need a dress for again?"

"Pffft, you can never have too many dresses, Bella." Clearly I wasn't going to be let in on whatever it was Alice had seen.

As I decided which one to try on first, I realized they all seemed significantly sexier than not only what I would pick out, but what Alice would usually pick out for me. *Hmm...maybe Alice has seen something about this weekend....* My hopeful feeling from earlier multiplied at the thought.

In the end, two especially caught my attention. The first was a BCBG Max Azria sheath dress with laser-cut pleats down the whole thing and an asymmetrical neckline. Falling mid-thigh, it was the quintessential little black dress. The second was an emerald green Nine West strapless satin dress with an empire waist and a bubble hem that gave me an hourglass shape. This dress hit me slightly higher than the black one, making my legs look much longer. I came out of the dressing room clearly excited about these dresses and Alice faked brushing a tear from beneath her eye. She sniffed, "My little girl is growing up and learning how to shop."

I reached out to smack her arm but she jumped out of my reach easily. “Wench!”

“Oooh. You’re catching on. A few years with me and Rose and you’ll be as feisty as we are!” I laughed with her, but her words meant a lot to me. I was looking forward to that time with all of them. It made me feel good when they so casually accepted me as part of their future.

Alice glanced at her watch. “We better be getting back soon. Stay here for a minute.” A minute probably hadn’t even passed when Alice returned with a selection of shoes and accessories to match the dresses.

Minutes later, we loaded my four huge shopping bags into Alice’s car and were speeding back to Forks. I was brimming with nervous energy. As the miles passed by I tried to focus that energy on firming up a plan of attack, as it were, for the weekend. *Edward Cullen isn’t going to know what hit him.*

Alice chuckled and patted my leg. “Atta girl.”

I blushed but couldn’t help but laugh.

“Oh! I almost forgot.” She reached behind the driver’s seat and pulled out a sheaf of 8x11 poster board paper and a black Sharpie.

“What’s this for?”

She looked a little confused for a split second. “Um, didn’t you want to talk to Carlisle?”

The blush I’d just had returned full force. I sputtered helplessly.

“When we get home, Edward will be in the shower. That’s your chance. But you can’t speak out loud or he’ll hear you.”

Slowly I understood what she wanted me to do. “Oh.” I stared down at the blank sheets for a moment. “Alice Cullen,” she looked at me expectantly, “You are a very, very dangerous vampire.”

She beamed and bounced in her seat. “Thank you!”

I pulled the cap off the Sharpie and thought for a moment. All of a sudden I knew what the first sheet needed to say.

CARLISLE—CAN YOU PLEASE AVOID THINKING ABOUT THE FOLLOWING CONVERSATION UNTIL AFTER YOU LEAVE? NOD YES OR NO.

I saw Alice nodding her head appreciatively out of the corner of my eye. “I think you just might turn out to be a dangerous vampire yourself, Bella Swan.” Now it was my turn to beam.

I had been thinking about wanting to talk to Carlisle for a while now, but I couldn’t bring myself to figure out how to start the conversation and I was afraid that Carlisle would slip and think about it while Edward was around and I’d be mortified.

I kept trying to remind myself that Carlisle was a doctor, after all, and the only one at that who I could talk to about some particular questions I had. I was the one who had made trying a part of our deal. I therefore felt I should take some of the responsibility for learning what I could and helping us try safely.

UM, JUST SO YOU KNOW, I FIND THIS TOTALLY MORTIFYING BUT NECESSARY. DON'T LAUGH.

"It's not necessary to justify your questions, Bella. He'll understand."

"Yes, I know, but I'll feel better if he knows that I don't really want to be talking about...*stuff*...with him about his son any more than he wants to know...*stuff*...about his son."

I tilted the poster board away from Alice so she couldn't read what I was writing. But then she got a wounded look on her face and I huffed and laid it back flat, my face erupting in redness.

CAN HIS [I can't believe I'm about to write this and show it to Carlisle] SEMEN HARM ME?

Alice tried hard to keep a neutral face. I looked at her. "If you breathe a word of this to any of the others I will never, ever forgive you for all eternity."

She coughed out a laugh. "I promise."

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU THINK I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT BEFORE [again with the mortification] HE AND I ARE INTIMATE?

I reread that one. Something about it didn't seem right. I ripped it in half and started again.

IS THERE ANYTHING HEALTH-RELATED THAT YOU THINK I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT BEFORE HE AND I ARE INTIMATE?

Much better.

I looked at Alice. "I think that covers it for now. I don't even know if I will be able to do this."

"You will, Bella, and you'll be glad you did."

Just then I thought of one more thing. I grabbed another sheet of poster board.

PLEASE FORGET THIS EVER HAPPENED AND LET US NEVER SPEAK OF IT AGAIN.

Alice couldn't help herself that time. She bust out laughing as we turned into the Cullens' driveway. I couldn't help but join her. I hoped she had cleared her thoughts of this conversation.

When we pulled up to the house, Carlisle was walking out to his Mercedes. He didn't appear to be dressed to go hunting. We got out of Alice's car and called out hellos. I walked around to the back to help her with my bags. My heart was thundering in my chest.

"Calm down, Bella. Go talk to him. Now's your chance."

I nodded and reached into my seat to pick up the sheets and the Sharpie. I was literally trembling as I approached Carlisle, who had just started his car. As I approached he rolled down the window.

“Hi Bella. Is everything okay?”

“Um...yeah...I can see this might be a bad time....”

He turned the car back off and stepped out of the car.

“I always have time for my family, Bella. What can I help you with?”

I blushed immediately and held up the first sign. He looked momentarily confused and then amused. He nodded that, yes, he would control his thoughts so Edward wouldn't know of our conversation.

I took a deep breath and blew out. Then held up the second sign. Right at that moment, this whole scenario was feeling much more 'mortifying' than 'necessary.' Carlisle then put on his professional doctor face. I looked at him for a moment expecting him to burst out laughing at any moment. But he just reached out and squeezed my shoulder reassuringly.

The third sign had the word 'semen' on it, and all of a sudden the thought of actually showing it to Carlisle seemed like an eminently bad idea. I was considering skipping that sign when my fumbling caused it to slip from my fingers and it fluttered to the ground, landing face up. Before I could react, Carlisle had the poster in his hand. I held the Sharpie out to him and held the other pieces in front of my face in the hopes that I might shrivel up behind them. No such luck.

I heard a scribbling noise and peaked over the edge of the sheets in my hand. Carlisle's hand was flying across the back side of the sheet. Slowly I lowered the paper from my face and leaned towards him to read his words.

Don't be embarrassed Bella. It takes a great deal of maturity and responsibility to do what you're doing and I respect that. My suggestion would be that you don't take his semen into your body. It shouldn't pose any problem for your skin to come into contact with it. You do not have to worry about pregnancy.

He handed the card back to me and I slipped it into the pile.

Just one more question left: I held up the poster with the open-ended question regarding any other health-related considerations I should know. Once again I heard the pen flying across the page.

Just take things slow. I think it is a useful idea to [he seemed to hesitate for a moment] familiarize yourselves with one another a little before your wedding night. That way that night won't be quite as overwhelming. Also, Edward is more capable of handling intimacy than he gives himself credit for. He has already shown the most control and discipline of any vampire I have ever known. He doesn't given himself enough credit in this regard. He will need your encouragement and assurance that he is not harming you. You will both be fine.

I finished reading and nodded. Then held up the final card. He flashed me a brilliant smile. “Deal.”

“Thank you Carlisle.”

"You're welcome, Bella. Now, if you'll excuse me, I got called into the hospital. Dr. Gerandy is sick."

"Oh, of course. Does this mean you're not joining the others to hunt?"

"No. We're going to leave late tonight after I return instead of this afternoon."

"Okay. Have a good day."

He smiled and wave. Well, the conversation had indeed been mortifying, but Carlisle being the professional and gentleman that he is had made it as easy on me as he possible could. But now I had no idea what to do with the posters. I couldn't very well carry them into the house. Carlisle's garage door remained open, so I ran inside looking for a place to stash them. I slipped them under the bottom shelf of an organizational unit and stood back. I couldn't see them from any angle I tried.

I entered the house through the garage door which led into a mud room and then into the kitchen. Edward was just coming down the steps, his hair still damp from his shower. "Hey," he smiled at me.

"Hey." We met in the middle of the living room and fell into a warm embrace. "I missed you." I pressed a kiss into his shirt and he pressed his lips against my hair.

"Me too."

Just then Alice and Rosalie came bounding down the steps. Alice was bouncing and clapping her hands together. "Since we're not leaving until late now, I have an idea!" Even Rosalie looked enthusiastic. "Let's go dancing! There's a great club in Seattle called Trinity. It has three separate rooms with DJs."

The guys pretended to grumble a bit before relenting to their wives' demands. Edward looked at me. "We don't have to go," he began.

Now I understood why Alice wanted me to buy those sexy dresses. *Hmm.* Me in one of those dresses dancing to pulsing beat-driven music with Edward. *This has potential.* "No, I'd like to." *Now please let me not make a complete fool of myself on the dance floor.*

Edward smiled and hugged me in again. He seemed pleased that I wanted to go dancing with him.

He grabbed my hand and pulled me towards the stairs. As we walked up at a human pace, I glanced back down to the living room unthinkingly. Edward's baby grand piano caught my attention. I looked away and then snapped my head back to look at it once more. *Hot damn! There's number twenty-one!*

EPOV

It felt so good to have Bella in my arms, I could hardly stand to let her go. It had been a strained week, which was entirely my own fault. I had allowed myself to lose far too much control with her on Tuesday morning. And though I was pleased that we had been able to be intimate with one another in a way that posed her no harm, I was frustrated for giving in to such base needs and talking to her the way I did. And encouraging her to pleasure me like she did, exquisite though it had been, was demeaning. Bella was a beautiful, loving, pure lady. She deserved romance and candlelight and sweet words of adoration. I had not treated her the way she deserved to be treated. It was clear that Bella sensed my emotional quandary and I

knew that it was upsetting her. But I was trying to steel my resolve for being with her alone this whole weekend. I wouldn't let things get so out of hand again until she was my wife.

I was therefore very pleased about Alice's suggestion that we all go dancing together. The girls would need hours to get ready. And we were planning to leave around 7 o'clock in order to allow us enough time to enjoy ourselves before returning home by midnight so the rest of my family could depart for their hunt. That didn't leave me and Bella much time to get ourselves in trouble today.

However, I knew she had been missing alone time with me. And, truly, so had I. So I excused us from the group and we went up to my room. I laid down on the bed and held her close to me, stroking her hair and occasionally brushing my thumb lazily across her cheek bone.

After a while her breathing evened out and I knew that she was asleep. I loved when she fell asleep with her head on my shoulder or chest. It was such a wonderful feeling to know that she was so comfortable around me that she could let herself be that vulnerable. It was just one of the many things that made me love this woman so intensely.

Bella shifted slightly towards me and something black caught my eye. Sticking slightly out of her shorts pocket was a marker. I reached down and pulled the black Sharpie out of her pocket and was about to toss it onto the nightstand when Carlisle's scent caught my attention. I thought about that for a minute and then tossed the marker aside.

After about an hour Bella woke up and smiled at me. "Sorry. I didn't mean to fall asleep."

"It's okay, love. You'll have more energy for tonight now." She nodded and yawned.

Bella rolled over on her stomach and set her chin on my chest so she could look at my face. "Edward, I think we should talk." I knew this conversation was coming at some point.

"I agree."

"Why were you so upset all week?" She remained exceptionally observant. "Did I do something to upset you?"

"No, love, of course not. It's just...I feel like I let you down by allowing what happened to happen."

Her face went from shocked to hurt to understanding. "Edward, first off, you didn't let me down, and second, you didn't 'allow' that to happen. We both wanted it. Edward, I wanted it."

"I just feel like I didn't respect you. You are a beautiful woman with an inquisitive mind and a pure spirit. You are not just a *body* there for my pleasure." She tried to interrupt but I continued on. "The more I thought about it, the more I felt dirty and disappointed in myself."

She quickly pushed herself up onto her knees and crossed her arms over her chest. I recognized the look on her face. She was hurt and angry. I could smell the salt of the tears she was trying to keep from spilling down her face.

"You want to know what *I* felt, Edward? I felt happy and satisfied and connected and *loved*. I was completely comfortable with our actions. It felt completely natural to me to be together like that. I did not feel demeaned or disrespected in the least. *Until now.*" The tears spilled then.

"Bella—"

A knock at my bedroom door interrupted and I growled. "Go away Alice."

She pushed the door in. "Sorry, no can do. It's 4 o'clock. I need Bella so we can start getting ready for tonight."

Before I could respond Bella slid across the bed and hopped down. She walked directly to the door and slipped by Alice, who looked at me and shook her head. Then I was all alone.

What just happened?

As I sat there trying to figure it out, another knock sounded at my door. "*What?*"

Jasper and Emmett stepped through and closed the door behind them. "What did you do, man?" My eyes flashed up to Jasper. "She's really pissed."

"I know. Now, do you mind?"

Jasper headed for the door with Emmett in tow. Before he shut the door, Emmett leaned back in and offered over his shoulder, "You know, Edward, she's not only about physical pleasure but it is one part of her. An important part. A part that needs attention. And it's a part that is directly connected to her expression of her love for you." He thought for a minute and then pulled the door shut behind him.

Dammit. I hate it when Emmett makes sense. It usually means I've made a real mess of things, which was clearly the case right now.

Two hours and fifty minutes later, the girls finally descended the stairs. Rosalie and Alice looked striking as always, but it was Bella whose appearance stunned me. She had on an emerald green dress that showed *a lot* of skin everywhere. Her chest and back were bare and the dress was very short. She had on a pair of strappy gold high heels that seemed higher than what she normally would agree to wear. I noticed that her legs looked incredibly long and lean. She wore a series of gold necklaces of different lengths around her neck and clutched a small gold purse under her arm. Her makeup was incredibly alluring, as was her hair, which had been ironed straight. It made her look much older. *She is sexy as hell. I can barely stand the thought of other men seeing her like this.*

I walked over to her and kissed her on the cheek. I walked around her dragging a single finger across her bare arm, then her back, and back around to her front again. I was pleased to hear her heart rate increase. I leaned in and pressed my lips against her ear. "You look truly stunning. I'm sorry. Please forgive me."

"Maybe," she said without looking at me. But I could see in her eyes that she would.

"Let's go already!" Emmett shouted from the door.

My siblings road in Rosalie's M3 and I drove my Aston Martin. Bella's stunning appearance warranted the use of my special occasion car for sure.

Less than an hour later we were inside the club. Emmett pushed through the crowd and managed to find us a table set back from the dance floor in the main room. Alice pulled the girls and ran off to the dance floor without us. The pulsing rhythm of the dance music was setting the dance floor afire. Bella surprised me by seeming perfectly comfortable on the dance floor. Maybe the presence of so many people packed so closely together allowed her to feel a sense of anonymity. Whatever it was, the movement of her body held me enraptured. I glanced quickly at my brothers. They were looking at their wives the same way.

Just then, a group of four guys walked passed our table carrying beers. "Oh man, did you see those three?"

"Fuck, yeah. God, that blond was incredible."

I realized that those scum were talking about our women. Emmett caught the comment too, and though he was pissed, he was more used to it.

It was taking everything in my power not to go out to Bella. To protect her from men like that and mark her as mine. But I didn't want her to feel smothered or that she couldn't enjoy herself with her sisters.

But my patience wore out three songs later, when the Nine Inch Nails song "Closer" began blaring over the dance floor and the lead singer proclaimed, "I want to fuck you like an animal. I want to feel you from the inside." The group of scum bags rushed passed us to the dance floor. Their thoughts were entirely focused on finding our women.

I flew out of my seat and pushed through the crowd. I came up behind Bella and spun her around towards me, causing her to gasp in surprise. But then a beautiful smile illuminated her face. I caught one of the scum heading Bella's way, and bent down and gave her a devouring kiss. I heard and felt her moan into my mouth. The guy headed in another direction after that.

When I pulled back from the kiss, Bella's eyes were darker and her eyelids appeared heavy. She put her hands above her head, closed her eyes, and began swaying her hips to the music. Every movement of her body brushed her chest against mine and her stomach across my growing erection. It struck me in that moment that she had absolutely no idea just how powerfully seductive she was.

Songs passed. I grabbed her hips and pulled her into me. Her eyes flew open and clearly communicated her arousal. My body had already betrayed mine.

I spun her around and put her back to me. She looked over her right shoulder and I captured her mouth with mine. All the while I kept my hand on her swaying hips. She wrapped one hand into my hair and pulled me in.

More songs passed. We were both panting hard. When Bella ground her ass back into me I almost grabbed her up and ran her out to the car. Instead I grabbed her hip bones and pulled her back into me even harder. I leaned down and kissed her bare shoulder. Then I dragged my tongue from the edge of her right shoulder across to her collar bone and up her neck to the space behind her ear I know she loves so much. She whimpered audibly.

"Edward," she gasped, "Edward, mark me. Make me yours." I grew immeasurably harder at her words. I lowered my lips to the spot behind her ear and, careful to keep my teeth clear, sucked hard. The mark appeared immediately. "Oh God," she moaned.

She spun to face me and I thrust my leg between hers. I held her body close to mine. She ground her hips into my thigh, occasionally bending her knees to drag herself down my body before standing back up. The last time she did it she wrapped her hands around the back of my knees and dragged her hands up the backs of my thighs. Then she drug her hand around the front of my hip, across my erection to her stomach, where her hand then moved up her body, stopping to grab her breast, before moving up under her hair and flipping it around her head. I snapped.

Must. Have. Need.

I took her hand in mine and pulled her through the club to the exit. We were both silent while we awaited the valet, who arrived quickly because I had tipped them a hundred on the way in to keep the car close so it would be available immediately.

I pulled into the first rest stop off the interstate as we left the city. It was deserted. I parked in the darkest part of the lot. I got out, appeared instantaneously at Bella's door, pulled her out and pushed her against the car. My mouth crashed to hers and she gave as good as she got. She was covered in a thin sheen of sweat that heightened her scent.

I sat down in the passenger seat and pulled her down on top of me so that she was forced to straddle my thighs. She pressed her body against me as tight as she could and pressed hungry kisses against my mouth. I ran my hands up the back of her thighs causing her to shiver. With each slow circle I worked higher and higher, until my hands passed under the hem of her dress. Before long I was gripping her bare ass. It didn't take me long to discover she was wearing a thong. I let out a low growl.

I moved my right hand slowly around from her ass to her front.

She surprised me by reaching down and grabbing my wrist, effectively stopping me.

She pulled back from kissing me. Her lips were red and swollen and her cheeks were flush. Her look got serious and I was immediately afraid I had overstepped once again.

She was breathing hard. "Not if...not if you're going to regret it later."

I was already shaking my head. "I won't. I vow to you." The lust immediately returned to her face and she pushed my hand against her hot center before returning both of her hands to my hair, face, and neck.

I immediately began rubbing firm circles against the satin of her panties. But it wasn't enough. The hand still on her ass reached around and ripped the back of the thong, effectively removing the crotch from the panties. She was so hot and wet and smelled so good. I relished in the feeling of her arousal coating my hand.

I pulled my hand back and she whimpered. Remembering how much we both liked it last time I raised my hand to my mouth and sucked two wet fingers in deeply, licking every last bit of her off. I then held up my pointer finger to her. "Taste how exquisite you are." She grabbed my wrist with both hands and immediately guided my outstretched finger into her mouth so that her lips quickly wrapped around my

knuckle. She kept her eyes fastened on mine as she slowly sucked my finger clean. I watched in hot fascination as she hollowed out her cheeks and sucked against my hard skin with as much force as she could.

Still fixated on her mouth, I pulled my hand free and immediately returned it to her center where I gently slipped my middle finger into her. She moaned fiercely and threw her head back. She quickly began grinding her hips against my hand while I moved my finger in and out of her and ran my thumb over her clit.

"More, please." I slipped a second finger inside of her and she cried out. "It feels so...good...good, Edward."

She wrapped one arm around my neck and gripped tightly. She deftly slid her other hand down my chest over my stomach to my erection, where she began rubbing steadily up and down against my jeans. "Bella, let this...let this be about you."

"This is for me...Edward...you feeling good...turns me...oh God...on."

She was moving more urgently now. I curled my fingers inside her and found and stroked her sweet spot. Her breath caught and she moaned. "Faster, please, faster. Oh, fuck, Edward. Fuck me."

"I will, Bella. But right now I want you to come. I want you to come all over me."

"Yes."

"Do it, Bella. I want it."

"Yes. Oh God. Oh, Edward." She concentrated and panted and finally screamed her orgasm and thrashed her body against mine. I kept my fingers moving until she was entirely played out.

Her head fell against my shoulder. "Oh my fucking God that was hot."

I traced kisses everywhere I could touch her. I pressed my lips against her ear. "Yes it was. Everything you do makes me hard." I pulled back and looked at her. Her skin was radiantly flush, her mouth slightly agape at my comment and her still-elevated respiratory rate.

I lifted her off me and placed her wobbly feet on the ground, keeping an arm around her to steady her. I kissed her fiercely before lowering her back into the car. "Now, let's get home." I let my eyes linger on hers for a long moment.

I shut her door and walked around the car at a human pace. Before opening my door, I sucked my fingers clean of her. There was no way I was letting that go to waste. I got in and started the car, then reached over to kiss her one more time.

I held her hand the rest of the way home. She fell asleep ten minutes after we pulled out of the rest stop.

~*~

Chapter 9: Games

BPOV

A piercing crash of thunder woke me up. It was eerily beautiful, intertwined as it was with the distant sound of piano music. I reached a hand out to my side, feeling for Edward's body. But he wasn't there.

I had no more finished that thought when I felt his cold hand grasp my warm one before pressing it to his lips. "Morning, love."

I smiled at him just as another booming crack of thunder shook the house. I couldn't help but jump. He pulled my body against his. "My, listen to your heart fly. Don't worry, my love. I've got you."

It was approaching morning, a dim gray light just starting to brighten the room. My body rebelled against being awake. "Lay down with me?" I murmured into his chest. He slid us down and pulled my back against his chest. I threaded my fingers through his and tucked both of our hands in a ball against my chest.

It felt wonderful just being with him. I loved the sound of a thunderstorm, and the multitude of windows in his room seemed to bring the storm inside. While I was very relaxed, the energy of the storm kept me from being able to fall back to sleep. Instead I closed my eyes, enjoyed the feel of our bodies intertwined together, and let my mind wander.

Last night had been wonderful in so many ways. Going out with Edward and his family somewhere where we could all be free and blend into a crowd was so *normal* and so much fun. Well, truly, *they* didn't blend well. But the crowded and dark nature of the club made it easier than usual. I felt so free on the dance floor. Again, maybe it was that so many people being there made me feel like I wouldn't stand out from the mass. But after the stress of the week, it had felt so good to just *let go*, to just *feel*, to just *be*.

My most significant experience with dancing before the club was at Prom. And between my cast, having been tricked into attending, the scrutiny I knew we were under by the other students, and the ambiance of the gym, I hadn't felt the ability to really enjoy dancing like I did at the club. And I was surprised to find that it wasn't really as hard as I feared. I'm pretty sure I had overthought the whole thing. So I closed my eyes and didn't think. I just listened to the music and my body responded. I found I really enjoyed it.

I danced out the remainder of my annoyance with Edward. I had felt guilty for snapping at him the minute I got into Alice's room to get dressed. And though my *rational* mind knew that he was just working through and discovering his own sexuality, my *irrational* and *self-conscious* mind had gotten the better of me, twisting the meaning of his words so that I felt like he thought *I* was dirty and disappointing. I knew I needed to apologize to him and explain myself, but I needed to be more awake to do it right.

When he finally came to me on the dance floor my good mood had returned completely. And was heightened by the sudden display of possession he put on by kissing me hungrily and repeatedly in the middle of the dance floor. If I accomplished absolutely nothing off the list between now and the wedding but got to go dancing *like that* with Edward even just once more, it might be an even trade. *Holy crow!* I had absolutely no idea how erotic dancing with him would be. I couldn't believe I could get that hot fully clothed and without him really even touching me. My heart was in my throat the entire time and I all I could do was pant and try to get myself as close to him as was physically possible. Dancing with him like that made me want to climb inside of him.

And I was completely thrilled to find that dancing with me was affecting him the same way. When he spun me around so that he was dancing behind me, the fullness of his erection was immediately clear. I couldn't help but press back into him. I loved the sound of his groan, the feel of his hands gripping my hips. But I almost passed out from the pleasure of his icy tongue dragging across my sweaty body from shoulder to ear. That was the point at which my panties became absolutely saturated and I thought for sure he must know what he was doing to me. So I decided to see if he'd continue to play along.

Earlier in the evening I had seen a couple kissing near Rose and was initially uncomfortable with their very obvious display. But then I became intrigued when I saw the man's lips trail down the woman's neck, pause, and then come back up, leaving a very angry reddish mark in their wake. Instantly I decided to add that to the list. I wouldn't always be markable. And I desperately wanted him to claim me in that way. His little licking escapade seemed the perfect opportunity to raise the suggestion with him, and he surprised me with his eagerness to do it.

Unthinkingly I slowly slid my hand up underneath my hair to see if I could feel the spot behind my ear where he sucked on me. I couldn't, and I was dying to see it. The very idea that it was there was a complete turn-on. I passed off the movement of my arm as the need to scratch so Edward wouldn't ask me what I was doing.

My movement still caught his attention. "Are you hungry?"

"Yes, actually I'm starving. I was too nervous to eat dinner last night before we went out and now I feel like I could eat a horse." I slid my shoulders slightly so that I could look at him. He had a strange look on his face.

"What?"

He flashed that crooked grin I so loved. "Horse isn't very good."

I gaped at him in shock. He so infrequently made a joke related to his nature. I burst out laughing. "Horse?"

If he could blush it looked like he would have. He nodded. "When I was a newborn, before Carlisle and I cleared out of Chicago. They were the biggest animals available without having to go far."

I had no idea how to respond to that but I loved that he volunteered that small story about himself. "God, Edward. You have lived so long. You have experienced so much. I want to hear your stories."

A look of total adoration settled his face and he leaned down and brushed his lips against mine. "I would love to share them with you. I will tell you anything you want to know." He pulled the covers back off of me. "But first, you shower, I'll cook."

The movement of the covers swirled the cool air around my body and I looked down. I was wearing my pajamas. A deep blush lit up my whole face. Edward followed my gaze, saw the blush, and guessed what I was wondering. "You were so tired when we got home last night. I could barely wake you up. Alice changed you before she and the others left."

"Oh," I said, trying to sound nonchalant. I wasn't sure whether to be thankful or disappointed. But his mention of his family distracted me. "They still went hunting in *this*?" I gestured a hand to the windows.

He nodded. "A good storm adds a certain level of...intensity to the experience."

"Oh." I couldn't think of anything better to say. For some reason his explanation sounded sexual. I was capable of reading innuendo into anything.

He stood and helped me up. I stretched my arms up over my head and then fell against him, lacing my hands around his neck. He kissed me gently and led me to the bathroom. Just as he was about to leave the room, I stretched out a hand and softly grabbed his arm. "I just wanted to tell you I loved...everything about...last night."

His eyes darkened a shade and he smiled. He took a step back to me and pressed his lips against my cheekbone. "So did I, love." He pulled away and smiled again. And then he was gone. *How does he manage to turn me into a puddle of goo with four words?*

I turned to the shower and adjusted the water and then quickly stripped my clothes off. Suddenly remembering, I spun around to the mirror and lifted my hair. I gasped with pleasure. There, just behind and below the soft spot behind my right ear, was a nearly perfectly round reddish-purple hickey. Perhaps a little larger than a quarter. I noticed I had the goofiest grin on my face. I ran my fingers over it and hoped it would last a while.

Still grinning, I stepped into the shower. My mind was going in a hundred directions at once, all of them involving Edward. *Gee, we're going to be stuck in the house together all day.* After last night, there was absolutely no way I would be able to keep my hands to myself. I shuddered at the memory of his fingers inside of me. There was absolutely no way I was not going to return the epic favor he had paid me last night. I took a deep breath. We had at least thirty-six hours until his family returns. *No need to rush.*

I dried off and stepped into Edward's walk-in closet where Alice had placed my overnight and shopping bags from yesterday. I reached into the shopping bag to select some lingerie to wear when my hand hit a piece of paper. I pulled it out.

Hi Bella—Enjoy your weekend. I would start with the pink and black set. And look up on the garment press. You might need something a bit warmer to wear.... Alice

My eyes looked over to the built-in mahogany pants and garment press. There lay the black button-down shirt that Edward worn to the club last night. I picked it up and pulled it up to my face, breathing in deeply. *Guh. I would bathe in that smell if it was possible.*

I was afraid if I just put it on without asking he would read it as an obvious attempt at seduction. So I put my head out of his bedroom door and called down to him, knowing he would hear. "Edward? Can I borrow one of your long-sleeved shirts? I only brought tank tops."

Instantly he appeared at the top of the steps at the other end of the hall, but he came to an abrupt stop when he saw that I was leaning out of his bedroom door with only a towel around me. He looked down and scratched his head. "Uh, of course, what's mine is yours."

"Thanks." I pushed the door shut and smiled. Minutes later I was dressed. I had on the black bra and panties set with the hot pink pin stripes and detailing. The panties weren't a thong, but they were in the same family as the back fabric only covered half of my cheeks. Over that I donned Edward's black button-down shirt. It was huge on me and I had to roll the sleeves way up to get them to hit mid-forearm. Then I looked around for a minute trying to decide what to put on the bottom. The shorts I brought didn't seem quite right. Tentatively I pulled a few of his drawers open until I found what I was looking for. I assumed he had

them but then again he hadn't been wearing any on Tuesday that I could tell. I pulled out a pair of black silk boxer shorts and slipped them on. I had to roll the waist twice to get them to stay on my hips, but when I turned to look in the full-length mirror behind me, I knew they were the right choice.

I was now very appreciative of the pedicure Alice had insisted upon last night. My toenails were bright red.

As I walked downstairs, an incredible aroma caught my attention. I walked into the kitchen to find Edward standing at the stove grilling French toast and frying bacon. He had already set a place for me at the island counter and there was a glass of orange juice and a bowl of strawberries awaiting me. "That smells fantastic."

He smiled up at me and his face froze.

"What?" I asked as I hoisted myself up onto the tall chair.

"That *looks* fantastic," he said nodding at his shirt on me. I was pleased that he thought so but still couldn't keep the blush from rising on my cheeks.

I dug into my breakfast with total abandon. Edward sat on the stool next to me completely mesmerized by my enthusiasm. We made small talk about nothing in particular until my plate was finally and embarrassingly clean and I pushed it away. "God, that was *so* good." I smiled at him. "I would be annoyed with you for being *so good* at everything, even cooking which you can't even enjoy yourself, but that was just too good not to feel entirely grateful."

He laughed out loud and in a blur had placed all the dirty dishes in the sink. He took my hand and helped me slip down off the stool. I shivered.

"Are you cold? I could make a fire."

"That sounds great."

I curled into one corner of the leather sofa and admired Edward as he built the fire. Soon it was blazing brightly and casting warmth into the room. He settled against the middle section of the sofa facing me.

We watched two movies together and then he spoiled me by making me lunch. He stoked the fire and we settled back into the couch.

"I want to play a game," I began.

He smiled at me. "Okay. What would you like to play?"

"A question game. We'll take turns asking questions and we have to be absolutely truthful answering them."

He looked thoughtful for a moment, then smiled. "Okay. Ladies first."

"Okay. What did you mean by saying that hunting during a thunderstorm makes a more 'intense' experience?"

He looked completely surprised by my question. "Um," his crooked grin returned, "okay. Well, because we turn ourselves completely over to instinct when we hunt, the others find that *all* of their base instincts demand...attention when hunting. It's common for them to spend a significant amount of alone time," he paused, "after they sate their thirst. When the violence of the weather combines with the violence of the hunt, it apparently makes their...alone time...more...*intense*." He looked relieved to be done with his explanation.

It took my brain a moment to comprehend his meaning. But then, *guh*. The sound of his voice trying *not* to be explicit in saying his vampire family tended to have rough sex when a thunderstorm interrupted their hunt sent a tightening sensation to my lower stomach. *Note to self: No. 23. Outside during a thunderstorm.*

I swallowed hard.

"My turn?"

I could only nod.

"Okay, then. Why did you get so upset yesterday afternoon?"

I knew this one was coming. "Well, okay. See...sometimes I feel like there are two sides of me. The side that is confident in myself and us and completely understands your need to have strict boundaries of all sorts. And then there is the side, much smaller, that can't help but read rejection and undesirability into your words whenever you make us stop." He seemed ready to interrupt but I pushed on. "Yesterday, when you said you felt dirty and disappointed in yourself for what happened, what I *heard* was that you thought I was dirty and disappointing. I realize that's unfair and inaccurate. And I'm sorry, because it wasn't fair to you. I know all of this is new to both of us. I'm just having a...hard time...waiting." I bit my bottom lip.

"Oh, Bella. You know I could never think those things about you, right?" He reached his arm out across the back of the sofa to stroke my shoulder.

I blinked back my stupid tears and smiled. "Yes, I know." I wiped a tear quickly from the corner of one eye. "Okay. My turn." I thought for a moment. His fingers were making small circles on my shoulder and it was hard to think.

"What is your favorite thing about being a vampire?"

He pressed his lips into a tight line. "Speed." He returned quickly. "What is your favorite thing about being human?"

"God. I don't know if I can pick just one. Maybe food?" He smirked. "Especially when you feed me food like this morning. Okay, what is your least favorite thing about being a vampire?"

"I don't know if I can pick just one. But I would have to say my fear that I will accidentally hurt you. What is your least favorite thing about being human?"

"Easy. Seeming so fragile to you that it scares you."

We just stared at one another for a moment taking in each other's words.

"My turn again," I began. "What are you most and least looking forward to when I'm like you?"

His grimace returned. He had accepted my change, but that didn't mean he loved the idea. "I'm most looking forward to your being indestructible, but I'm also worried then that you might not need me anymore."

I was stunned. I echoed his words from earlier, "Oh, Edward. You know I could never feel that way, don't you?"

"Yes. Most of the time." He so clearly had his own insecurities. "How about you? Most and least thing you're looking forward to when you're changed?"

"I'm most looking forward to being your equal and I'm most worried that...you...won't like me as much when I'm not soft and warm and human anymore," I rushed out.

"Impossible. It's the essence of who you are that I love. That won't change." The small circles he was drawing on my shoulder turned into deeper massaging motions.

I felt the sting of tears in my eyes again but I managed to blink them away. *Okay, time to lighten things up.* "Tell me a sexual fantasy that you have about me."

"That's not a question," he said as the corner of his mouth twitched up.

I huffed. "Fine. What is one sexual fantasy you have about me? Better?"

"Much. You're cute when you're annoyed, you know." I rolled my eyes. "Okay. There's one in this room."

I didn't know what he meant but that didn't keep my heart from starting to beat faster. Unthinkingly I blurted, "Two."

"What was that?" His eyes narrowed at me.

"Uh, nothing. You have to, um, finish your answer."

Before I knew what was happening Edward had scooped me up in his arms and placed me on top of his piano so that my feet rested on the keys. He sat himself at the bench, spread my legs apart so that my feet weren't in his way as much, and began playing bits and pieces of things distractedly.

My heart was beating so hard I thought I might pass out. And with his face so close to the apex of my legs I knew he would be able to smell my arousal. But I wasn't going to let him realize how much this was affecting me.

"When we can, Isabella, I will have you on this piano," he said in almost a whisper as he watched his hands on the keys. I was a goner. I audibly whimpered. So much for him not knowing this was affecting me. "My turn." His voice was clipped. "You said 'two.' What did you mean?"

I could barely form a sentence. "Um, two. Right. Um," I took a deep breath. As much as I had no interest in moving, I needed to turn the tables on him. "Help me down?"

He looked momentarily disappointed, then intrigued. I plastered a nonchalant expression on my face, grabbed his hand, and pulled him behind me. I walked over to the rug in front of the fireplace and pulled him down to the floor with me. I kissed him hard and then laid back on the rug keeping my knees raised and slightly spread. I held my arms up to him, beckoning him to lay on top of me. He hesitated. "You showed me. I have to show you. You know, in the name of science."

He rolled his eyes. But then slowly he placed his body between my legs, lowering himself down on top of me until his body was flush with mine. He still held most of his weight on his arms, but not so much that I couldn't feel his obvious erection. I pressed my lips to his ear. "When we can, Edward, I will have you on this rug in front of this fire." I bit his ear lobe and he growled. That sound sent an immediate jolt of pleasure to the center of my legs. When he pulled back his eyes were darkening before me.

"My turn," I rasped. "Do you like it when I bite you?"

He closed his eyes and rested his forehead against my forehead. "Very much." His voice was husky. "Do you like it when my fingers are inside of you?"

Oh my freaking God. He did not just ask that!

I choked and strove unsuccessfully to echo his casual reply. "Yes, very much."

"How much?"

"Nuh-uh. My turn. What is a sexual fantasy that you have about me that you don't think is proper for you to have?"

His head pulled back and his eyes flew open. "Isabella—"

"You have to answer, Edward. Those are the rules." He hesitated so long I was sure he wasn't going to answer. I took a deep breath. "Or...you could, you know, show me...."

His mouth was on mine, devouring. He ran his tongue against my bottom lip and when I opened my mouth he plunged his tongue in and out. I was panting furiously. It occurred to me that he wasn't French kissing me. *Oh my God. He's tongue fucking me.* I broke out in a thin sheen of sweat at the realization. He pulled back and I groaned. "I want to be in your mouth, Bella, but not just my tongue."

!#?&%!?

I wanted to tell him I wanted that too, but he pressed his fingers against my mouth just as I was about to speak. "I think we should take a break from this game for a while, love."

"Okay," I squeaked. He smiled at me. He sprung off of me in one lithe movement, held his hands down to me, and lifted me to my feet. I was shaky.

I looked to the living room windows. The rain was still pounding to the ground, though the thunder seemed to have quieted for now. I couldn't tell what time it was because it was so dark out. I was surprised to learn that it was already five o'clock.

I took a deep breath. "Okay. I have a different game then."

He looked at me skeptically.

I swallowed. "Um, well, we forgot the dare part of Truth or Dare."

"No."

I ignored him. I walked around him at a leisurely pace to the stairs. "Well, I'm going to take a shower. I *dare* you to join me."

"No," he called.

"Fine. I understand if you're chicken." I heard a low growl from behind me. "I guess I win this game then."

I walked up the stairs and when I reached the top, I quickly pulled off his black boxers and threw them down the steps. "Oops." I heard a louder growl that time.

I kept walking towards Edward's bathroom, knowing he could easily hear me. "I promise I'll keep my hands to myself, Edward. I won't try anything. You can trust me."

When I was walking up the stairs to his floor, I said, "I'll even keep my underwear and bra on. And you can keep your boxers on. That is, *if* you're wearing any. If not, I don't mind if you use the ones I was wearing."

I was just walking into his room when something grabbed me from behind and I was flying through the air. Edward had his arms around me like a vice and landed us on his bed so that he was on top of me. I hadn't seen or heard him coming. My heart was thundering.

"This is how it's going to work," he rasped. "Your undergarments remain on. We *shower*. And that's it. No...touching. Do you understand?"

I bit my lip and nodded.

When he got up off of me I was astounded to see that the fly to his jeans was undone. I could see the black boxers underneath of them as if he had disrobed to put them on, pulled his jeans back up, and then left his fly undone. He walked towards the bathroom. "Coming?"

God I hope so. "Yeah," I choked out. He turned the water on and I entered the bathroom. We looked at each other.

"Ladies first."

"Oh, uh, no. I went first last time. It's only fair." I tried to sound very official.

"Nonsense. This is your dare." He wasn't relenting in the least.

"That's right. I dared *you*."

"You dared me to join you in the shower. But you're not in the shower. Yet."

"Fine." I started at the top and began to unbutton Edward's black shirt. I kept the material close together because I wanted what was underneath to remain a mystery until the last possible second. When the last button was undone, I took a deep breath, shrugged the shirt down off my shoulders, astutely ignoring Edward for the moment, and then turned around to hang his shirt on a hook and give him a good view of my ass. When I faced him again, his eyes were completely black.

"You have got to be kidding me."

"What?" I put on my best innocent expression. I knew he didn't buy it.

"Turn around in a circle." My heart was in my throat again. As I turned around, my knee caught the stack of towels he had placed on top of the toilet lid. They tumbled to the ground.

"Sorry," I mumbled as I bent over to pick them up, giving him a full view of my rear. His growl startled me. I threw the towels back in place and stood back up to face him.

I took a step towards him. He looked fierce. "I love that sound," I whispered. His eyes widened. I hesitated for a moment and then stepped towards the shower. "Your turn," I said as I stepped in. I left the door open behind me.

I stepped under the stream of water and wet my hair. Every molecule in me told me he wouldn't come. But I was hoping nonetheless. *Please number five, please number five.* The chant seemed to work well the last time...

Just then I heard the shower door close. I didn't open my eyes because I didn't yet want to know if he had gotten in and shut the door or decided against joining me and shut the door. I could still feel him in the room either way.

"May I wash your hair?" I kept my eyes closed and nodded. I could have cried. *He got in!*

I felt his strong cold fingers work the shampoo. It was one of the most sensual experienced I ever had. He was so gentle and loving, but he also worked his fingers in relaxing circles all over my scalp. Then he turned my body around and rinsed all of the suds away. I gasped when I felt him press his lips softly against his mark on my neck.

I opened my eyes for the first time. If I thought he was beautiful, I was stunned by the appearance of him wet. His hair appeared darker and hung down in loose curls over his forehead. Every once in a while he would sweep it back with his hand but it would manage to spill forward again. Droplets of water ran down his face. My eyes followed them down over his chin, down his neck, to his chest. I realized I was leaning forward unconsciously. I shook my head to snap myself out of it.

"May...I...wash your...hair?" He smiled and nodded. I grabbed the shampoo and put some in my hand. But he was so tall I couldn't reach him. "Um, you're too tall. Bend down." He smirked at me. "Please?"

He dropped to his knees in front of me and I knew if I allowed myself to focus on that I might cum right in front of him. I was surprised at how arousing I found him positioned like that before me. I took a deep breath and forced myself to focus.

My hands were trembling when I ran the shampoo through his hair. "I love your hair, Edward. It is one of my favorite things about you." I worked my hands around in firm circles, then ran my fingernails over his scalp. My eyes widened as I realized he was making a sound that resembled purring, though it might have been a low growl. It sent another flow of moisture to my already wet panties. "Okay, um, rinse."

He stood up and tilted his head back under the water.

"Edward, if I promise to be good, can I show you something?"

His eyes narrowed but he nodded. "I...I don't know why, but I found the picture of you kneeling before me like that to, um, be very...appealing. I want to show you what I mean." Before he could respond, I sunk to my knees, but I lowered my behind to my heels so that he could see I wasn't trying to do anything to him.

I slowly ran my eyes up his body. "Edward, do you realize I've never seen your bare legs before? You're so beautiful. May I touch your legs?" I met his eyes. From this angle two things were crystal clear: his erection was tenting the silk boxers and his breathing rate was accelerated. He nodded again. I wondered if he'd lost his voice.

I slowly reached out my hands and placed them on his lower quad muscles just above his knees. He truly was pure raw muscle. He was so smooth most everywhere else, I marveled at the thin layer of brownish hair that covered his legs. Slowly I moved my hands down his legs, around the back of his calves to his ankles. I kept my face tilted down watching my hands' movement on his legs. I laid my palms flat on the top of his feet, and then pulled my hands away. I sat back.

"I see what you mean about this position being...appealing. Do you have any idea how seductive you are, Bella?" I blushed immediately. He held a hand down to me and helped me to my feet. There were two puffy sponges hanging from a hook. I placed a little soap on both and handed one to him. I took one for myself. We were 'just showering,' after all.

I ran the sponge up my right arm and then my left and then washed my neck before beginning on my chest. He simply stared at me without blinking. I noticed he had stopped breathing.

Out of nowhere he grabbed my hand. "I want to do it." Using his sponge, he traced the line of my bra running his hands over and under my breasts. Then he ran long soapy strokes up and down my stomach before tracing the sponge across the top of my panties. I was panting hard. He dropped back to his knees and used a hand at my ankle to communicate that he wanted my legs further apart. He started the sponge at my right foot and slowly worked up to the edge of my panty. Quickly he dropped his hands back down to my left foot and repeated the same process. When he got back up to the top the second time, he pushed the sponge in between my legs and I gasped. "Turn around."

I turned on now shaky legs and leaned my hands against the tiled wall to steady myself. The tile remained cold despite the warm steam now filling the room and I was immediately reminded of number six. He began running the sponge up the back of my legs, repeating the same process as a moment ago. The skimpiness of my panties meant that much of my ass was exposed to him and I noted with interest that he seemed to concentrate on cleaning that skin longer than was necessary. Soon my back was clean too and I was rinsed off. I stood trying to recompose myself for a moment as he washed himself. I realized I wasn't steady enough to take charge of washing him, but then watching him run his hands over his own wet body was almost as good.

He leaned into me so that the water cascaded down his body as well. He planted a barely there kiss on my lips before reaching around me and...shutting the water off.

He reached out and grabbed two towels, handing one to me and keeping the other for himself.

He wrapped the towel around himself and stepped out of the shower. I dried myself as thoroughly as I could while keeping my eyes on him. I flipped my hair over and tied the towel around my hair for a moment, allowing the moisture to soak into the thick fibers. Then I released the towel and stepped out of the shower.

"That was refreshing," Edward said with a crooked grin.

"Refreshing," I mumbled. I was so hot for him I could barely see straight.

When he wasn't looking I squeezed the towel around the fabric of my bra and panties. The dampness wasn't exactly comfortable, but for some reason I wasn't ready to give them up yet. I grabbed his black shirt off the hook and slid it back on. At this point I no longer felt the need for bottoms, despite how much I enjoyed wearing his boxers.

He walked out to his closet and returned a moment later with a pair of gray flannel pants and a white wife beater. He managed to look comfortable and sexy at the same time.

"I suppose it is my turn now." I looked at him confused. "For a dare?"

"Oh, right. Yes." My mind couldn't begin to anticipate what he might want me to do. And what he might think I wouldn't be willing to do.

Just then my stomach grumbled loudly. I blushed. He came to me and placed his hand around my waist. "Food for you now. I will take a rain check on the dare for another time."

"Okay," I whispered. I was dying of curiosity.

I was hungry, but not so hungry I wanted us to spend a lot of time preparing something involved. I settled for a sandwich and a bowl of soup. It fit the weather.

When I was done eating we sat gazing at one another across the kitchen table.

"No more ideas for games, love?"

I pushed my plate and bowl back and placed my arms up on the table. "Well, actually, I do have another idea. But I don't think you'll want to play."

"Oh really? Try me."

I took a deep breath. *PLEASE LET HIM PLAY.*

"Okay," it was clear he caught the shakiness in my voice. He was intrigued. "Here are the rules. Tonight is my turn. You will get a turn at another time of your choosing."

He raised one eyebrow at me. "Proceed."

"You will do what I say. You will speak only when I say. You will not touch me unless I give you permission to. If you disobey a rule there will be consequences. If you disobey the rules twice you will forfeit the turn you have coming."

He didn't respond. *Does that mean...?*

I took a deep breath. "Go to your room and wait for me. I want you standing in front of your leather couch." I met his eyes. They were pitch black.

He rose at an excruciatingly slow pace, intentionally scraping the chair against the hard floor. It sounded very loud in the quiet house. Then he was gone.

Ignoring the dirty dishes, I ran up to Alice's room. My new black dress was hanging in her closet. I quickly slipped it on and dug out the tall black heels she had selected to go with it. I flipped my now nearly dry hair upside down and ran a brush through it, spraying a light amount of hair spray into it to give it a fuller tousled look. I picked up Alice's black eyeliner and ran a thicker than normal line under each eye before stroking on black mascara. I didn't add any other make up. I wanted to be pale, like him. *I look pretty bad ass, if I do say so myself.*

I grabbed a small bottle out from under Alice's vanity, left the heels in the hall outside her room, and ran back down to the kitchen. *I wish I had had this idea sooner and prepared better for it.* But I could improvise this time. I poured some of the clear liquid into a large measuring cup. I put it in the microwave with a paper towel over it for twenty seconds. When it started to pop I pulled it out. I gingerly stuck my finger in it and snapped it right back out. It was too hot for my skin, but I knew it would have some time to cool before I used it, and I doubted he was as sensitive. I grabbed a teaspoon and two kitchen hand towels and made my way back upstairs.

By Popular Demand: Bella's To-Do List (Items accomplished either in part or fully are italicized):

1) *Against the tree by the meadow*

2) *Feel his full weight on top of me*

3) *French kiss*

4) *See him naked*

5) *Shower together*

6) Against the cold tiles in the shower

7) *In his car*

8) On our lab table

9) On his leather couch

10) I want him to come in my hand

11) IN MY MOUTH

12) His mouth on me, there

13) Whatever it takes to get him to say FUCK again

14) Get him to talk dirty in general

15) Submit

16) See him hunt

17) Have Edward taste my blood

18) Dominate

19) Phone sex

20) His mouth on my breasts, suckling me

21) On his Baby Grand Piano

22) Hickey

23) Outside in a thunderstorm

24) In front of the fireplace in the Cullens' living room

~*~

Chapter 10: Control

BPOV

As I approached Edward's door I put the heels on. I took a deep breath and walked into his room to find him standing exactly where I told him. I adjusted the lights in the room so that only the recessed lighting that highlighted his bookshelves was on dimly, then moved to the table next to the leather sofa where I placed the large round candle, the spoon, and the towels. The dim lighting on the other side of the room, the candle, and the occasional flashes of lightning were all that illuminated the room.

Edward kept his eyes on me the whole time. I could feel them boring into the back of me whenever I wasn't facing him. It felt like there was an electromagnetic field between his eyes and my body. Goose bumps broke out on my bare skin.

Fuck! Fuckfuckfucketyfuck! I don't know if I can do this! I don't know if I can do this! Okay, calm down. Fuck.

There was no way he didn't hear my heart hammering against my rib cage. I could feel my pulse in my toes.

Finally, I walked over to stand in front of him. I bit my bottom lip, hard, to keep from breaking out into a big goofy nervous grin. I wanted to be Bad Ass Bella tonight.

I took a deep breath. "I want to remind you of the rules and make you a few promises. But first I need to ask you a question, and you need to be entirely truthful." I looked into his eyes for the first time. "Do you trust me?" He didn't answer, and I started to get worried that he had to think about his answer. But then I realized that he was playing the game, and clearly playing it better than me. "You may speak."

It looked like he stifled a smirk. "Yes."

"Good. Okay, then. First, the rules. You will do what I say. You will speak only when I say. You will not touch me unless I give you permission to. If you disobey a rule there will be consequences. If you disobey the rules twice you will forfeit the turn you have coming."

I paused and met his eyes again to make sure he understood.

"Okay. Well, then, I also want to make you a few promises. I know we have limits and that they are there to keep me safe. I promise to stop immediately if you say 'stop' and to slow down or give you a minute if you say, um, 'wait.'" The heat radiating from his eyes made my voice catch in my throat. I momentarily lost my train of thought. I ended up whispering, "Do you understand? You can answer."

"Yes, thank you." His voice was low.

I needed to get out from under the weight of his gaze for a moment. So I slowly began walking around his body, and I imitated the move he had pulled on me last night when he was admiring me in my new dress. I placed my pointer finger against his bicep and then drug it across his back, across his other bicep, and back around to his chest as I circled him. Keeping my finger against his chest, I slowly let it drop down across his stomach to the waistband of his flannel pants at his hipbone. I felt him go still. I hooked my finger in the pants and pulled them away slightly and smirked. *I don't know how but I knew it!* He'd put on a pair of boxers under the pants after the shower. I laughed inwardly—apparently he felt he needed extra layers of clothing for protection around me. I wasn't having that.

"Really Edward? You are overdressed. The pants can go." When he hesitated I raised my eyebrows at him. He smirked at me, his face a mixture of amusement, lust, and something else dark that I didn't fully understand. *If he ever takes his turn I am so gonna pay for this.*

He pulled the flannel pants down and left them in a pile at his feet. The black cotton boxers that he wore were tight and left nothing and everything to the imagination at the same time. I hadn't seen him in five days; it felt like an eternity. That thought made my mouth water and I swallowed hard. He saw me do it.

His underwear led my thoughts in a different direction. "You know, Edward, I seem to have misplaced an article of clothing. I looked everywhere and couldn't find it. Do you know anything about it? You can answer."

"No." His voice had a questioning tone. He was confused. His mind hadn't gotten there yet.

I crossed my arms across my chest and put my weight on one hip. I tried to look stern. "Really? Do you want to rethink your answer?"

"Uh...." He was actually at a loss for words!

"Think back, Edward. I was wearing them Tuesday morning...white...." I let it hang there for a minute. His eyes widened momentarily. I took a step towards him and motioned for him to bend down so I could whisper in his ear. "Go get them and come right back." I pulled my body away and noticed his nostrils flaring.

He was gone from in front of me before I saw him move. Then he was back, his hands at his sides. I held my hand out and wiggled my fingers at him. "I think you have something that is mine."

He dropped his eyes as he placed the white cotton bikinis in my hand. I wanted him to know I wasn't mad, so I reached up on my tiptoes and placed a kiss on his cheek. "Why, thank you. I'll come back to these in a minute."

"Hmm, do you like my new dress, by the way?" I turned around in front of him, giving him a little show. "You may speak."

"I love it. You look stunning."

"Thank you. I love it too. But I'm feeling overdressed now." I knew what part of my outfit I wanted to take off, but I couldn't figure out how to do it without looking completely awkward and risking falling over. Then it came to me. *That's fucking brilliant.* "I need your help, Edward. It would probably be easiest if you got on your knees."

His face looked confused, then wary.

"Now, please." When he dropped to his knees in front of me, a tiny moan of excitement and pleasure escaped my throat. His eyes flashed to mine. The combination of his position, the game, and his eyes caused a rush of moisture to flood to my panties. I bit my lip again. *I couldn't have planned that better.*

"Since you seem to like my panties, Edward, I'm going to reward you for playing along so nicely with me. I want you to take off the ones that I'm wearing." I took a step closer to him. He licked his bottom lip. *And, now they're even wetter. Oh God, there's no way I'm going to make it through this without imploding. Oh, but what a way to go!*

Cold hands interrupted my thoughts. Gentle fingertips trailed up the front of my thighs and paused at my hips. He gripped my hips momentarily like he was struggling to hold on. I stilled and kept silent to give him the time he needed to regain his control. Then his fingers were hooking under the thin straps on both hips and slowly pulling them down. It felt like it took him a full minute until my black and pink panties were sitting around my ankles. Resting a hand on his head I lifted first one foot and then another, using the toe of

my heel to lay them in front of him. "That's much better. Thank you. They're yours now." His hand flashed out and grabbed them into a fist.

EPOV

This girl is going to be the death of me.

That was my exact thought as I pushed back from the kitchen table. But when she spoke to me like that, when she laid out so plainly her desire to control me, I couldn't help but be thrilled. As I stood in my bedroom waiting for her—*what is she doing? when is she coming up?*—I couldn't help but relish in the thought of relinquishing a little control. I knew one of her greatest desires was for us to be equals, which meant sharing the ability to make decisions and be in charge, things admittedly she so infrequently got to do with me and my family. And it was so mentally exhausting to keep myself so rigidly under control all the time. So I decided, if I could, I would play this one last game with her tonight.

It took effort not to fly to her when she entered my room. She looked absolutely ravishing in a body-hugging black sheath dress and tall black heels. She had on dark eye make-up that made her eyes look huge and her skin look ethereal. Her hair was long and full and slightly wild. I watched her enraptured as she moved around my room. *Where did this confidence and poise come from?* I noted with interest she never stumbled once, despite the heels. If it wasn't for the pounding of her heart, which sounded nearly as loud in this space to me as the thunder, I might not have thought she was even that nervous. Her nerves helped calm me. They told me she knew that she needed to be careful if she wanted to play *this* game.

She asked me if I trusted her. It wasn't even a question. She had saved me in every way that I could be saved. She was the very embodiment of trust. She reiterated her rules and I had to restrain myself from smiling at her effort to be all official and businesslike. Then she nearly caused me to break her rules and reach out and pull her into a hug when she made her promises to me. At all once I was reminded of her actions on Tuesday morning, how she had gone so slow in touching me, allow me to get used to her before pushing us further. I felt incrementally more assured that I would be able to play and not disappoint her by having to pull away.

I was caught up in these thoughts and the hot feel of her single finger across my skin when she reached down to my waistband and then asked me to remove my pants. The pout of her lips at discovering my layers was too precious and I bit back a laugh. But I also found myself incredibly aroused—*Bella Swan, Seductress. How is she familiar with doing all of this anyway?* As I lowered my pants I found myself anticipating what she would do next, and I started formulating my own plan for when it was *my* turn.

Her next words completely threw me. "You know, Edward, I seem to have misplaced an article of clothing. I looked everywhere and couldn't find it. Do you know anything about it? You can answer."

"No," I answered, confused by the direction of the conversation. All of her clothing was in the bags in my closet.

Her posture was immediately stern. "Really? Do you want to rethink your answer?"

My mind reeled. "Uh...."

"Think back, Edward," she began, "I was wearing them Tuesday morning...white...." And then it clicked. Twin thoughts ran through my brain: *Damn. She's good.*, and, *Fuck. I'm screwed.* She took a step towards me and beckoned me to lean down. She whispered hotly in my ear, "Go get them and come right back." I flew to my closet. In the back of the bottom drawer was a carved box where I kept several important mementos I had related to Bella. Both pair of panties, the lemonade bottle cap from our first lunch together, a few notes she had written to me at various points, the onion root lab worksheet, the pocketknife she had used to carve our initials in the tree.... I grabbed the white panties and pressed them to my face. Her scent was still thick on them. Then I returned to her. She held her hand out and wiggled her fingers at me. "I think you have something that is mine."

Afraid she was mad at or disgusted with me, I didn't meet her eyes as I placed the white fabric in her hand. But then I felt her lips on my cheek. "Why, thank you. I'll come back to these in a minute."

Before I knew it, she was off in another direction again, asking me what I thought of that Goddamn sexy dress and twirling in front of me. When she started making pronouncements about being overdressed, I braced myself. I didn't think I could handle seeing her naked again in my current state. My brain was computing every possibility when her words caught me off guard. "I need your help, Edward. It would probably be easiest if you got on your knees."

What?

I apparently didn't move fast enough. "Now, please." I complied, remembering how *appealing* she had told me this position was to her. That was confirmed when I heard her moan, a sound that reverberated directly to my cock. And then I smelled her. *Oh God she's exquisite.* The venom started pooling in my mouth. *It would be such an easy matter to tear that dress in two and bury my face between her legs.*

"Since you seem to like my panties, Edward," her voice took on a throaty quality, "I'm going to reward you for playing along so nicely with me. I want you to take off the ones that I'm wearing." Her heart was pounding and her scent became stronger. I licked my lips. *I'm going to have to taste her soon. I can't smell that and not taste it.*

I slid my hands up underneath the hem of her dress, just barely brushing my cold fingertips along her hot skin. When I realized how close my hands were to her pussy I had to grip on to her hips to keep myself from simply burying my fingers in her heat. The feeling of her clenching around my hands is fucking astounding, and I nearly lost it. But I wanted her to have this her way, so I took a deep breath and pulled the panties down as she'd commanded. She used her hand on my head to steady herself as she kicked them off—the hot black panties she'd worn in the shower and I'd struggled earlier not to simply tear off of her—and then kicked them to my knees. "That's much better. Thank you. They're yours now." Her voice was strained. I relished in it. Then I grabbed the panties into my right fist and squeezed, easily feeling the moisture soaked well through the crotch against my palm.

BPOV

"Do you like the gift, Edward?" I paused, seeing if he might slip up. *How does one get a damned vampire to lose his concentration and make a mistake?* "I rather think you do. I rather think you have a panty fetish, Mr. Cullen." I circled around so that I was standing behind him. I stood so that my feet were on either side of his calves as he knelt on the floor. I placed my hands on his head and several times ran my fingers through

his hair, scratching my fingernails along his scalp. I could swear I heard a very low noise resonate from his chest when I did that. I leaned over and placed my lips against his ear. "I rather think that makes you a naughty boy." I snaked my tongue out and licked the shell of his ear. He hissed.

I kissed down his neck, around the back of his neck at his hairline, and over to his other ear, where I whispered, "You're still overdressed. Shirt off, please."

There was no hesitation this time. The shirt was instantly on the floor several feet away.

I hiked the skirt to my dress up a little and knelt down behind him, straddling his calves now. His back was a freaking masterpiece of sculptured muscle with strong broad shoulders that narrowed to a trim waist. I placed light kisses on both shoulder blades and his spine. He shivered lightly. Then I pressed my chest up against his back and wrapped my arms around his chest. "You are so beautiful, Edward." I held him for a moment before pulling away. I placed a wet, open-mouthed kiss at his hairline before dragging my tongue as far down his spine as I could reach in my current position. He hissed louder this time. "Mmm...you taste so good." I placed my hands on his shoulders and stood back up. I walked back around to his front.

"Why don't you have a seat on the couch, Edward?"

He rose slowly, gracefully, and moved the three steps to the couch. He sat down dead center, now wearing only his tight black boxers which were straining against the mass of his erection.

Please, God, please, let me be wearing him down.

EPOV

I sat in the center of the couch with the most painful erection of my life. Her scent hung so heavy in the air I felt like I was swimming in it. And the feel of her arousal in my hand as I rubbed my fingers against her panties was heaven. I didn't know how much more of this I would be able to take before I threw her down and helped her find God.

She stood looking at me for a moment and then walked right up, pulled her skirt up a few inches—further releasing her musky scent into the air—before straddling my lap. Her now-bare crotch was still covered by the dress, but just barely. She kept the weight of her body away from mine. She was mostly sitting on my knees. It took everything I had not to pull her hard against me and grind myself against her hot, wet center. *God I've never felt more seventeen in my life.*

"Edward?" Her voice forced my eyes to move from her lap to her face. "There is a reason why I wanted to play this game tonight." Slowly her right hand made its way over her breasts and stomach and came to rest on the taut edge of her skirt. "I need you to know something about me, something that I don't think you know." I caught movement in her lap and immediately my eyes tracked it. She had slipped her hand under her dress. I watched enraptured as her hand began to move. *She. Is. Touching. Herself.* I was torn between being absolutely fascinated and wanting to tear her hand away so I could take over. "Ah ah ah. Eyes up, please." It took everything I had to drag my eyes away from the sight of her pleasuring herself.

"As I was saying," she continued, "yesterday you said you thought I deserved to be treated a certain way because I was pure and innocent and a lady. I wanted to play this game with you tonight, Edward, because

while I may be those things sometimes, that's not *all* I am." The sound of her fingers moving through her wetness was now audible. I swallowed, hard.

"Would someone who was pure do this?" She pulled her hand out from under her dress and wiped her fingers across my lips, which fell open instinctively. I was now smelling her scent full force. I groaned and then she offered conspiratorially, "You can taste, if you like." I snaked my tongue out of my mouth and licked my lips clean. I had to close my eyes at the goodness of it.

"Would someone who was innocent," she moved her hand from my face slowly down my torso to my groin. My eyes flashed open and she studied them for a moment before grazing my cock with her fingertips. I flinched and held my breath, but true to her words she went slow. She was studying my reactions and gauging her movements based on them. I heard her swallow, then say, just as her fingers softly stroked my length, "Would someone who was innocent want this?" Her rubbing became more insistent. When she used her nails against me, I lost it.

"Bella, fuck."

Her eyes flashed to me and she froze. She raised an eyebrow and pushed herself off of my lap, back into a standing position. "Who gave you permission to speak, Edward? Certainly I did not." I couldn't wait to see where she was going to go with this. As always, she surprised me. "Lay down on the couch. Clearly you need a reminder of who's in charge of this, of *you*, tonight."

She stood over me and looked me up and down. My body took up the whole length of the couch. She didn't appear to neglect a single part of me with her eyes. She murmured "beautiful," although I don't think she meant to say it out loud.

"Close your eyes, Edward." So I did.

BPOV

Holyshitholyshitholyshit! He let me straddle him! He let me touch him! He let me stroke him! My mind was reeling, calculating just *how much* I might be able to get away with tonight.

And then he spoke out of turn. As much as I absolutely loved hearing the word 'fuck' roll off his beautiful velvet mouth, he needed to be reminded who was in control of this little party.

I shivered as I surveyed his exquisite body on the couch and then after he closed his eyes I walked over to the candle. I whispered, "Do not open your eyes until I tell you to." I looked into the candle, which over the past hour had managed to create a large pool of liquid wax. I dipped my pinky into the wax--it was hot but not *too* hot. I figured if I could tolerate, he could too. *Perfect.*

I picked up the candle and the spoon and knelt down on the floor next to his torso. "I don't know if I told you, Edward, but I love your mark on me." I noted that this position allowed me to see just how accelerated his breathing was. "Now it's my turn."

I held the candle up and scooped some of the hot wax into the spoon. Hoping it wouldn't drip or congeal before I wanted it to, I moved my hand above his chest and began to drizzle a line of hot wax over his still heart. He reacted instantaneously, hissing and choking out a "wait."

I stopped immediately, just like I promised I would. *He didn't say stop!* I was almost holding my breath waiting for him to decide if he was okay with this.

I heard a low growl rumble in his chest. Then he surprised me by saying, "Go."

"Are you sure, Edward? You won't hurt my feel—"

"Go." His voice was husky.

I took a deep breath. I noticed my hand was trembling now. I grabbed one of the hand towels to catch any spills or drips I might make.

I dipped the spoon in the wax again and drizzled the hot liquid along the same line as before. "I can't actually mark your body, Edward, but I can give you this little reminder that you're *mine*." I drizzled more wax on his chest, this time a loop that connected with the top part of the first line. I dripped a second coating of wax in that same loop pattern.

"How does this feel, Edward?" I scooped more wax and began a second loop off of the original line. "You may speak."

"It feels fucking hot." My heart started thundering.

With a very shaky hand now, I drizzled a final coating of wax onto the second loop, completing the letter 'B' in the center of his chest. The coolness of his skin had helped the wax cool and harden almost immediately.

I grabbed his hand closest to me and lifted it over my mark. I took his forefinger and helped him trace it along the wax letter. "You are mine, Edward. For the rest of the night, in case you forget who you belong to, who's in control of you, just look down."

I placed the candle back on the table along with the spoon and the towel. "You may open your eyes now. And please sit back up." He did as I asked, and looked down to see the letter on his chest. When he lifted his face to mine, his eyes were the blackest I had ever seen them. His expression was fierce. It was thrilling.

Seeing his mark made me think of mine. *God I love that he marked me. I want another one.* I had decided earlier that I wanted as many marks as possible between now and the time I was changed. I just knew I had to keep them away from areas that might show around my wedding gown or Alice would kill me. I had just the place.

As I kicked my heels off, I said, "I hope you won't disobey the rules again, Edward. I would hate for you to lose your turn in our little game." I walked up and stood in front of him again. "Did you learn your lesson? Answer."

"Yes." It came out as a hiss. *Oh my.*

"I'm feeling left out, Edward. I want a mark of my own tonight. Answer me, would you be willing to do that for me?"

He bit his bottom lip and nodded.

"Good. I'm glad. But first, I think we need to make sure you can keep those hands under control." I reached over and took his right hand, which was still gripping my black panties, and lifted it up across the back of the couch. I reached behind me and scooped my white bikinis off the floor and pressed them into his left hand. I leaned forward to whisper in his ear, "All you had to do was ask, you know." I bit down gently on his ear lobe, then placed his left arm across the back of the couch on his other side. "Now, no matter what happens for the rest of the game, your arms must stay right where I put them. I don't care what you have to do to keep them there. Nod if you understand." He did. I noticed he had spun the white bikinis around so that his fingers were now rubbing against the crotch of both panties.

I stood back in front of him again. Taking a deep breath, I stood up on the couch, one foot on either side of his hips, my crotch right in front of his face. I slow began to pull my dress up, exposing more and more of my thighs. I stopped just before he would get any eyeful of anything, although his nose was now mere inches in front of my very wet pussy.

"Right here, Edward," I said, placing my forefinger against the upper inside of my right thigh. "I want you to mark me as yours right here."

At my words I noticed that his hands gripped the back of the couch. I placed one hand on the wall in front of me for support and the other in his hair, encouraging him. "Please?"

He slowly leaned his head down and forward and placed a gentle kiss on my thigh. I gasped and sucked in a breath. He purposely selected a place so high on my thigh that when his lips found my skin his nose brushed lightly against my outer lips. When he actually started sucking against me I cried out in pleasure, wrapping my hand tight in his hand and holding him to me. It was over too fast, and I was panting hard. I felt a new trickle of moisture leave my body and I heard him groan in response.

"Thank you, Edward," I breathed roughly. I stepped down from the couch. So he could see, I placed my right leg up on the cushion next to him, pulling my skirt back up high enough that we could both admire his handiwork—lipwork? It was a thing of beauty—bigger and dark than what he'd placed on my neck.

EPOV

I can't take this I can't take this I can't take this! Focusing on those four words over and over ironically helped me take it. Anything, *anything*, to help distract my mind from what she was doing to my body.

Her words were causing my brain to melt.

Her touch was electrifying my body.

Her little stunt with the candle wax nearly caused me to come flying up off the couch at her until I realized what it was. I should have guessed, really, given that I saw her bring the candle in. But it seemed that my brain function had been severely reduced.

Her possessiveness and dominance over me were making my heart soar.

Her scent was making my mouth water.

And when my nose brushed against her moist hair I vowed I would soon make good on my thoughts of burying my face in there until she couldn't see straight.

I couldn't deny it; I loved see my marks on her. And I loved that she loved it too.

"Edward, love, I need to see all of you now. It's time for the boxers to come off now," she said lowly as she placed her marked leg back on the ground.

I knew she would make this request of me. I knew I should say 'stop.' There was only so much I could reasonably take. But, *Goddamn it*, she had me so tightly wound that I wanted nothing more than to give into whatever her vision was for our so-called game.

She kneeled down in front of me. *Mother of God*. She slowly reached towards me and placed her hands on my hips. She looked up to my eyes and, *God help me*, I nodded. She curled her fingers into the waistband and slowly pulled them down; I lifted my hips to assist her in lowering them. When she had pulled them all the way off, she held them up on one finger and looked me dead in the eye. "These are mine now, Cullen. Turnabout is fair play, and all that." She tossed them to the side.

Her heart was racing and her breathing was coming shallow now. I watched her look at me. Her mouth dropped open and I saw the muscles of her neck work as she swallowed. That little action caused my cock to twitch and she noticed.

She wrapped her hands around my knees and pulled, indicating that she wanted me to scooch down towards her. She could never pull me, of course, but I complied.

She leaned forward and placed a kiss on his knee, and I sucked in a breath at the vision of her kneeling before my naked body with her face so very near to my lap.

Then she surprised me by laying her head down on my right thigh, about midway between my knee and my groin. She brushed her hair back off her face and slowly worked her right hand up my thigh in a small circuit. With each pass of the circuit she would go a little higher. Until finally her fingers brushed lightly against the base of my cock.

"I'm going to touch you now, Edward. I promise I'll go slow."

I tilted my head back and closed my eyes, giving in to the sensation of it.

I could feel her heart beating against my knee, her warm breath on my thigh, and her soft fingers slowly stroking my hard length. It was unspeakably good.

"Edward, I'm giving you permission now to say anything you want to say at any time. I like hearing you. I *want* to hear you." I felt her tilt her head up. "Open your eyes, baby, I want you to watch." I wrenched my head forward to look at the sight of her in my lap. She was right. This was not something to be missed.

She adjusted her body to make her arm a little more comfortable as she stroked me. It brought her chest up against my thigh and her face was now laying more against my hip. I could now feel her fevered breaths against my cock as she worked it, a little harder now, in her fingers.

“God, Bella. Fuck. You are so fucking good.”

She gripped me harder and my hips jerked against her.

“Edward, you are so hard. God you feel amazing in my hand.” Her words caused more air against my erection.

She pulled her hand away and I moaned out loud. I watched in wonder as she brought her hand up to her mouth, bathed her palm with the moisture from her tongue, and then wrapped her wet hand around me again. When she started moving up and down my length this time, the feeling was even more sensational.

“Yes, Bella, yes, God.” I grunted. “So good.”

She started moving faster.

“Edward, I want to make you feel good.”

“Ungh, it is, Bella, you do. It’s...nnngggh...so....”

I felt her adjust her body once again. She moved her head slightly closer to her my center, making it so that when she pumped me in a certain way the base of my cock would brush against her lips or nose. I froze.

What is she? Is she? Does she want to? Can I...? My thoughts were a complete mess.

Anticipating what was going on in my head, she whispered, “Earlier today, you cut me off before I had a chance to respond to your fantasy, Edward. I never got to say how much I also want more than just your tongue in my mouth.”

“Bella—”

“You say the word, Edward, and I won’t do it. I’ll back off a little, or I’ll stop. But I want to taste you, Edward. I want to *feel you inside me*. I need to.” All the time she kept working her tight fist slowly up and down my length, her labored breathing now flush against me.

She held her head still, waiting for me. Seconds passed, minutes. My brain had worked itself into an absolutely standstill. *Tell her to stop! Tell her to wait! You shouldn’t let her do this! She could get hurt! She could....*

And then I felt her move the remaining inch so that her lips were firm against the side of my cock. She stilled her hand, allow me to get used to the feeling of her lips against me. Keeping her lips closed, she slowly drug the soft skin of her lips and nose up my length. I grabbed on tight to the back of the couch with both hands. *Under no circumstance can I touch her head!*

When her face reached the top of me, I felt her tongue snake out against me. I sucked in a sharp breath as she circled her tongue around my head.

“Jesus fucking Christ, Bella.”

She pushed herself up slightly onto her elbows in my lap, giving herself better leverage. She whispered against me, “Would a lady do this, Edward?” And then she ran her tongue all the way from head to base and back again.

I moaned loudly. It seemed to spur her on. When she reached the top again, she pressed a firm kiss against my head, causing the top of it to push in between her lips.

“God, Bella, oh. Fuck.”

She opened her mouth more, letting more of me slip into her mouth.

The heat and wetness and dirtiness of her actions seized me all at once and I gripped the couch harder. Some part of my brain registered a ripping sound on the back of the couch.

Slowly she pushed her mouth down around my cock. It was the most exquisite thing I had ever felt in my entire fucking life.

To be sure, I was letting go—and that scared the hell out of me—but the place I went to when I let go was all Bella. It was my heart. My soul. And I could never hurt that, because it would mean killing myself. That realization allowed me to let myself completely set adrift in the sensation of her mouth, her hand, her body against me. I could trust us; I had to.

Then she completely blew my fucking mind. With my cock buried in her mouth and pulsing beneath her hand, she looked up at me from underneath her long eyelashes. She held my eyes while she moved up and down on me, taking a little bit more of me in with each motion.

“God you look beautiful with my cock in your mouth, Bella. It’s the most incredible sight I’ve ever seen.”

She moaned at my words, sending a shockwave from her vocal chords through my length. I groaned in return.

She held my gaze for another moment before removing her hand from my base and laying it flat against my upper thigh. She scooted up further on her knees again and, in a move that almost caused me to cum right there on the spot, she lowered her mouth around me until I was buried in the back of her throat.

“Oh, God, Bella, that’s it. Just like that. Holy fucking God.” There was a snapping sound from behind the couch.

And then she held stone still. She had almost my entire length in her mouth. Her eyes closed in concentration. She swallowed once roughly, and I felt her throat muscles work around my head.

“Oh baby, Christ.”

As she had done with my finger in the car last night, I then felt her hollow out her cheeks and suck hard as she brought her mouth up my entire length. She was just at my head when she abruptly stopped sucking and plunged her mouth down around me again, taking me into the back of her throat. *Where did she fucking learn how to do this it is so fucking good oh my fucking God.*

The next time she went to do it, she flicked her tongue along my length as she sucked. I hissed out a string of now unintelligible curses.

Her motions then turned shallower but faster. "Bella, love. *Fuck.*" I was panting hard now, having difficulty saying what I needed to say. "When...when I...say...move...when I say...move. Okay, love? Oh, God that's so good."

She wrapped her hand back around the base of my cock and joined her fist with her mouth in pumping me. That did me in. "Now, Bella, move." She did, immediately. "Fuck, I'm coming, Bella." I roared out as my seed poured out against my hand and stomach.

When my mind finally started to return to me, I felt her kisses on my knees again. She was still on her knees between my legs. I saw her reach to the side for something, and then she pulled up a hand towel from the floor. She reached up as if to clean me up. I gently took the towel from her and did the job.

Then in one smooth motion I leaned forward, scooped her up off the floor in my arms, and laid us together on the bed. I was completely naked; she was still in that hot damn dress. I held her tight against me.

"Bella, there are no words—"

I felt her smile against my neck. "I won."

"I don't know about that, love. I'm pretty sure I won." She giggled softly.

I ran my hands up and down her back, and then reached down and grabbed her thigh behind her knee, hoisting it up over my hip. She gasped. As I moved to reach my hand down between her legs, she stopped me. Our eyes met. "No love," she said, "tonight was all about you."

"But—"

She cut me off with a kiss. "All about you and your pleasure." We continued to exchange soft kisses, then she buried her head into the crook of my neck.

Her breathing started to even out. I rubbed my fingers through her hair. And then she fell asleep.

I reached down and pulled the blanket around her, but I continued to hold her directly against my body instead of separating us with a blanket the way I usually did. For now, at least, I needed to feel her.

Bella was right. She wasn't an angel. She wasn't something to be put up on a pedestal. She wasn't perfect. But she was perfect for me. She was exactly what I needed her to be when I needed it. And she seemed to have a better grasp on what I needed than I did sometimes.

I pressed my lips against her forehead. "Good night, my love, my life, my Bella."

~*~

Chapter 11: Music

BPOV

I woke up with a big cat-like stretch and smiled into my pillow. I didn't have to wonder if last night really happened. I must have woken up a half dozen times over the course of the night, and every time I would sit up a little, realize I was still wearing my black dress, smile to myself and think, 'yep, it really happened,' before laying my head back down and falling back to sleep. I'm not sure at what point Edward left the bed. But when I was finally awake enough to open my eyes, they fixed immediately on a folded sheet of stationery and a single long-stemmed blush-pink rose. I pulled the fine paper close and flipped it open to see Edward's elegant script: *Went for a quick hunt. I'll be back in time to make you breakfast. With my love, E.*

I grasped the stem of the rose, smiling at the realization that he had removed all of the thorns. I brushed the silken petals against my lips, inhaling the sweet scent of the large blossom. I carried it with me as I pushed out of the bed and stumbled into the bathroom.

I froze at the sight of my appearance in the mirror. My hair was wild and my eye makeup had smudged creating dark circles below my eyes. My dress was disheveled and slightly askew. My body thought about being embarrassed by my appearance, but then a wave of satisfaction came over me. *So worth it.*

I stripped myself of my dress and folded it on the bathroom counter, biting my lip at the realization that I had on no undergarments—*one having been helpfully removed for me...*—and ran a brush through my hair. I grabbed a washcloth and removed my make-up, and as I rinsed the cloth my eyes traveled down my body. All at once I remembered, and I lifted my right leg up so that my toes rested on the edge of the toilet seat. There, in all its glory, was the mark I instructed Edward to give me. *In case I need it, that would be my proof that last night really happened, thank you very much.*

Smiling, I turned the water to the shower on and stepped in once it warmed. For a few minutes, I was all business, lathering my hair, then rinsing it, then turning to grab the sponge. But on some level, my brain was remembering Edward washing my hair, reliving the feel of that sponge as he washed between my legs, fantasizing about Edward kneeling, wet and beautiful, in front of me. All at once I was so turned on I could hardly stand it. All at once my unaddressed arousal from our little game last night hit me full force. *Why was it again that I stopped him when we got in bed?!?*

I was absentmindedly rubbing the soapy sponge over my body as I made these realizations, and when I ran it over my breasts I whimpered. I immediately bit my lip. *Edward will be back any minute. I can't....can I? Would he know? Of course he would know, wouldn't he? Okay, pull it together, Swan.* I shook my head, and quickly finished washing, trying hard to ignore my body's reaction to the sponge as it passed over certain areas. I rinsed and shut the water off, intent on distracting myself with dressing and seeing Edward.

I wrapped the towel around me and walked out into Edward's bedroom. I noted that he had cleaned up from our little activities last night, but then something caught my eye. I walked over to the couch and noticed a hole in the leather on the top edge of the backrest. Upon closer inspection, I found that the top edge of the backrest had quite a bit of damage in two places: *Exactly where I had placed Edward's hands.* My hand flew to my mouth to cover my gasp.

A rational reaction might have been fear—here was physical proof of the danger Edward insisted that he posed to me. But my mind went in a completely different direction—here was physical proof of the affect I have on Edward. I wasn't scared of his strength; I was completely thrilled and turned on by it.

But, more importantly, here was the proof that he could handle intimacy without harming *me*. *Who cares if a couch or a bed or a wall is a casualty? Those things can be repaired or replaced.* There was the answer: Edward just needed a way to *redirect* any excess...enthusiasm.

That realization had two results: I felt an almost uncontrollable giddiness at the idea that *trying* seemed more doable now than ever, and an equally strong wave of lust at the idea that *trying* seemed doable. *Doable. Doable! I'm doable! Do me! Domedomedome!!!*

I burst out into a fit of nervous laughter, throwing my hand over my mouth to try to stifle the sound. Then I scampered over to Edward's closet to grab some clothes. Folded on top of my overnight bag was the pair of black boxers Edward had worn last night and I had claimed as my own. I found the gesture of his having acknowledged my claim both insanely sweet and maddeningly erotic. *Not helping!*

I grabbed a pair of khaki canvas cargo shorts and a navy blue tank top, which I threw on over a beautiful pink bra and panty set that I chose because it reminded me of the color of the rose. With a grin still firmly in place, I walked back into the bathroom and brushed my hair up into a girly ponytail, then, noticing how prominently displayed that left Edward's mark on my neck, I adjusted it so that the ponytail was low and to the side, with the hair cascading over my right shoulder.

I skipped downstairs expecting Edward to already be back, but the house was quiet and empty. I thought about just grabbing a bowl of cereal, but Edward had said he wanted to make me breakfast, and I didn't want him to think I'd gotten impatient, so I just grabbed a glass of orange juice. It occurred to me that I'd never been at the Cullens' house completely alone before. I walked around looking at the few photographs that were displayed in the public part of the house and unthinkingly found myself standing at Edward's piano several minutes later.

I ran my hand over the glossy surface and sat at the bench. I placed the glass of orange juice on the floor next to me and rested my fingers lightly on the keys. It made me feel closer to Edward to sit where I knew he had sat so many times before. I pressed down on some of the keys and was surprised by how loud the notes sounded in the otherwise still house.

A memory came to me from when I was maybe twelve or thirteen. Renee got into knitting and joined a knitting circle that rotated its meetings between the members' houses. One of the members had a daughter my age, Marla, I think her name was, who had a piano and took lessons. I would hang out with her while our moms did whatever it was they did, and she was always working on the same song whenever I came over. I liked it because it seemed melancholy, but every once in a while turned hopeful. I realize that sounds dumb, but that's how it always seemed to me.

Before I really thought about it, my fingers were on the keys trying to remember the notes. Marla had tried to teach me. I wasn't coordinated enough to be able to pay attention to both hands at once, so she had created a game where she played one hand and I played the other—then I only had to remember half. We had a lot of fun, and I had gotten to a point where I knew my part, sorta.

It took me a few minutes but, before long, I found the notes. I was so pleased with myself that I broke into a big grin before resuming my concentration and trying to remember more. It didn't sound particularly good,

but for some reason remembering this one insignificant part of my past was comforting in an unexplainable way.

I don't know when Edward returned. I didn't see or hear him. All I knew was when his arms wrapped around my stomach and his cold lips found my exposed throat. I jumped and pulled my hands away from the keys, scared that he might be upset I touched his piano. He chuckled lightly against my neck before resuming his feather-light kisses. "Don't stop on my account, love," he whispered.

"I...I don't really know...."

"Nonsense. I heard you. You were doing fine. How did I not know you could play?"

"Edward, I *can't* play. I just sorta know this one song, well, only half of it really. I didn't even remember that I knew it until I sat down here. I don't even remember what it's called."

"Play for me, Bella."

"Edward—" This was beyond embarrassing. The virtuoso asking *me* to play.

"Please, Bella?" Ugh. I was as susceptible to his pleas as he said he was to mine.

"Don't laugh," I muttered.

I felt him smile against my neck and place a gentle kiss there.

"Well, see, I only know some of the notes...." My hand began playing the notes I knew, not well, of course, and even worse than a few minutes ago when I didn't have an audience—or didn't *think* I had an audience. "That's as much as I've remembered so far."

"Start again," he whispered, and I felt him shift slightly behind me.

My left hand began moving uncertainly over the keys again. Suddenly, Edward's right hand appeared on the keys and played the other half of the song. I gasped, messing up the notes. "Again," he whispered.

I did better the next time, but was nearly holding my breath in concentration. Sharing this with him was so wonderful that I found myself wishing I actually knew how to play so we could do this together. There was something so intimate about playing with him, and even though I was so obviously unskilled, sharing that with him for those few moments made me feel connected to him in an unexpected way.

Hating to interrupt the moment, I waited after the sound of the notes faded away. "Do you know what it's called?" I whispered.

"Yes. 'Moonlight Sonata.' It's Beethoven." His breaths were cool against my ear.

"You know it? I mean, can you play it?"

He rose and slid onto the bench next to me. He gazed at me for a moment in a way that made my heart race, before turning to the piano and bringing to life the song I could only hear in pieces in my memory. It was

beautiful and haunting and sad and unexpectedly hopeful. When he was done playing, he turned to me and used the pads of his thumbs to wipe the tears I hadn't realized had fallen off of my cheeks.

Holding my face in his hands, he leaned into me and pressed his lips to mine. The kiss was tender at first; I think he felt the connection I sensed too. Then he deepened the kiss, before long running his cold tongue over my bottom lip, asking permission to enter. I opened my mouth to him, and reveled in the feeling of our tongues dancing together. I moaned into him and placed my hands on his strong shoulders before running them up his neck and into his hair.

Before I realized it, Edward lifted my body onto his lap so that my knees were straddling his legs on the bench. The position brought my center flush against his hips, causing my stomach to turn immediately into a mush of tingles in response to the sensation of his erection pressing firmly against me.

The weight of my pent-up arousal descended upon me full force and I groaned at the contact and shamelessly ground myself against Edward. He grunted in return and clutched tightly at my back, pulling me in against him so that there was no space between us.

I fisted my hands in the back of Edward's shirt, trying to find leverage to pull myself in harder against him. All the while our mouths fought for dominion over the other's lips and neck. We were both panting hard and my heart was crashing against my ribcage.

EPOV

I'd needed to hunt. Bella's mouth on me had been the single most erotic experience of my life and I was spent, not just in the physical sense, but mentally. The entire day had been an exercise in control, and by the very end I had managed to hold onto it by the very thinnest of threads—my leather couch was proof of that.

Blood was one of the surest ways to help me maintain my control. And not knowing what the new day might bring—since all of my days of late seemed to bring unimaginable surprises—hunting seemed imperative. I hated to leave Bella; she slept so restlessly all night. But I really needed to go so I could feel more in control and return before my love awoke.

I heard the piano as I returned to the house and was momentarily confused. I had approached the house from the woods in the back and reflexively glanced in the rear garage windows to see if my family had returned. Rosalie was a proficient piano player and sometimes amused herself at the piano. But my family's cars hadn't yet returned. That left only Bella.

To be sure the music wasn't practiced. She seemed to just be playing around, but in a purposeful way. None of that was what intrigued me though. In the year and a half since we first met, Bella had never once indicated she had any experience playing the piano at all. And yet here she was fiddling around with Beethoven?

I slipped in the back sliding door and silently moved through the house. I leaned against the wall behind her for a few moments while she tried out different keys, attempting to resurrect the melody. After a few minutes, she successfully found the notes for the first dozen bars of the sonata and broke out into a huge smile of accomplishment. That was when I could no longer sit back and watch silently.

I chuckled as I surprised her. And of course I was not at all surprised by her immediate embarrassment. I was determined to make her play for me when she knew she had an audience, and I had to nudge her into playing several times. The image of her hand moving on the keys struck me as sensual, perhaps because her hand now moved where mine had so many times before. And then I got her to play with me, just for a few minutes. But in that short time I felt like I shared something with Bella that was such an important and personal part of me; I came away feeling like she knew me better because of it.

She asked me to play for her, and I did. And before long, we sat facing one another. I held her face in my hands, and I was overwhelmed with her beauty and her closeness and how very much I loved and desired the woman sitting before me.

In that moment I didn't know whether it was the way she looked at me or the music we shared or the intimacy of that moment or the power of the freshly consumed blood flowing through me or the seductively sexual being that Bella was turning into or the unexpected build-up of our relationship over the past week or the remaining three weeks until our marriage. What I did know—all I knew—was that I *wanted* her.

I threw my desire into kissing. And it was wonderful and hot and dizzying and consuming.

I want—no, need—more.

I pulled her into my lap causing the heat of her center to crush against my now obvious erection. I wrapped my arms around her back and pulled her body flush with mine. I was rewarded with Bella's sounds, which together with her scent seemed to reverberate directly to my cock. She ground herself against me and it made me feel delirious with need.

More.

Bella was grasping and clutching at my back, trying to pull herself in closer to me. I knew what she wanted. My arms slipped down from her back and my hands slowly came to rest on her firm bottom. I gently squeezed her there and she moaned loudly into our kiss and her hips jerked against me. I groaned and grasped her harder, helping her grind herself into me.

More.

God help me, I need to feel her. I moved my hands back up, purposely slipping them underneath the back of her top. I groaned at the color of it—she was quite aware of how partial I was to dark blue against her skin. When my fingers made contact with the soft skin of her back she jumped but then sighed into me.

My hands roamed all over her back, constantly serving to pull her tight against me. The higher my hands went, the more my arms caused her shirt to ride up in the front, and I became acutely aware that all that separated our torsos from one another was the thin cotton of my t-shirt.

"Edward," she sighed. "Mmm."

"Bella." I pulled back so that I could look in her eyes, silently asking permission.

"Please," she asked, and offered.

I gently grabbed the hem of her shirt and pulled it up over her outstretched arms. The shirt had caught the band on her ponytail and loosened it, so I reached up and pulled it all the way free, preferring her hair that way anyway.

Bella was a vision. Her long mahogany waves spilled over her ivory skin which was covered by a dainty and feminine blush pink bra with satin straps and a small row of satin roses in the center. "Perfect," I murmured, before returning my mouth to her skin, this time working down her neck to her collarbone.

More.

I felt Bella clutch harder at the back of my shirt. "Edward," she moaned, tugging harder on my shirt. I momentarily released Bella's body so I could reach back and pull off my shirt, bringing our bare upper bodies fully into contact for the first time. The heat and steady thrumming of her heartbeat radiated into me making it feel like her heat was my own and her heart beat for me too.

As we kissed, Bella's hands across my bare skin left blazing trails that only exacerbated my need for her. When all of a sudden she removed her hands from my body I immediately felt a sense of loss. My eyes flashed open searching for the explanation of her pulling back.

She sat before me with one delicate hand pressed against the lacey fabric of the front of her bra. Her other arm was folded behind her, and then the straps to the garment slackened as she undid the clasp at her back. I sucked in a breath. Her actions still never failed to surprise me.

Biting her bottom lip, she met my eyes. She held still for a moment, allowing me to prepare for the sight she was about to offer me.

I wanted her to know I wanted it too, so I gently reached up and placed my hand on hers above her heart, then pulled both of our hands away, slowly lowering the lacey fabric as we did.

Sweet God she is astonishingly beautiful.

I reached my hands up and cupped her face, pulling her to me for a kiss. "Bella," I whispered around the edge of our kiss, "there are no words. No words for how much I love you. No words for how exquisite you are."

She leaned further into the kiss, bring her bare chest flush against mine. The sensation was nearly unbearable and we both moaned at the contact. I immediately felt her peaks harden against me and I thrilled at being able to feel the physical evidence of her arousal the way she could mine.

More.

I felt a war raging inside of me. I knew this was going too far too fast but I felt compelled by my need for her, particularly since our recent intimacy had slowly begun to chip away at my fear that Bella would automatically be harmed if I allowed myself any loss of control.

Our kiss deepened and Bella gasped for breath. I ran my mouth across her jawline to her neck, nuzzling the mark I made there. Bella was panting in my ear and the feel and sound of her breath was driving me crazy. I felt her hand land on top of one of mine and felt her trying to guide me. She panted hard again and then breathed, "Touch me," as she slid our hands down to her breast.

Ungh, so good. The feeling of her breast in my hand was beyond description—she felt warm and firm and full and soft and hard.

“Edward,” she panted. “Oh.”

“Bella, you feel so good,” I rasped.

“Mmm, harder Edward.” She licked my ear. “You told me you’d touch me harder.”

Christ. Her words went right to my cock, which was straining uncomfortably against my jeans and her now damp shorts. I knew exactly what she was talking about—the words I’d used to guide her in touching herself that morning.

I knew how I wanted to touch her, but we were well into dangerous territory here and I froze in fear of hurting her. She felt it.

She pulled back and met my eyes. Her face was flush, her eyes appeared heavy with desire, and her mouth hung open. She laid her hand on top of mine. “Would it...would it help you if I...showed you? I mean, how...hard is...okay?”

Her words amazed me once again. *She is going to be my salvation and my death all at once.* I leaned in and kissed her softly, and whispered “yes” into her mouth.

She tightened her hand around mine and guided us in kneading and squeezing her soft flesh. The harder the touch the more soft moaning sounds she made. An intensification of her aroused scent made it clear that she derived intense pleasure from being handled rougher and some primal part of my brain jumped to attention at the receipt of that knowledge. Her willingness to go slow and let us learn about one another was not only helpful to my control but also made me realize that she could be handled somewhat less gently than I would have attempted.

She brought her other hand up and with both hands pulled mine slightly away. She held my wrist with one hand while she grabbed my forefinger and thumb with her other and guided my fingers to her taut nipple. It took effort to keep my eyes from rolling back into my head as she showed me how hard I could squeeze her there, the sight of her demonstrating this being so incredibly erotic.

“It’s okay, Edward,” she whispered, leaning in to kiss my ear, “it feels good. You won’t hurt me.”

“Bella, I love you so much,” I murmured as I ran my nose along the length of her neck. “You are driving me crazy.”

I felt her cheek curve into a smile against mine. “The feeling is mutual.”

I felt her gently dragging her teeth along the shell of my ear and I groaned. She bit down playfully and I growled instinctively, causing her to whimper in pleasure. “Need you, Edward,” she bit a little harder. “Want you, so much.” She pushed herself hard against me to punctuate her point.

Her heat, her words, her teeth, her body. It was so much, nearly too much, and I wanted it all. My resistance, my resolve, was wearing down, and now in my mind appeared as a taut rope fraying in the middle with only the thinnest of fibers still holding the whole thing together.

More!

Not needing her guidance any longer, I ran my hands hungrily over her chest. She arched into me, tilting her head back in a pleased abandon. I caught her weight with one hand across her back and slowly leaned her back so that her body was on full display for me. I guided her so that her shoulders came to rest against the piano, her elbows landing on the keys, causing a discordant symphony of notes to erupt from the instrument. This piano had never made a more beautiful sound in all the years I had owned it.

“God Bella, you are so beautiful. I need to touch you. I need to feel you.” She moaned what might have been a ‘yes’ as I placed both of my hands at her neck and worked down, running my palms across her shoulders, back in over the smooth plane of her chest, around and in between the firm curves of her breasts, and over the firmness of her stomach. Here and there my touch would cause Bella to moan or jerk in response, causing her body to play more music against the piano. My hands came to rest on her hips, which I grasped firmly and unthinkingly pulled towards me, creating friction between us. We both groaned at the contact and Bella ground into me on her own. I wanted her so much in that moment that a thought flitted unwelcome through my mind: *Screw the wedding! Take her now!*

No! More! No! Yes! More! Ugh.

“Bella, I...I want to try something. I need you to...hold still. Can you do that for me, baby?”

“Mmmhmm,” she managed, lifting her head off the piano to meet my eyes.

I leaned forward and pressed my lips to her stomach and she trembled.

BPOV

Oh God.

I thought the sensation of his hands on my breasts would unravel me, but it was nothing compared to the feeling of his lips on my skin. He ran soft kisses across my stomach, from the bottom of my rib cage to the top of my shorts—at which point I didn’t entirely maintain my promise to hold still. But the higher his kisses went, the more his silken hair, now wild from my hands running through it, brushed across my breasts. That light contact made my breasts ache for the want of him, and the more I tried to hold myself still the louder the sounds that escaped from my throat and mouth.

And then there was the damn piano. The sound of it as my body moved against the keys sent jolts directly to my center, especially she I knew for certain that the glossy black instrument was the centerpiece of a shared fantasy.

Occasionally I thought I heard Edward whispering against my stomach, but I couldn’t make most of it out. I was trying to pay attention to his hushed tones when I felt tongue.

“Unngh, Edward,” I cried out as he ran a slow icy lick fully up one side of my stomach.

I heard a rumble in his chest and I forced my eyes to focus down on him. The sight of him taking slow precise laps at my torso was the most incredible thing I had ever seen.

“Oh God, Edward. Umm. Please.”

I arched against him and he drew one arm around my lower back. He looked up at me, meeting my eyes with his now blackened gaze. As he looked at me he slowly ran his hand up my stomach to my right breast, grabbing it firmly and rolling my nipple between his fingers.

I wanted to watch as this played out before me, really I did, but the sensation was too much, and I threw my head back as I gave into just *feeling*.

His tongue.

Oh. My. God.

He circled his tongue around my belly button and then plunged into my belly button, causing my hips to jerk against him. He clutched tighter with the arm around my back as if trying to hold me in place. Then holding his tongue rigid against my skin, he slowly licked a straight line from my belly button between my breasts to my heart, where he placed a wet open-mouthed kissed.

He lingered there, with his lips pressing lightly over my racing heart. “You have to hold still now, baby. Please.”

“Okay,” I breathed, not sure I actually said it out loud.

Any consideration of that fled my head when I felt his lips press against my left breast. My hands balled into fists, that small motion of my arms causing more notes to fill the room. I was dying to grasp as his head and pull him against me harder. But I needed to feel his mouth on me so badly that I didn’t want to do anything to ruin this so perfect of moments.

I was panting now, the anticipation so great that my whole body felt on fire.

“Please, Edward.”

He kissed around my breast in a circle, one hand going to gently cup my other breast.

I strangled on a scream when his lips press down gently on my achingly erect nipple. “Ungh, yes, Edward. Oh, more.”

I heard him groan and felt the gentlest of sucking sensations. With the exception of rare occasions sucking on my bottom lip, he had never before taken any part of my body into his mouth. I thought I would die from it. *I want to feel his teeth!* In that moment I wished more than anything that he would—could—bite me. Because it was forbidden, my body was screaming with need for it.

His lips tugged gently against my sensitive peak and I groaned at the pleasure of it. I put so much effort into staying still that I was now covered in a thin sheen of sweat, making his hands glide with even greater ease across my skin. My sweat exacerbated the pool of wetness now accumulated between my thighs. I was so aroused that I knew not only were my panties a casualty but I was pretty sure my shorts were, too.

And then he licked me. First, he ran one wet firm lick across my breast and over my nipple. And then he used his tongue to flick my nipple over and over, and at that I screamed unabashedly and out loud. He moaned in response and I felt a fresh rush of moisture, now clearly on my thighs.

"Edward, I can't...I can't hold still...I need...." I trailed off into a whimper.

He moved his mouth to my other breast while I continued to moan and whimper. He sucked my nipple into his lips again, this time running his tongue over it while it was still in his mouth. I screamed his name and he lifted his head, his eyes flashing to my face. "If I hear you scream my name in pleasure like that a million times, Bella, it will never be enough."

He wrapped his arms around me and pulled my body back against his, and then he shoved the piano bench back and to the side and stood us up. From having straddled his legs for so long my own were wobbly, and he kept his arm around my lower back for support.

He leaned his forehead down to mine, our eyes mere inches from one another. "Bella, I want...there are things I want to do right now. Things I can't do. Things I shouldn't do...yet."

He trailed off. I waited. But I *needed* to hear him *say* whatever was on his mind.

"Tell me, Edward."

He continued to meet my eyes, his smoldering with that intense blackness. It was clear his mind was racing but he remained hesitant.

"Tell me. Please, Edward? There's nothing that you would want to do that I don't want too."

With that he placed a devouring kiss against my lips and I moaned into him. When he sensed I needed air he began to talk around his kisses. "I want to put my mouth on you, Bella, *everywhere*. I want to taste you."

"Unhh, yes, Edward," I breathed, now rubbing my thighs together to try to generate friction. He noticed and pulled my hips more firmly against his own, grinding his erection into me.

"But, baby, I need you to know. I want to do it so bad. But I'm too afraid that I could lose control, there, if I do it now."

I could only moan in response. Rational thought was quickly eroding away at the sound of his voice. "I...I understand, Ed...ward."

He pulled back and looked in my eyes again. "Do you, Bella? Do you understand? Do you understand that I want it? Bella, as soon as it's safe, you have to know...."

"Know what, baby?"

His expression became intense, bordering on fierce. "I am going to feast on you, Bella. I am going to eat you alive."

Holy fucking hell.

"Oh my God, Edward," I whispered against the skin of his neck. My legs were actively shaking now. Then, with more volume, I managed: "I am gonna fucking hold you to that."

He growled in response and gripped my hips, shoving me back a half step. I squeaked in surprise and looked up at him. He swallowed hard and then trailed his hands down my stomach to the button on my shorts. "Off," he rasped, half asking, half commanding.

Our hands fumbled together and within seconds I stood completely naked before him. He closed the gap between us with one step that made it appear he was stalking me. He threw his arms around me and crushed his mouth to mine. When one of his hands smoothed down my back to cup my bare ass, I moaned and without thinking threw my legs up around his waist. He grunted and caught me, pressing me against him and taking us two steps backwards until I felt the piano press lightly into my back.

I felt him lower some of my weight and the piano sung out a cacophony of notes as he rested my ass against the keys, my legs still wrapped around him.

He placed his hand flat on my heart slowly running it between my breasts and passed my belly button to the triangle of moist hair between my legs. He pulled back a half step and guided my left leg to rest on the bench. He wrapped his left arm around my right leg where my thigh met my knee and held my leg tight against his hip.

And then he firmly grasped my mound with his right palm.

I cried out and arched my back, seeking more of the delicious contact with him.

"Bella, I want to be in you." His voice was strained, husky.

"Please, Edward."

He rubbed his fingers back and forth through my wet folds several times before finally slipping a long finger inside me. I moaned his name loudly and tried to press myself harder against his hand. One word ran through my head without stop: *More. More! MORE!*

EPOV

Mother of God.

I want her. I want to touch her, taste her, feel her, enter her.

I grinned darkly to myself as I fleetingly considered throwing us both in the car and driving to Seattle so that we could catch the next plane to Vegas and be married tonight. I knew Bella wouldn't object...

I grunted and shoved the idea away. Three weeks. *What's three weeks?* That was the blink of an eye to me. At least it once felt that way. Now it seemed like a millennium.

These thoughts ran through my mind as I enjoyed the taste and feel of her against my lips and tongue. The skin on her stomach was so amazingly soft and smooth. Like warm satin. But that was nothing compared to the feel and taste of her breasts. Her heart sounded like a drum in my ears and I relished in it as I pressed gentle kisses around her breasts and then dared to suck her sweet nipple into my mouth. I kept my jaw locked tight as I lightly sucked her delicate skin between my lips, even going so far as to tug at her. The scent of her increased arousal was driving me to the edge of insanity; the sounds she was making in response to my lips and tongue threatened to push me right over the precipice.

"Edward, I can't...I can't hold still...I need...." The need was plain in her strained voice. *I did that to her.*

I wasn't done with her yet. Unsure if I would be able to allow myself to lose this much control with her again any time soon, I was going to take all I could get. I moved my mouth to her other breast and quickly sucked her nipple into my lips again. Needing to taste her further, I ran my tongue over it while it was still in his mouth. "*Edward!*" she screamed, and I jerked my head up to her in response. *Oh God, that was exquisite.* "If I hear you scream my name in pleasure like that a million times, Bella, it will never be enough."

I pulled her to me and stood us up, realizing I needed to hold her weight because her legs were so uncertain beneath her. *I did that to her. And I want to do so much more. Fuck.*

I leaned my forehead against hers and tried to communicate all that I wanted, all that she was, to her. But in the end I needed her to hear it. "Bella, I want...there are things I want to do right now. Things I can't do. Things I shouldn't do...yet." I hesitated a moment to make sure my control was in tact enough.

"Tell me, Edward." *I want to, Bella, but....* "Tell me. Please, Edward? There's nothing that you would want to do that I don't want too."

That can't be true. Can it? I wanted it to be, so bad. *If that's the truth, eternity is going to be too short for us.* I crushed my mouth to hers, summoning the courage. She told me last night—*ungh, thinking of last night does not help my grasp on control*—she told me she wanted to hear my words. I swallowed and murmured as I kissed her, "I want to put my mouth on you, Bella, *everywhere.* I want to taste you."

She moaned her ascent and rubbed her thighs together. *I'll help you with that, baby.* I ground our hips together and continued, "But, baby, I need you to know. I want to do it so bad. But I'm too afraid that I could lose control, there, if I do it now." She whispered words of understanding and I pulled back to meet her gaze. *I love this woman.* I needed to make sure she did understand, especially after what she had done for me last night. "Do you, Bella? Do you understand? Do you understand that I want it? Bella, as soon as it's safe, you have to know...."

"Know what, baby?" *She melts me when she calls me that. If feels so...human.*

I lost myself and blurted out, "I am going to feast on you, Bella. I am going to eat you alive."

But she rewarded my crass words with a promise I would make her keep: "I am gonna fucking hold you to that."

More. Now!

I pushed her and grasped at the button on her shorts. "Off," I demanded, although I tried to soften my tone with a pleading gaze. Within seconds, we pulled the offending fabric away, releasing the incredible scent of

her arousal. She stood in absolute perfection before me and left me speechless. I kissed her roughly and touched her everywhere, apparently encouraging her to throw her legs around me. I grunted at the contact between her wet heat and my now aching erection. I pressed against her, desperate for some relief. I stumbled back a step or two and she was up against the piano, a clang of notes rang out as I sat her gently on the keys. I supported her legs and then could wait no more.

I cupped her sex in my hand and she cried out. That was my breaking point. "Bella, I want to be in you."

"Please, Edward." *No need to beg, baby.*

I easily wet my fingers in her slick moisture and slid home. I wanted it to be my cock inside her so bad that I thought it impossible to resist.

Her words managed to distract me. She was panting "more" over and over again.

I slid a second finger into her. Still she called out. Then a third. She moaned and groaned and screamed out my name. At one point I felt my middle finger brush against her barrier and I pulled back, not wanting to hurt her, not wanting to take that from her in this way.

I needed her words again. They kept me grounded. In the moment. "Talk to me, Bella," I rasped.

"So...good, Edward. You too," she managed, "you talk, too." She threw her arms around my neck, seeking leverage.

As I worked my hand against her, I leaned into her, pressing my lips against her neck and collar bone and feeling her breasts press into my chest. "I want you so much, Bella."

"Oh God, Edward, me too. I wish...."

"What, baby, tell me what you wish for."

"I....," she cut off with a groan when my thumb found her clit.

"Come on, Bella, I need to hear it." My voice sounded strained, even to myself.

"I wish it...was...your cock inside me. I wish you were fucking...me....," she moaned again.

I pressed a hard kiss against her carotid artery, feeling her blood racing and her breath pant against me. "I wish that too baby. Soon. I promise, Bella, I will have you soon."

"Oh, yes," she whimpered.

I was moving faster within her now, and stray notes rang out more frequently, more forcefully.

"More, Bella, tell me more."

"Mmm...I love...love you inside me. Edward," she tilted her head back to look at me, "I want it...*ungh*...want you inside me...all the...time."

Me too, Bella, I'm home there. Me too. "God, Bella." I curled my fingers inside her, stroking her sweet spot.

"Oh, mmm, Edward...Edward...."

I circled her clit faster and she jerked against me. "Come on, Bella," I ground out, "give it to me. I want it."

She was whimpering non-stop now, occasionally managing a strained "oh" or "I" before trailing off into a moan. She was close—I could feel her body tensing around me.

"Oh God, I'm...."

"Yeah, baby, come on."

Then she did three things that absolutely thrilled me: she screamed my name in pleasure, came hard against my hand, and clamped her teeth down hard at the base of my neck. Instinctively I growled, but I kept enough presence of mine—despite her teeth on me which elicited a natural defensive instinct to kick in—to keep stroking her until she was entirely played out.

I swung her into my arms bridal style creating one last play of notes and sat us back on the bench. She was panting hard with her head resting against the crook of my neck, seemingly incapable yet of words. With my still wet hand I gently tilted her face up so she could see mine, and then I slowly and deliberately sucked my fingers clean of her.

Her eyes flared in response, going from sated and tired one moment to hungry and alive the next.

"Play...play something else for me, Edward. Something that captures your mood, right now."

Her request surprised me, but as I could resist her nothing, I scooted us and the bench closer to the piano. She remained in my lap, so I as comfortable reach the keys. I launched into a funky jazz piece—something I'd never played for her before—and she smiled immediately. She pressed her lips to my cheek and whispered "Don't stop," and then she was squirming out of my lap.

I looked at her curiously and then she slid to her knees in between the piano and the bench on which I sat. "Sit up straighter," she whispered.

"Bella—"

She ignored me and my playing slowed. "Don't stop, Edward," she whispered again as she undid the button and zipper to my jeans.

She mmmmed appreciatively at the realization that there was nothing between the jeans and my erection.

"Bella—"

"Pay attention to the piano, Edward. I'm going to touch you now," she said as her fingers gently reached out to me.

God help me, I want this. The fresh blood in my veins seemed to call for it. My body cried for it. I was literally aching for her touch.

"You can do this, Edward. Just keep your hands on the piano," she paused, seeming to think for a moment, "gently," she added. "I need this, Edward," she said as she began to stroke my cock, "and so do you."

Oh God, yes I do.

I might have said something in response as I enjoyed the sensation of her touching me while I tried in vain to pay attention to my fingers on the keys. I knew what she was doing—the same thing she had done last night with her panties and my couch. She was redirecting my attention, giving me an outlet for my...enthusiasm. I loved her for it. *How well she knows me, understands me.* That's what was so incredibly sexy about those actions.

Her hand was warm and hot and soft and hard and fast and slow and *amazing*.

"I need to taste you, now, Edward, sit up a little more, baby," she whispered as she leaned her head into me.

"Oh, *God*, Bella," I rasped, my fingers clearly missing the notes in the chord.

When her mouth wrapped around me I knew instantly: *I'm not going to last long.*

It was harder to reach the keys now, leaning further back as I was. And I could barely pay attention to them anyway. But I kept my hands there, and moved them against the ivories to ensure this remained safe. In some ways this was harder than last night—what was left of my rational mind revolted against the idea of losing enough control of my hands that I might break my piano. That would have been bad not only because it was one of my favorite material possessions, but more importantly because of this moment I was sharing with Bella. Not to mention that explaining the damage to my family would have been, well, let's just say, that was something I wanted to avoid.

Her mouth was so hot, and she was running her tongue all over me, flicking across my head every time she pulled her mouth back to the top. And then she started using her teeth, grazing them back and forth along my length.

"*Fuck, Bella!*" Her teeth did me in. "I'm gonna come, baby, move," I rasped. She sat back immediately but couldn't go far because of the piano behind her, so I pushed the bench back away from her at the same time. I came with a roar and a shudder ran through my whole body. I nearly fell backward off the bench.

She crawled towards me on her hands and knees, eliciting another growl from me—*How can she not know how fucking sexy she is?* She grabbed my shirt off the ground and handed it to me. I used it to wipe myself clean and then pulled her tightly to me.

"Bella, that was...." I truly had no words.

"Yeah," she whispered. "Amazing."

"Yeah," I agreed.

We held each other for a few minutes when her stomach growled loudly. I felt her blush against my chest and chuckled at her. "I was supposed to make you a nice breakfast, wasn't I?"

"I'm not complaining," she said with a smile.

"Still...let's go upstairs and get cleaned up and then I'll make good on my promise."

She pulled back and looked at me. "You better," she said with a gleam in her eye. The double meaning was not lost on me.

"You are so much trouble, Bella Cullen." I chuckled at her and she gasped.

I looked at her, wondering what had happened. "What?"

She shook her head, biting her lip around a small smile.

"What, Bella? What's the matter?"

"Nothing. Really. Nothing's the matter, Edward."

"Ugh, would that I could read your mind! *Please* tell me."

I saw her shoulders fall and knew that my plea was working. "You just...you just said my name...."

"Yes...." And then it clicked. *Bella Cullen*. "Oh, *oh*." I pulled back to look at her, worrying that I made her uncomfortable.

"Don't worry," she whispered around a kiss, "I liked it."

I smiled hugely in response. Nothing could be better than her being my wife. *My wife*.

~*~

Chapter 12: Words And Letters

EPOV

We showered—*just showered*. While she dressed, I made Bella breakfast which ended up being more of an early lunch, and then I suggested we get out of the house. I couldn't possibly take any further temptation today—and I couldn't even blame Bella's human hormones for what happened at the piano. That one was all me. *I just want her so damn much*. One of the many interesting things I was learning about myself with Bella was the more sexual gratification I got the more I wanted. *Is that normal?*

I took Bella to Port Angeles, still pleased with Alice's revelation that Bella agreed to my purchasing of a cell phone for her. She acquiesced easier than I expected to my suggestion that we go shopping. And we spent the rest of the afternoon lounging on my bed listening to music and learning all the functions on her new

iPhone 3G. I programmed in all my family's cell phone numbers and wrote her number on a slip I stuck to the refrigerator door for the others.

At five o'clock, I drove Bella home. She had promised Charlie she would return in time to make him dinner and hang out for the evening, and there were things I needed to do back at the house anyway. Still, I hated to let her go. The weekend had been beyond description. *Three. Weeks.*

When we pulled up in front of her house we both sighed. "Soon I won't have to part with you anymore, love."

"It can't come soon enough," she smiled.

"For me, neither." I thought for a minute. "Bella?"

"Yes?"

"I would like to take my Dare now."

She broke into a huge smile. "Now?" I leveled a crooked smile at her and her heart fluttered. I loved that reaction. "Uh, okay?"

"I don't think you'll take it, though," I taunted, hoping this would indeed goad her into taking it.

"Oh, really? Try me." She sounded very sure of herself. This was going to be fun. And miserable.

This morning in the shower it had come to me. I had loved our weekend together. And, truly, *I regretted nothing*. But my having uttered her name—*her soon-to-be-married name*—reminded me that there were some things that remained important to me and that I wanted—needed—to have preserved. I wanted our wedding night to have some sense of newness about it.

"First, are you willing to consider a two-part dare?"

Her grin got bigger. "Uh, sure, okay."

"Good. But I don't think you're going to take it." I was just playing with her now.

She huffed. I held my hands up in surrender. "Okay, okay. Here it is: first, I dare you to agree *not* to see me until next Saturday."

"*WHAT?*" The volume of her voice was nearly deafening in the confines of my car.

"Would you like to hear the second part?"

"Uh, please. Do tell." She crossed her arms over her chest.

I repressed a smirk and continued on. "Second, I dare you to agree that, after next weekend, there will be no more...nudity or...orgasms...until *after* we're married."

Her mouth was opening and closing but no words were coming out. I was actively biting the insides of my cheeks to keep from busting out laughing. *I feel your pain, sweetheart, trust me.*

"What...what...why?" she finally managed.

"Is that a 'no'?"

"No!" Her face was now fully flushed.

"It's a 'yes' then?"

"No! I mean...Edward," she whined.

I couldn't help it that time. I burst out laughing. "I guess I win this game then?"

A dark cloud of emotions passed across her face. She crossed her arms over her chest and huffed. "I have a point of clarification."

How lovely. She sounded like she was in a debate using Robert's Rules of Order.

"Proceed." I tried to match her detached tone.

"If I agree, can we still talk between now and Saturday?"

"Hmm," I thought, "I suppose that doesn't violate the spirit of the dare. Okay. Anything else?"

"Um, yes. You said no...well, you know, *after* next weekend..."

"Yes." I was going to make her say it.

"So...that means...next weekend can have...those things?" She sighed in relief.

"Which things was that?"

In a flash, she smacked my bicep with the back of her hand. "Ow!"

Instantly I reached out and grabbed her hand, bringing it to my lips for a kiss. "Are you alright, my love?"

"Yes," she huffed. "Yes."

"Yes?" I looked at her.

"Yes. Yes. Yes. I accept. But you are going to pay for this one, Edward Cullen."

"I'm going to hold you to that." Just then Bella's front door opened and Charlie waved out. "Ooh, saved by your father," I quipped.

She glared at me and huffed again. "Now I can't even get in a good good-bye kiss." She leaned over and pecked me on the lips. She pushed her door open. "How am I going to sleep without you *all week*."

"See? Good thing we got you a new phone. You can call me. I'll keep you company until you fall asleep."

She looked slightly placated, then whirled on me. "I can still see Alice, right?"

"Like I could keep you two apart, love. Yes, of course."

"Okay. Well, then...."

"Come on, Charlie is starting to wonder if we're fighting." I slipped out of the car and came around to pick up Bella's overnight and shopping bags. I carried them up to her front porch and Charlie took them from me. We exchanged brief greetings and Bella offered me another peck on the lips.

They stepped inside then as I drove off wondering what the hell I had just gotten myself into but also smiling broadly at Bella's reaction to it. *Priceless*. This was perfect, though. A week to better build up my resistance and control. A week to plan. A week to drive *Bella* crazy, this time. A week closer to our wedding. I smiled, congratulating myself on the brilliance of my plan.

Now if I can actually go a whole week without seeing Bella.

I floored the accelerator. My family was coming home within the next two hours so Carlisle could get cleaned up and to the hospital for the night shift. I was well aware of how strongly Bella's scent was all over the house. And I was determined to remove as much evidence of our weekend activities as I could lest my family, Emmett in particular, torture us relentlessly for the next three weeks.

EmPOV

The damn pixie has dirt and won't give it up. All weekend she kept having little flashes of visions and would immediately choke down a laugh or hide a smile. Once I even swore I heard her say, "Go Bella," but when I tried to force her to give up the goods Rosie intervened with a smack to my head and a threat. So I had agreed to back off. At that moment, anyway. But something was up. And I was determined to know what it was.

We could all tell by the lack of the sound of a heartbeat that Bella was no longer at the house when we returned. Carlisle and Esme and Jasper and Alice quickly unloaded their belongings and retired to their rooms for some alone time. Rosie and I spent some time in the garage first, liking as we always do to clean and tune up the Jeep following an off-roading adventure. It was our type of foreplay.

One of my favorite sights was Rosie's long lean legs sticking out from underneath of a vehicle as she worked on it. So many times that sight had driven me wild with desire and I ended up pulling her up and taking her on the hood of the car. Tonight just might be one of those nights. *Damn baby. Hurry that shit up.* But I wouldn't rush her. She had picked up on a problem with the right front axle on the ride home, and I knew she wouldn't fully relax until she had figured out what was going on.

So, there she was under the car with her beautiful legs on display, and here I was handing her tools and cleaning.

Finally I heard her huff. I bent down to look under, wondering what had her perturbed. Working on cars was something that usually relaxed my woman. "What's up, baby?"

"Nothing." Though she said it in a way that clearly meant 'something.'

"No, come on, Rosie, what's eatin' you?"

"It's just...dammit...this is *my damn garage*."

"Yeah...." I had no idea where she was going with this. "And?"

"Why the hell do I smell *her* in *here*? If Edward fucking fooled around in my garage...."

What the f—? I inhaled. *Damn*. She was right. And that was odd, because Bella knew this was Rosalie's space and didn't tend to come out here. They got along better these days, though it was clear Bella remained intimidated by Rosalie and Rosalie did little to make Bella feel more comfortable. And, the closer it got to Bella's wedding and the more attention that directed to her, the more in a snit Rosie seemed to be getting.

I stood up and tracked the scent. It seemed to be concentrated in one place, and it was an odd place, around one set of cabinets. So it wasn't even like she had been in the garage on the way to Edward's car or something. And anyway he usually parked the Volvo outside because he used it so frequently.

The organizational unit had two sets of doors and I opened them up. There was nothing in there but tools and cleaning products. But when I stepped away, the scent decreased in intensity. I stepped back. It was stronger. All of a sudden I was feeling like Sherlock Fucking Holmes trying to solve a mystery. A mystery. Alice's mysterious visions. *Damn! Ding ding ding. I am putting the pieces to fucking together.*

I opened the bottom doors and knelt down, starting to rifle through the items inside. Then Rosie's voice interrupted. "Em?"

"Hold on a minute, baby."

It came again, more insistent this time. "*Em?*"

"What, baby?" Let a man do his job. Sherlock Holmes was never interrupted when he was on the case.

"Under."

"Under what?"

She huffed. "Look under the cabinet."

Oh. I bent all the way over so that my face was touching the ground. I looked to the left and had a direct view of Rosie's beautiful face now beaming from under the Jeep. I turned my head back to the right and saw some papers hidden under the cabinet. I threaded my thick fingers underneath and after a minute had pulled the pieces of poster board clear.

"*Holy. Shit.*"

Rosie was standing next to me in less than a second and we were immediately doubled over in hysterics.

I was giggling like a twelve-year old boy. "Semen," I wheezed out. Just picturing Bella writing that word and then showing it to Carlisle had me gasping for my unnecessary breath.

"Damn," Rosie said after a bit, "I didn't think she had this in her." She grew thoughtful for a few minutes. "Emmett, you have to protect your thoughts about this from Edward. I'm assuming that he doesn't know about this which is why Bella stashed these papers out here."

"Okay. Shit," I said as my breaths started to return to normal. "Damn. This is going to be hard." Then I started giggling again because, well, I said 'hard'.

Our photographic memories allowed us perfect recall of the contents of the messages, so we slid the papers back into their hiding place. *Hmm...maybe Edward and Bella had an interesting weekend after all.*

A few minutes later we finished up in the garage and went inside and I began purposefully thinking of what I wanted to do to Rosalie—which I knew would automatically caused Edward to block out my thoughts. The passage from the garage led into the kitchen, and both of our eyes were immediately attracted to the piece of paper now stuck to the refrigerator surface. It was labeled "Bella's New Cell Phone #."

We looked at each other and nodded. *This is going to be too fucking good.*

BPOV

By 10 p.m. Sunday night I was crashed on my bed, my head spinning, wondering what the hell I had agreed to. *My idiocy knows no bounds!*

I had no idea how I was going to get through the next three weeks, during the first of which I had stupidly agreed to forego seeing Edward at all. *I could always just lose the dare.* I huffed. Yes, that's true. But, dammit, I liked winning against Edward. It made me feel like we were equals. I didn't want to be the weak one who had to give in. *Yes, but being weak in this case leads to being with Edward.* Then, the image of his most smug expression came into my mind as did his taunting voice from the car earlier. *No, I'm not giving him the satisfaction.*

Maybe he'll cave first. *Maybe he'll cave first. OOOH!* Maybe I can *make* him cave first.

But how?

I need inspiration.

I thought for a minute and then fished under my mattress for my notebook. I realized quickly that I had made mental notes for some additions that I hadn't yet written down, so I scribbled numbers 21-24 at the bottom of the list. I noted with a giggle as I wrote that it was nice that some of those had already been accomplished. I reread the list:

1) Against the tree by the meadow

- 2) Feel his full weight on top of me
- 3) French kiss
- 4) See him naked
- 5) Shower together
- 6) Against the cold tiles in the shower
- 7) In his car
- 8) On our lab table
- 9) On his leather couch
- 10) I want him to come in my hand
- 11) IN MY MOUTH
- 12) His mouth on me, there
- 13) Whatever it takes to get him to say FUCK again
- 14) Get him to talk dirty in general
- 15) Submit
- 16) See him hunt
- 17) Have Edward taste my blood
- 18) Dominate
- 19) Phone sex
- 20) His mouth on my breasts, suckling me
- 21) On his Baby Grand Piano
- 22) Hickey
- 23) Outside in a thunderstorm
- 24) In front of the fireplace in the Cullen's living room

There it was. The key to my plan. Number nineteen. And, how convenient that I had a brand new phone.

Just then my new phone rang and scared the crap out of me. I knocked my notebook to the floor as I reached to my nightstand to retrieve it. I saw Edward's name on the screen and smiled.

It was a short conversation. He was just calling to wish me good night. His family was all home and he wanted to let me know they all had my number now too. He teased me a bit about whether I wanted to back out of the dare and that strengthened my resolve. I set the phone back down. I needed to plan how I wanted to approach this first.

The next thing I knew the sun was filling my room. I immediately tensed and lifted my head up, sure that Edward was there after all. But my room was empty. My mind and body were so used to him being there that I think I was just programmed to expect him.

I stumbled out of bed and went to the window. *Wow. It's actually sunny.* And it was already hot. I got a quick shower and threw some clothes on. I went downstairs to eat breakfast. Charlie was already off to work. It was nine o'clock in the morning and I now had no idea what to do with myself for the day.

I went back upstairs and grabbed the volume of the collected works of Jane Austen and stretched out on my bed to read. Something about the style of romance in these books just tugged at my heart. That got me thinking about Edward. At one low point the night before I had briefly allowed the thought to come through my head that it was so easy for him to dare us into this abstinence program because he wasn't as interested. But in the light of day I realized that wasn't the case at all. He simply wanted us to have at least some new things to discover about ourselves after we were married. And I agreed. *Doesn't mean I like it, but I agree. And, what's three weeks?*

If the romance in these books wasn't enough to make me think of Edward, the fact that so many of the heroes were named Edward or Edmund smacked me in the face. I needed to hear his voice.

I picked up the phone and dialed. He answered before the end of the first ring. "Good morning, love."

"It is now that I can hear your voice." I sighed.

"What are you doing today?" I could hear the smile in his voice.

"Nothing. Thinking about you."

He chuckled. "Me too."

"Hey, Edward, I was thinking."

"Yes?"

"Since we can't see each other and we can't be on the phone *all* the time, I was thinking maybe you could write me some letters." *Why did it sound romantic in my head but stupid when I said it out loud?*

"Letters? Like, love letters?"

I hesitated. "Uh, yeah, no, I don't know. Never mind—"

"No. No, Bella. I love that idea. I would love to write to you."

I smiled. "Okay. Good. That's your homework, then."

"Yes, teacher," he began in a seductive voice.

Just then I heard a loud voice in the background of the call. "Hey, Edward, is that Bella? Tell her I said 'hi'."

"Emmett says 'hi'."

"Yes, I heard." I laughed. Emmett always managed to crack me up.

There was a commotion in the background. "Emmett, stop. Stop. Uh, Bella? Ow! I'll call you back later, okay?" Now there was laughing.

"Okay."

We exchanged quick "love yous" against the background of whatever ruckus was unfolding at the Cullens' and it made me feel like I was missing out on whatever fun mischief they were getting into over there.

I needed a distraction. I set Austen down and noticed my notebook still on the floor where I had accidentally knocked it last night.

Perhaps some additions were in order. The weekend had been—how shall we say?—inspiring.

I browsed down the list again and came to number seven. *In his car*. I smiled remembering the ride home in Edward's Vanquish. His fingers in me felt fantastic. And the words that came out of his mouth. *Holy hell it's hot when he talks dirty*. Then I realized, as hot as the Vanquish was, I felt a little sorry for the Volvo. *Poor lonely Volvo*. I smiled. Okay, seven was still in need of attention as far as I was concerned.

Next I came to number eight. *On our lab table*. In an instant his lascivious tone from a few moments before came back to me: *Yes, teacher*. Teacher. *Teacher*. *Mr. Cullen*. *Shit*. My panties were now damp from the picture of Edward, er, Mr. Cullen, standing in front of the classroom and then leaning over my shoulder to review my work, or reprimanding me for not completing my reading, or asking what I would be willing to do to keep my 'A'. *Holy shit*. Okay, um, I think this role playing thing deserves its own frickin' number.

25) Role Playing: Teacher

What else?

25) Role Playing: Teacher (*Yes, Mr. Cullen, I really need an 'A' in this class.*), Doctor (*Ooh, Dr. Cullen, I need your help with this little problem.*), Police Officer (*I'm sorry, Officer, I didn't know I was speeding. Isn't there anything I could do to avoid a ticket this time?*)

Shit. *The possibilities are endless with this one*. I kicked my feet against the bed in excitement.

I continued reading down the list. Number twelve. I sighed at that one. Apparently his mouth on me down there was a big nonstarter for now. No matter. There's plenty else to...do.

Number fifteen sent a shiver down my spine. *I can't believe I actually pulled off dominating him.* But more so, *I can't wait for him to take his turn.* Though, now that we were going to be cooling things down for the next three weeks, I didn't see that happening any time soon.

Sixteen and seventeen. *Hmm.* These two were going to be the hardest. Seeing him hunt. *Probably not happening while I'm still...human.* Him tasting my blood. That one I needed to think about more. My time to accomplish that was running out. I would only have blood for so much more time, after all.

My eyes skimmed further down. Number twenty-two: Hickey. My hand began massaging the mark still on my neck. I squeezed my legs together, knowing that was the spot of my other mark. I don't know why the idea of him having a mark on me was so arousing. It just was. I found myself sorta sad at the idea that any marks I might have on me would heal when I was changed, and then there wouldn't be any additional possibility of him marking me ever again.

Then there was number twenty-three, which immediately made me feel better about being changed, because being with him outside during a thunderstorm was definitely a post-change activity. I thought of him telling me how the intensity of a thunderstorm heightened a vampire's sexual urges following a hunt. How did he put it? It "makes their...alone time...more...intense."

Intense. Like, rough. Rough. *Rough!*

26) Rough

Just the thought of him pulling my hair or restraining me or pushing me up against a wall or thrusting into me. *Fuck.* Now my panties were beyond damp. *Oh God, the change can't come quick enough.* He'd never do those things to me now. *Still....*

Oh! As I let my mind wander, all of a sudden I was back in our biology classroom with, er, Mr. Cullen. In my mind's eye I had pig tails and was wearing plaid mini-skirt and a tight white button-down shirt tied in a knot at my waist. And I was in trouble. I hadn't done my homework. *Oh, very naughty!* And I was being punished. Edward told me to bend over our lab table and pulled out a wooden paddle....

What the hell is wrong with me?

But, oh. My mind might want to reject that one, but the pool of moisture between my legs told a different story.

Fine, my rational brain huffed: 27) Get spanked.

It was getting hot in here now. I pushed myself up off the bed and turned the fan on, causing the notebook pages to flutter. I saw the diary entries a few pages back that I made after *that morning* and made a mental note to add more entries about this past weekend. I laid back down feeling more bothered by the heat now.

Maybe I should see if Angela's around. We could go to the beach.

Just as I thought this, I was further inspired.

28) In the water

29) In a hot tub!

Oh God. Hot water and cold Edward. A study in freakin' contrasts. Yum-my.

This water theme had opened up a whole new avenue of ideas.

30) On a beach

Was sand really that great of an idea though? It seemed romantic, but it didn't seem like sand and...private parts...mixed. Still, I had this image of Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr laying in the sand kissing in 'From Here to Eternity.' Maybe if we had a towel...?

It would also have to be a secluded beach, I guess. Right? Or....

Oh!

Shit!

31) In a public place

Oh my God these three weeks are going to turn me into a complete sex fiend.

Okay, let not think about number thirty right now [bookstore] because the possibilities [airplane] are just too [nightclub] freakin' [elevator] limitless [movie theater].

I was now actively chewing on my bottom lip and rubbing my thighs together. *Shit.*

Just then the sound of a car caught my attention. I would recognize that car anywhere. *Edward's Volvo.*

I got to my window just in time to see the back end of the Volvo as it moved down my street. *He was here.* My phone chirped. *Ooh! My first text message! Cool!*

E: You have mail!

Oh! I ran through the house, slipping on shoes as I went, and in two minutes was standing at my mailbox. I pulled the door down and there sat a single ivory envelope of fine stationery. "Miss Swan" was written across the front in Edward's elegant script.

I squealed out loud and ran back into the house and up to my room.

I plopped down on my bed and carefully untucked the back flap, sliding the pages out into my hand. My grin was huge.

My dearest Bella,

In my day, love letters would have been a common way for a gentleman to court a lady. And so here I am, at your request, writing, and in the process, once again, you give me back a piece of my self, my humanity.

I love you, Isabella Marie Swan. I love you because you gave me hope and faith and joy and love. I love you because you helped push away the dark and find the light. I love you because you look at me and see the man and make me see him too. I love you because you are brave and kind and funny and smart. I love you because you know me so well, because you anticipate my needs, and sometimes you know what I need more than I do. I love you because you said 'It doesn't matter,' and because you said 'Yes.'

Given our time apart this week, I thought this cummings poem seemed appropriate:

*i carry your heart with me (i carry it in
my heart) i am never without it (anywhere
i go you go, my dear; and whatever is done
by only me is your doing, my darling)
i fear
no fate (for you are my fate, my sweet) i want
no world (for beautiful you are my world, my true)
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant
and whatever a sun will always sing is you
here is the deepest secret nobody knows
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows
higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart
i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)*

You gave me back my heart, Bella. And for that there are no words except

I Love You.

Yours always,

Edward

By the end of the letter, I was bawling and laughing and smiling and entirely set on losing the damn dare and driving over to see him. He wasn't even here and my heart was pounding in my chest. *I love him so much.*

I rubbed my thumb gently over his name, imagining I could feel his hand as it worked the pen over the page. He had written it larger than everything else, and his penmanship was just...beautiful. Elegant. Special.

Holy. Shit.

It came to me in a flash. An idea. So. Epic.

Could I really do it? I don't know. Fuck. It will hurt.

I thought some more. I was back to chewing my bottom lip as I began pacing back and forth in my room, still clutching the letter but making sure not to crinkle the page.

But Charlie will freak. So put it somewhere he won't see. But there will be blood, right? I don't know, but Edward's not around for five whole days.

Five. Whole. Days.

Just then, a car pulled up outside. I looked out and Alice was leaning against her Porsche, looking up at me and waving.

"Hey, Alice. What's up?"

"Hey, Bella. Want a ride?"

"Um, where?"

She looked at me expectantly. After a few minutes, she frowned. *I hadn't decided anything for sure, had I?*

"Um, Alice, I don't know."

"Come on, Bella. It's a fantastic idea. And Edward will love it."

"Alice, can you come up here? I don't want to talk about this out the window."

She was in my room in a flash. "Let me see," she said, reaching out for the letter. She shuffled immediately to the second page of the letter where Edward signed his name. "Ooh, that's very pretty. He is going to freak. In a good way."

"Alice, I didn't...I don't...know. I was just thinking."

"Yes, right now you're thinking, but in a few days you'll decide for sure, and then it'll be too late because the wound will be too fresh to see Edward this weekend. Come on. I was looking around on the internet. I found just the place."

We were on our way to Seattle. Alice asked a few questions about the weekend that made it clear she had a pretty decent idea what had occurred. But I found that I was no longer as embarrassed to talk with her about it. Not that I was offering up details or anything, but then again, she already knew about the list and had helped make parts of it happen. If anything she was like my own personal cheerleader. I kinda liked it. *I could get used to this sister thing.*

We pulled up in front of a storefront situated in a row of funky boutiques, eateries, and shops. I had never been to this part of Seattle before but it looked interesting. Alice was pointing out some clothing stores she just adored. But I was too nervous to really focus on what she was saying.

All of a sudden she sensed my hesitancy. "It's okay if you don't want to do this, Bella. We can just browse around for a bit."

I agreed. This was a bad idea. *Phew. What was I thinking?*

We hit some of the stores for a few hours and then headed back to the car. We passed the shop we had come for in the first place. A stylized sign in the front window read "The Only Thing You'll Take With You At The End." Another said "Become Art."

But it was the first one that drew my eyes most. *The only thing you'll take with you at the end.*

I wouldn't have my heartbeat. I wouldn't have my blush. I wouldn't have my sweat. I wouldn't have my body heat. I wouldn't have Edward's marks. I couldn't take any of those things with me.

But this...this I could. Alice had seen it.

I looked at Alice and her face slowly shifted into a smile. "Really?" she asked excitedly.

I was suddenly filled with nervous energy. "Fuck! I don't know. Yes. No. Yes. Let's just go in before I start thinking rationally again."

Alice giggled and clapped her hands together, then leaned into the car and grabbed Edward's letter.

We walked into the shop together. It wasn't exactly what I expected. It was clean, bright, and well organized. There were several padded black tables and chairs—only one of which was currently occupied by a young man getting work done on the back of a shoulder.

A man with a dark moustache and a bald head came up to the counter and asked if he could help us. I took a deep breath, my voice cracked the first time I tried to speak, but then I finally forced out: "I'd like to get a tattoo."

He smiled. "Have you ever gotten a tattoo before?"

"Nooooo."

"Are you certain you wish to get one today?" He looked back and forth between me and Alice. He could tell I was nervous.

"Honestly, as certain as I'll ever be. Actually," finding more courage now, "I'm more scared of the pain than of the tattoo. I'm getting married in three weeks and I want this for a wedding present for my...fiancé...husband."

He nodded and smiled again. "Okay. Do you have any idea of what you want?"

I smoothed the letter out on the counter in front of the man's lean hands. I pointed my finger at Edward's name. "That, exactly as it appears there. Is that...possible?"

He looked it over for a minute. "Absolutely."

We began talking about color and placement and the man, whose name was Zeke, needed a few minutes to get prepared. Alice was offering me words of encouragement and said that she could help calm me by dazzling me with her breath. She did it once and it was true. My brain went all warm and fuzzy and I relaxed immediately. *Maybe I could do this after all without running screaming from the building before it was done.*

Zeke had showed me to his table and I was sitting there, my feet shaking back and forth in nervousness.

"Bella," Alice finally whispered. "Calm down."

"I'm trying, Alice."

"Just think of it this way. If you can survive a vampire attack and venom in your system, you can easily handle a few minutes of getting a tattoo."

Okay, she had something there. Although I hadn't willingly done either of those things. I took a deep breath. "Okay. Point taken."

"Besides, Bella, just keep thinking about Edward. His heart is going to burst out of his chest when he sees this!"

"Yeah, about that. You're going to have to help me come up with a plan."

"Of course. I'm already working on it. Just let me think."

I nodded as Zeke came over to the table.

Seventy-five minutes later I was on my feet again. It *did* hurt, though it wasn't as bad as I feared. It had mostly been like a bad paper cut followed by a bad sunburn. That didn't mean I didn't need Alice's help once or twice. But I was actually pretty proud of myself. And. It. Looks. Fan. Frickin. Tastic.

And now I don't have to give up Edward's marks. Besides, he already owns my mind, heart, and soul. I had no problem giving him my body too.

We stopped at a drug store on the way home and picked up Curel lotion and waterproof bandages to help me keep the inked skin moisturized and to keep direct water off during showers. *Oops, guess those water-related fantasies will have to wait a few weeks....*

That night I lay in bed looking around my room and thinking about my life. *My life is magical*. It was almost dizzying to think how many things had to happen over such a long period of time to make my meeting Edward Cullen happen. I found myself a firm believer in fate at that moment.

As I laid there it occurred to me I never responded to Edward's earlier text message. I grabbed my phone and started typing:

B: Your letter was beautiful

E: Because it was about you

B: Miss you

E: Me too. How was your day?

There were a lot of things I so wanted to say here but I couldn't. I smiled as I typed.

B: Good. Thought about you. Your day?

E: Nothing special because you weren't here

Aw, that was sweet. I recalled my earlier thinking about making him cave and started typing again.

B: What are you wearing?

E: Boxers

Yay! He played along!

E: You?

B: Tight white tank top & lil black panties

E: !

E: Killing me

B: Not possible

B: If you don't like what I'm wearing I can take it off

EPOV

Okay, this phone is the devil. Leave it to Bella to find a way to drive me insane from ten miles away.

B: Your instructions?

Fuck. Well, at least this was safe. I smirked. Also, there's no way she's going to be able to go the whole week without seeing me. This will help.

E: Strip

B: Done. You too

E: Done

E: Touch your breasts

I pictured Bella's body in front of me and what I wanted to do to her.

B: Call me

I sat down on my leather couch and she picked up on the first ring. "Hey." Her voice sounded breathy. "It's too hard to type and...touch." She moaned softly. "I'm imagining it's you, Edward."

Christ that's hot.

"That's right. Picture my hands on your tits, Bella." I winced, realizing what I had just said. But then I heard her moan my name louder.

"Edward, I want you to touch yourself too. Think of me, Edward. On me knees touching you, sucking you."

My cock was instantly hard. The image came readily—too readily—to mind. "God Bella." I laid back on my couch and my right hand started stroking. "Baby, pinch your nipples with one hand and grabbed your mound with your other—just your palm for now. No fingers."

I heard her gasp. "Oh Edward." I heard her breathing accelerate. "So good, Edward. Oh."

"That's right Bella. Grind yourself against your hand. Are you wet for me?"

"I'm so wet Edward. You make me so wet. I...I need more, Edward. Please."

"Fuck Bella. Use your fingers now. Spread your juices around. Stroke yourself. Outside only. And don't touch your clit yet."

Her moaning immediately intensified. I could just make out the sound of her movements in the background. I picked up stroking my cock a little faster, a little harder. "Ah Bella."

"Does that feel good, baby? Tell me what you're doing."

"Ungh, Bella, I'm picturing you sucking my cock as I stroke myself. Your face is so beautiful wrapped around me. Your hair spilling around your shoulders. Your eyes looking up under your lashes. It's so fucking good."

"I love to suck your cock, Edward. It tastes so good." I groaned. "Bella, put two fingers inside yourself. I love the feeling of being inside you, Bella."

She whimpered. "Oh my, Edward. Oh. Ungh. I need more, Edward. Please."

Shit. I started stroking myself harder. *I can't believe how fucking hot this is.* "Add another finger, Bella. And do it harder, faster." I could now hear her hand moving against her body and I felt my release approaching. "Baby," I rasped, "use your other hand and rub your clit." She moaned and gasped.

"Edward, I want your cum. I can't wait to swallow it. I need you to give it to me."

Mother of God. "God, Bella. I'm going to give it to you." *Fuck.* "Those are my fingers, Bella. That's my tongue on your clit. Feel it Bella. You are mine."

"Oh God, Edward. Yes. Fuck. I am yours. Only yours. Your mouth feels so good on me."

I groaned, straining to hold on. "Bella, I'm so close."

"Me too baby."

"Please, Bella, come with me." I grunted her name and came hard. In the next moment Bella moaned my name, clearly trying to restrain her voice, and was panting loudly.

"Edward. Oh, Edward."

"I love you, Bella."

"I love you too. Listen. See if you can hear." I heard the phone move and couldn't figure out what she was doing and then I heard it. It was soft but undeniable.

Tha-thump. Tha-thump. Tha-thump. Tha-thump.

Bella had laid her phone flat on her chest. Her gesture, the sound, both took my breath away. *Bella Swan represents all that is right in the world.* A minute later I heard her voice again.

"My heart beats for you, Edward. For both of us." Truer words had never been spoken.

BPOV

As I was drifting off to sleep with a satisfied smile on my face, my phone chirped. I rolled over in the darkness, searching. Finally I gave up and turned my light back on. I picked it up with a smile. *He just can't stay away, can he?*

I looked down at the phone and frowned. It was from Emmett. It was one line. And it meant trouble.

Em: PLEASE FORGET THIS EVER HAPPENED AND LET US NEVER SPEAK OF IT AGAIN

The hell? Oh. No. Oh no. *No, no, no.*

I am toast.

~*~

Chapter 13: Teasing

BPOV

It was a long week. There were many reasons this was true.

First, it had been four days since I had last seen Edward. And, if that wasn't bad enough, it seemed Edward was significantly less inhibited by phone than he was in person. All week, he had taken it upon himself to send me a variety of text messages that ranged from romantic to teasing to suggestive to downright erotic. I had gone through more panties this week than I cared to consider. The worst (best?) day was Wednesday. The texts seemed to start out innocently. I was lying in bed trying to convince myself to get up when my phone buzzed. The first text simply said, "I was thinking about that night at the club. I loved dancing with you." It made me smile.

I got out of bed and, after applying my waterproof bandage to my new Edward mark, as I liked to think of my tattoo, I went to take a shower. The whole time I tried to do the calculations in my head of how many hours, minutes, and seconds were left until I would get to see Edward again on Saturday morning. Alice had already laid the groundwork with Charlie that I would be spending the weekend with her. I didn't know in reality what I was actually doing this weekend. The only thing I knew and cared about for this weekend is that Edward's dare on no nudity and no orgasms *didn't* yet apply.

That thought brought a frustrated moan out of my throat, and I reached for the showerhead. The water had begun to cool anyway, so it was *just right*. I sorted through my mental catalogue of Edward images, and settled on the night he let me go down on him on his couch. *God the way he tastes*. His eyes that night alone were enough to bring me to orgasm. But it was my memory of his words (*God you look beautiful with my cock in your mouth, Bella. It's the most incredible sight I've ever seen, and, Oh, God, Bella, that's it. Just like that. Holy fucking God*) and his expression when he came that caused my orgasm to rip through my body. With a shaky hand I reattached the showerhead and turned off the cold water.

You see what I mean about it being a long week. This was one Pandora's Box that just wasn't getting closed again. I was becoming less concerned about winning Edward's dare by the minute.

When I came back to my room to dress, my phone was buzzing, letting me know there was a message waiting. Actually, there were four. They were all from Edward. And at first I was very confused by them.

The most recent one read, 'You let me complicate you'. I almost responded with a question mark before deciding to read the other three.

The next most recent one read, 'You let me penetrate you'. *What?*

Quickly I opened the other two, which read respectively, 'You let me desecrate you' and 'You let me violate you'. By the third message, I got it. And I realized I was reading them out of order.

You let me desecrate you

You let me violate you

You let me penetrate you

You let me complicate you

Edward The Big Tease Cullen.

Remembering dancing at the club, indeed. This was the first song we'd danced to that night. The one where he had come up and grabbed me and kissed me roughly and began grinding against me.

I was torn between complete arousal (*Edward is texting me lines from 'Closer'!—and I knew what lines were still to come....*), complete disbelief (*Edward is voluntarily talking dirty to me, is trying to arouse me—the same Edward who 10 days ago was berating himself for enjoying a handjob*), and a desire for revenge (*Two can play at this game; I will find a way to torture him as badly*).

The whole day it went like that. Over cereal came, 'I want to fuck you like an animal'.

While I was washing the dishes, my phone buzzed with, 'I want to feel you from the inside'.

By the 27th line of the song, 'I drink the honey inside your hive', I was forced to go change my green panties, which were drenched.

Thankfully for my lingerie drawer, there was only one line left after that. 'You are the reason I stay alive'. That one tugged at my heart.

Throughout the remainder of Wednesday, Edward also worked through the lyrics for Chantal Kreviazuk's 'Feels Like Home', Hoobastank's 'Inside of You', John Mayer's 'Your Body is a Wonderland', Sarah McLaughlin's 'Fumbling Toward Ecstasy', and Lifehouse's 'Everything'. I required a second shower that day to calm my overworked heart and cool my overwrought body down.

Edward's weren't the only texts lighting up my phone all week, which leads to the second reason why it had felt like a long one. Emmett had made it crystal clear he had found the poster boards from my conversation with Carlisle that I had stashed in the Cullens' garage. I was such an idiot for not destroying them! But, in the euphoria of my incredible weekend with Edward, I had completely forgotten them. Plus, why would anyone be looking under that cabinet?

Like clockwork, Emmett had sent me one text a day beginning Sunday night. Five posters with questions for Carlisle. Three texts so far. By the time his fourth text arrived Wednesday evening, I was so worked up by Edward's lyrical torture that I grunted out my frustration. Charlie poked his head into my room five minutes later to see if I was okay. I nodded and dissembled and he finally left uncomfortably. I looked down at Emmett's latest text: CAN HIS SEMEN HARM ME?

All day on Wednesday, I never gave Edward the satisfaction of a response to all of his texts. And, as of yet, I hadn't given Emmett the satisfaction of responding to the veiled threat his texts entailed. But, *dammit*, I had gone four days without Edward during which time they both tortured me. I came to my breaking point.

B: What do you want?

Em: Hmm...that's a pretty open ended question there, sis

B: I'm calling your bluff Cullen. Name your price

Em: I'll get back to ya

B: Emmett Cullen so help me God

Em: I like it when you're feisty, Bella

B: I can't wait until I'm a newborn

Em: :)

A smiley face? *He sent me a fucking smiley face?! Argh!*

This was obviously getting me nowhere. Now I had two revenge plans to think through. My first reaction to Emmett's discovery of my cards had been complete mortification. It was bad enough talking with Carlisle about this stuff. Of all of them, *Emmett* had to be the one to find the cards? And, if he knew, there was no way that Rosalie didn't know. Emmett couldn't hold a secret like this one to save his life, not from Rosalie anyway. When the second text came on Monday, my reaction went from embarrassment to annoyance. The all-knowing, all-seeing, all-hearing part of the Cullens' abilities was pretty damn annoying sometimes. When the third text came on Tuesday, my embarrassment was gone, and my annoyance was further enflamed by the unfulfilled need (my warm hand just *wasn't* as good) I felt from my separation from Edward. By Wednesday night, Edward's teasing had me nearly spun out of control. The two of them had created a revenge monster and, the best part was, they didn't even know it.

I woke up early on Thursday morning with a kernel of an idea of how to seek revenge on Edward. He clearly knew my vulnerabilities. Between the love letters and the phone sex and the erotic texts and the separation, he had orchestrated the whole week into one long seductive tease, into one long test of Bella's limited control.

Well, two could play at that game.

I walked out to my old beast of a truck—it hadn't been running as well lately and I was beginning to worry about it dying outright. But it started with a protesting rumble and I pulled out of the driveway. Ten minutes later I pulled into the hospital parking lot. I was definitely nervous, and not at all looking forward to what I wanted to do, but the last couple weeks had been about boundary pushing, and this was one I absolutely needed to push sooner rather than later.

I was forcing myself to take deep breaths as I walked in through the front entrance and walked up to the information desk.

"May I help you, dear?" an older woman said with a smile.

"Yes, I'm looking for Dr. Cullen. Is there any chance he's available? I'm his, well, in two weeks...."

"Bella?" Carlisle's voice interrupted my fumbling efforts to explain my relationship to him. "Is everything okay? Are you alright?"

"Oh. Hi, Carlisle. Yes. I just...do you have some time today to, um, talk?" I finally met his eyes.

"Is my office okay? My shift ended over an hour ago but I still haven't managed to get through my charts. I was just heading there to finish up some paperwork." He smiled at me. I knew he could hear my heart thudding inside my chest.

"Yeah, sure. If you're sure?" I hadn't exactly decided how to broach this topic and now I was chickening out.

"Of course. This way," he said, guiding me with his hand.

Moments later we were in Carlisle's office. I had never been in here before. It was rather impersonal, especially compared to his office at home. But then, it wasn't like he could decorate his walls here with the true ephemera of his life. He sat behind his desk and gestured me to one of the chairs in front of it.

"I can tell you're nervous, Bella. Please don't be. I will help you however I can. And, I've been doing this for a very long time. There's nothing I haven't heard before."

I appreciated his words. But I'm pretty sure he hadn't heard *this* before. I couldn't stifle a nervous giggle. I nodded.

"Um, well. Okay. Here's the thing." *Shit! Why does Carlisle have to be his father? Okay, deep breath.* "Um, sorry. Um, I...I had an idea of a gift that I want to give to, um, Edward. But, I...I don't know if it's a good idea or...if it will...cause...problems. But I really want to give it." I rushed the last words, eager to just spit it out already. And, of course, I hadn't actually said the most important part, yet.

"Okay. And, what is that?" His face was mostly neutral, though I felt like I could detect the hint of a smile at his lips.

"Um," my voice felt tight. But all of a sudden a very strong sense of wanting this for Edward came upon me. I took a deep breath and forced out, "my blood," trying very hard to keep it from sounding like a question. I looked Carlisle in the eyes as I said it, hoping to communicate to him that I knew this wasn't a joke nor a matter to treat lightly.

Carlisle's silence unnerved me, and I felt the need to fill it. "Just so you know, I know this is serious, Carlisle. And I have thought about it for a long time. I don't want to do anything that would harm Edward, so if you tell me this is a bad idea, I will drop it. But I have the ability to give him the one thing I know he desires most in the world but cannot have. There's nothing he would not give me. And there's nothing I would not give him. And if it would truly give him pleasure, I want him to have it. I just don't know the...best...way...to give it."

My face was completely red now, but I pulled every ounce of strength I had and forced myself to continue to look at Carlisle.

"You're right, Bella, this is very serious. I don't know if this is a good idea." He held up a finger. "Let me think a moment."

I nodded. And waited. Impatiently.

"Bella, this is a very generous gesture. The mechanics of the...donation ...are easy enough. I could simply draw your blood. But the manner in which you give it to Edward is more problematic. I don't think you could be present for it. He has shown control around your blood on multiple occasions, but it would be in both of your interests if you weren't there."

I nodded, still thinking. "How much...human blood...would it take to cause his eyes, um, to...turn red? I don't think he'd like that."

"I agree. But it would take more than what you could give in one donation—which is only one pint."

He still hadn't agreed to this, but then he hadn't said 'no' either.

"Do you think it would be harder for him to be around me after...having it?"

"Possibly. Probably. But if he hunted sufficiently before seeing you again, that would probably take care of his...need."

I nodded again. "Um, do you think it would make...being...staying...a vegetarian...too hard if I did this?"

"Edward is quite practiced, Bella. All those years ago when Edward returned to me after his rebellious years, he was quite able to adjust immediately back to a vegetarian diet. As I told you the other day, Edward is one of the most disciplined of my kind I have known in nearly 400 years. He will be surprised greatly. But he will remain committed, I am sure."

I blew out a breath of air I didn't realize I had been holding. "I'm sorry if this is making you uncomfortable, Carlisle."

"Bella, I am not uncomfortable. I am completely astounded. Do you realize how unprecedented it is for a human to accept us at all, let alone accept so unconditionally our way of life and our needs? You...it's just...Edward is a very lucky man." I had never heard Carlisle stumble for words before. But, he was wrong, I was the lucky one.

"Well, I just figure, it's going to be my way of life soon, too, right? My blood has always been the elephant in the room. I just don't want to ignore it anymore. Especially because it won't be there much longer."

He nodded. It sounded like he said "extraordinary," but it was so soft I decided I'd imagined it. "Would you like me to draw the blood today?"

"Yes!" I said quickly.

He smiled. "Stay here. I'll be right back."

He returned minutes later carrying a bag of supplies and a plastic bottle of orange juice. Carlisle arranged me so that the side of my chair was pulled close to his desk and my arm was laid flat atop it. I looked away.

"You're not going to faint on me, are you?" I could hear the humor in his voice.

"As long as I can't smell it, no."

"You'll be fine."

I froze momentarily as I felt a quick stick at the crook of my elbow. "Thinking more about this, Bella, I think you should wait to give this to him until after you've changed."

My eyes flew up to his. I didn't know what to say. He seemed to be giving me time to think. "O-okay. Will it...last?"

"Yes. I'll take care of it," he said quietly.

I nodded. I was a little disappointed to have to wait. Plus I had been hoping to convince Carlisle to put some in a little vial I wanted to have Alice place on his bed as my revenge for yesterday. But Carlisle was right. I didn't want to push Edward too far. Plus, my blood wasn't a game. And I would still get to see him taste my blood either way.

Fifteen minutes later, I was done. Carlisle affixed a small band-aid over a piece of balled-up gauze over the needle mark. Yet another reason it was good I wouldn't be seeing Edward for a few more days.

I drank the bottle of orange juice he had brought for me and said, "Well, thank you, Carlisle. Again."

I stood up.

"You're welcome, Bella. Make sure you keep your fluids up today. Um..., he began as he collected the sterile plastic bag with my blood.

His hesitation caught my attention and I turned back to him, questioning.

He seemed to be deciding whether to speak. Finally, he said, "Is the tattoo healing well?"

I blushed a brilliant crimson immediately. "What? How....?" *I'm gonna kill Alice!*

"I'm sorry, Bella. When I got close enough to draw your blood I could just make out the smell of the wound. It's quite faint. I'd guess you've had it a few days?"

I bit my lip and nodded. "It's...fine. Seems to be fine. And, it's a surprise."

He nodded. "Oh, okay, then. Sure. Well, let me know if you need anything else."

I nodded again. "Okay, well, thanks, Carlisle. I should...I'll be going."

We smiled at one another and I flew out of the room.

If I'd have had vampire hearing, after I left I might have heard Carlisle chuckle and say, "Oh, Edward, you are going to have your hands full with that one."

Now that I was out of the immediately embarrassing situation of Carlisle's office, I found myself overcome with giddiness at having actually put that part of my list into action. I wasn't yet sure of the how, when, or where, but I knew number seventeen *would* definitely happen now. I couldn't wait to see his reaction. The more I thought about it, the more intrigued I became. Me, as a vampire. And Edward. In a dark room. Without clothes. And with my blood.

Yeah. That has possibilities.

As I hoisted myself up into my truck, I could tell that my panties were damp again. I rubbed my legs together trying to get more comfortable there. But it was no use. I was aroused. Again. It seemed to be a constant state of being for me this week.

It had been so early when I went to the hospital that it was only 9:30 when I got home. But I had my morning planned out. I had collected some boxes yesterday and planned to spend part of today packing up my room—things I wanted to take "to college" with me. But I couldn't get the blood out of my mind and, more specifically, Edward's *reaction* to the blood. I was getting worked up despite the mundane task before me.

My phone startled me when it began to ring. It was Alice.

"Good morning, Bella."

"Hey, Alice. What's up?"

"You're chipper this morning."

"Am I? I dunno...."

"Hmm...anyway. I have news."

Uh oh. "Oh yeah? What's that?"

"Rosalie, Esme, and I are taking you out tonight for your bachelorette party!"

"Uh...."

"You can't say no, so don't even think about it! Besides, the boys just left with Edward. They'll be back tomorrow."

"*Edward* is having a bachelor party?"

"Well, so to speak. They tried to talk him into something more adventurous, but he wouldn't hear of it. So they're going on a boys-only hunting trip. Carlisle just got home and they left right after."

Her mention of Carlisle's name made my face immediately enflame. I was glad she couldn't see through the phone. "Oh. Okay."

"So, get yourself ready. I'll be by to pick you up around one o'clock. We're having a spa day and then we're going out on the town tonight."

"Uh...." Damn my mind! It wouldn't react quick enough to her pronouncements.

"And, uh, Bella?"

"Yes, Alice?" I said this the way a man might say 'yes, dear' to a nagging wife.

"Would you like a suggestion for Edward's revenge?"

I flushed again, but then giggled. "I don't know. Do I want your suggestion?"

"Yes! Of course you do!"

"Well, then," I laughed, "by all means."

Her voice took on a conspiratorial tone. "The panties you have on *right now* would make a very nice gift to leave for Edward. Like last time."

Ugh! Will this blush never recede? "Okay, Alice. Gotta go. Bye." I clicked my phone shut, but not before hearing the beginning of her laughter.

The 'no privacy' part of being around vampires was really the hardest thing to get used to. Besides, I just had on a pair of plain yellow cotton panties. They had a small satin bow on the front. Other than that they were nothing special.

I packed a couple more boxes and then worked myself into a sweat. By eleven I decided to shower again and then eat some lunch before Alice and Rosalie arrived.

I was surprised to realize upon stripping that I had started my period. Between the wetness of my arousal and the blood, my panties were ruined, and I folded them up with the intention of throwing them away in my room. Then Alice's suggestion hit. *The panties you have on right now.*

She knew. *She knew this was going to happen?! Was she seriously suggesting...?*

But that would mean...wouldn't it mean...she knows about number seventeen???

Alice hadn't seen the list since there were only nine items on it. She was *way* behind. I shouldn't have been so surprised that she was informed, but I was.

I set the yellow panties on the bathroom sink and showered quickly, my mind reeling. I got back out and dried off, using a tampon as I always do when I have my period so that I can more easily be around them without making it so difficult—this had been Alice's advice the first time it had come up. She had explained that menstrual flow wasn't as tempting as regular blood because the properties of menstrual blood are

somewhat different and the discharge contains dead tissue. Her explicit description made me sorta queasy at the time, but it alleviated my concerns that I would have to isolate myself from them three days a month.

At least it only lasted three days. Three days. *Three days! Shit!* My period won't get over until some time on Saturday.

So much for nudity and orgasms on *that* day. *Dammit.*

I pulled on a tank top and a pair of shorts. It was warm but cloudy. I returned to the bathroom to pull my hair up into a ponytail when I noticed the yellow panties again.

I picked them up. It wasn't *a lot* of blood. A spot maybe the size of a half dollar.

This would be an interesting revenge, wouldn't it??? But, I couldn't. It was sorta...yucky...wasn't it?

Unthinkingly, I threw them in my hamper and went downstairs to make some lunch. Just as I was pulling some stuff out to make a salad, my phone rang. I had left it upstairs and I went running up the steps to answer it. I got to it on the fourth ring and answered with a breathless "Hello."

"Hello to you. Have you been running?" Edward's velvet voice melted me and I laid down on my bed.

"Hi. No. Well, I was downstairs when you called and my phone was in my bedroom."

"Ah. Sorry about that."

"No, no. So, you're on a hunting trip with the boys?"

"I am. I see you've been well informed."

"I have my sources," I laughed.

"That I know too well, my love. I take it my sisters are taking you out today as well?"

"Yes. We're apparently starting out with some girlified torture this afternoon and then they're taking me out later."

"I'm sure it won't be too bad. It might even be fun."

"I know. I'm sure it will be fun. It will be nice to spend some time with them." I thought for a moment. "Speaking of torture...you were quite naughty yesterday, Mr. Cullen."

"Me?" he said, feigning innocence. "I don't know what you could mean."

"Uh huh. I'm sure if you think *real hard*," I paused for emphasis, "you might be able to figure it out."

He chuckled. Then I heard some commotion in the background.

"*Hi Bella!*" Emmett called from somewhere near Edward.

"Did anyone ever tell your brother that he can be a real pain in the ass?" I said with a dark chuckle.

"Repeatedly. Unfortunately, he seems to take it as a compliment."

"That's great. So, anyway, back to your naughtiness...."

"Bella, I make every effort to act the epitome of a gentleman. I apologize if something I did caused you offense."

That time I heard a "Bullshit!" and a round of guffaws in the background.

"Where *are* you?" I asked. It kept sounding like someone was trying to take the phone from Edward.

"In Emmett's Jeep. Luckily Emmett's driving—or *at least he's doing something resembling driving if he'd keep his hands on the steering wheel*—or else he'd have grabbed the phone by now. I have no idea why he's so interested in talking to you...."

"Hmm. Dunno. Well, I should let you go then so he doesn't crash. I'm sure he'd be upset if something happened to his baby Jeep." Edward laughed. "But, just know this, Edward. Revenge is sweet."

"Bella?"

I ignored his question. "I love you, Edward. I hope you have a nice time," I said using a sing-song voice.

"Bella?" His tone was intense now.

"I have to go now, baby. I love you. Ba-bye...."

"*Bel-la!*"

"What?"

"I love you too." I could hear the smile in his voice. "Talk to you tomorrow."

"Okay, Edward," I said without all the playfulness of a moment ago. "Bye." We hung up.

I sat up on the edge of my bed smiling. Then I grabbed my phone and ran downstairs to make lunch. After I ate, I called Charlie to tell him I would be home later than usual and why. He reluctantly agreed. Fifteen minutes later, the girls arrived.

It ended up being a very nice day. Alice and Rosalie orchestrated manicures and pedicures for everyone and made me the biggest, gooiest, and best ice cream sundae for dinner, saying it was a celebration and therefore I should go straight for dessert.

As we talked and laughed, Alice hinted around so much at the existence of the list that I was finally forced to admit its existence to Rosalie, who was so taken aback that I was keeping a running list of fantasies to play out with Edward that she messed up one of Alice's toes—which *never* happens. I couldn't remember the whole list in exact order without it in front of me, but I shared quite a bit of it with them and they

roared with laughter and shook their heads with knowing respect. I couldn't decide if I was more or less embarrassed by the conversation when one or both of the girls would say, "Oh, yeah, that's a good one," and then launch into their own tale of having played out a similar fantasy with one of their mates. What I most liked about the whole conversation was that it seemed to earn me quite a bit of respect from Rosalie, who must've said a half dozen times, "Damn, girl, I didn't know you had this in you."

Luckily, though, Alice kept her promise to not say anything to anyone about my tattoo. It was bad enough that Carlisle knew. I didn't want too many more people having to try to hide their thoughts about my surprise around Edward or it wouldn't end up *being* a surprise.

When Rosalie pressed on why Edward and I were avoiding one another this week, I was forced to explain his dare, which led to a larger discussion of our game playing over the weekend. Although I *heavily* edited that story. When I explained how Edward had come up with the dare and then had been torturing me all week to try to make me lose it, Alice recalled her advice about my panties and asked where they were.

"Alice, I...I don't think that's such a good idea."

"But, *why* Bella? It would be the perfect revenge."

"But, Alice...." I didn't really want to voice my concern, both because I still didn't feel entirely comfortable in front of Rosalie and because I thought maybe Alice didn't actually know what was going on.

"Wait, what's the story here?" Rosalie asked.

"I told her to leave the pair of panties she had on *earlier today* for Edward's revenge."

"Ah," Rosalie replied.

"Ah?" *What does that mean?*

"Bella," Rosalie began, feigning disinterest by checking out her fingernails, "you do realize we can...um, smell...what's going on with you?"

"Huh? Oh. Right. Yeah." Queue my blush.

"Well, I take it your panties got...stained?" She dropped her hands and our eyes met. I blushed harder, then nodded.

"I have to agree with Alice. Perfect. Revenge. I love anything that could drive Edward nuts. And this could do it."

"But...."

"But nothing, Bella," Alice said in a near whine, "I'm telling you, it's a great idea. It will drive him wild."

"Yeah, but, *is that a good thing?*"

"Bella, we spend months on end around teenage girls. We can tolerate menstrual blood without becoming ravenous. It's not quite the same," Rosalie stated matter-of-factly.

"Oh." I had always wondered about that, but it's not the kind of topic I ever felt comfortable just coming out and asking about.

"In fact—"

"Rose!" Alice cut Rosalie off with a stern voice and a nearly indiscernible head shake.

"What?" Rosalie and I both said at the same time.

"Nothing Bella," Alice began, "I think that's a conversation *for another time*," Alice finished, looking pointedly at Rosalie.

"What other time? How many more menstrual cycles is she going to have?"

"Okay. Any chance one of you is willing to fill me in on the part of the conversation I'm missing?"

Alice went to speak but Rosalie playfully jumped her and put her hand over her mouth. She spoke so quickly it was hard to make out her words. "You could always let him taste it at the source!" Rosalie started laughing as Alice pushed her off. Alice appeared ready to spring at her but Rosalie reminded her of their wet nails. Alice frowned and shook her head.

The source? What?

Oh. Oh! Oh my God!

I blushed a brilliant red. Rose laughed. Alice smacked her but joined in.

"This is why I didn't want you to say anything," Alice reprimanded.

I chanced a peak up at them and they were both looking at me expectantly, seeing what my reaction would be to Rosalie's suggestion. "But," I finally managed, "wouldn't that be...would it be...." I couldn't get the words out.

Rose huffed. "Bella, it's blood. And sex. And for us, even for my prude brother, those things go together quite...comfortably." Her expression and posture seemed to indicate her belief that she had just communicated a great wisdom.

I looked up to Alice. She nodded nonchalantly. "It's true, Bella."

"But...I don't know."

"Up to you," Rose said as she bounced off the bed.

All of a sudden, one of Edward's torturous texts returned to my mind. A line from 'Closer.' "Um, okay, Alice. Let's go get those panties."

They both squealed—*seriously*, Rosalie too—and raced me through the house to the garage. We were to my house and back in twenty minutes.

I had folded them and placed them in a Ziploc bag with a one-line note. The same lines Edward had teased me with the day before: ‘I drink the honey inside your hive’.

Rosalie and Alice both thought it was perfect.

Once again, I laid my gift on the center of his bed.

After two hours of getting ready to go out, during which time Esme finally joined us—she had been out during the day working on wedding plans that no one would discuss with me—the four of us went out to a swanky bar in Seattle. I adamantly refused to wear the little foil and net “I’m the Bride-to-Be” veil thingy that Alice had bought for me. She finally relented with a pout.

I had never hung out with Esme this way before, but I found her to be quite funny. It was easier to see her as one of the girls in this situation, particularly because she wasn’t really that much older, in terms of her human age, than the rest of us.

The apparent purpose of the evening at the bar was to give me one human experience in particular—the girls were eager to see me get drunk. Esme was less keen on the idea, but even she couldn’t help from laughing as my flush remained ever-present and I laughed more frequently and louder. It was a good thing Alice had insisted on some appetizers for the table or I would have been under it within the first hour.

We kept trying to talk about other topics, but inevitably the conversation would come back to men and sex, particularly sex with our men. And, the more other men came up to try to talk to us, the more we laughed and told stories. Occasionally, Esme excused herself to the ladies’ room, which was a complete euphemism for “I don’t want to hear this story.” Alice and Rose laughed every time. At one point, Rosalie let it slip that she knew about my conversation with Carlisle. Turns out they all knew, which Rosalie was a little miffed about. Alice had been with me when I wrote the cards, after all, and Carlisle had apparently inferred something to Esme, though she didn’t know the details.

That led me to the topic of plotting a revenge for Emmett. Though she had been in on Emmett’s texts, Rose was only too glad to help plan. It wasn’t long before we had a great idea in mind, but first I would need to bring Edward into the know.

The night ended up being as enjoyable as the afternoon. I *was* drunk, but not *really* drunk: I could walk; I wasn’t slurring. I just felt warm and fuzzy and tingly and good. Alice finally cut me off and forced me to start drinking water. I didn’t understand why at the time, but I was thankful to her the next day.

Around two a.m., they dropped me off at home. Alice helped me change and get into bed, and brought me water and some aspirin to take. She promised to call in the morning to check on me. I think I managed to say “thank you” before falling hard asleep.

At 8 a.m. the next morning my phone rang. I grumbled. The light hurt my eyes, and my head ached. I didn’t feel horrible, but I didn’t feel great. *Alice couldn’t have waited a little later to check on me?*

I felt around for my phone and pulled it up to my face, trying to wake up enough to remember how to answer it.

"Hello?" I mumbled.

"Hello, Bella."

Edward's voice woke me the rest of the way up. "Hi," I breathed warmly. I didn't hear anything for a moment so I looked at my phone to see if I had dropped the call. I hadn't. "Edward, are you there?"

"I'm here, Bella, and it's taking everything that I possess not to come over *there* and take you the way I so very badly want you." *Oh my.*

And then I realized what must have him so worked up. He had found my revenge. "Well, Edward," I said in a low voice, "I'm not stopping you."

"Bella!" Edward hissed.

"What, baby, tell me what's the matter," I cooed, seductively, I hoped.

"God, Bella, do you have any idea?" His breathing was labored. "Any idea at all what...this does to me?"

"Tell me, Edward," I rasped.

"I feel like a complete animal right now, Bella," he ground out. "I want nothing more than to devour you. I want to put my hands, my mouth, *everywhere* on you."

I moaned without even realizing I was going to do it.

Edward heard. "Oh, God, Bella. I need you so much. I want you, Bella. So bad."

"Take your clothes off, Edward."

"Bella..."

"Now, Edward," I commanded.

I heard him moving against his phone. And then he stilled.

"Grab the panties, Edward. Take them out of the bag."

"Bella..."

"Do it, Edward. It wasn't a question. It was a command. Now, do it."

"Oh, fuck me," he hissed. "Bella, that's fucking exquisite. I have to have you."

"Edward, focus. Are you hard, Edward? Get hard for me, Edward."

"As steel, Bella."

"Good, baby. That's good. I want you to wrap the panties around your cock, Edward."

He groaned.

"Now stroke yourself with my panties, Edward. Do it."

"Christ, Bella. Oh my God." I could hear his strained breathing through the phone. My own breathing began to become more labored as we spoke.

"Imagine it's my hand, Edward. My mouth."

"No, Bella. It's your pussy. I'm imagining your pussy. I can't wait, baby. I want you so God damn much. Bella," he rasped, "you have no idea...what...ungh...this is...like....unghh...for me. The blood, Bella...*God*...your fluids...*fuck, Bella.*"

My heart was now hammering in my throat. I couldn't believe how hot it was to hear him this worked up. This far out of control. I couldn't wait to see it in person.

"How does my pussy feel, baby? Does it feel good?"

"Oh my fucking God, Bella, you're killing me. It's good. It's so good. Please, baby. *God.*"

"Harder, Edward. Faster. Pretend I'm like you, Edward. You don't have to be gentle. You can be rough, Edward. Fuck me hard, Edward. I want it *rough.*"

"*Fuck, Bella! Fuck! Christ, I'm fucking coming. Ah, unghhh.*" He grunted and roared out.

All I could hear was him panting, literally panting.

"Bella," he rasped, "be ready for me at eight a.m. tomorrow morning. Don't bother with a bag. I will bring everything you need for the weekend."

"But, Edward...."

"It wasn't a question, Bella. Just do it." He threw my words back at me. That didn't nothing for my current state of arousal.

"Yes, Edward."

"And Bella?"

"Yes, Edward?"

"I fucking love you."

~*~

Chapter 14: Advice And Plans

EPOV

The week hadn't gone exactly how I thought it would. My purpose in proposing the 'time-off' dare was to try to cool us down. It hadn't really worked, a lot of which was my own fault. The phone had turned out to be a massive temptation for teasing Bella, and I had greatly enjoyed doing so. It was freeing to find a way to express our sexuality without the constant fear of my harming her. I was continually surprising myself these days, doing and saying things I never for the life of me thought I would. But it was so enjoyable, *liberating*, really. Though all week I ended up as aroused as I intended her to be. So much for cooling us down.

In addition, my brothers forced me into an overnight hunting trip. That was better than what they initially intended, a bachelor party which involved – Emmett hoped – scantily clad dancing women. I had no such interest, not only because I had eyes for only one woman, my beautiful Bella, but also because there was nothing at all attractive or enjoyable about the kinds of thoughts I knew I would hear in such an establishment. So they recast the event as a male-bonding experience with, Emmett, again, hoped, lots of opportunities for offering me unsolicited *marital* advice. I finally relented in the hope that it would make the time pass more quickly until I could see Bella again.

Carlisle, Emmett, Jasper, and I departed for Goat Rocks on Thursday afternoon. They were all acting...weird. For starters, they all seemed to be working hard to control their thoughts around me. Occasionally one of them would let their mind relax, and something would catch my attention. But almost as quickly they would rein their thoughts in again. It just all seemed too...controlled. Something was up. In addition, several times I caught Jasper smirking at me in a knowing way. Between his own ability and Alice's, I had no doubt that they were about as well informed about the progress of my relationship with Bella as anyone possibly could be. And then, add to that Emmett's...hyperactivity... regarding Bella. He literally seemed to be bouncing off the walls asking me all sorts of strange questions about Bella. On the surface they seemed innocent enough: "So, how's Bella doing these days?" "How are you and Bella getting along?" "Anything new with Bella?" But *the way* he said them was always so full of smugness and innuendo. So, yeah, they were all acting weird.

I tried to ignore it and just enjoy my time with my father and brothers. We hadn't all gone out together like this in a long while. It was nice, for once, to have everything so settled around our family and just be.

It started late Thursday night after a full day of hunting. I was sated beyond all reasonable capacity.

We were lounging around a cabin Carlisle had reserved for us to get us out of the rain Alice had foreseen up in the mountains. They were all staring at me, with similar thoughts on their mind, wondering who was going to speak first. Ah, so this was a coordinated strike.

"You three are killing me with your anticipation. You do remember that I can hear your thoughts, right?"

Emmett guffawed loudly and Carlisle and Jasper joined him.

"Dude, *you're* getting *married*," Emmett proclaimed.

I couldn't help but smile. And nod. I settled my back into the soft couch cushion and stretched my legs out in front of me.

"So where are you taking her on your *honeymoon*?" Emmett continued with the same innuendo I had been hearing in his questions about Bella.

"Not a chance, Emmett. You'll know when Bella knows." I smirked at my big brother. He hated to be out of the loop.

"Okay, then," I looked at Carlisle and Jasper – *Chickens*. They were leaving this up to Emmett to begin. – "So, are you two planning to, uh, *consummate* your marriage during your honeymoon?"

I was only tolerating this line of questioning because, well, I had been meaning to solicit some advice for a while. Though I had obviously gained some experience in recent days, I still had so much to learn. I knew it was in the interest of Bella's safety to talk with them about it. And though my preference would have been to talk to Carlisle alone, their varied perspectives on the matter seemed likely to be useful. Even if having this conversation was going to be mortifying and probably something I wouldn't live down for decades. I was already hearing a future Emmett in my mind, "Remember that night at Goat Rocks when...."

I sighed. Sensing I needed some encouragement, Carlisle finally spoke, "Edward, we're not trying to embarrass you here," he threw a cautionary glance at Emmett who tried hard to rearrange his expression, "but we just want you to be prepared for whatever you choose to do. We thought, maybe, you had some questions or concerns...?"

"I know, Carlisle. I appreciate the concern. I share it, in fact." I ran my hand through my hair several times. "Okay, we plan...we plan to *try*...to...consummate...our marriage during our honeymoon."

I held my breath for their response. Their thoughts all froze for a moment.

Jasper and Emmett clearly had opinions and thoughts on this, but looked to Carlisle to respond first. "I won't ask you if you've thought this through, Edward, because I know you well enough to know you've probably thought about this relentlessly from every conceivable angle and consideration."

I nodded.

I heard Carlisle's next point before he said it. "If that is your intent, Edward, I think it might be useful to...work on being intimate with Bella in other ways first."

I nodded, hoping to walk away from this conversation without giving too much away.

I noticed Jasper shift in his seat. Emmett noticed too. He glanced back and forth between Jasper and I. "What?" he directed at Jasper, "You know something, or...*Alice* knows something." He looked back at me. All of a sudden a strange series of thoughts, more images, really, moved through his mind – rectangular pieces of paper with writing on them. It went by so fast, though, that I couldn't focus quickly enough on what they said.

Jasper smiled, though he kept my confidence. But Emmett was like a dog worrying at a bone.

"Dude, spill."

"Emmett—" Carlisle began.

"No way, Carlisle. He's known the intimate details of our relationships for decades. I don't need a blow-by-blow, but *come on!*" Emmett was sitting on the edge of his seat now with a huge grin. "Besides, if those phone calls we've been hearing are any indication..., " he began.

My eyes flashed to his as I pounced, taking him and the armchair he was sitting on to the ground in a heap. "You are such an *ass*, Emmett!" But my ire only fueled his fire. We began wrestling around on the debris-covered floor, while Jasper and Carlisle stifled a laugh and Carlisle tried to act stern about the damage we were causing.

"Get off me, you little punk," Emmett laughed, "you had to know we'd hear you," he wheezed in between jabs and attempted headlocks. "Besides, I'm not complaining. Rose found your foul mouth surprisingly inspirational," he teased.

"Gross, Emmett," I panted as I shoved him one last time and stood up. He sprung up next to me, shrugged, and punched me in the shoulder. I couldn't help but smirk at him. *I knew that phone was the devil.*

"Edward," Carlisle tried to interrupt with some modicum of seriousness, "you realize that Bella is likely working through these same issues and questions. Have you at least spoken in any detail about the nature of your physical relationship?"

I sat back down on the couch as Emmett settled into the remaining armchair. "Yes, we have talked about it." *Okay, we've done more than talked....*

"Just *talked*?" Emmett interjected, alluding to the phone calls again and trying to bring the conversation back around to his earlier question.

Would it help put your mind at ease, son, if you knew that Bella and I have talked as well? My eyes flew to his. I can't tell you more without violating her confidence. Just know that she is thinking about all of this in a very responsible way, and understands the risks. You can trust her.

I couldn't believe it. Here I was fretting over what to say and how to say it. Yet Bella had already beaten me to the punch. She had apparently discussed...*our sex life?*...with Carlisle. I wasn't upset. I was amazed. *God, she is so much more courageous than me.*

Emmett and Jasper watched the exchange between us and knew I was reading Carlisle's thoughts. They waited, though Jasper seemed immeasurably more patient than Emmett.

I nodded in Carlisle's direction, silently thanking him. "Okay." I blew out an unnecessary breath. "I'm not giving details." I looked pointedly at Emmett. "But, I will say, because I have some questions about how to progress further, that Bella and I have shared some physical intimacy already."

"Dude!" Emmett shouted enthusiastically. Jasper and Carlisle laughed.

I sat forward with my elbows on my knees and looked down, trying to hide my own smile. "Emmett, I appreciate your enthusiasm, but this would be easier for me to talk about if you could manage to tone down your inner twelve-year-old."

He laughed again but nodded, trying hard to be more serious. It *was* pretty funny. Even around my own discomfort at the topic of conversation I could admit that.

"You said you had some questions, Edward?" Carlisle prompted.

"Yes. Well, mostly, I'm wondering what...precautions I can take to ensure I don't lose control so much that I hurt her."

"Edward," Jasper spoke finally, "I know you know that I already, well, know some of the details." Emmett huffed in exasperation. I nodded. "Sorry, I don't really *want* to know the details, but you know Alice...", he trailed off. "So, anyway, can you at least tell us what you've done so far to avoid hurting her?"

"Um, well, mostly, when she has...", *Ugh! This is so embarrassing!* "I've just...I've tried to keep my hands otherwise occupied so I don't grasp her too tightly and I've, um, just kept my mouth mostly away from her altogether."

Jasper nodded. "But, you kiss her quite freely?"

"Yes. Well, mostly."

"Edward, outside of the act of intercourse itself, I doubt you need to worry about biting her at this point," Jasper said. He had mentioned to me once before that he had never felt my bloodlust get out of control around her, even when she and I were alone in my room.

"I agree," Carlisle offered. "You underestimate your own control, son. I think you are more capable of intimacy with her than you give yourself credit for." I shrugged as he thought for a moment, "The only other suggestion I would make to ensure her protection is that you use a condom. Just to be on the safe side. The venom you have likely exchanged with her while kissing obviously hasn't posed any problems, and pregnancy isn't an issue, but it might offer you additional peace of mind."

"That makes sense," I offered, then followed up on Jasper's earlier comment. "You said 'outside of the act' itself? Can you explain the distinction?"

"Well, what I think you've experienced so far – and I'm not trying to ask for details here, man, I promise – has obviously been intense. But nothing is more intense than intercourse itself. It is the act that will most challenge your control. But, I think you've already discovered one major strategy. You'll need to redirect any loss of control to something besides Bella's body. And just accept that you *will* lose some control. It's the nature of the act."

I nodded.

"And, Edward," I looked at Emmett skeptically as he spoke now, "maybe you should consider, um, positions that will keep your teeth further away from her body." I was surprised at how seriously he offered that advice. I nodded again. "You might consider letting her, uh, take the lead, set the pace, you know?"

I smiled. *She's been doing plenty of that already.* I shook the thought away.

"Edward, I want to ask a question that I know you're not going to like," Jasper began.

I took a deep breath, willing myself to keep an open mind. "Okay."

Jasper looked down and then scanned his gaze by the others before settling on me. "Bella wants to be turned, right?"

I knew my expression was already darkening. "Yes."

"Relatively soon?"

"Yes, unless I can convince her otherwise."

"Okay, so, I'm just gonna throw this out there. Okay?" I nodded. "Worst case scenario is you hurt her or bite her?"

"Obviously."

"But then she becomes one of us which is what she wants?" I heard it more bluntly in his mind: what was the big deal if she got turned when that's what we were planning on anyway?

I huffed and rose, pacing back and forth behind the couch. I was trying very hard to rein in my anger, and I knew Jasper would know that.

I stopped finally, my arms crossed, my head down. "I understand your point, Jasper." I knew my voice sounded clipped and tense. "But I cannot bear the thought of causing her any pain. It would kill me. Plus, as you might imagine, I would prefer to separate what will be the most painful experience of her life, being changed, from...our physical relationship." I looked up.

After a moment, Carlisle spoke, "You do realize that she will experience pain at first, right, Edward?" He was trying to redirect the conversation.

I nodded.

"And that there will likely be some blood?"

I nodded again. It was one of the things about which I was most worried.

"You can handle her blood, Edward. You've tasted it, for God's sake. You're around her during her cycle. You just need to steel yourself for it," he encouraged.

I settled back into the couch, still somewhat tense but now trying to relax. I ran my hand through my hair. "Am I making a mistake in even thinking about this while she's still human?" I was almost certain I was.

Three voices chorused out a 'no.' I looked up, surprised.

Jasper elaborated first, "Edward, if you can handle what you have shared with her so far, you can handle the rest. You just need to trust yourself. And, maybe even more importantly, you need to trust her. Talk to her. Be open with her. And believe her when she tells you things. You can trust her completely to tell you how she's feeling and what she can handle."

My knee jerk reaction was to say, well, of course I trust her. I'm the one I don't trust. But, if I was to be completely truthful, I also worried that she would hide her pain from me in order to make it possible for us to be together, and in order to keep me from feeling any guilt. All of a sudden I knew I needed to talk to her about this concern.

"And, dude, try not to overthink it either. You are the king of overthinking. It is supposed to be fun, after all," Emmett smiled, trying and succeeding at lightening the atmosphere. Then he started a sing-song chant in his head, *Edward's gonna get some. Edward's gonna get some*. I couldn't help but laugh at him. But I threw a couch cushion at him at the same time to get him to cut it out.

After that conversation, the weirdness died away between us. As morning neared, we made our way back to Forks. I had preparations I wanted to finalize for my weekend with Bella. Though the conversation hadn't been comfortable, it only served to make me long for her company. Especially now that I had a number of topics I wished for us to discuss while we were together.

As we pulled into the driveway, I threw a warning glance at Emmett from my position in the passenger seat. "Emmett?"

He smiled smugly at me. "Yes, little brother?" I rolled my eyes.

"If you tease me about this in front of Bella I will make you regret it." I knew there was no sense in threatening him about teasing me in general. It was simply part of Emmett's DNA to tease.

He feigned an offended look and raised his hands in mock surrender. "Fine, Edward. I'll forget this ever happened and let us never speak of it again." His lips twitched up momentarily.

That was a weird thing for him to say. "Uh, okay. Thanks, Emmett."

He nodded and donned a huge grin, thinking all the while about football, as the Jeep came to a stop.

As soon as we arrived home, the men disappeared immediately to be with their mates. I was thinking of purposely losing the dare to go be with Bella to escape the intense passion currently being shared by the other three couples in the house. But I wanted to shower first.

Like a magnet, once I entered my bedroom my eyes were immediately drawn to the center of my bed. Again. My brow furrowed as I wondered why she bothered to put this particular piece of yellow torture in a plastic bag. I lifted the plastic and focused on the attached post-it note. It read, "I drink the honey inside your hive." It didn't all snap together, however, until I turned the bag over in my hands and noticed that the panties were stained. *Holy hell*. I was so completely aroused in the course of a second that it was nearly dizzying. I was completely flabbergasted. *What had possessed Bella?*

And then I new: Jasper's and Alice's thoughts assaulted me simultaneously. From Jasper: *Dude, your lust is killing me*, he teased. From Alice: *Enjoying your gift, Edward? There's more where that came from, you know...and it'll be safe, I've seen....*

God, my sister was in on this?

But I couldn't focus on their teasing. I shoved everyone else's thoughts from my head. I developed tunnel vision. I saw, smelled, and thought only of Bella. My phone was pressed to my ear and ringing before I knew it.

I'd woken her, but I couldn't be bothered to care. And she didn't seem to mind anyway. *God*, the way I'd spoken to her. *And she had encouraged me!* I felt like I should be mortified at my own behavior, but she made me feel so safe, so accepted. She made the things we did and said feel so natural. I couldn't find it in myself any longer to feel any regret.

What I did feel was desire. Intense. Wanton. Lust.

Having ordered her to be ready for me at eight a.m. the next morning, I set about finalizing my plans for the weekend, now making a number of adjustments to my original plans. My original purpose was to arrange a completely romantic weekend. Though I knew she wasn't one for the grand gesture, and I knew she had purposely been showing me that she didn't need to be worshipped, I wanted her to understand the significance to me of the emotional side of our relationship. I loved our new physical relationship – *obviously* – but I never wanted her to doubt for a moment that my commitment to her was complete and unbreakable regardless of that.

Now, though, I had some other ideas for the weekend I wanted to incorporate. Without question, she had been in complete control of my body and mind for the past two weeks. Even when I tried to exert control, she managed, unconsciously at times, to wrench it back from me. It was both infuriating and exhilarating. *She was a human, for Christ's sake. I'm supposed to be dazzling her.* Now it was time for me to wrest control back for myself.

This weekend I would take *my turn* in Bella's little game.

And this would take planning. Because, some things were completely impossible. I wouldn't hurt her. I wouldn't risk her. This needed to be planned out to the very last detail. I smiled darkly, remembering my thoughts from the night she took her turn. Payback is going to be so...very...satisfying.

Alice invited herself along to help with my shopping expeditions on Friday, which seemed to make her more exuberant than usual. One moment she was flinging clothing for Bella at me, the next she was mentally warning me not to mark her anywhere that would show around her wedding gown – *as if*. One moment she was giggling furiously as possible images from our weekend ran through her mind, the next she seemed to close her thoughts to me altogether. Twice she had random thoughts about "Bella's list," and I looked at her curiously, but then she focused her concentration on wedding-related items like the guest list or the gift registry. Her brain really could go in ten directions at once when it came to this stuff. I couldn't help but smile at her. She almost seemed more excited about our weekend away than I was.

That night was one of the longest of my life to date. I was in the Volvo down the street from Bella's house by six o'clock. *Will Charlie ever leave?*

Finally, at 6:50 Charlie pulled out of the driveway. I parked in his spot two minutes later, and pulled a bag along with me as I approached the house. The sound of Bella's heartbeat told me she was already awake. It was early for her. I couldn't help but hope that meant she was as anxious for our reunion as I was.

A moment later I was through her window and she flung herself into my arms as if she'd been waiting.

"Oh, thank God!" she exclaimed happily. "I will never willingly accept time away from you like that again!"

I laughed into the crook of her neck. "Don't worry. I won't be stupid enough to suggest such a thing again."

She pulled away. "I should think not," she pouted. I laughed out loud again.

Sitting her back down on her feet again I stepped back and admired her. It had only been six days since I had last seen her but there were subtle differences. Her hair appeared slightly longer. There was a hint of a new freckle on her right cheekbone. She had clearly been worrying at her bottom lip with her teeth. She also...smelled a little different? Then her voice interrupted my thoughts.

"So? What is the game plan for the weekend?"

"Ah, yes." I sat on the edge of her bed and patted the mattress next to me. She sat down facing me. "I would like to take you away with me overnight. Would that be okay with you?"

"Of course," she said with a smile. "And Charlie thinks I'm staying with Alice at your house?" He nodded. "Where are we actually going?"

"Well, that part is a surprise." Predictably, she frowned. I continued on, "There's more to the 'game plan'. Would you like to hear it?"

"Okay."

"I'm taking my turn this weekend, Isabella."

She looked momentarily confused. I could literally see the thought process play out across her features. She blushed a beautiful scarlet as she finally got my meaning. She bit her bottom lip and nodded, her heartbeat and respiratory rates beginning to accelerate.

"My turn begins right now. And lasts through the weekend until I say. Will that be okay with you?"

She nodded and swallowed. I tried not to pay attention to that particular movement.

"There are no restrictions on your speech, *for now*, but otherwise you will do exactly as I say when I say to do it. Do you agree?"

"Yes," she nearly whispered. I fought back a smile. *This was fun.*

I handed her the shopping bag. "Well then, you go get showered and dressed – everything you need is in here. And I'll go make you some breakfast."

"Okay." She leaned forward to kiss me as she rose and it took everything in my power to lean back away from her soft lips. "Tsk, ts, Bella. I didn't tell you to kiss me, now, did I?"

Her face immediately flushed and her expression went from wounded to mad to chagrined to aroused. "No, Edward," she finally managed.

"Off you go, then," I said in a low voice. When she closed the bathroom door behind her I let out a slow breath and shook my head. *Yes, this is going to be fun.*

The omelet, strawberries, and juice were laid out on the table when she came downstairs a half hour later. She looked stunning in the first of the outfits I had chosen for her: a tan jersey-knit skirt with a chocolate brown fleur de lis pattern around the above-the-knee hemline and a chocolate brown v-neck wrap shirt with cap sleeves. I had made sure that the fabrics I had chosen for this part of our weekend were casual and comfortable. The flat gold sandals Alice picked out worked so well with the outfit. I also *loved* knowing what was underneath this particular ensemble.

"Thank you for my outfit, Edward," she said as she sat down. "I do love it."

"You're welcome. It suits you."

"But, brown? I thought you preferred blue." She closed her eyes as she enjoyed her first bite of the omelet. I don't know why watching her eat was so erotic.

"Perhaps I do. But you once told me brown was your favorite color. And this weekend is about *you*." I let that sink in for a moment, and smiled as the soft pink of her blush colored her cheeks and neck.

When she was done eating, I cleaned up her breakfast dishes as she collected her purse. Just before we stepped out her front door, I gently grabbed her by the waist.

"Bella?" She glanced up at me. "Do you trust me?"

She frowned at me slightly, but then donned a completely earnest expression. "With my life, Edward. You know that."

I nodded. "I just want to reassure you that I won't do anything this weekend that you don't want me to do. We'll use the same safe words you proposed last time. Okay?"

She smiled. "Okay."

"And you can use them in any situation that arises."

"Okay."

I looked at her for a long moment, and lowered my lips to kiss her for the first time this morning. She moaned into it. Finally, I pulled back enough to lower my lips to her neck. Her body sunk into mine.

I stepped back from her, and her eyes slowly reopened and focused on my face. *Here goes nothing.* "Hmm. Love, I'm worried you might be too *warm* in this outfit today."

"No, no, Edward, I—" I pressed a single finger to her lips to cut her off.

In a low voice I continued, "I was thinking you might be a little more comfortable, a little *cooler*, if you removed your panties. I'll keep them safe for you." And I held out my hand and waggled my fingers at her as she had done to me that night.

It wasn't hard for me to keep a straight face. Because I was so aroused at the very thought of her complying. And I so *did* love possessing something so intimate of hers. I wasn't surprised by the blush that colored her beautiful skin. But I was somewhat surprised by the determination that quickly followed it.

She kept her eyes on mine as she bent over at the waist and reached her hands underneath her skirt. She wiggled her hips and legs a little to help shimmy the slight piece of apparel down to her ankles. Then she kicked the chocolate brown panties with contrasting tan piping and strategically placed satin bows off of her sandals. She broke eye contact to bend down and retrieve them before wordlessly handing them to me.

"That is better," she whispered conspiratorially.

Damn. Is she that powerful or am I that weak? Because those three words nearly broke my control altogether. I needed to reassert control, and quick.

I brought the panties to my nose and inhaled deeply. *Christ.* I focused on projecting a steady voice. "Mmm. *Delicious,*" I said as I stared into her wide eyes. Her heart was now thundering and the scent of her arousal was more obvious. I smiled internally. I made a show of slowly and deliberately folding the panties before sliding them into my pocket. "Shall we, love?" I asked, indicating the door with my hand at the small of her back. She nodded, her body trembling ever so slightly, as I led her out the door.

~*~

Chapter 15: The Weekend, Part I

BPOV

Ohmygodohmygodohmygod. Deepbreathsdeepbreaths. Calmdowncalmdowncalmdown. Damn vampires with their damn super hearing and smelling.

Thank God Edward can't read my mind.

We were speeding in the direction of Port Angeles. Edward was driving me freaking crazy sitting over there driving looking all relaxed like this was just any pleasant Saturday morning drive. And while I was trying hard to project a similarly nonchalant body posture, I know he could *hear* my traitorous heart and *smell* my equally traitorous, well, you know.

I couldn't have been more relieved when a few minutes later Edward pulled the Volvo in line behind some other cars at the ferry terminal in Port Angeles. My curiosity about our destination helped distract me from the suffocating sexual tension in the car. Not surprisingly, Edward had timed our arrival perfectly, and within ten minutes he was sliding the Volvo in place on the lower level of the ferry. I was excited about the ferry ride. I had never been on a ferry before but I'd heard that the scenery from the water was gorgeous. And the ferry gave me an inkling of our destination. It was one of two routes to Vancouver. The ferry route was more direct, although the longer, more circuitous highway route was supposed to take the same amount of time.

When the cars on either side of us were in place, Edward came around and opened my door for me, offering his hand to help me up from my seat. *Always the gentleman.* I smiled up at him as I stood. "I've never been on a ferry before. This is cool."

"Wait until you see the views. Spectacular. Though," he leaned down and kissed me on the cheek, "my eyes will be focused on you." I blushed and smiled as Edward threaded us through the cars and to the narrow stairwell. Two decks up was a concession area and an indoor seating area with tables. The top deck offered an outdoor seating area. Fortunately, the cloudy morning enabled us to venture outside as the ferry got underway.

The warm air, the sounds of children running the deck, the call of the seagulls, and the beautiful views made the hour-plus-long journey fly by. As he said he would, when he wasn't pointing out something for me to see or looking at something I pointed out for him, Edward kept focused on me. When I urged him to enjoy the view, he said simply, "I am, Bella. I'm seeing it through your eyes, through your reactions. That makes it new for me again." I adored this man for adoring me.

On the way back through the ferry I made a stop in the women's room. My period was lighter today but I was a little worried about being adequately protected without any panties. But, in a weird and probably completely freaky kind of way, I was turned on by having my period and not wearing panties. Edward *knew* I had my period. He, well, *had* the evidence. And his sisters had made it clear that they could tell by smell when I had it. On the one hand, thinking that *that* could be potentially be appealing to him was sorta gross. On the other hand, he *was* a vampire. Blood in all its forms was apparently appealing. As I washed my hands I stared at my reflection in the mirror. *Better get comfortable with the idea of blood, Swan. You are a vampire girl, after all.* I shook away the thoughts as I dried my hands and went to find Edward.

When I was done, we settled back into the Volvo as the ferry reached the dock on the other side of the Strait. "Tell me what you're thinking," Edward asked.

I looked towards him. "Nothing really. Just...everything is so much more enjoyable when we do it together."

He smiled and nodded, then stretched over to kiss my forehead. "I couldn't agree more, love."

The cars around us began moving and soon we were back on solid ground. We were driving through the city of Victoria but soon left the city limits and traveled west through a more secluded forested area that looked down over a huge wide river. A short while later Edward turned into a beautifully landscaped drive and past a sign that read The Aerie Resort and Spa. My breath caught as the buildings came into view.

I had never seen anything as architecturally gorgeous as these buildings in this setting. The Aerie was a series of Italian-looking villas, complete with stuccoed facades and rich red tile roofs, built into the side of a lush green hill overlooking the water. Everything about the incredible setting, the kinds of cars in the parking lot, and the refinement of the people walking around radiated luxury and opulence. Edward pulled the car to a stop under a wide carport where immaculately dressed valets and bellhops were busy helping arriving guests.

"Edward, I don't—"

He leaned in and cut me off with a kiss. "Bella. I have more rules for our weekend. Are you ready to hear them?"

I was so surprised to hear him mention our game again after several hours of decidedly non-game interaction that I simply nodded in response.

“Good. First, I intend to spoil you in every possible way this weekend.” My blush was already beginning. “And you,” he ran a finger down my cheek, “will let me.” He raised a single eyebrow as if to challenge me. “And the appropriate response,” he ran his thumb over my bottom lip, causing it to fall open, “will be ‘thank you’.”

I was trembling again. The words he used were harmless enough, but his tone was just so damn seductive. Of course I was already uncomfortable with the idea of being spoiled – what exactly did he mean by that? – but a bigger part of me was simply eager to let him have his turn at the game however he wanted it. After all, he had let me do what I wanted. He had played along. So would I.

He was looking at me expectantly. I finally realized why. “Thank you,” I offered in a weak voice.

“You’re welcome.” He nodded. And just then valets appeared on either side of the car and opened our doors.

Before long, we were ensconced in the most incredible accommodations I had ever seen or imagined. As if the main building wasn’t wondrous enough, Edward had reserved the penthouse of a separate villa that stood on the highest point of the Aerie resort.

Everything about the villa reflected elegance and comfort, and the views of the surrounding mountains and of the water below were absolutely breathtaking. I walked through the villa – which was larger than Charlie’s house – in complete amazement. Edward walked behind me pointing things out: the five king-sized bedrooms, the state-of-the-art kitchen, the multiple balconies, the hand-painted wall murals, and the bathrooms with heated floors, double-sized showers with multiple showerheads, and double-sized soaker tubs.

I couldn’t begin to fathom how much this place cost a night. My gut reaction kicked in: “Edward, this is incredible but it’s too mu—”

The words died in my mouth when I saw one of his eyebrows arch up at me. I wasn’t offering the correct response. *Damn, this obedience thing is hard.*

“I mean, uh, thank you,” I managed with an embarrassed smile.

“You’re welcome, Bella. I will have nothing but the best for you.” He looked at me to see how I would react. *Damn him!* I knew now part of his intent for his take on the game was to make me willingly accept and enjoy this kind of luxury. “Do you like it?”

Though I was uncomfortable with how expensive this all must have been, I had an obvious and completely honest response. “Like it? Edward, I love it. This is the most gorgeous place I have *ever* been.” I walked over to the windows that overlooked the water below and the mountains off to the left. The clouds hung low and seemed to envelop us. “Look at the clouds.” Edward wrapped his arms around my waist from behind and squeezed me. “It’s almost like we’re up in the sky the clouds are so close.”

He pressed his lips to my ear. "It's like being up in heaven. I can almost imagine it. Because you're here...." His words trailed off as he began kissing and nibbling on my ear and neck. But his words had so affected me that I needed to see his face; I turned in his arms to face him.

"I love you so much, Edward."

"Kiss me, Bella."

In the moment my brain could think, it occurred to me that he had never before asked me to kiss him. Or, rather, *told* me to kiss him. It was such a simple thing, really, but he was always so focused on giving me what he thought I wanted or needed, that he so rarely ever asked me for the things he wanted or needed. It was a complete and utter turn-on to hear him express his desires.

I threw myself into the kiss and it wasn't long before we were moaning and panting into it. *God it had been one long week.*

"Turn around, Bella. I want you to enjoy the view."

I complied and he gently pushed me the three additional steps until my body was nearly flush against the glass.

"Spread your hands out against the glass, Bella."

My heart started thundering inside my chest.

I moved my hands out at shoulder height to rest on either side of me against the cool glass. I leaned my forehead against the cool glass as well. Something cool and hard in front of me. And something cool and hard in back of me. I was suddenly hit hard with the memory of my fantasy that involved being pressed up against the cold tile in the shower, or, um, being embraced between two...um...vampires. I whimpered, both in embarrassment at my thoughts and in arousal. My lack of panties made it so that the moisture between my legs felt so much more prominent.

Edward was trailing his lips along the sides of my neck and lifting my hair so that he could kiss and nibble at the part of my upper back not covered by my shirt. Meanwhile his hands worked to massage my shoulders. Then he slid them slowly out the length of my arms and rested his hands on top of mine. He pressed his body firmly against the back of mine and I could feel how much this was affecting him too. He whispered into my ear, "Tell me what you see, Bella. I love seeing things through your eyes."

He expects me to be able to talk?

"Um," I squeaked, then swallowed to try to get my voice back under control. "The clouds..."

He licked the shell of my ear in one firm swipe. "What else? Keep talking." He softly tugged my hair to cause my head to fall to the side. He started taking long licks up the length of my neck from shoulder to jaw. I was immediately reminded of the night on the dancefloor.

"The river...it...connects...um...ah...to the sea."

"Mmmhmm," he said as he slid his hands back in towards my body and glided them down my sides, rubbing against the sides of my breasts before continuing down to squeeze my hips.

"And, um...oh God," I moaned as he pulled my hips back against him, causing my bottom to grind into him, "um...the cliffs over the water...are...striking."

Holding his hands flat, he slid them around to my lower abdomen and squeezed me in a short embrace before slowly sliding them upwards. "And? What else?" he rasped as he kissed my shoulders.

I was breathing heavily now. I wanted nothing more than to close my eyes and *just feel* but Edward had ordered me to describe the view. "There are...aaah...there are some beautiful...wildflowers at the edge of the...yard. Aaah! Edward!" I groaned as his hands found my breasts and squeezed.

Just then three quick raps sounded at the front door. I gasped and Edward sighed. "You may step away from the window now, love." He pressed a kiss to my cheek and then moved quickly to the door, letting Robert, the villa's personal butler, enter. He proceeded to unpack our luggage and then set up a large and varied spread for lunch.

The food looked incredible, but the damn window had left me hungry for something else. I was also so wet that I feared if I sat down it would mark my skirt. A quick trip to the bathroom helped and soon Robert left us to our lunch.

Edward pulled out a chair for me and indicated for me to sit. He pulled his chair from the far side of the small table to the space immediately to my right. "I want you to try some of everything. Okay?" When I smiled my ascent I was rewarded with his incredible crooked smile.

I savored the artisan cheeses, finished almost all of the lump crab meat dipped in butter, enjoyed a big crusty roll, licked the light cream sauce off my lips from the pasta, and moaned into a potato skin with sour cream and bacon. The only thing I hadn't liked were the mussels; I just couldn't get past the way they looked and their texture on my tongue. I noticed that Edward had watched me eat with great interest, his eyes frequently flickering to the movement of my mouth and tongue as I tried the various dishes. I tucked that nugget of information away for future reference. When I was sure I couldn't fit in another bite, I said, "God, Edward, everything was so good. Thank you."

He smiled and then enthusiastically moved some dishes around, bringing forward a number of desserts. He picked up a spoon and eagerly scooped a raspberry up with some strawberry sorbet. He held the spoon out to me. "Open your mouth, Bella." Though I was getting full, the combination of his order and the appealing dessert being offered me made my mouth fall open. Slowly Edward slid the spoon into my mouth and I wrapped my lips around it, keeping my eyes on his as he slowly slid it back out. *It was good.*

He seemed quite eager to feed me the raspberries and sorbet. I kept my eyes on his; he kept his eyes on my mouth. When the last spoonful, which was mostly melted, dripped out of the corner of my mouth and slid down the side of my chin, Edward's bright golden eyes noticeably darkened. Without thinking I moved to grab the cloth napkin off my lap. "Leave it," he ordered. He continued to stare hard at the red juice running down my chin and now making its way down my neck. Finally, he reached out a finger and caught the droplet of juice on my neck. Using two of his fingers he wiped the juice from my skin. I couldn't resist. As he reached to wipe his fingers on his napkin I grabbed his hand in one of mine and brought it to my mouth. Before he could say anything I was sucking the juice off his fingers.

His eyes darkened further in arousal, but then a different emotion overtook his features. I could only describe it as a dark amusement. He carefully extricated his hand from my mouth and fingers and sat back in his chair.

"That was very naughty of you, Bella. I think you need to be punished for taking such a liberty."

"Punished?" I squeaked.

Before I even realized it, Edward disappeared and returned with a box in his hand. It was small. And wrapped in a turquoise blue paper with a white bow. I had never seen such a box in person before, but I knew where it was from. Tiffany's. I gasped and looked up to Edward's face. He looked excited, amused, and with one cocky eyebrow raised dared me to make a fuss about my 'punishment'. He handed it to me. My hands were trembling and I chewed on my bottom lip.

"Open it," he encouraged.

Very carefully, I opened the wrapping paper, breathing a sigh of relief when I had managed it unscathed. The box under the paper was so beautiful that it alone could have been a present. I lifted the hinged top of the box and gasped, my hand flying to my mouth. "Edward it's...", *too much*, "it's...", *too expensive*, "it's...", *unnecessary*, "it's...beautiful." The ring was unlike anything I had ever owned before or even imagined for myself. I lifted it out of the box and slid it on my right ring finger. "Thank you," I said softly, trying hard to be a gracious accepter of gifts.

"I know you don't like extravagant gifts, Bella. But I want *so badly* to give you small tokens of my love. It brings me so much pleasure to give you things, to share the many pleasures of this world with you. This is one way I need to express *my* love for *you*." He reached out and took my hand. "It's an eternity ring," he said as he spun the platinum ring of inset gemstones around on my finger. "There are twenty sapphires, one for every month that we have known one another." I looked up to his eyes to find them so full of love and happiness that any discomfort I felt melted away.

I started to rise out of my chair to embrace him but then remembered that I wasn't supposed to be initiating anything. I accepted the ring but couldn't imagine what other 'punishments' he had in store for any additional rule breaking. Half standing, I looked at him questioningly and he laughed out loud, understanding my predicament. "Come here," he chuckled, and then I finished launching myself into his arms.

As I moved around the corner of the table, two things happened: my hip caught the corner of the table, knocking over my glass of tea, and my elbow knocked over the bowl of melted butter from the crabmeat. Both the tea and the butter ended up all over my skirt and running down my left leg. I yelped in surprise as the liquids hit my skin. I hopped away from Edward, hoping to spare him from the deluge. Then I looked down at myself to assess the damage. When my eyes went back to Edward, it was clear he was trying hard to stifle his laughter. I could feel my blush heating my face.

Leave it to me to ruin a perfectly romantic lunch. I was so mad and embarrassed at my clumsiness that when Edward's laughter finally escaped him, I glared. "I'm sorry, Bella," he said upon registering my expression.

"It's not funny, Edward. Look," I gestured pointing down, "I ruined the new outfit you just gave me."

He rose from his chair and came to me. "Don't worry, love. We'll send it right out to the laundry. I'm sure they can take care of it. Besides, now I get to see you in another outfit."

I harrumphed, not yet able to shake my annoyance. I bent down with a napkin to wipe the butter off my leg. It left an oily residue. I stood back up, tossing the napkin on the table. "I think I'm going to go get a shower, if that's alright."

"Of course. I'll bring you some clothes."

I nodded, starting to walk in the direction of our bedroom. I stopped and turned. "Edward?"

"Yes?"

"Despite...," I gestured to myself, "lunch was lovely. Thank you."

"You're welcome."

I walked into the huge master bathroom and sighed as I closed the door. As I assessed the multiple showerheads in the huge shower stall I hoped that a nice hot shower would relax me enough to get rid of my now sour mood. *I hope to hell that being changed makes me graceful or I'm demanding my money back.* That made me smile, just a little.

I carefully removed my soiled clothing and slipped out of the gold sandals, the left one of which had a thin coating of butter on the heel. I used the toilet as I allowed the shower water to warm up. I removed my tampon and was surprised to see that I was still bleeding a little heavier than I expected. *Great. A weekend away with Edward and it looks like I'm going to have my period until tomorrow now.* This realization did little for my mood. I flushed and stepped into the shower.

The minute the water hit my body from five different directions, my bad mood washed down the drain. *Holy crow. Somehow, someway, I will live in a house with a shower like this one.*

A huge round showerhead rained water gently down from above, while a four massaging jets pulsed in two lines down the marble wall. After I washed away the remains of my lunch I aligned my back with the jets and closed my eyes against the pleasure the jets provided to my back. Dabbing the moisture off of my tattoo with a washcloth, I rested my hands on my chest as I lost myself to the feeling of the hot water on my back.

My mind soon began trying to convince me to turn around, to allow those jets to treat my front side as well. These jets were so powerful that they made the removable showerhead at home look like a soft sprinkler. I rubbed my thighs together. Thoughts like this weren't helping.

All of a sudden I felt eyes on me. Edward was standing outside of the shower enclosure watching me. I hadn't heard him come in and had no idea how long he had been standing there. After I got over being startled, I took note of his eyes. They were literally darkening as I looked at him.

It was time. I was dying to show Edward my surprise. Since I didn't know what our plans were this weekend I had no way of planning a big reveal. I had decided I would simply play it by ear as the weekend unfolded. There was no way to keep it from him at this point unless I asked him to leave the bathroom, which I didn't really want to do.

I walked over to the glass wall of the shower closest to where Edward was standing. I bit my lip, hard, trying to steel my resolve. Then I dropped my hands down from my chest and rested them on the glass in front of him. It wasn't lost on me that this position resembled my earlier one against the window.

There, over my left breast, at the very spot where my heartbeat was loudest and most forceful, was my newest and, hopefully, permanent mark – my tattoo of Edward's signature. It was relatively small, about a two inches in length and three-quarter inches in height. The ink was a deep blue and Zeke had embellished the design with a flourish line he noticed under some of the words in the love letter. Between the beauty of Edward's script and Zeke's talented artistry, it really was beautiful. I could already tell that despite the fact that some of the scabbing remained. I held my breath awaiting Edward's reaction. I hoped he loved it as much as I did. As if to highlight the tattoo, my heart was now thundering against it from the inside.

EPOV

I was frozen, and completely overwhelmed.

It had begun before Bella had even approached the glass shower wall.

Indeed, I had been struggling with it all day.

Alice told me I needed to desensitize myself to Bella's heightened scent by keeping the stained panties with me on Friday. I don't know if it was my week away from her, or my newfound sexual desires, or the new confidence she had been exuding lately, or something different about her cycle, or that combined with her arousal, but she smelled absolutely phenomenal. I had noticed the moment I arrived at her house this morning.

Mind over matter. Mind over matter. Every time I had been especially enticed, I forced myself to focus. All day I had been so pleased that I was able to talk myself down and rein myself in.

Because what I really wanted to do, what the time apart made me feel like I *had* to do, was claim her in every possible way.

I had knocked lightly on the bathroom door when I brought Bella her new outfit. Twice. But she didn't seem to hear me. I entered the bathroom intent on simply setting the clothing on the counter and then leaving. But then two things happened: I saw her reflection in the mirror – she was exquisite with the water cascading down her body; and I *smelled* her – her regular mouthwatering scent combined with her cycle combined with her arousal, all mixed into a potent alchemy by the steam in the air.

The venom flooded my mouth and I walked nearly up to the shower glass. My rational mind reasserted itself, then, and though I didn't have the power to leave the room right at that moment, I forced myself to freeze and stop breathing. But I allowed myself my sight. My vision seemed all of a sudden to be attached directly to my groin.

That was the moment when Bella apparently felt my eyes on her. Her eyes flew open and she gasped, her mouth falling into a small and incredibly enticing oval. Her heart took off full pace and more blood beyond that already brought to the surface by the hot water flooded her face. As if that didn't exacerbate the situation enough, she approached me, her heart wilder still.

Has this woman no self-preservation instinct at all???

And then she dropped her hands.

My eyes immediately focused on the new mark on Bella's body. Over her left breast, where her skin most quivered from the force of her pounding heart, was my name. *My. Name.*

I was stunned into silence. My thoughts were in complete disarray. One thought finally became dominant. All day, I had been dreaming of claiming her. And here, she had claimed herself for me. She had marked herself. Permanently. With my name. Inscribed over her heart, the very symbol of her life, her love.

"Edward?" she whispered after a few minutes.

I couldn't. Not just yet. I held a single finger up to imploring her to wait. To give me a moment.

"Okay," she whispered again. She took a few steps back, probably thinking it might help, but all it did was stir the air further.

"Be. Still." I could only imagine how my voice sounded to her. But I just needed a moment to get used to the air, to deal with her revelation, to evaluate myself, and to come to some decisions.

A few minutes later, I took in a slow deep breath. *Tolerable.* I took in another. *Manageable.* The flow of venom slowed substantially with each purposeful breath. I sucked in a final breath through my mouth and nose. *Pleasurable.*

Bella apparently sensed that I was resurfacing, because she crossed her arms over her chest, effectively hiding the tattoo with the washcloth. Her action finally jolted me from my stupor entirely.

I opened the shower door and, fully clothed, stepped into the large space with the pulsing hot water. I moved slowly towards her. She probably didn't even realize she was doing it, but with every slow step I took towards her, she took a step back. Soon her calves hit the edge of the built-in seat in the shower and she stopped retreating. There was nowhere left to go.

"Drop your arms," I said in a low voice. She did, and I noticed her hands were shaking. *Dammit, Edward. Fix this.*

I reached forward with my right hand and gently took her left hand. I squeezed lightly, wanting to reassure her. I was rewarded with a small smile.

With my left hand, I slowly reached up until my fingers touched my name over her heart.

"Can...can I...say something?" she asked.

My eyes flashed to hers. "Of course, love. Bella, I'm...I'm sorry about before. I was just a little overwhelmed. I cannot apologize enough for scaring you."

She took a deep breath. "I...no, I wasn't scared, Edward. Well, I guess I was scared you were mad. But not...of anything else." She searched my eyes for a moment; I could tell they were still darkened. My

proximity to her was keeping my body in an anxious and excited state. She continued, "I just...I loved your marks on me so much and I just thought...", she sighed, "that I won't, you know, always be markable, so I wanted to have a mark of yours that would...last."

"Bella," I began as I ran my fingers lightly over the mark, careful not to disturb the thin scab, "never...never in my whole life have I been as completely surprised and overwhelmed as I am right now. You...you *marked* yourself. With *my name*. And I...I...*like* it...a lot more than I probably should."

She threw her arms around my neck, surprising me once again. *Christ!* Her body felt delicious pressed against the front of mine. "Oh, Edward. I am so glad you like it. I...I wanted it for me. But I also wanted it for you. I wanted you to see that I was completely comfortable with this," she pulled back so that she could look in my eyes, "with *us*, being forever. I thought of this as an early wedding present for you." Her voice sounded shier towards the end.

"Bella, you are the most remarkable creature I have ever known or will ever know. Thank you," I said as I pressed my lips against her ear. "But, now we have a problem."

She pulled back completely. "We do?"

"Indeed." I ran my eyes completely up and down her body. I was rewarded with the renewed smell of her arousal. I loved how responsive her body was to me. "Now we have to decide whether you should get your reward or your punishment first."

"What?!" Her cheeks were aflame.

"Your gift greatly pleases me, and I am inclined to reward you for it. But as much as I loved your hug a moment ago, you are once again taking liberties that you ought not to be taking." I watched her face as understanding washed across her features and her breathing hitched. I leaned in, using my hands to tuck her wet hair behind her ears, and murmured, "I thought I already taught you that lesson, love. So, you see, it's a problem."

I smiled at the small whimper that caught in her throat.

"From here on out, you need to do *exactly* what I say."

"I will, Edward," she said in a small, seductive voice.

"Lace your hands behind your neck." The look of surprise on her face was quickly replaced by one of desire.

"Very nice," I said as I noted how the position caused her chest to jut out. Her breathing rate accelerated.

I lifted my wet t-shirt up over my head and tossed it in the corner and kicked my shoes and socks off as well. My wet jeans hung heavy and low on my hips. Her eyes raked over my chest. She licked her lips, causing my erection to harden further.

"You need to keep your hands there. Do you understand?" She nodded. I leaned my face into her neck and breathed deeply. *Exquisite*. "God you're beautiful, Bella. So beautiful."

I pressed my lips against her carotid artery, lingering there for a few moments before kissing up over her jaw and pressing my lips to hers. Not able to resist, I slid my tongue into her mouth and was quickly rewarded with an intense sucking sensation on my tongue in her mouth. *Fucking incredible.*

Placing my hands on her hips, I bent over and placed my face against her stomach, kissing over her belly button and allowing my tongue to slither out and explore her there. She moaned softly. *She's exquisite and she's mine.*

I needed to taste her further. I started lapping at her stomach. I could feel her muscles rippling in reaction. Not wanting to tickle her, I held my tongue firm and licked one continuous stroke from her navel to her collar bone. Softly I placed a kiss on the tattoo. I couldn't believe that she had done this for me. But she had earlier accepted my gift to her gracefully and, though her gift to me elicited my knee jerk reaction to question anything that harmed her, I decided I would accept her gift gracefully as well.

I moved lower, placing open-mouthed kisses all over the soft flesh of her left breast. She was whimpering softly, obviously restraining herself. I wasn't having that. "Bella, you are holding back on me. I have become quite intoxicated by the sounds you make and your voice when we are together like this. I expect to *hear you*. Don't hold your sounds back from me."

"Oh God, Edward," she immediately called out in response to my mouth on her nipple.

Stepping back, I gently palmed both breasts, occasionally catching and rolling her nipples between my fingers. "Tell me what you want, Bella."

"Everything," she blurted.

God yes. "Hmm. That's a good answer. But what do you want *first*?" I asked as I continued to tease her soft flesh.

"I just want you to touch me. I missed your touch so much." She was panting now and the scent of her arousal permeated the moist air.

I continued to knead her breasts, leaning in to kiss her again. As our tongues and lips battled, I began squeezing her nipples. "Touch me harder, Edward. Please."

She has no idea. Restraint. Restraint. Restraint. Someday I will take her the way I want. But now. Have. Restraint.

A growl rattled in my chest and I squeezed her breasts more firmly. She gasped and pressed her chest into my hands, moaning my name.

With my left hand still teasing her breasts, I slid my right hand down her body, running it roughly over her abdomen and hips before curving around behind her and cupping her ass. *Christ she feels good.*

She moaned at the contact and was trying to both press her front forward into one hand and her rear backward into my other hand.

"You have been a bad girl, Bella," I murmured as I continued to rub her soft cheek. "First you tried to kiss me this morning without permission. Then you teased me when you took your panties off, then you sucked

on my fingers, and just now you hugged me, both of these again without permission. Do you have a problem with authority, Bella?"

"Um, no?" her voice trembled.

"Hmm. You're not very convincing. You are *mine*, Bella," I rasped.

"Yes. Always," she murmured.

"And, for the moment, you are to do as I say. Is that understood?"

"Yes."

"Good. Then how should we punish you, Bella?"

"I...uuhh...don't know." She licked her lips. My cock twitched in response.

I rubbed my right hand more firmly against the rounded flesh of her rear. Very gently, I tapped her ass with my hand.

I couldn't have been more caught off guard by her reaction. "Ungh, *yes*," she hissed.

"You like that?" I couldn't decide if I wanted her to say yes or no. The idea of 'yes' thrilled me so much that I felt like I *should* want her to say 'no.'

"Yes," she whimpered. *Oh God.*

I rubbed her more. *Was she really enjoying this?* I had to be sure. "Do you...do you *want* me to spank you, Bella?"

"Mmm...yeah," she said as her head fell against my chest. *Fuck. The tone of her voice. She's pleading.* My cock pushed uncomfortably against my soaked jeans.

"Here's how this is going to work. You are going to guide me in how hard I can do this, Bella." I met her eyes so that she knew I was deadly serious. "I *will not* hurt you. Do you understand? You must be completely honest."

"Yes, Edward. I will," she rasped.

"Once I know your limit, you will count off your punishment. You will receive one spank for each infraction." She whimpered softly.

I brought my hand down against her ass, with just a little more force than last time. I accentuated the slap with a moderate pinch to her nipple. "Oh God. Harder," she pleaded.

Licking her shoulder, I lifted my hand again and made contact slightly harder. "Oh! Ungh, harder, Mr. Cullen. I'm so sorry." *Holy Christ.*

"Such a bad girl," I rasped against her soft skin. I pushed my erection into her hip and we both groaned. I spanked her again. "I won't do it again, Mr. Cullen. I promise. Harder. Please, harder."

The next time was hard enough. "Now count, Bella." My voice sounded strained even to me.

Pinching her nipple, I brought my hand down against her rounded flesh, a full notch below where she told me was okay, just to be sure.

"Ungh. One. One, Mr. Cullen." *I don't know what made her think to say that but it's the hottest fucking thing.*

I rubbed her soft skin before spanking her again.

"T...two." The scent of her arousal became even more prominent. I noticed her rubbing her legs together.

"Ah ah, Bella. Spread your legs apart." She whimpered and I groaned, realizing I was smelling more than just her arousal. I took several deep breaths. *I can handle this. But, still. Fuck.*

"I hope you're learning your lesson, Bella," I whispered into her neck as I spanked her again.

"Oh God, Mr. Cullen. I am."

"Did you forget something?"

"Oh...three. *Three*," she whimpered just before my hand came down again.

"You got lucky. You were almost too late, bad girl."

"Four. I'm sorry, Mr. Cullen. Four," she panted. *Oh God, I might go insane from the pleasure of her enjoying this.*

I rubbed her cheek with both my cold hands. I had been sure not to hit the same place twice, and I felt certain that I had used sufficient restraint, but I knew my coldness would be soothing nonetheless. I was overcome with the sense that she was teaching me to play her body in the same way I had learned to play the piano – sometimes andante, other times allegro. That knowledge was making me feel free, and powerful. "You did very good, my Bella. I am pleased."

"Ummm," she hummed, "thank you, Edward."

"Now that the problem of your punishment is out of the way, I think it's time for your reward."

She whimpered.

I grabbed her wrists and gently pulled her arms down to her side. I massaged her shoulders while I whispered against her ear. "I'm going to touch you now, Bella. Would you like that?"

"Yes," she moaned. I slid my hands up to cup her head and leaned in to kiss her deeply. She threaded her fingers into my hair and pulled me into her. *I fucking love when she pulls my hair like that.* The feeling and the thought made me grunt, and become impatient.

Keeping my left hand cupped behind her head and my mouth pressed to hers, I slowly slid my other hand down Bella's body. I ghosted over her breasts and abdomen, just teasing.

I struggled internally over whether I should say anything.

But then she spoke and I didn't have to.

Just as my fingers reached the soft hair at the junction of Bella's thighs, her hand grabbed mine, stilling it from moving any lower. I pulled my face back so I could see hers.

"Edward, I...I'm...", she began.

"I know, Bella."

"You know? But...I mean...is it...can you—"

"I can handle it. It's not exactly the same. Is it okay with you, love?" I didn't want her to feel that her safety was compromised in the least.

She nodded, keeping her eyes focused on mine. I twisted my wrist within her grasp, and she released my arm. Her hand settled on my hip. My hand slid home into the warm, moist folds of her center.

It was crystal clear that the slick moisture there was *more* than just the shower water. She was as wet for me as she had ever been. It was also clear that the moisture pooling between her legs was mixed with a small amount of her menstrual blood. I had smelled it earlier. I could now feel its distinctive texture on the sensitive pads of my fingers. I noted with interest that the realization didn't cause much venom to flow in my mouth, but it did cause my cock to harden in a way that was now becoming achingly painful.

I pressed my erection into her hip and we both groaned. She used the hand on my hip to keep me pulled in tight against her. I continued kissing her and feeding her my tongue while my hand set a slow, steady rhythm up the length of her folds to her clit.

She lowered her other hand to the top of my jeans and I pulled back. I wasn't sure I could take being stimulated by both the smell and feel of her blood and her hand on my cock. "You will not touch me, Bella. Do you understand?"

"But—"

"Do I need to have you put your hands back up?" I concentrated my rubbing directly on her clit.

"No! God. Ungh. Okay, okay," she whimpered.

"Keep that hand in my hair," I commanded. She complied immediately. I smiled darkly as she tugged at my hair again as she pulled my mouth back to hers.

After several moments she was moaning non-stop and her legs were shaking. "Sit down on the bench, Bella." I pulled my hand back from her line of sight.

She lowered herself slowly, and I sunk to my knees in front of her. "Slide your hips to the edge," I ordered. My eyes raked up her body as she got into position. *Fucking beautiful.*

I slid my hands up her legs starting at the knees. Her eyes flashed down to my right hand, which I had balled into a fist. *She misses nothing.* Her eyes moved back and forth between my face and my fist several times before she chewed hard on her bottom lip. "Edward?"

"Yes, Bella?"

"Just *how much* can you handle it?"

I froze, my dark eyes meeting her expression brown ones. "What do you mean, Bella?" I feared I knew exactly what she meant.

Her heart rate kicked up another notch. She hesitated. "Well...nothing. Never mind."

I pulled my hands back entirely and she whimpered at the loss of contact. "If you want me to continue touching you, Bella, tell me exactly what you were thinking."

"I'm afraid to. You'll get mad."

"You *never* have to be afraid of me, Isabella. I promise not to get mad."

Her expression started out as embarrassed but quickly shifted to skeptical. In another situation it would have been cute and amusing. Now it was simply enthralling.

Her mouth opened and closed several times before I saw her eyes and jaw set with a fierce determination. She took a deep breath and said, "Taste me."

I sucked in a breath. *She did not just offer her blood to me. Yes she did. Mother of God.*

She whispered this time. "Taste me, Edward. I want you to."

"Bella, you...don't know...what you're saying." *Take it back. Take it back or I won't be able to resist.*

"I *do* know what I'm saying, Edward. *I know* you can do this. I want you to."

'I know'...? Of course. Alice. I heard my meddling sister's voice from Friday morning: 'There's more where that came from, you know...and it'll be safe, I've seen....'

Competing needs – no, *wants* – tried to express themselves. "Bella, I...I don't...I never want to...you're not just a...."

She pressed two fingers on her right hand against my lips. "Sshh, baby. It's alright. You're not taking. I'm giving." I watched in fascination and a little horror as she slowly slid her left hand towards the fist hiding the fingers thinly coated with her blood. She moved as slowly as she did the day she touched me for the first time, all the while murmuring words of encouragement and comfort.

When her warm fingers wrapped around my wrist, I resisted and held my arm firmly in place against my side. *I want to taste her so bad but it's so wrong. I cannot degrade her in that way.*

"Please, Edward?" A small whimper caught in my throat. "I know you would never try to take it from me, Edward. But I also know how much it calls to you. This way you're not taking it. My body doesn't need it. So I can give it to you. And I *really* want to give it to you. Please. For me, Edward." The entire time she was talking she was pulling at my wrist. The second time she said 'please' I relented and slowly she pulled my forearm up towards my face.

"Bella," I pleaded.

"Sshh. It's okay, baby. Taste me."

I closed my eyes and sucked in a deep breath. I knew I was completely in control of my bloodlust. The situation wasn't raising that particular concern. What I was most having to restrain myself from was ripping my jeans off and burying my cock in the rich moisture of her pussy. I could imagine it, nearly feel it. Her hot moist walls sucking at my hard length as I slid myself into her. Her body wrapping itself around me as I thrust my cock into her time and time again.

"Move your hands away from me Bella." She immediately dropped her hands from my arm and waist into her lap.

I pressed my fist against my lips, wishing I was strong enough to reject this most incredible of invitations.

With a hard stare I slowly opened my mouth and slid my fingers in. I growled lowly and closed my eyes against the sensation flooding through my entire body. *Bloody fucking heaven and hell nothing has ever been better than this and never will be again and it's mine all mine all mine all mine.*

I opened my blackened eyes and what I saw before me elicited a sharp hiss. Bella's eyes were heavy lidded and needful; her mouth hung open and she was panting hard; and her right middle finger was pressing in hard circles against her clit.

"That. Is. *Mine*," I hissed as I pushed her hand away from her pussy. I thrust my body flush against hers, urgently returning my hand to her moist center and rubbing her with renewed intensity. I tugged her hair to get her head to fall back so that I could lick and nip at her neck. She let out a loud groan at the assault and then a sharp "Fuck!" as I slid two fingers into her tight slit.

"This is mine, Bella. *Mine*."

"God, yes, Edward. Yours."

"I will have it. I will *taste* it," I ground out.

"Please."

"It was fucking exquisite, Bella. Nothing in the world tastes better than you."

"Ungh," she grunted as I added a third finger and sucked hard on her shoulder, easily bringing an angry mark to the surface.

I slid my face down her body, placing cold hard licks and open-mouthed kisses wherever I could reach. She threaded one hand into my hair and made a fist, pulling sharply against my scalp. I groaned and curled my fingers within her in retaliation, smiling darkly when she screamed my name.

"I want to see my fingers entering you, Bella," I rasped as I laid my face against the inside of her thigh, midway between her knee and her hip. *Christ that looks beautiful.* She moaned and thrust her hips up and forward, bring her delectable center closer to my face. "For the love of God, Bella, *stay still.*" Her fist squeezed tighter in my hair, just hinting at pain. It was thrilling. All at once I felt her tensing around my fingers. Then she was screaming and clenching, hard.

"So good, Bella. So beautiful. But I'm not done with you. You will come again." She moaned loudly and incoherently.

As I watched in lustful fascination at my fingers plunging into Bella's most sacred of places, Alice's words played like a chant in my mind: *it will be safe...it will be safe....*

I couldn't trust it. I wouldn't. Because I wanted it too much. I wanted to bury my open mouth into her soft folds and lick and suck and swallow and bite. I wanted to thrust my tongue repeatedly into her hot hole and make her scream and gush down my throat. I couldn't get past the risk, though.

"Bella, talk to me. Distract me with your words. Tell me why you wanted me to...do that," I commanded with a low strained voice.

As her words began, I locked my teeth firmly together and slid my head slowly up her thigh.

"Ugh, Edward. I...I know you...*God*...don't like what you are, but Edward, I...ungh!...I *love* what you are. Everything about...what you...*uh*... are...appeals to...me...*Aah!*...turns me on, Edward. It turns me on."

"*Fuck! Edward!*" she screamed as I pressed my nose hard against her clit; my fingers rammed in and out of her directly below my mouth. I let out a sharp cold breath against her hot flesh.

"Keep talking," I ground out roughly between my clenched teeth, "and fucking keep pulling my hair." I needed those distractions, bad. I slid my other hand away and wrapped it around the built-in marble bar of a low soap dish to make sure I didn't lose control of it.

I couldn't tempt sliding my tongue through my teeth, which I so fucking badly wanted to do, because that would require loosening up the vice grip of my jaw. So I settled for jutting out my bottom lip against my thrusting fingers. I rocked my nose against her clit and rubbed my bottom lip against my fingers, drawing some of her sweet nectar into my mouth in tiny, irregular, *exquisitely delicious* amounts.

"Edward! God! I can't...please...."

I wanted to ask her what she wanted but I wouldn't open my mouth to do it. And I couldn't give up what I was managing to get.

So I growled at her.

"Fucking yes, Edward! Fucking growl again," she pleaded as she pulled my hair with both of her hands.

The sound I unleashed at her was certainly unlike any other she had ever heard from me. It started low in my chest and rolled upwards, gaining volume and grit as it roared out of me.

"Yes!" she screamed as her pussy clenched down on my fingers again. I kept moving within her until her body started to settle.

With my head resting against her lower abdomen I slid my fingers out of her and, turning my mouth away from her center, quickly licked them clean. A soft growl rattled my chest again and she stroked my hair, still gasping for breath.

"Give me a minute, please," I said, just needing time to ensure I was temporarily put back together. I wouldn't allow myself to fall completely apart until I was in a distant bathroom.

Finally, I sat back from, my ass against my heels. She sat up straight on the bench and closed her knees together. I thanked her silently for that.

"Bella—" "Edward—" We began at the same time. She bit her lip and smiled at me. I shook my head in disbelief but couldn't help the crooked grin that soon dominated my face.

"Thank you—" "Thank you—" We both began again. Our mutual inarticulateness caused us both to chuckle, and then Bella laughed hard. The sound of it was pure magic. I smiled broadly and leaned back to shut off the water. I couldn't imagine the size of the hot water tanks in this place but they must have been massive. I rose to my feet and offered my hand out to her.

I need to get out of here.

Her eyes flashed to the still incredibly obvious erection bulging against my jeans. "Not a chance, Swan. If you have even an iota of self-preservation instinct, you will keep your hands and your eyes above the waist."

She jutted her bottom lip out in a beautiful pout and accepted my hand. I embraced her tenderly and pressed my lips softly to her cheek. She seemed to sense my reluctance to kiss her lips because she grabbed both sides of my face with her hands and pressed her mouth firmly and open against my own, once again demonstrating her complete and unconditional acceptance of me. It was astounding.

"There are no words, Bella, for the gifts you have given me. I can only promise to spend everyday for the rest of our lives expressing my undying appreciation."

"Please understand, Edward, that I feel *exactly the same way*."

"Isabella Swan, that could not be more clear to me than it is at this very moment."

Okay. I really need to get out of here.

I pulled her to me again and then stepped back, reaching out of the glass door to the plush towel on the heated towel bar just outside. I wrapped the towel around her and she shivered at its warmth. "You, dress. I

am going to go change. Meet me in the living room when you're done. I think we've, perhaps, had enough alone time for a bit? I am taking you into town."

She bit her lip and smiled shyly, then nodded. "Okay."

I shook my head at her. *She never does what I expect! It's maddening and glorious!*

Just as I was about to step out of the bathroom door, she called. "Oh Edward?"

Must go now. "Yes, Bella?" I replied as I leaned my head back in.

"We're going to play this game again after I'm changed and you're not going to go so easy on me." My jaw dropped open in disbelief. "And I'm not going to go easy on you either."

No fucking way did she just say that to me. And with my control this frazzled. I blinked my eyes hard, but her expression remained as smug and taunting. I growled at her. But her smile only broadened. "I...Bella...I...."

"Okay, Edward, I'll see you in a few minutes. I'm going to get dressed now."

I was dismissed. *I was dismissed?! Fucking little beautiful tease.* "You know, Bella, my memory of this moment will remain crystal clear, but your memory of this moment will be faded by your change. I *will* remember to make you pay." She was the one startled this time and she sucked in a breath as her heart rate exploded. I chuckled darkly before stepping out of the room and closing the door. I needed to have the last word because I had no doubt that once she recomposed herself she would have come up with a deadly appealing retort. I didn't think the thin grasp I had on my control could bear it.

Go! Go! Go!

I grabbed a change of clothes and flew through the house to a bathroom on the opposite end. I ripped my jeans trying to get them off and wrenched open the shower door, cracking the glass around the door handle. I pulled the water on and threw my body down onto the built-in seat before roughly grabbing my cock and jerking it relentlessly. As much as I wished it was her doing this for me I knew there was no way. I was too insane with lust. I needed it hard. And fast. And tight. And rough. And fucking to never stop. I slammed my fist up and down around my solid cock, thrusting my hips up into my steel grasp. I ran my tongue around the inside of my mouth tasting a remaining hint of Bella's essence there. I pictured her soft warm body bouncing above me as she straddled my cock and rode me hard. That image was all it took. I came harder than I ever had in my entire life. I stifled a scream as I buried my mouth against my shoulder. My orgasm went on for a full minute. And then I slumped against the hard marble wall behind me. I sighed, in victory, and in defeat. Both were glorious.

~*~

Chapter 16: The Weekend, Part II

BPOV

Edward slipped out of the bathroom and pulled the door shut behind him. I stepped out of the shower onto the plush bath mat. After counting to five I began silently screaming into my towel and jumping up and down. *That was the best fricking shower anybody has ever taken in the whole history of the world!!!!*

After my small celebration I glanced up at myself in the mirror. My usually pale skin was flush all over. My lips were fuller than usual from kissing. I even seemed to be standing straighter. Orgasms were apparently very good for my constitution.

I finished drying off and started grabbing the change of clothes that had brought Edward into the bathroom in the first place. *That fiend!* I sorted through the pile again. Sandals. Shirt. Skirt. Bra. Sandals. Shirt. Skirt. Bra. *Apparently I'm skipping panties altogether this time!*

Fine.

I pulled on the gauzy knee-length black skirt and the sheer white bra and white v-neck t-shirt. The t-shirt was a good thing, because the mark Edward made on my shoulder did not fall exactly where a tank top strap would sit. I rubbed my fingers over the mark. I was thrilled beyond words that he marked me without my asking him to do so. But I feared Alice's reaction – this mark was not well positioned in terms of my wedding dress. Surely it would fade within the next two weeks, though.

Sliding on my new black sandals, I walked out to the master bedroom and found a headband in my purse. I pushed my hair back off my face, noticing my new ring catching the light as my hand moved. I smiled as I admired it, and then hugged it to my chest as if the ring was Edward himself. *How unlike me.* I guessed we both were changing in response to the other.

I finished up everything I needed to do in the bathroom, finding myself now somewhat glad that my period seemed to be lasting slightly longer than usual, and made my way out to meet Edward in the living room. Curiously he wasn't there yet.

"Edward?" I called out several moments later.

Almost instantly he appeared from some distant part of the villa.

I was going to ask him where he disappeared to but then he kissed me so thoroughly that I nearly forgot my name. He pulled back with a warm smile. "Ready?"

"Mmmhmm."

He grabbed my hand and led me out the front door. His car was waiting immediately outside.

Several minutes later we found a parking spot in Victoria's downtown. I was thrilled for once that it was overcast, because the city was filled with urban gardens and a long promenade ran beside the harbor. We browsed all afternoon, being led only by things that caught our interests. Victoria was a charming city with an Old World feel – right down to its London-style double-decker buses. The British history of the city led

us into a conversation about traveling. Despite his long life, Edward hadn't traveled nearly as much as I might have expected. Together we began brainstorming a travel itinerary for our future. We agreed immediately on England, Ireland, and France. He persuaded me easily on the idea of Greece and Egypt. We both agreed that Italy had a significant amount of interest from a tourist-perspective but that it was probably better to avoid that country.

We encountered an ice cream shop where I stopped to use the bathroom and grab a bottle of water. The ice cream smelled so good, however, that I gave in to my desire to get a small cone. There were so many flavors that it was hard to decide, but I finally picked pink mint chip and we continued walking while I ate my treat.

I swear I didn't do it on purpose. It was ice cream for goodness sake. It required the use of the tongue to eat. But after a few minutes of eating and trying to keep up with the melting drips on the warm day, I became acutely aware of Edward's...fascination with my...snack. At first I was embarrassed. I was sure I looked silly repeatedly licking the cone and turning it to find the next drip to scoop up. But then a drip got away from me and landed on my wrist, and I quickly licked it off. I heard Edward groan next to me. When I looked over at him, I stopped in my tracks. His eyes were visibly darker. His reaction flustered me and I bit my lip as another drip landed on the back of my hand. Realizing I had been neglecting my ice cream I turned to it and licked it quickly several times. I wiped the spot of ice cream off my hand with my finger and sucked it into my mouth. When I heard the low growl rumble in Edward's chest, the embarrassment slipped away and I smiled into my next lick, taking a long slow continuous stroke around the whole cone.

Before I even realized what was happening, Edward grabbed me and spun us around to sit on a bench along the sidewalk. He pulled me down onto his lap. "Do you feel what you're doing to me?" he growled against my ear.

I was so startled by his actions that I let go of the cone and it landed ice-cream-down on the sidewalk next to us. I'm not sure who pouted more.

"Love, I'm sorry." He started to scoot me off his lap. "I'll run and get you another."

"Stay," I said as I pushed my hips back against his, causing a small groan. "I had enough. It's okay. It's just...."

"What?" He laid his cheek against my shoulder and looked up at me.

I forced an innocent expression. "Now I don't have anything to lick."

He pressed his hips up against me and spoke in a low voice. "I'm sure we can solve that problem, Bella."

"Why, Edward Cullen."

He bit down on his lower lip, then realizing I was teasing, flashed me a devilish grin.

I pressed my lips against his forehead. "Can you walk with your, er, little problem there?"

He flashed his eyes up to mine and slipped his hands down to my hips so that he could better press himself up against me. "I wouldn't really say it was a *little* problem, would you? And, before you answer, I would encourage you to choose your words very carefully." A low growl rumbled against my neck as he kissed me.

I giggled, then quickly recomposed myself. "Hmm, let me see," I said as I pushed back against him. All of a sudden, number thirty-one – being with him in public – crashed into my brain, causing a stream of moisture to flow against my skirt. "Um...."

"Mmm." He made a show of inhaling deeply against my ear. "How I would love to know what you are thinking right now."

I took a deep breath to try to steady my voice. "I was thinking...."

"Yes?"

"I was thinking that that ice cream cone was a very poor and much too small substitute for what I'd really like to have in my mouth right now." *There. Let him suck on that one for a bit. Er, actually, let me suck on that one for a bit. Please? With a cherry on top? My cherry! On top! Ha! I'm so far gone....*

My gasp interrupted my internal shtick. Edward's hand had slid around from my hip and not-so-gently squeezed my butt, causing his erection to settle quite firmly in between my cheeks. I realized what power I hoped I'd get when I was a vampire: telekinesis. 'Cause I swear I'd will these clothes right off us in a heartbeat.

Two weeks two weeks two weeks two weeks

Just then a little family made their way past us, paying us no mind. The mother was pushing a curly haired little girl in a stroller, and the father was repeatedly lifting a slightly older boy into the air on the count of three. Perhaps this wasn't exactly the best place for number thirty-one to take place....

I spied some activity further down the block. I stood up and turned to face Edward. Reaching out my hand to him, I said, "Come on. Let's keep walking." His expression was somewhere between sheepish and devilish. I couldn't help but laugh as he rose with a flourish and offered me his arm. I wrapped mine around his and we continued down the street.

At the end of the block was a park filled with colorful totem poles and murals of Native American design. There appeared to be some sort of a small festival going on, and tables were arranged throughout the park selling foods, arts, and crafts by First Nations people. The sway of the foot traffic led us into the park and I began to browse the display tables.

Several things happened all at once.

First, after weeks of successfully managing to distract myself from thinking of him, I was forcefully and painfully reminded of Jacob, my long lost best friend who was currently running the wilds to avoid me and my pending nuptials. Thoughts of him were so unexpected and so jarring that they made my breath catch and Edward spun towards me in alarm.

Second, the two First Nations people – a middle-aged couple – staffing the nearest display table took note of us. Or, more precisely, they took note of Edward. Something about the way they were looking at him didn't sit well with my stomach. And on top of my sorrow about Jacob, I was suddenly gripped with the desire to flee away from this place as fast as inhumanly possible.

Third, Edward's phone began to ring, but in his concern for me he didn't answer.

And, fourth, and most problematic, just as the low murmuring of the suspicious couple tore my attention away from Edward and back to them, I noticed a reflecting bit of light off of the silver jewelry sitting on the table in front of them. It held my attention for a long moment. And then I realized why. *The sun.*

Time seemed to move in slow motion.

I turned my eyes to Edward, whose back was towards the bit of thinning cloud that was allowing the sun's rays to escape to the ground.

Between the glares of the couple and the impending appearance of the sun, every protective instinct I had engaged. *Protect him. Defend him. Save him.*

I gripped Edward's wrist tightly and tugged at him hard. *There. On the next table.*

It was getting brighter. And the tension in his arm muscles told me he realized it now. But he was trapped amidst a throng of people, some of whom seemed destined to be wary of him already.

I lunged forward another three steps and grabbed a thick blanket off the nearest corner of the table. "I'll get my money from my fiancé," I called over my shoulder as I spun, shook the folds out of the blanket, and flung it over Edward's head. "Play along," I whispered. "The sun."

He nodded once. As I wrapped my arm around his back I sensed as much tension in his body as I had ever felt before.

It was like I was operating outside my own body. The moment was surreal. All I knew was that Edward was in danger. I would have done *anything* to protect him from it. The feeling scared me more than a little.

"I'm kidnapping you, sweetie," I called playfully. "Laugh," I whispered.

He let out a low forced chuckle. "I'm all yours," he said. It probably sounded normal to anyone bothering to pay attention. But I could hear it was said through gritted teeth.

I searched Edward's back pockets for his wallet and fished inside for money. I had money of my own but it was in my purse and I knew it would take too much time to dig around to find it. I pulled out some bills and handed two twenties to the perplexed lady selling the blankets. I don't think she had noticed us before so her only concern seemed to be about my bizarre behavior. But a quick glance to my right revealed that the middle-aged couple was still eyeing us warily.

"I'll lead. You follow," I said to Edward as I wrapped my arm tight around his waist and moved us through the crowd. The woman called after me about my change but I waved her off. "The museum."

"I can see through the weave in the blanket." His voice was low. Dangerous.

"Good. But you still have to let me lead you. And pretend like you think this is funny," I whispered. "I'm getting you to this museum one way or the other, dear," I joked as an older couple looked at me funny. I smiled and shrugged my shoulders. "I love museums," I said to them, "but this is the only way I can get him to go."

Fifty feet. Thirty. We pushed through the front doors of the Royal BC Museum, but they were all glass, and the sun shone quite clearly into the lobby. "Hold on." I looked around. Straight ahead I found what I needed.

"Two adults, please," I said to the teenage girl behind the counter. She arched her eyebrow at the blanket over my companion. "It's a surprise," I whispered over the counter to her.

"Oh," she whispered back as she handed me my tickets with a smile. I maneuvered us around the admissions desk. The sun didn't reach this far into the lobby.

"We're out of the sun," I said as I started to lift the blanket up over his head. I got as far as folding the blanket over his hair like a hood when he grabbed my wrists. The action made me meet his eyes, which were pitch black. His expression was torn between mortification and rage. "Come on." I grabbed his hand and led him to a second ticket counter. "Two please for whichever show is next." I collected the tickets and pulled him into the dim theater.

The IMAX screen stood several stories tall and filled the whole width of the theater. The show would be starting in fifteen minutes and there were a scattering of people in the theater, most in the center section.

The dimness made it more difficult for me to see, which Edward must have guessed, because he began directing us to the highest back row. The end of the row jutted out over the theater entrance creating a solitary grouping of seats, which we soon occupied. There was no one anywhere near us.

The quietude, coolness, and dimness of the theater were a stark contrast to the preceding moments, which for me had been filled with the threat of danger.

Edward still hadn't said anything, and now that the danger had passed, I could feel the adrenaline coursing through my system. Suddenly I was shaking so bad that my teeth wanted to chatter. I pressed my hands hard against my legs to try to hold myself still, but my body insisted on experiencing the panic now that I hadn't the luxury to experience in the midst of the situation.

The next thing I knew the blanket was around my shoulders. I pulled it a little tighter. It seemed to help, not a little because the blanket smelled like Edward. I noticed Edward slipping his phone back into his pocket.

"Edward—"

"Please Bella." His voice was strained.

Okay. Give him a few minutes. This is Edward. Prepare for him to overreact.

Five minutes passed. Ten. More people drifted into the theater. Still no one sat anywhere near us. I glanced over at him every so often but the hard set of his facial expression and his body posture told me he wasn't ready to talk. After fifteen minutes the movie started, and we were immediately immersed in a beautiful undersea world. Larger-than-life whales, dolphins, and sharks swam by and the theater was awash in the deep blues and greens of the ocean.

It would have been pretty cool if the tension between us wasn't so perceptibly thick. And if I hadn't nearly drowned myself once upon a time by jumping off a cliff into the ocean. I pushed that thought away. I had bigger worries at the moment.

Finally, my impatience got the best of me and I leaned in my seat towards him, putting my arm over his armrest and into his lap, where I entwined my arm with his and interlaced our fingers. I squeezed my hand as hard as I could. *It's okay, Edward. Everything's okay.* I willed him to understand my gesture.

After what seemed like ages, but was probably less than an hour, the movie ended and the house lights came up. Everyone else shuffled out of the theater. A teenage employee came in to collect trash and noticed us sitting in the back. He began making his way up the stairs, presumably to tell us to clear out. When he got a little closer I leaned over and gripped my stomach before calling to him, "I'm not feeling very well. Would you mind if I sat here for a few minutes?" The blanket around my shoulders added a nice effect.

He thought for a minute. "Yeah, sure. I guess that would be okay. The next show starts in an hour so you'll just need to leave before then or purchase new tickets."

"Of course. Thanks a lot. I appreciate it."

He nodded and made his way back down and out of the theater.

When he was gone I shifted in my seat so that I could face Edward. "Edward, please talk to me."

Finally his face turned to mine and he trailed his now dark-gold eyes upwards to mine. I saw too many emotions there to name. All I knew was that none of them were good.

EPOV

Stupid. Dangerous. Stupid. Idiot.

By the time she dragged me to the theater I was livid. Not at her. No. Never at her. At the situation. At God throwing my little charade back into my face. *Who was I kidding? The daytime, out among people – that's not your world, Edward. Stupid. Stupid. Stupid.*

I saw the situation play out in the blink of an eye. The light glittering off my skin. People noticing, pointing, gasping. The First Nations people were already alarmed on some instinctive level by my presence. The spectacle of my skin would gain attention, soon notoriety. And while we would escape the situation, word of it would spread, making its way into the local newspaper or on to the internet where someone would post a cell phone photo. And from there the Volturi would learn of my transgression, and descend on us to mete out my punishment.

Stupid. Stupid!

I had been caught by the sun before. But I had always been able to use my speed to resolve the situation. And I'd never had to worry about another person's welfare in considering how to protect myself, my secret.

I had completely lost control of the situation. *Unfuckingacceptable.*

Bella began shivering next to me. I could smell the adrenaline pouring off of her, heightening her scent, exacerbating my volatile state. I pulled the blanket from behind me and placed it around her shoulders,

fishing my cell phone out of my pocket as I did to shut it off. The constant 'missed call' vibrations were annoying. *A little too late, there, Alice.* Okay, that was unfair. But I wasn't feeling particularly fair-minded at the moment.

Bella tried to talk to me but I found myself pleading with her. I just...couldn't...yet. Guilt for my reticence combined with my fury for endangering Bella and so limiting her life. *She should be able to enjoy the sun, dammit.*

Soon the screen before us was filled with swirling images of undersea life that I barely noticed as I spiraled deeper and deeper into my own self-imposed penance. The shock of Bella's warm skin against my arm and hand jolted me, especially when she began squeezing with what I guessed was all of her strength. She seemed to literally be trying to pull me back to her. It was working. A little.

I was vaguely aware of her pleading an illness to a teenage boy before she turned to me. "Edward, please talk to me."

Slowly I shifted my body towards her slightly. I was nervous to make eye contact with her. I was afraid of the fear and pity I might see there. The whole situation made me realize that, on some level, I was still waiting for the running and the screaming.

The expression on her face confirmed it. I *was* an idiot. What I saw there stole my unnecessary breath. There was no fear, no pity, no anger. I saw concern, to be sure, but mostly I saw determination and protectiveness and possessiveness and love. There would be no running and screaming. Not from this girl – woman. Ever.

My voice cracked. "I'm so sorry, Bella."

"What for?" She leaned into me and took my hand again.

Multiple responses vied for priority. "For...endangering you."

She raised her free hand to me but I plowed on.

"For putting you in that position."

"Edward...."

"For scaring you."

"*Edward....*"

"For stealing the sun from you."

"*Edward!*" I felt her fingers against my mouth. "Stop. Please."

"But Bella...", I talked around her fingers.

"No, Edward. You're being melodramatic."

"No, I'm not, Bella, what could have happened if—"

"But it didn't. Nothing happened. No one saw anything. We're safe."

We're out of the sun. We're safe. Her use of the plural troubled me. None of this was her problem.

"Edward, we're safe," she reemphasized.

"I put you at risk." I was surprised she could hear me, I said it so low.

"But we dealt with it." She squeezed my hand again.

"*You* dealt with it. I did nothing." I cringed internally at the petulance in my voice.

She sat for a moment, apparently thinking about my words. "I *did* do it, didn't I?" A tentative smile played around her face and she bit her bottom lip.

I rolled my eyes at her apparent lack of understanding of the near-peril of the situation.

"Don't you roll your eyes at me, Edward Cullen." She pulled her hand away from me and crossed her arms. "Get over it right now. You save me all the time. You're constantly keeping me from falling or protecting me from mythical creatures. So just this once I took care of you. Big deal. That's what people do for the ones they love. They take care of each other, as partners, as *equals*. Don't act like I didn't understand the threat of what happened. Because I did. I get it, Edward, because I understand you and your world, at least as much as I possibly can without being like you."

Her words pierced me. I was so used to being the strong one, the protector, in our relationship, that I didn't see what had happened for what it was, at least in part: she had protected me. She had defended me. *Bella saved me*. I closed my eyes as the epiphany swept through me. *She has saved me in every way it is possible for one person to save another*. I thought I knew this already, but this moment brought it home to me full force.

I opened my eyes and threw my arms around her. "Thank you, Bella," I rasped with a voice full of emotion. "Thank you for taking care of me. You...", I pulled back to look in her eyes, "*God*, you were so impressive. You were so good under pressure." The truth of my words flooded me. "You were so decisive and level headed. God, Bella, thank you."

She eyed me warily for a moment before relaxing. A small smile brightened her face. She nodded. "You're welcome, Edward," she nearly whispered. She reached up and cupped my cheek and I leaned my face into her palm. "Are you okay, Edward?"

"I will be."

She seemed to consider for a moment. "I think I know something that will help."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah." She stared into my eyes for a moment as she rubbed her thumb across my cheekbone. "I think part of what bothered you about this whole thing was that you weren't in control."

Perceptive again. "That's fair."

"So, take control now."

Huh? I pushed the sensation of sluggishness off my brain and took Bella in. I quickly noticed her elevated heart rate, warm blush, and, sure enough, I smelled her arousal. I looked around the empty theater. *Surely she isn't suggesting....*

She seemed to sense my hesitation. She rose from her seat and stepped directly in front of me, using her legs to shift my body to sit straight in my seat again and separate my knees. She held the blanket around her shoulders still and sank to her knees in front of me.

Christ.

"Edward, tell me what you want. Tell me how to make you feel better. Tell me how to make you relax." She licked her lips.

"Bella—"

She placed her hands flat against my thighs closest to my knees.

All at once I knew: I absolutely needed what she was offering. And, even more importantly, the events of the past two hours made it clear to me once and for all – I could never hurt Bella. Bella was my life. Not figuratively, not metaphorically, but literally. Without Bella, I was nothing. I could not exist. She was the tether that held me to my existence. I could have her. Free of fear. I knew it now. I shuddered at the promise of that realization.

I quickly assessed the situation. Bella's body was mostly hidden behind the low wall in front of my seat. And the blanket would shield her the rest of the way. No one else was in the theater, and the lights were dim by human standards. I couldn't believe I was about to agree to this, but *damn* I absolutely had to release some of the pent-up emotion that had settled in my chest and on my shoulders.

I peered down at her. "You want to make me feel good, Bella? You want to help me feel better?" My voice was husky, full of want.

"More than anything, Edward."

"Undo my pants." *Yes. Take control.*

She complied immediately, her small hands unfastening the row of buttons on my button-fly jeans. I wore nothing underneath, so her actions immediately released my straining erection.

"Touch me, Bella. Please. God I need you so much."

She brought both of her hands around my aching cock. She gripped her left hand around the base of me and stroked me with her right, gathering up the slick fluids leaking from my tip to moisten my length. I groaned at the sensation and fought with myself to keep my head up and my eyes open. I didn't want to miss any of this. "God, Bella, so good."

The heat of her skin against my hard length was enthralling. I found myself pushing my hips up into her grasp. I noted with interest that while my fists were balled my arms lay almost completely relaxed on the armrests of the seat. I wasn't having to restrain myself to, well, restrain myself.

So good so good so good. God I want more. More.

She seemed to read my thoughts. "Is this all you want, Edward? Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"God, Bella."

"What, baby? What do you need? I'll do anything for you." She emphasized her words with several harder strokes that made my eyes flutter.

"I know. God, I know. Oh, Bella." I was starting to pant at the goodness of it. I knew what I wanted, but I hesitated to ask. The other two times she had done this had been her own initiative.

She licked her lips and looked back and forth between my eyes and my cock.

God damn it all.

"Bella. Bella, baby. I need you. Oh. Bella, could you please...take me...in your mouth?"

She leaned forward immediately and placed a firm wet lick along my length. I groaned at the sensation and wrapped my fists in the blanket on her shoulders. With no tentativeness at all, Bella wrapped her beautiful red lips around my painfully achy and needy cock. "Fuck yes, Bella. Suck me. Oh my God."

She moaned around my cock, eliciting a grunt from me.

She bobbed her head up and down several times and I marveled at the sight. *Christ that's so fucking good.*

She wrapped her hand around the base of my cock and stroked up as her mouth plunged down. The pleasure of it was incomparable. I was totally at her mercy and I couldn't want it any more than I already did.

She pulled her mouth off of me with a loud popping noise and looked up at me from underneath her lashes. "Control me, Edward. Show me how you want it. I know you can." She held my gaze for another beat before lowering her mouth again and eagerly wrapping it around me.

Yes. Fucking yes I can do this.

Tentatively I moved my right hand against the back of her head. I kept my hand relatively flat, and I refrained from twisting my fingers into her hair the way I longed to. But the additional sensation of my hand against her bobbing head was exhilarating. I held myself still for a moment, just acclimating to that sensation before slowly and very gently beginning to exert pressure against her, coaxing her to go just a little deeper and just a little faster. She moaned as she sensed my instruction and complied immediately.

"Oh, God, Bella. Your mouth is exquisite. God damn that's so good, baby." I grunted repeatedly as she ran her tongue up and down while she sucked me.

I tried hard to hold my hips still. I didn't want to push down too hard at the same time that I thrust up. But it was so damn difficult to stay still.

"Faster, Bella. Please." She picked up the pace. "*Fuck.*"

Not only did she go faster, but she also started taking me deep enough that my head hit the back of her throat. I knew that was the beginning of the end. "Ungh...Bella...Christ...oh God, baby."

I was definitely guiding her head with my hand now and it was thrilling to learn that I could do it, and, not only did it not harm her, but she seemed to enjoy it. "Oh...soon baby...oh I need you. Always, Bella...*ungh*...need you always."

When she began lightly scraping her teeth against my length I knew I was gone. Once. Twice. Three times I allowed myself to enjoy the sensation before ordering her away.

She sat back but left her hands on my upper thighs. I wasn't expecting that, and didn't react quickly enough. One small stream of my cum landed on the back of her right hand before I covered myself and caught the rest.

Our eyes met instantly. Then she pulled her hand away. I worried that she was offended or disgusted. But then, as she had done earlier with the drip of ice cream, she quickly leaned down and swiped her tongue through the opaque liquid on her hand.

I was immediately alarmed. "Bella—" I cautioned.

I couldn't have anticipated her response. She closed her eyes and moaned. "Mmm." Then she licked her lips and looked down at her hand again.

"No, Bella. It might not be safe."

She met my eyes. "I know. But God I want it."

Holy Christ. The thought of her swallowing my cum, the image of her tongue lapping at it. I was getting hard again.

She pulled the edge of the blanket off her shoulder and wiped her hand on it. I tucked my growing erection back into my pants and buttoned myself back up. Then I rose and helped her to her feet.

I hugged her tight against me, lifting her slightly off the floor. "I love you, Bella. I need you so much. Thank you."

"I love you too, Edward. Thank you."

"What could you possibly be thanking me for, love?"

"For letting me help you. For letting me love you. For trusting yourself." Her eyes were so earnest. I melted into them.

I pressed my lips against hers, hoping to communicate to her the love and trust and gratitude I felt.

She stepped away and picked up the blanket, folding it quickly and placing it over her arm. Then we made our way down and out of the theater just as a family strolled in. When we stepped through the double doors to the lobby, we immediately looked at one another and began laughing. It was raining. Not just raining, *pouring*.

"I'll go get the car and come back," I offered.

"No, Edward. Don't do that. Besides, I'd still get soaked getting from the door to the car anyway. I'd rather stay with you. It's only rain." I considered for a moment and then led Bella over to the gift shop, where I bought her a rain poncho that threaded over her head and shoulders and hung down to her knees.

She looked adorable in the oversized red poncho, but I could tell she felt ridiculous. We stepped out of the museum doors and hovered for a moment under the marble entryway. "Climb on, Bella." She looked at me skeptically. "That's an order." I raised my eyebrows at her and she rolled her eyes. But she came over and I easily hoisted her onto my back. The rain had cleared out the streets. I would be able to move faster than normal, not that it was likely to help much in the downpour.

Ten minutes later, I had maneuvered us the eight blocks back to the car. I was fairly certain my faster pace had gone undetected. We were both soaked as we slid into the Volvo, but our spirits remained high from our encounter in the theater.

"We don't seem to be able to stay dry today," Bella mused as I kissed her lightly.

"Hmm. You're right."

I turned up the heat to ward off any chills Bella might feel. Twenty minutes later we were in front of our villa. I had called ahead for extra towels to be left at the front door, and they were awaiting us when we returned. We stepped inside the entryway and immediately kicked off our sopping shoes. We wrapped the towels around us to keep the worst of the water from dripping everywhere.

We walked into the master bedroom together. "Why don't you go get dried off, love? There's a robe in the bathroom."

"Sounds good." She reached up and kissed me before making her way into the bathroom. I heard the shower, but it only lasted a few minutes. Then Bella reemerged with her wet hair in a messy bun and a thick fleece robe knotted around her waist. I had changed into a pair of gray sweatpants and a white t-shirt. Bella's stomach announced its presence with a growl.

I pulled her to me and wrapped my arms around her. "I was planning on taking you to dinner at the resort's restaurant. It is reputed to be superb and the chef is world renowned. But I would like to know what you would like to do."

"Well, dinner out does sound nice."

"But?" I could hear it in her voice.

"Well, we're so comfortable now. Dinner in sounds even better." She bit her lip and looked up at me. "Do you mind?"

"Of course not, Bella. As long as I'm with you I'm happy."

I ordered room service for her, adding several dishes to her order in addition to that which she had chosen. I wanted her to have a variety of choose from. While we awaited dinner's arrival, I built a fire and we pulled large cushy pillows down off the couches and placed them on the carpet in front of the fireplace.

Dinner arrived and Bella ate heartily. She appeased me by trying some of everything and enjoying it all. I was more than appeased – the more she ate the more I got to enjoy watching her mouth as it wrapped around her fork and her tongue as it licked her lips. Bella eating was incredibly sensual to me. And I knew she knew it.

Once Bella was done and Robert had returned to clear away the dinner service, we cuddled into the mountain of pillows. For a long time we simply lay and enjoyed one another's company. Words weren't needed. But after a while we began to talk. About little things, at first, and then about deeper, more significant topics.

I shared with Bella my increased hopefulness that we were actually going to be able to *try*. While I emphasized that intercourse was of a whole other magnitude, I explained how I'd felt increasingly in control of all of my desires since we had begun our sexual relationship.

That led Bella to reveal that she had spoken to Carlisle so that she could try to help with my control however possible and so that she could understand what was safe and what wasn't. Wanting to be as honest as possible, I admitted that Carlisle mentioned their conversation to me, but only in the context of me having a similar conversation with him.

That revelation led me to share my fear with Bella that she would downplay or hide any pain I caused her to ensure our relationship could continue to progress. She begrudgingly admitted that she was prone to shield me from any instance of her pain, but promised she would never hide how she was feeling. We both understood that what made our relationship so special was the absolute trust we placed in one another, and we vowed to do everything in our power to protect that most important of foundations.

Talking about her conversation with Carlisle made Bella recall something else – apparently Emmett had learned of her conversation and had been teasing her about it. She quickly talked me down from being annoyed with him and let me into a revenge scheme that she and Rosalie had concocted. If she could pull it off, it was going to be fantastic.

Recalling our time together earlier in the day, I asked her what it was that had upset her before the sun came out. She admitted, rather reluctantly, that the park had reminded her of Jacob. And while she tried not to think of him, she couldn't help but still feel responsible for his flight. I grumbled internally. That damn dog clearly still held a place in her heart. But my expression reflected nothing but concern and understanding. And, truly, I hated that she continued to hurt over that situation, which was precisely why I had been sure to send Jacob a wedding invitation. I knew if it had played out in his favor, I would have wanted at least the option. I could only hope he would man up and put her feelings first.

On and on our conversation went. I had never felt more closely connected with her. Our whole souls were laid bare for one another. I knew the ceremony was important, but I already felt conjoined with her in every way that mattered.

At some point she fell asleep in my arms and for a while I enjoyed the soft rhythmic movement of her chest against mine. As the fire started to die down, I gingerly picked her up and carried her into the master bedroom. She stirred slightly as I slipped her under the thick down comforter. I went around the other side and crawled in next to her and she immediately curled into my side.

The still and peace of the night allowed me to focus on the events of the coming day. I had a major surprise planned for Bella and I felt a little nervous about it. I turned my head and pressed my face into Bella's hair. Her scent, which had once upon a time driven me nearly insane with bloodlust, now had the reverse effect – it was calming, life-giving. I smiled at the changes I had undergone over the past two years. *I am a new man.* I pressed my lips to Bella's head. "I love you, Bella. Forever could never be long enough."

~*~

Chapter 17: The Weekend, Part III

EPOV

At some point she fell asleep in my arms and for a while I enjoyed the soft rhythmic movement of her chest against mine. As the fire started to die down, I gingerly picked her up and carried her into the master bedroom. She stirred slightly as I slipped her under the thick down comforter. I went around the other side and crawled in next to her and she immediately curled into my side.

The still and peace of the night allowed me to focus on the events of the coming day. I had a major surprise planned for Bella and I felt a little nervous about it. I turned my head and pressed my face into Bella's hair. Her scent, which had once upon a time driven me nearly insane with bloodlust, now had the reverse effect - it was calming, life-giving. I smiled at the changes I had undergone over the past two years. I am a new man. I pressed my lips to Bella's head. "I love you, Bella. Forever could never be long enough."

Two forty-one. Bella had slept peacefully until that very minute. I reveled as I always did in the feel of her warmth against me. If I trained my mind entirely on the sound of her breathing and heartbeat, I could almost convince myself that I was being lulled into sleep as well.

But then, as it usually does, her sleep pattern began to change. And, as it had happened more and more lately, her dreams caused her to become incredibly and maddeningly seductive. I smiled. *Don't worry, Isabella. I'll make all those dreams come true.* A few minutes later I shifted my hips. I grimaced at my growing erection. *Not helpful.* Ten minutes later, Bella hitched her knee up across my thigh, causing the wet heat of her naked center to radiate against me and the scent of her arousal to permeate the room. I inhaled deeply, savoring the bouquet. *God, to drink that scent.*

I swallowed hard. *I want her. Now.* I allowed myself to picture it. Rolling over on top of her. Sliding her robe apart. Pushing her thighs open with my knees. My head coming in contact with her slick folds. Pushing in. *Argh!*

How much longer can this go on?

It occurred to me: was I talking about her dream or my ability to restrain myself from taking her?

"Mmm...good," Bella whispered. I bit my bottom lip to keep from making a sound out loud. "Oh."

I closed my eyes. *Really, how much longer can this go on?* I wasn't sure I was going to be able to stand the temptation of her dream much longer. If it was *just* her sounds or *just* her small movements against me or *just* her heat or *just* her scent, then maybe. Just maybe I could keep my hands, my mouth, off of her. But, damn it all to hell, it's been *twenty-seven minutes*. Twenty-seven minutes of her writhing against my leg.

For the dozenth time her hand curled tightly around my shirt. "Please," she whimpered.

Please what, baby? Anything. Anything for you. God, Edward, not helping. I tried to think of something else. Redirect my attention. Distract myself. These were the strategies I had used successfully over the past several weeks to keep myself from going too far too fast. To keep myself from losing control.

Except, they just weren't working very well right now.

And then her next words, moaned and thick with sleep, unraveled me completely. "Taste me."

Oh Christ. God baby, I want to. So do it. No. Alice said it would be okay. No. I did it this afternoon. No, I didn't. Okay, I all but did it this afternoon. That's a big enough difference in this case. No, it's not. Yes, it is. Fuck, smell that. I know! Taste it. Can I do it? Maybe if I just.... No! It's not worth the risk. It is too. And there's no risk. I couldn't hurt her. Maybe just licking but no.... I groaned, realizing I was experimentally moving my lips around to see I could cover my teeth.

"Please....need you."

She's begging me. Oh God. I can deny her nothing. I'm denying her this. Only because I have to. Oh, really? At least admit you want it. Of course I fucking want it. Then take it. SMELL THAT. Christ.

I pressed my lips against the top of her head and hugged her against me with the arm wrapped around her shoulders as my internal debate raged.

A fresh wave of her arousal assaulted my senses.

Mine.

Okay.

Now!

Fuck. Okay.

I slid mostly out from underneath her so that I could turn on my side towards her. Keeping my right arm under her head and around her shoulders, I pulled her into me and placed my lips against hers. I sucked on her bottom lip gently. She moaned in her sleep.

Wake up, Isabella. My voice was sing-song in my head. I smiled darkly against her soft mouth.

I heard her heart rate and breathing begin to change. *That's it, sweet girl. Come back to me now.*

"Mmm," she moaned appreciatively as her eyes began to flutter. She pulled away slightly. "Edward?"

"Yes, love?"

"What...what time is it?" She wrapped her arms around me and stretched her legs out straight, pointing her toes and slightly arching her back. Her movement caused her stomach to push into my erection.

"It's the middle of the night." I leaned back in to kiss her again, sweeping my tongue teasingly into her mouth and pulling it back out again. I smiled as her heart rate predictably increased.

"Edward?" Her voice was still thick with sleep. But there was clearly want there too.

"Hmm?" I wasn't willing to pull my lips away from her neck to answer her.

She hesitated; finally I pulled back. Her expression was an adorable mixture of desire, confusion, and amusement. I had never woken her up quite this way before. Even without being able to read her mind it was clear she was wondering what had gotten into me.

"You were dreaming, Bella. And you were driving me crazy in the process." I felt more than saw her blush spread across her smooth skin. I pressed my mouth against hers to cut off the anticipated apology and kissed her deeply. When she needed a breath, I pulled back and met her eyes. "So, I decided, Bella...." My voice was low and gravelly. "I decided I want to make your dream come true." I held her gaze and watched as her eyes dilated. "Do you remember it, Bella, your dream?"

She thought for a minute. The blush deepened. She nodded and bit her bottom lip.

I smiled. "Would you like me to make your dream come true, Bella? Because I so badly want to please you."

"I...um...well...*God yes*, Edward, but...."

"No 'buts', Bella. Can you...can you trust me, love?"

She rolled her eyes. "I don't even know why you ask me that question anymore." She cupped her hand around my cheek. The warmth was life-giving. "I think the more important question is, can you trust yourself? I don't want you to do anything you're not ready to do, Edward, because there's no hurry. We have forever."

Her words went right to my heart. "How did you get so smart?" I leaned forward and kissed the tip of her nose.

She smiled shyly. It always astounded me how she could go from seductive and assertive to shy and uncertain in the span of seconds. "I don't know about smart, Edward. But I do know you."

"I know you do, Bella. And it's one of the most fulfilling things about my life. You, knowing me. Me, not having to hide myself. I don't know how I'll ever be able to make you understand what that is like for me, after all this time."

She leaned in and kissed me. "I love you, Edward."

"I love you too."

She pulled back from me. "Sorry, I need a human moment."

"Of course, love." I rolled onto my back and she scooted herself off the bed. She grabbed her purse off the dresser and then walked into the bathroom, closing the door behind her. I heard her groan against the light after she turned it on and chuckled to myself.

A few minutes later she crawled back into bed and we turned on our sides facing one another, only inches separating us. She lifted her hand to my hair and began gently scratching her fingernails against my scalp. I closed my eyes against the sensation. It was so calming and tender. After several moments her giggle caused my eyes to fly open. "What?"

"Nothing," she said with a big grin on her face.

"What?"

She shook her head and bit her bottom lip.

"You better tell me, Isabella."

"Nope." She popped the 'p'. The look on her face was pure challenge. I chuckled internally. *I'm the vampire. I'm the one who's lived over a century. I'm the one who's indestructible. Yet she's the one throwing down the challenge. Fine. I. Accept.*

"Perhaps I'll make you tell me." I pushed my body into hers, causing her to roll over on her back. I lowered my open mouth to the soft spot where her neck meets her collar bone and began laving my tongue against her warm skin. Her hands flew to my hair and fisted there. *Damn I love her pulling my hair.*

Within seconds the tension between us had ramped all the way up again. Every stroke of my tongue against her hot skin made me want her. Every moan that fell from her beautiful mouth made me crave her. Soon her scent filled my head and my erection strained against my thankfully loose pants.

I crawled all the way on top of her, holding most of my weight on my forearms and settling my legs between hers. I nipped and sucked and licked at her neck and collar bone, enjoying her moans and hands and pleas. *God damn I want her so much right now.*

I pushed myself into a sitting position, on my knees between her legs. Once her body registered my loss, her eyes flew open, questioning.

"Do you want to tell me yet?"

"Edward!" she whined.

"Shall I take that as a no?"

"Now I'm not telling you on principle because you're teasing me." She is adorable when she's feisty.

"Bella?"

"Hmm?" Her scent and her heart beat both made it clear she was significantly more aroused than annoyed.

"Our game is on, love." I needed as much control as I could wrest from her if I was going to do what I so very badly wanted to do.

Her breath hitched. "O—" remembering, she cut herself off with a hand across her mouth.

I chuckled. Looking straight in her eyes, I said, "Untie your robe, Bella."

Her eyes widened at my command, but she complied, her small hands fumbling at the thick tie for only a few seconds. When the knot was untied, she looked up at me.

"Now push it open for me. I want to see you."

Her breathing shallowed and she slowly drug the thick terrycloth over and off her breasts. She was bare underneath the robe. And breathtakingly beautiful. My eyes were drawn immediately to the image of my handwriting on her left breast. I was still awed by her gesture.

"Mmm. Very nice." I cupped my hand around the side of her neck and then slowly dragged my fingertips straight down the center of her torso ending just above the soft hair in front of my knees. She whimpered and wriggled as my fingers set her skin ablaze. "Sit up and take my shirt off, Bella."

She sat forward and smiled as she reached for the hem of my shirt, which she quickly pulled over my head.

I flicked lightly at the robe that still hung open on her shoulders. "All the way off. I want full access to your body." As she shrugged her arms out of the robe, I reached forward and cupped her breasts in my hands. *So good. So warm and soft and...just...so fucking good.* Bella gasped and threw her head back. Remembering what she taught me, I palmed her harder, catching and working her taut peaks between my fingers. Her mouth fell open and she sighed a moan. *More!*

"Lay back down, baby."

Close to panting now, Bella fell back against the bed. I dropped myself back down on top of her and immediately allowed myself the pleasure of the taste of her breasts. I needed to fully trust myself there before I'd allow myself to explore anywhere else. Her heart thundered in my ears as I licked and nipped and sucked at her breasts. I pressed soft kisses against my name as her hands nearly found my hair before she dropped them back to the bed and tightened them into fists at her side. Wrapping my lips around my teeth I gently sucked one of her nipples into my mouth. The sound of her moan and the heightened scent of her

arousal made me feel nearly intoxicated with pleasure. I realized with an overwhelming sense of satisfaction that my bloodlust was entirely in check.

It's. Time. For. More.

I lifted my head up to look at her. Her eyes were heavy lidded and full of lust. It was enthralling. Her desire, her pleasure, her needs became my full focus, my life's mission.

I worked down her body, placing open mouth kisses over her stomach, watching as her muscles reacted to my touch.

Before long I settled myself between her legs. *Yes.* Placing a gentle hand on both of her thighs, I pushed her legs further apart and breathed deeply. *Oh God yes.* I looked up. Bella's face was filled with need and desire and want and just a touch of concern, which I knew was all for me. I knew what I needed. "Say it, Bella." She looked at me blankly for a moment, and then understanding filled her eyes.

"Taste me. Taste me, Edward." *Fucking yes.*

I slowly leaned my head down, inhaling deeply and ever evaluating my control. "You must hold still, Bella," I rasped. "And I want to hear you."

Swallowing hard, I snaked my tongue out as far as it would go and ran one firm lick with the tip of my tongue threw her unbelievably soft, unbearably hot, and tantalizingly wet folds. *Oh good. So good. So fucking good. Don't stop. More. Don't stop.*

Bella grunted and grabbed fistfuls of the sheet but managed to keep her hips stilled.

Using my shoulders to keep her legs spread for me, I slid my fingers up and pulled her open. I wanted to be able to see this lovely secret part of her. *I can't believe this is happening. How I've wanted this.* I leaned in again running several soft licks with the tip of my tongue through her wetness. I gulped it down greedily. *I could fucking live on that.* Bella was panting and moaning and chanting my name and thrashing her head against the pillow and clenching and unclenching her fists around the sheet. *I'm doing that. I'm making her feel that way. More!*

Taking another step, I flattened more of my tongue against her. *Oh yeah.* This was by far the hottest part of her body. It was absolutely exhilarating to learn that I could actually explore her like this. Time after time I pressed my tongue against her hot wetness. A small muscle contraction brought forth a new flow of her arousal and I drank it down with a moan. "You taste so good, Bella, so fucking good." She had to know.

Christ I'm doing this. I can do this. Thank God.

My words and my tongue caused another small contraction, and when I lapped at the moisture again, I was completely enthralled that it was laced with a small amount of her blood. I ground my erection into the mattress beneath me and moaned sharply. *Oh fucking hell yes yes more more.*

Pulling her soft folds slightly further apart I ground my flattened tongue against her bundle of nerves. Again and again I pressed my tongue against, her feeling her body vibrate with her effort to hold still. *Come on baby. Give it to me.* I rocked my back and forth and alternated between flat grinding strokes and sharp flicks of my tongue.

I felt her leg muscles bunch and I pulled back slightly as she came with a scream and an unavoidable thrust of her hips.

I pushed her hips back down and dove in, lapping at the blood-laced moisture flowing from her. I groaned in dizzying pleasure, licking relentlessly and grinding my erection into the mattress in time with my tongue. *Take her. It doesn't matter. You. Her. Now. That's all that matters. TAKE HER!* My hips thrust in agreement. She was mewling and whimpering as the last of the contractions of her orgasm played out.

"I don't want to be done, Bella. I want more. Tell me I can have more." I was fucking flying on her pleasure and her blood and her arousal and the fact that I could fucking do this without hurting her.

Bella's heart was thundering against her chest and she was covered in sweat. Her hair was splayed out around her and her skin was flush, everywhere. She had never looked more exquisite.

"Mmm," she managed. "I'm yours, Edward," she breathed out, "you can have as much as you want."

Fuck. Yes.

"Oh God, Bella. Open up for me more, sweetheart. I have to see you. You're so fucking beautiful." I helped her push her legs so that her knees were up and her feet were flat on the bed. I threaded one of my arms underneath of her hips, lifting her up to me.

Using my other hand to gently pull her apart for me again, I cupped my lips around my teeth and sunk my tongue into her. Lights exploded against my vision at the sheer pleasure of being in her. She screamed out and pushed against me. I quickly pulled away. "Please, Bella, stay still. You must."

"Hold me, Edward. I can't. You have no idea," she panted.

I placed my hand and forearm against her lower abdomen to hold her still. "I have *every* idea, Bella. Trust me."

Certain I secured her body, I wasted no time in plunging my tongue into her hot wetness again. I held my tongue rigid and curled it inside her, licking against her firm walls and reveling in her muffled screams. I quick glance to her face revealed that she had brought a pillow to her mouth. I pulled away and she yelled, "Shit, don't stop!"

"Don't hold your sounds back from me, Bella. I want to hear what I'm doing to you."

I began to set a rhythm with my tongue inside of her. In. *So hot.* Out. *So wet.* In. *So tight.* Out. *So soft.* In. *So much.* Out. *So good.* In. *So sweet.* Out. There was almost no blood left but my tongue sought out every last trace and I savored it without regard to morality or propriety because *Fuck. It's. Mine.*

With each movement, my nose rocked against her clit and my hips thrust into the mattress. She was moaning my name nonstop and I was matching her moans with the sounds caused by my own growing pleasure.

"Edward, please," she keened.

I smiled darkly as she finally lost the battle with her hands and they fisted tightly in my hair. *So fucking hot.*

I slid my tongue up to her clit and sucked hard against her there while sliding my arm out from underneath her and sliding two long fingers into her heat. Two curls of my fingers sent her over the edge. "Ungh! Ah! Edward! Edward! Unhhh!" I enjoyed the sensation of her clenching around me and then licked her clean of every drop of her gift to me. I pulled my hands free and sat back, waiting for her eyes to open and look at me before I sucked my fingers into my mouth.

BPOV

All I could hear was the sound of my own pulse in my ears. All I could see were the intense lights flashing behind my eyelids. But it was what I was feeling that was beautifully killing me. Edward's tongue against me, in me, relentless and hard and soft and cold and hot and wet and fast and slow and *in me*.

It was so much and I was so fucking proud of him but it was so hard to think or talk or feel the rest of my body because every nerve ending seemed to be focused *down there* and there was no place else in the whole wide world and I never ever wanted it to stop.

When he pulled back and curled those long beautiful fingers into me I couldn't restrain myself. I couldn't be bothered to care that I was screaming and grunting and sweating and panting and just giving myself entirely over to the pleasure he was giving me. "Ungh! Ah! Edward! Edward! Unhhh!"

For a long while I felt like I was floating.

Finally I lifted my heavy eyelids and found him looking at me. His eyes were pitch black but satisfied. My breath caught as he sucked his fingers into his mouth – *that's right, baby, taste me* – and I sat up and threw my arms around him. I wanted to know what it tasted like to him, but the taste of me on him, *in him*, was mindblowing and I sucked his tongue into my mouth and found myself moaning nonstop. "Oh my God I love my taste on you, Edward." Mostly because my taste in his mouth was proof that he finally trusted himself.

After a few minutes he pulled back slightly and leaned his forehead on mine. "So...", he sounded so serious, "are you going to tell me what you were laughing about?"

I laughed. "You were purring."

"What?"

"You were. It was cute."

"Hmmpf."

"Oh, don't be like that, now. I liked it." I leaned into him and kissed him again. As I pressed into him my thigh rubbed up against his still-straining erection and he groaned. I pulled back and looked into his eyes. There was satisfaction there, but there was also still need. I looked down to find his cock straining against his cotton pants. A wet spot had soaked through where his fluids leaked from him.

I knew what I wanted to do but I wasn't sure if we were still playing the game.

With no subtlety whatsoever I looked back and forth between his eyes and his erection. His lips parted as his breathing picked up, but he remained quiet. Finally I prompted him. "Tell me to pleasure you, Edward. Tell me to or I'll have to be bad and, how did you put it earlier?, I'll have to take some liberties that I ought not to be taking."

A growl rumbled in his chest. *Oh God that sound is so hot.* "Be bad, Bella."

That was all the encouragement I needed. I shoved him backwards off the bed and he allowed me to do so. He rose and I slipped off the bed and fell immediately to my knees. I gripped at his pants and pulled them to the floor.

I was still so worked up from him putting his mouth on me that I wanted nothing more than to return the favor. I wrapped my lips around his cock and savored the taste of his pre-cum as I sucked him hard into my mouth. "Ungh, that's it, baby."

I grabbed his ass into my hands and pulled myself against him hard and fast. I wanted him to fall apart as completely as I had. I moaned around him and he grunted.

"Fuck, Bella. So intense. I can't....ungh."

I wrapped my arms around him tighter. I didn't want to have to move when....

"Oh God. Oh Bella. Ungh...ah...uhhh."

Come on, Edward. Give it to me. Let me have it.

"Oh baby. I'm....already...let go, Bella...Christ."

I grunted a dissatisfied noise against him, trying to communicate I didn't want to let go.

I felt his fingertips on my shoulders, trying to pushing me away gently. "Fuck, Bella. Hurry. I can't....ungh...Bella!"

I relented and dropped him from my lips. But he was so close and I was backed against the edge of the bed and there was nowhere for me to go. His cum streamed against my breasts and stomach and I moaned in approval and thought, *Fuck. Next best thing.*

His roar settled into a soft growl rumbling in his chest and he looked at me with love and lust and completion and amazement. All I could concentrate on was the incredible feeling of his cold release on my body.

I looked down at myself and he lowered himself to his knees in front of me. Both of us were still breathing hard. I moved my hand to my breast and placed my fingers into his cum. I heard him suck in a breath when I began to smear it against my skin. He had never come so quickly for me before and it made me feel powerful. I felt like his cum on my body was proof of my power and I relished in it.

"Christ Bella, you're so fucking sexy." He lunged at me and pulled my body to his. Between my sweat and his cum everything was slick between us and we kissed and hands roamed and moans filled the room.

After several moments he pulled back. "Let me get you, um, cleaned up?" He looked sheepishly down at my body.

"Edward? I loved this." I deliberately placed my hand into the wetness on my stomach. "I just thought you should know." His gaze darkened noticeably as he scooped me up and carried me into the bathroom.

For the second time, Edward woke me up. This time, however, it was clearly morning. And, admittedly, I was slightly less happy about being woken up this time.

"Come on, love. I know you're still sleepy, but we have plans for today and need to get ourselves moving." I opened my eyes to a sight that could only cause my mood to brighten. Edward's beautiful and noticeably bright golden eyes sparkled at me.

I cupped my hand around his cheek. "Did you hunt?"

He nodded as he turned his head to kiss my palm. "I was only gone a few hours."

I yawned and stretched and finally sat up. Edward was dressed in a pair of very nice dark jeans and a white button-down shirt.

"I laid some clothes out in the bathroom and breakfast will be here in ten minutes." He helped me up and kissed me. When I tried to deepen the kiss he pulled back. "You. Bathroom. Now."

I feigned a salute. "Yes, sir."

I walked towards the bathroom. "I rather think I like that," he called.

"Hey! Don't start that if you're going to send me in here by myself."

He chuckled as I closed the door.

I chuckled myself as I saw that I was going to get to wear panties today. I picked them up. *Wow. Way to go, Edward.* The matching bra and panty set was made of a deep red lace with ivory ribbons and rosettes. Combined with a short-sleeved v-neck red knit sweater and short jean shorts, I felt comfortable yet sexy when I sat down at the breakfast table several minutes later. I noticed with some surprise that it was already ten o'clock.

Robert laid platter after platter out on the table and I looked at Edward. "You realize I'll never eat all this, right?"

He smiled. "Perhaps. But this way you can taste a little of everything."

Edward followed Robert to the door where they had a quiet conversation before Edward rejoined me at the table.

"So, what are we doing today?"

"I thought we'd have a picnic," he said nonchalantly.

"Oh. Well, then why am I...," I indicated the huge spread of food before me with my fork.

"You'll see."

"O...kay...." Now he was acting suspicious. I took another bite of French toast and chewed thoughtfully. I knew he wasn't going to tell me. "A picnic sounds nice, then."

A short while later a private car arrived at the villa and Edward ushered me out into the once-again overcast day. I remembered enough of our drive yesterday to realize we were heading back towards Victoria again. I was about to ask why we were being driven when on the outskirts of town we encountered heavy traffic. I looked at Edward who smiled. I teased, "You realize you look like the cat that ate the canary."

Edward guffawed loudly and I couldn't help but join him. He didn't laugh that freely often enough.

Every once in a while Edward would shift in his seat or stretch to look at the traffic or sigh. It occurred to me all of a sudden. I gasped.

"What?"

"You're nervous!"

"Don't be silly."

"No. No. I'm right. You're nervous." He leaned into me, his eyes boring into mine and he breathed across my face. My mind fogged over, though I fought it. "Hey! No dazzling me." I slid further away on the seat.

"Just...trust me. Okay?"

That could only mean another surprise. I sighed and nodded.

"Here we are, sir," the driver called as he pulled the car to a stop. The door opened and Edward helped me out. He retrieved a basket and a blanket from the trunk, then tipped and thanked the driver. He turned to me and took my hand and we began walking in the direction of the harbor area where we had spent the afternoon before.

Throngs of people were walking in the same direction, many carrying blankets and baskets and lawn chairs. Soon the crowd descended into the street as well as the roads around the harbor were closed to vehicular traffic.

Large banners strung across the streets welcomed us to the 19th Annual Victoria Symphony Splash.

The harbor area was alive with a festival-like quality. Children ran and laughed. Street vendors hawked assorted food and drinks and character balloons for kids. Friends and acquaintances called out to one another on the street. The whole thing had a wonderful energy about it. I already loved it, whatever it was.

Edward squeezed my hand and I smiled up at him. We threaded our way through the crowd down onto the promenade that ran along the harbor water. People had staked out spots all along the causeway. The water itself was filled with people in kayaks and canoes. Everyone seemed to be in a celebratory mood.

Edward walked up to a two teenage boys sitting against the wall at one point. "Are you Jeremy?" he inquired of a black-haired boy.

"Yeah. Mr. Cullen?"

"Yes. Thanks for doing this," Edward said as he slipped him something when he shook his hand.

"No problem. All yours," he said as he and his friend cleared the way for us.

"Thanks again," Edward called as they started to walk away, both boys clearly celebrating whatever it was Edward gave them.

Edward caught the look on my face and finally explained. "Robert's cousin."

"Oh."

"They were coming down for the event anyway and when I inquired as to seating, Robert volunteered his cousin to save us a good seat."

I looked around as Edward spread out the blanket in front of a smooth concrete wall. Families and couples lined the wall as far as could be seen in both directions. Thousands of people lined the surrounding street and lounged on the huge green lawn in front of the legislative building. We settled down with our backs against the wall and Edward offered me something to drink. I took a bottle of water and settled back to enjoy the scenery.

Finally I noticed the huge barge set out in the harbor directly in front of us.

"The Victoria Symphony does a free concert on the water every summer. It draws people from around this whole region," Edward explained with a smile.

"Edward, this is incredible. What a fun idea. Thank you so much! This is exactly my kind of surprise!"

He laughed and leaned in to kiss me. "I'm thrilled that you like it, Bella. Truly."

Around 1:30 p.m. the orchestra took their seats on the floating stage. More kayaks, canoes, and small boats filled in the harbor water in front of us. Latecomers rushed to find a place to sit or stand. The sound of the musicians tuning up filled the air through a huge series of speakers that broadcast the music to every part of the harbor area.

At 2 o'clock a huge roar erupted when the conductor took the stage. Introductions were made and soon the orchestra launched into an amazing concert. When my stomach growled an hour later, Edward pulled out a wonderful picnic lunch for me. It was the perfect afternoon. Edward, music, sitting by the water, good food, and just an incredible sense of liveliness all around us.

A short while later, the conductor announced a guest musician. She explained the Symphony's commitment to music education and that, each year, the symphony accepts auditions from people twenty-one or younger to compete for a solo performance with the orchestra to be performed at the annual Symphony Splash. This year's winner was a pianist named Hugo Wong, who was only fifteen years old and played the first movement from Schumann's Piano Concerto phenomenally. The crowd cheered louder than ever for the boy's solo performance.

"In a most unusual situation," the conductor announced again, "there was another applicant for the young soloist performance who was quite noteworthy as well but who was unable to travel to perform with us today. This talented young man, seventeen-year-old Masen Edward, submitted not only a beautiful performance, but he performed his own original composition. We are pleased to play that original composition for you now."

The conductor turned around and raised her arms. Moments later I froze in place as I heard what I instantly knew was Edward's composition. Masen Edward. Stunned, I snapped my head in his direction. He was nearly holding his breath in anticipation.

"Oh my God, Edward." My mind was going a mile a minute. He was waiting for me to say something more coherent but the words wouldn't come. "This? This is the surprise."

He nodded and held out his hand to me. "Dance with me?"

I put my shaking hand in his palm and he helped lift me to my feet. I melted against him, tears now streaming down my face. "Happy tears," I tried to say. "I can't believe this, Edward. This is incredible."

The people around us smiled at our dance, not realizing that the amazing man before them was the composer of the very piece to which they were listening.

I was completely lost in Edward's eyes as the symphony played an enhanced version of my lullaby. At one point the orchestral accompaniment quieted and the solo piano rang out the central melody. I could almost picture sitting next to Edward on his piano bench listening to him play this.

When it was over I was so overcome with love. "Hold me, Edward," I gasped against his chest. He wrapped his arms securely around my body and gently rocked me. Finally I pulled back and grabbed his face in my hands. I peppered butterfly kisses all over his face whispering "thank you" between each and every one.

I never saw him smile so fully as when I was done showering him with my affection and gratitude.

Soon our little bubble was burst by the concert's big finale. The '1812 Overture,' complete with cannon and carillon, was the perfect ending to what had been a fantastic concert. The crowd roared its applause and soon people were moving in every direction as the crowd slowly dispersed.

I was still half stunned. "I can't believe you did that. I can't believe you did that for me."

"I would do anything for you, Bella."

I thought more about it. "When...?"

"I applied back in May. Though I knew I wouldn't be able to perform. I couldn't risk the attention. So when they offered me the solo, I explained my unavailability and inquired whether they would be willing to perform my composition. I've been conversing with the conductor over the phone all summer."

I gasped as the timing worked itself out in my mind. "In the midst of all...," my voice trailed; I really didn't want to actually give voice to the whole war with Victoria's newborn army.

"I knew we would have our happy ending, Bella," he said simply. I was struck by the optimism of that sentence and fell in love with him, impossibly it would seem, even more.

Slowly we packed up our things and made our way back to where the driver had dropped us off. Our car was waiting for us and we slowly crawled through the traffic back out of town to the resort. I regretted the realization that it was now Sunday evening and the weekend was almost over.

Edward heard my sigh. "What is it, love?"

"I don't want the weekend to be over."

"Guess what?" He smiled his crooked smile at me. "Me neither. Alice realized that we wouldn't want to come home yet and she already called Charlie to ask if you could stay with her again tonight and come home tomorrow."

Instantly I felt better. "Oh my God! Really?" He nodded with a big grin. "Oh! I love your sister so much!"

He laughed. "She figured that was the least she could do for letting her plan our wedding."

We got back to the villa and I napped for a while at Edward's insistence. When I woke up I noticed a garment bag hanging on the door to the bathroom. Edward came in wrapped in a robe and I cocked one eyebrow at him.

"Nice," I called suggestively.

"You're incorrigible," he teased.

"Maybe, but you love it."

"Truly, I do." He leaned down and kissed me but managed to stay out of the reach of my hands. "Tonight, I am taking you to dinner at the restaurant. There's a dress for you in the garment bag. Our reservation is in an hour." He kissed me again and retreated from the room.

After my shower I stared in amazement at the strapless knee-length blue cocktail dress Edward had chosen for me. Shimmering ribbon surrounded the bust, waist, and hemline and it was just, me. I worried momentarily that it would show off my tattoo, but it just covered it -- if Alice had had anything to do with selecting this dress I don't know why I even worried. I did need a little makeup to cover Edward's mark on

my shoulder, though. Low silver heels matched perfectly and I wore my hair down in soft curls the way I know he likes. The look on his face when I entered the living room told me he approved.

"Bella, you are a vision. Turn around for me."

I rolled my eyes but spun myself around. By the time I was facing him again he was right in front of me, having moved silently across the room in that short amount of time. I gasped and jumped, but he caught me. He always does.

He leaned down and kissed me sweetly. I pulled back and admired him in his dark suit and tie. 'Handsome' didn't even begin to describe him. Minutes later we had walked through the warm evening air to the main building which housed an elegant restaurant.

For each course, Edward asked me to choose two items, and he ordered for himself the second of everything I wanted. He insisted on me tasting everything, and I knew that his insistence on tasting food all weekend was his way of dealing with one small part of what he thought I would be giving up when I was changed. I couldn't help but find it endearing.

We had a long leisurely dinner and talked more about the concert and his composition and the reactions of the conductor and really just anything and everything. It was after ten o'clock when we left the restaurant and walked back to the villa. Thunder rumbled and lightening flashed in the distance. I made my way immediately to one of the balconies after we got back to our place and stepped back out into the silky evening air. An insistent breeze coming off the approaching storm picked up tendrils of my hair and I leaned my head back and enjoyed the feeling of the air against my body.

I leaned back into him when Edward came up behind me and wrapped his arms around my waist. "Sorry, I couldn't resist," he murmured as he kissed my neck.

"Never apologize for that," I whispered and he chuckled.

I spun around in his arms and our lips met, needful and insistent. It wasn't long before we were moaning and pressing into one another. I loved the feeling of his erection against my body, knowing *I* did that to him.

He trailed kisses across my bare chest and along the skin above the top of my dress. As he bent down to kiss my chest, I felt his fingers on one hand softly drag along the outside of my leg. Once, twice, three times he dragged his fingers just under the hem of my dress.

He was driving me crazy.

I wanted those fingers to go higher.

One of my hands was threaded into his beautiful hair; with the other I grabbed the fabric to the skirt of my dress and hiked it up a few inches.

This time when Edward went to tease me with his fingers, they went up a lot higher before he encountered the hem of my dress. He stopped kissing my chest and looked down, realizing what I had done.

I was biting my lip to try ineffectively to restrain my smile. He kissed me. "You are insatiable."

"I thought I was incorrigible," I quipped.

"That too," he chuckled with a kiss.

"I'm only insatiable for you," I whispered against his ear.

He pulled back. His expression hinted at a fierceness. I didn't have long to consider that before his lips crashed to mine and his fingers trailed up the inside of my thighs with greater purposefulness. He teased the soft skin on my thighs until I was panting with need. But when his fingers found my bare core, he sucked in a breath and gazed at me in amazement.

"Are...where...um...", he attempted.

"I made a slight wardrobe adjustment."

"Wardrobe adjustment."

"Yes." I played with his hair as I spoke. "I didn't really think I needed the panties you laid out."

"You didn't think...", he repeated in a daze. His eyes visibly darkened as he looked at me. "You realize you will have to be punished now."

"Yes...sir." I tried on that last word, remembering him saying he liked it earlier. *Bingo*, I thought as he eyes further darkened.

"Turn around," he ordered. *I love this game!*

"Place your hands on the railing and spread your feet." His voice was low and gravelly. The position he commanded me to take was thrilling.

I felt his hand under my arm and slowly felt my dress loosen as he lowered the zipper.

"Christ," he muttered as the dress fell to the ground and I stood naked before him, only wearing the silver heels. He helped me step out of the dress.

I realized with a thrill that I was standing outside completely naked. I knew there was no reason for anyone to be anywhere where I could be seen, but the feeling of being naked outside, with the summer wind against my body and the coming storm electrifying the air, was unlike anything I had ever experienced.

I felt the wetness pooling against my inner thighs and began to turn my head to look for him.

"Stay facing forward, Bella," he called from somewhere behind me.

Not being able to see him, what he was doing, what he would do next, it set my whole body on fire with anticipation.

I gasped when I felt his tongue against the back of my calf. Slowly he lavished one long wet lick up the back of my left leg, ending just before the curve of my cheek. I couldn't stifle the gasp when almost immediately I felt his tongue against the calf of my right leg as he repeated the some torturous process.

"So fucking exquisite, Bella." He felt closer now, but I still couldn't pinpoint exactly where he was, what he was doing.

I moaned loudly into the wind when he gripped my hips and pulled me roughly back into his erection. I internally cursed the feeling of the fabric of his suit pants. I would have liked nothing better than for him to have made love to me right there on that balcony. I whined as I pressed back against him.

"Fuck, Bella. I want you so damn bad," he murmured as he placed open-mouthed kisses all over my back.

I pressed back into him harder, trying to tell him I wanted that too.

"Tell me not to, Bella. Tell me we should wait. Make me believe it. Because...."

I don't want to wait. I don't want to wait. Make love to me, Edward!

I knew he was caught up in the moment. But this was Edward. My Edward. And I knew waiting was important to him.

"We should wait."

He growled low in his chest. I wanted to scream, *That doesn't help my resolve!*

"We should wait, Edward. Because it will mean so much more then. I want you now, too. But it's not long now, baby. And it'll mean so much more then."

"I know. I know," he muttered, trying to convince himself.

Out of nowhere, his arms wrapped around my body, his left arm around my breasts, cupping firmly there, and his right arm around my hips. He ground himself into me and I cried out. *Okay. Now is good too.*

With his body still hunched around me, he dipped his right hand between my legs and began stroking me there, spreading my wetness. He alternated between long wet strokes, firm circular motions on my clit, and sliding two long fingers into me. I was gone. All that was left of me were my instincts. I pressed back against his cock, pressed down on his fingers inside of me, pressed forward against his circling hand. His voice was the only thing keeping me grounded. He murmured a constant stream of his desires against my ear. "So wet for me, Bella. So tight. Aw, so fucking hot. You're everything to me, Bella. God damn I need you."

He held me as my orgasm hit and my knees buckled. When I returned to myself, he was placing soft kisses all over my shoulders and his erection was still pressed up tight against my ass.

I began to turn to him but he held me fast. "I...I'm right on the edge of my control, Bella. I don't think...."

He wasn't going to let me reciprocate. But his need was so damn obvious. "Then you do it, Edward. You do it. And tell me what you're thinking about. You do it. I want you to."

He sucked in a breath behind me. "Bella—"

"Please, Edward? It would be so hot knowing you were pleasing yourself and thinking about me."

His head fell heavily to my shoulder and I wasn't sure that he would comply. But then he pulled his body away from me some and I heard what could only be the zipper on his pants "God, Bella."

"Yeah, baby."

He withdrew his left arm from around my chest, and while I relished the feeling of him moving behind me I missed the greater amount of contact we had a few minutes before. His voice distracted me from these thoughts.

"Ungh. I'm thinking about our wedding night, Bella. How I'm going to take your dress off. And when I kiss you I'll be kissing my wife."

"Mmm." I could feel his knuckles moving up and down against my ass every once in a while. The sensation was driving me crazy. I longed to turn around and watch him stroke himself.

"I'm going to lay you out on the bed and worship every inch of your body until you're begging for me to be in you." His hand kept up a steady motion around his cock.

"God, Edward," I whimpered. I felt his head rub quickly against my ass, leaving a wet trail behind. *He's not close enough!* "Edward?" I breathed.

"Oh Bella."

"Edward, put your hands around me on the railing."

"What?"

I reached behind him and grabbed his hands. He let me guide them to the railing in front of me, which pulled his body in against mine and settled his cock in between my cheeks. I pressed back against him and rubbed up and down, showing him what I had in mind.

"Fuck," he groaned.

"Use me," I rasped. "Please."

He let out a low growl as he began to rock himself in small movements against the crook of my ass. The sound of his growl reverberated directly to my core and I was instantly covered in my own arousal. He must have smelled me because he hissed and thrust a little harder.

I leaned my hands on top of his, looking for every possible connection with him. I could feel his muscles straining everywhere we touched.

"God, Bella, you feel so fucking good."

"Tell me what you're thinking about, baby."

"Ungh...I'm imagining...how hot...how wet you're going to be when I first push into you. Fuck, Bella, so close." He was panting against my ear now.

"God, Edward, that's going to be so good." I could feel him working his hips against me. I wished I could see what he looked like from behind us. It must have been a stunning sight.

"Fuck!" he cried as he laid his forehead on my shoulder. "Oh, Bella. Oh."

"I want you to come on me, Edward."

A low growl rumbled in his chest again. "Ungh....God...."

I was surprised when my own orgasm overtook me. I had been clenching my thighs together relentlessly but had been so focused on the feeling of Edward behind me that I just hadn't realized. "Oh my God!" I cried.

"Fuck, Bella, yes!" he yelled. A second later I felt his cold release spurt on my back. I was struck again with that feeling of power, but more with the feeling of complete and utter love.

Before I even knew what had happened he scooped me into his arms and carried us through the house to the bathroom. He murmured words of love and affection as he held me under the shower and bathed me.

We stood there for a long moment just holding one another while the hot water streamed over our spent bodies. Finally a loud crack of thunder rocked the villa and I jumped. We smiled at one another and he shut off the water. He refused to even let me dry myself off. Before long I was cuddled against him in bed, trying in vain to stave off sleep. But between the steady hum of the rain against the roof and having slept so little the night before, my body finally won the fight, and I slipped into sleep beside the man of my dreams.

~*~

Chapter 18: 13 Days

BPOV

It had been the best weekend of my life. And if our honeymoon turned out to be even a fraction as nice, it was going to be the best honeymoon anyone had ever had. Our honeymoon. Edward was planning it as a surprise for me. After the weekend, I was finding surprises a little easier to accept.

There were a lot of reasons why our time together this weekend had been so special. I couldn't wait to get home and look over my list – quite a bit had been crossed off, including some things I *never* thought would be before I was changed, or at least married. Of course our developing physical intimacy was incredible, mind-blowing, even.

But there were three things that made the weekend particularly special to me. First, Edward had trusted himself. Maybe for the very first time. Edward had trusted himself not to hurt me. That meant Edward was starting to believe in himself, starting to believe that he wasn't the monster he used to insist that he was.

Whenever I thought of it I wanted to take him in my arms and pull his head into my chest and stroke his hair and...just...hold him. I was so damn proud of him.

Second, Edward's surprise for me had demonstrated optimism. Even in the midst of the whole crisis with Victoria, Edward was planning for a time when we would have the luxury of a relaxed vacation away. Edward was looking forward to a time when we would just be 'us'. Edward said he always knew we'd have our happy ending. How far we had come since his insistence that it would be better if we weren't friends.

Third, Edward and I had talked this weekend, a lot. We had both shared some concerns that had clearly been weighing on our minds. Listening to Edward's thoughts and sharing my own – I really felt like we were partners. Like we were in this thing together. He was on my side and I was on his. For the first time, I realized that was the whole point of marriage. It was about having a soft, safe place to land. And being that for someone else. And making your way through the world with someone at your side. This way of thinking about what a marriage was all about dispelled any remaining hesitation I once had about getting married. Now I couldn't wait. Thirteen days never seemed so long.

I thought about all this while I rested against Edward's chest on the ferry ride back across to Port Angeles. Neither of us spoke much. It was a comfortable silence. I think we were both regretting the end of the weekend and trying to hold on to the last moments of it. I had no idea how I was supposed to go back to spending any time apart from Edward over the next two weeks.

As we passed out of the Port Angeles town limits, I was overcome with the distinct impression of time running out: the end of our weekend was nearly upon us, all the others were able to intrude upon our little bubble, the realities of saying good-bye to my family and finalizing wedding plans required my attention, and the second half of Edward's dare was about to begin.

The second half of Edward's dare: *I dare you to agree that, after next weekend, there will be no more...nudity or...orgasms...until after we're married.*

Why the hell did I agree to that again?!?

Especially now that I knew what he *could* do to me! *God*. Just thinking back to that night was enough to.... *Great*, I thought as I tried to inconspicuously readjust myself in my seat. I could feel the dampness on my panties.

I looked over to Edward. As he steered the car through the drizzly roads back to Forks, he seemed to be absentmindedly humming along to the classical music softly filling the car. *God he's just gorgeous. And somehow all mine.*

He must've known I was looking at him but if he did he didn't acknowledge it. I was just as happy for that. It allowed me the opportunity to really study him without the embarrassment of the blush that colored my face any time he caught me doing so.

The messiness and uniquely beautiful color of his hair.

The strong prominence of his cheekbones.

The square cut of his jaw.

The long leanness of his neck.

The soft hair of his forearms.

Those long graceful fingers.

That was all the further I saw before I shivered.

As my eyes raked back up his body, they settled on a mole on the back/side of his neck close to his hairline. I'd seen it before but never really thought about it. I was suddenly overcome with the desire to lick it. Repeatedly.

I squeezed my thighs together, hoping doing so might keep Edward from smelling my growing arousal.

It didn't work.

I heard him inhale deeply and felt my blush grow. He finally dropped his disinterested demeanor and turned to look at me, a smile playing around the corners of his mouth. "Penny for your thoughts?" His voice was soft, low. He reached over with his right hand and gently grabbed my left.

"Um." *Damn. Like he doesn't know. "It's just...." I really want to lick you. Argh! This dare!* As I tried to manage an articulate sentence, I noticed a mileage sign along the side of the road: Forks 42 miles. With Edward's driving, that would probably put us there in maybe twenty minutes. Hmm. "Okay," I began as the idea crystallized in my head, "the truth?"

"Always."

"Okay, well, would you agree that we extended the weekend through today?" I held my breath as I tried to wait nonchalantly for his reply.

"Yes," he said suspiciously.

"Okay, so then, technically, the second half of your dare doesn't begin until we return from our weekend?" The logic seemed sound to me.

He thought for a moment. "I suppose that would be one interpretation."

"Is it an interpretation you're willing to accept?" *Say yes! Say yes!*

He smirked at me. "It is." I could see the curiosity on his face now. My breathing increased the more he played along.

Good. Time to even up the score a little, while there's still time. Current score: Bella 6, Edward 3. "I was thinking I'd like it if the score was a little more even," I said finally, wondering where the hell I had been finding the guts lately to say half the stuff I said.

His faced dropped immediately into confusion. "What?"

"I think maybe this is something that would be better demonstrated than explained," I said without meeting his eyes as I clicked my seatbelt free.

"Isabella, put your seatbelt back on." He looked alarmed.

I shifted onto my knees facing him and leaned over. I whispered in his ear, "Your driving skills are flawless, so I am perfectly safe. You've said so yourself, many times." I then sated that desire to lick Edward's mole. Twice. Just then, my plan transformed. I had been thinking that Edward's neck could entertain my mouth while my hand was employed elsewhere. But the taste of him against my tongue suggested a better place for my mouth.

"Bella." How I loved that low husky tone to his voice.

"Edward," I whispered as my hand trailed down the front of his body.

"Bella, I'm driving."

"Uh huh." I kissed all along his jaw line.

I had noticed the button fly jeans earlier in the morning. Worn as the jeans were, the buttons slid open easily. I noticed with glee that Edward's breathing had increased too.

I mmmmed appreciatively when my hand didn't encounter any boxers. "How convenient," I quipped lowly.

Edward hissed when my hand curled around his cock and gently pulled it free of his jeans. He shifted his hips to assist me at the same time that he said, "Bella, I'm trying to drive."

I sat back from him. The look on his face was pleading. I couldn't tell if he was pleading for me to stop or continue. *Continue*, I decided. I grabbed his right hand and guided it to the headrest of the passenger seat. "Don't *try* to drive. Just drive." Then I leaned forward and kissed the head of Edward's cock.

"Bloody hell, Bella," he rasped.

I knew further conversation wouldn't help convince him. So I set my mouth to convincing. I swirled my tongue around the top of him several times and he sucked in a breath. Then I lowered my mouth around him. *So good!*

"God, Bella, what are you doing to me?" His voice was gravelly.

Kinda obvious, I thought. But it wasn't important enough to interrupt what I was doing to vocalize, so I moaned around him and he groaned.

I had been imagining this particular fantasy ever since the night we went dancing and ended up pulling over at the rest stop on the way home. The Aston Martin was lovely, to be sure, but ever since I had been thinking, *Poor neglected Volvo!* No longer.

I never would have believed how much pleasure I got out of performing this particular act. The weight of Edward's cock in my mouth was thrilling, and the sounds he made were so damn sexy. And the way he

seemed completely at my mercy, how he let himself be in my control, was exhilarating. And I freaking loved causing him to fall apart.

I set my mind to it, moving my mouth up and down in a nice even pace. Alternating between hard sucks, laving him with my tongue, and scraping his length with my teeth.

I moaned loudly when I felt his body move. I momentarily thought he was trying to pull away but then I figured it out. He was putting his seat back a little further. *Hot damn! I've got him!*

"Damn, Bella, I never imagined...so damn good...your mouth is so fucking hot...."

Come on, baby, lose a little of that control.

Moving the seat was good. But I wanted more. More proof that I could affect him the way he affected me. I thought immediately of the orgasm that snuck up on me last night on the balcony. His power over my body was absolute.

I placed my right hand on his thigh to better position my body so I could take more of him into my mouth. He grunted and pressed his hips up gently. *That's good. But I still want more. Come on, Edward.*

I picked up my pace and started sucking harder. I was moaning nearly nonstop and could feel that my panties were now wet straight through. *God he tastes good.* Edward was now rocking his hips ever so slightly to try to meet my mouth on each stroke. Finally I got what I was hoping for: I felt the car slow down, just a little.

"Bella, I can't....Christ...."

I pulled off of him just enough to say, "I love sucking you, Edward." He groaned. I snuck a peak at the speedometer. Sure enough – it had dropped from 90 to 75.

I plunged back down on him and he cried out my name. I felt the car slow a little more. Internally I was smiling to myself but outwardly I was sucking him with everything I had. "Fuck, Bella! I can't...you can't....ungh, God...."

I was dying to see what his face looked like in this moment but I didn't dare let myself pull back that much from him. In my mind's eye I pictured his intense and lust-ridden countenance set off by fiery black eyes. I realized that I was squeezing my thighs together in time with my bobbing head. I released him a little and rasped, "Can you smell how much I love doing this, Edward?" A quick peak told me we were now traveling at 62 miles an hour. *Yes!*

"Bella, your mouth is killing me," he growled. *Growled. God, I'll never get tired of that sound.* "We have to...you have to...Bella....," he pleadingly panted.

The next thing I knew, several things were happening at once: I felt his right arm curl protectively around my back, securing me against the padded center console; I sensed his hand moving against the stick shift; and I felt the car slow significantly and turn to the right. In less than a minute, the car had come to a complete stop. *He stopped! He freaking stopped!* The idling engine and the pattering of the rain against the roof of the car accompanied our heavy breathing as the only sounds.

I moaned loudly around him.

"Aw, faster baby. Please. It's so fucking good, Bella," he ground out. I complied, gladly, and lashed at him with my tongue as I moved over him. "Oh baby, oh baby....you hafta...Bella...*fuck!*"

I sat back enough that I could cup my hands over him and I instantly felt him shoot his cold release against my sweaty palms. I caught all of it, though it was about to slide off my hands back onto him. I scooped my hands into a closed ball, one cupped around the other, and sat the rest of the way up to relieve my tired back.

Sitting on my knees in his car, my face and hair sweaty, breathing hard, and holding the icy burn of his cum in my hands, I finally met Edward's gaze.

Holy hell! If there was ever a look that made a woman cum at the very sight of it, it would have been this look. Fierceness and power and lust and desire radiated off of him. His black eyes flashed from my face to my fists and back.

"My sweatshirt," I finally whispered with a nod to the backseat. He blinked twice then seemed to understand. As if emerging from a daze he slowly turned and grabbed the extra layer with which I had started the morning and reached for my hands.

I resisted opening them and he looked at me. He still hadn't said anything.

"I want it," I finally breathed out.

"Bella, you can't, love." His voice was so filled with affection that it was nearly overwhelming.

"I know. But I can't help it. Edward? Can you make me a promise?"

"I'll try, love, what is it?" He looked so earnest.

"Before...before you change me," I looked up to him, pleading with him with my eyes to not become upset at the topic. He didn't. "Before you change me, I want to do this and not have to stop. I want that experience, Edward. And if you're about to change me anyway, it won't matter."

He looked at me for a long moment. His face flashed with amazement and lust before he shifted it into a more neutral expression, still filled with love. He swallowed hard, then said, "If that is what you wish, Bella. What an incredible creature you are," he whispered lovingly.

He reached again to my hands with the sweatshirt and I slowly opened my palms and held them together like the sign for a book. Both palms were coated with wetness. He made quick work of cleaning my hands and then balled my soiled shirt up and placed it on the floor behind him. The next thing I knew he had pulled me into a deep and passionate kiss filled with longing and love and gratitude. He pulled away after a minute and leaned his forehead against mine. "I can taste me on you," he whispered before pressing his lips softly to mine once more. He looked in my eyes and dazzled me. "That was incredible, Bella. This whole weekend. I don't know how to thank you."

"I feel the same way, Edward. Thank you. I just...I just love you, so much."

"As I love you, Bella." He kissed me once more, then leaned around me and grabbed the seatbelt. He clicked it low around my hips and looked at me with mock sternness. "Stay."

I couldn't help the smile that brightened my face at the return of his playfulness. As he backed us up and out onto the road, I saw that he had pulled off into some old logging road. Soon we were back out on the highway and speeding past the "Welcome to Forks" sign.

Monday and Tuesday passed in a blur. Last-minute wedding details required a lot of my attention, so I spent almost all of both days after we returned with Alice. There were so many little things to attend to that Alice didn't even spend *that* much time teasing me about my weekend away. The Cullens' house was a little quiet otherwise; Rosalie, Emmett and Jasper were away on a hunting trip, Carlisle was working, and Esme always seemed to be gone somewhere.

Charlie had to work late Tuesday night so I ate dinner with Edward and Alice and planned to sleep at their house. Over dinner the three of us discussed the implementation of my revenge plot against Emmett. Seeing that this would happen, Alice had spoken to Rosalie and Jasper before they left. Everyone was officially on board, although I was such a nervous wreck over it that I had no confidence in my ability to pull it off at all. I don't know why I ever allowed Rosalie to talk me into a gag that involved me acting. I think I was too intimidated to refuse. And it did sound like a good prank, in theory.

Why am I considering antagonizing the strongest vampire I know? Oh, right. Because he tried to humiliate me with my sex life. Good enough.

Edward wasn't in bed when I awoke Wednesday morning so I showered quickly and dressed, then went downstairs. I found Edward, Alice, and Jasper in the kitchen. Edward set a plate of scrambled eggs out for me as I walked in the kitchen. I kissed him then tucked into the eggs.

"It's the perfect time, Bella," Alice whispered to me. I looked up at the three of them; they all wore expectant and amused expressions.

"I don't know if this is really such a good idea, guys...."

Just then the door to the garage opened and closed and Rosalie strode into the kitchen. "Oh, good, you're up. Emmett's out cleaning the Jeep, Bella. Perfect time...."

I took a deep breath. "Um, Rosalie...."

"Bella, please don't tell me you're wimping out. Emmett so deserves this. Besides, if you let him think his teasing bothered you, he'll never stop."

"That's true," Alice agreed. "Some time I'll tell you how he tried to tease us before he realized that I could always see what he was planning and Jasper could feel his mischievousness. Even once he realized he kept it up."

"So, what did you do to make him stop?" I asked.

Everyone chuckled. "For a solid week, every time Rose was, um, interested, I made him start crying," Jasper said with a smile.

I had just taken a drink of juice and nearly spit it out all over the counter. "Oh my God! Remind me never to get on your bad side, Jasper! I don't think our little idea compares to that."

"It's still good," Rosalie asserted. It was after all her plan.

All of a sudden I felt a wave of confidence settle over me. I looked up at Jasper. "Are you doing that?" He just smiled. I looked at Edward.

"You don't have to do this, Bella...."

"I know. But I want to. I think. No. I want to." I pushed my plate away and stood up. I walked over to Rosalie. I was buoyed by my borrowed confidence. "You know," I said to her, "in a couple of weeks I hopefully won't be as intimidated by you and it won't be as easy for you to talk me into fool plans like this."

She laughed. It was one of the most genuine laughs I had ever heard from her. "God I hope not, Bella." She patted me on the back. "Go get him."

I turned back to Edward. He and I had already gone over some of the 'dialogue.' "Remember," I looked at him sternly, "it's all an act. Don't flip out."

He rolled his eyes and nodded. He was torn between thinking this was funny and being jealous.

Another wave of confidence soaked into me as well as a small amount of lust. "Jasper!" I chided.

Alice chuckled. Jasper just smirked at me and said, "Break a leg."

I took a deep breath and stepped out into the garage before Jasper's confidence wore off and common sense returned.

"There she is!" Emmett bellowed as he buffed the passenger side of the Jeep.

"Hey Emmett." *Damn Jasper.* My voice sounded husky, even to me. *Deep breath.*

I walked up behind him and stood maybe a foot away. He was bent over rubbing some sort of cleaner onto the tire.

"Mmm," I moaned appreciatively as I ogled his toned ass. I saw his body tense slightly. He looked up at me from underneath one arm. It was clear that I had been looking.

"Um, Bella?"

"Yes, Emmett?" My face was completely flushed, but that didn't necessarily give anything away. At least I hoped.

He stood up and turned to face me. "Um, can I help you with something, Bella?" He wrung the rag in his hand.

I took a step towards him. "I thought you'd never ask, Emmett." My heart was flying, but that wasn't necessarily 'out of character' either.

He opened his mouth to say something but it died in his throat when I ran a single finger down his chest to his abdomen. *Don't panic don't panic don't panic*

He looked down to my finger and then back up at my face. His mouth hung open. "Bella, what are you doing?" he whispered.

"Well, Emmett, it's just..." I bit my lip to keep from breaking out in a big dumb smile, "you know I talked to Carlisle about, well, *being* with Edward."

He nodded and shifted his weight between his feet. "Yeah. You know, I'm sorry for teasing you." He flashed me the cutest grin.

"Oh. You are?" I felt my resolve weaken. *If he's going to apologize, I don't need to tease him back.* All of a sudden I felt a renewed wave of confidence with a dash of annoyance and a pinch of lust. Apparently my audience perceived my momentary lapse and wanted to ensure I continued. *Fine.* "Well, no need to apologize, Emmett. Actually, I wanted to thank you for that."

"What? Really? I mean...why?" As he spoke, he pressed his body back against the Jeep to place a little more space in between us.

"Well, since you know that my relationship with Edward is *progressing*...and since you're always insinuating that you're the...*best* in the house, I thought maybe I could *practice* some *things* with you. You know, so that I don't disappoint Edward on our wedding night."

His mouth gaped. "What?" He slid from in front of me and walked around the front of the Jeep. "Uh, gee Bella, I mean...that's really nice of you...um...Bella, I don't think you could ever disappoint Edward." He took a deep breath on that last comment, looking proud of himself for making that point.

The whole time he stuttered his responses, I slowly walked towards him. I noticed that with every few of my steps, he would take one away. I bit my bottom lip hard to keep from laughing.

"Well, I certainly appreciate you saying that, Emmett. But, still, couldn't you show me at least one thing, Emmett? *Pleeease?*"

"Bella, this just isn't a good idea. I'm sorry." Emmett looked like he wanted to be anywhere but in that garage with me.

Just then I felt the planned sadness and tears sprung to my eyes. "Oh please, Emmett!" I wailed. *God Jasper's powerful. Cripes. I feel like my dog died. Okay, that was a really bad joke. Focus!* I sobbed harder.

Panic overcame Emmett's features at my outburst. "Oh, God, Bella. I'm sorry. Please don't cry!" He took a step towards me and was about to wrap his arms around me when the door to the garage flew open and banged against the wall.

"What the hell is going on out here?" Edward demanded.

Both Emmett and I turned to Edward and gaped. I felt the sadness lift off of me immediately.

"Edward, I...Bella was just...I mean...I'm sorry, it's just...it's not what you...."

That was when I made my mistake. I looked at Emmett as he was trying to explain to Edward. He was flailing his arms around and rubbing his neck and shifting his weight around and scrunching his forehead as he tried to answer Edward's question.

I couldn't restrain the huge smile that wanted to precede the laughter about to erupt out of me. At first, Emmett didn't notice, but Edward did. Edward was trying to signal me with his eyes to cut it out, but that made it even funnier to me.

And then I completely lost it. The tears were back this time, but they were tears forced out by the sheer force of my laughter. I doubled over and clutched my stomach. It wasn't long before I couldn't breathe.

"Bella?" Emmett asked.

That's when the chorus of laughter broke out in the kitchen. Soon the others had all filed into the garage.

"What the fuck?" Emmett finally asked as he surveyed us.

"Em...Em...you...your...face...see...Em...." I couldn't form more than a syllable at a time my laughter was so encompassing. Finally I stepped back against a wall and slid down to my butt. "Woo...can't...breathe...shit...Emm...ett...."

My laughter finally died down. The others were still chuckling as well. Emmett finally realized he'd been played. And his face was a combination of 'ha ha good one,' 'you gotta be shittin' me,' and 'I am so gonna get you fuckers back'.

"So," he looked between me and Edward, "I take it he knows about the cards?"

"Yeah," I launched into a slightly more subdued round of crying and laughter.

Rosalie walked up to Emmett and patted him on the chest. "Did you know about this, baby?" he asked her in a wounded tone.

"Afraid so. It was my idea, actually."

"Rosie, baby. What the hell? You were right there with me!" he shouted.

"I know, baby. I'm sorry. I couldn't help myself. I know I was very bad," she said suggestively.

"Yes. Yes, you were. You know I'll have to punish you for this?" His voice was low, husky.

She leaned in. "I'm counting on it."

Alice coughed to try to break up their little private banter as Edward said, "Okay, alright, that's enough of that." Edward reached out his hands and lifted me from the ground.

Emmett walked up to me, one arm over Rosalie's shoulder. "Swan."

I looked up at him, half holding my breath.

"Good one."

I nodded with an unrestrained smile and felt the blush infuse my face. He and Rosalie were just about through the door to the garage when he called back, "And Swan?"

"Yes, Emmett?"

"You know what they say about payback." The door shut behind him and I gulped.

Edward hugged me into his chest with a chuckle. "I'll protect you, love. Don't worry."

Alice and Jasper offered amused congratulations on pulling off the prank before heading back inside themselves.

Edward kissed my forehead. "When did you become so deceptive?"

"I'm not, trust me. I felt like a complete open book. Jasper kept flooding me with emotions to keep me going. There's no way I could have done that on my own." He chuckled and walked me out to his car. Charlie was coming home at noon today and had the afternoon off. So I wanted to get home in time to make him a nice lunch. Then we were spending the day together.

Edward kissed me good-bye and promised to come by that night. I whipped up some homemade chicken and potato salads for lunch. I caught up with Charlie for the rest of the afternoon. He had picked up a few movies and we ate and watched. Then, going for some deep nostalgia, Charlie suggested a game of Monopoly, which we played at the kitchen table for two hours before I finally beat him. Before I knew it we were eating dinner and Charlie was settling in for some SportsCenter. I watched with him for a bit before excusing myself to go to bed.

On Thursday night, Edward went hunting with Alice. I had a hard time getting comfortable so I couldn't fall asleep. Finally I turned my light back on and grabbed a book. I found myself reading the same paragraph over and over, so I finally tossed it aside. Then, inspiration struck! I reached under my mattress and pulled out my notebook. *My list, old friend! Long time no see!* I smiled to myself as I reread my list of hoped-for fantasies:

- 1) Against the tree by the meadow
- 2) Feel his full weight on top of me
- 3) French kiss

- 4) See him naked
- 5) Shower together
- 6) Against the cold tiles in the shower
- 7) In his car
- 8) On our lab table
- 9) On his leather couch
- 10) I want him to come in my hand
- 11) IN MY MOUTH
- 12) His mouth on me, *there*
- 13) Whatever it takes to get him to say FUCK again
- 14) Get him to talk dirty in general
- 15) Submit
- 16) See him hunt
- 17) Have Edward taste my blood
- 18) Dominate
- 19) Phone sex
- 20) His mouth on my breasts, suckling me
- 21) On his piano
- 22) Mark me
- 23) Outside during a thunderstorm
- 24) In front of the fireplace in the Cullen's living room
- 25) Role Playing: teacher, doctor, police officer
- 26) Rough
- 27) Get spanked

28) In the water

29) In a hottub!

30) On a beach

31) In a public place

I couldn't believe how many of them had actually happened. The list had assumed almost magical properties in my mind. Before the list existed, sex in any form had been a complete impossibility. After the list existed, it was like something shifted in the universe and Edward became open to the idea of exploring our boundaries and his control. *Well, as long as the list has been working so nicely, perhaps I should add some more to it?*

I had had a couple thoughts over the course of the weekend.

32)

Surely what I had in mind for #32 would have to wait until after I was changed, because there was no way Edward would perform his side of this while I was performing mine. Nonetheless, I was curious as hell about

32) 69

Yeah.

I thought for a moment. Edward had received quite a bit of pleasure out of watching me eat. That was something I wasn't going to be able to do much longer. I needed some sort of a food-related fantasy because I loved nothing more than driving Edward crazy. I considered and discarded quite a few ideas before finally striking gold.

Holy shit! That's perfect!

33) Eat an Edward ice cream sundae

Ha! The ice cream won't even melt!

I read back over the list. My next idea was sorta already covered on the list. At a minimum, I had to add it to the existing entry:

25) Role Playing: teacher, doctor, police officer, *to which I added*, vampire

Admitting to Edward how much his vampiric nature and characteristics turned me on was liberating. *God, when he growls at me it causes an immediate gush of moisture from my center. And the black eyes! Holy crow!*

So that had gotten me thinking. How freaking sexy would it be for Edward to dress in some Gothic-looking get-up and stalk after me? *Gah*. I could even dress up myself. I couldn't decide if his look would entail more

of a classic nineteenth-century cape over a refined gentleman's suit or a more modern black leather duster over some...

Oh, crap. Leather. Picturing Edward in leather did some strange stuff to my girly parts. Okay, that settles that.

34) Him in leather

This line of thinking seemed to open a whole costume door. I wondered if there were any costumes Edward would like to see *me* in? I giggled to myself, then yawned. There was one last entry I wanted to make. That night on the railing had cemented this one.

35) Have him take me from behind

I had wanted him to just *do it* so badly that night that I have no idea how in the hell I told him to wait. This wasn't the position I imagined when I imagined our first time, to be sure. But at some point, I wanted him to just push me over a railing or a couch or a bed or, *damnit, anything*, and just finish what he started that night at The Aerie.

Not helpful, I thought to myself. *Now I'm all aroused and Edward's not here and we're not supposed to be having orgasms. Stupidest dare ever, by the way. Good going, Bella.* Thankfully I was feeling really tired now, so I tucked the notebook back under my bed and turned the light off. The last thought I had before slipping into sleep was to wonder whether Edward meant to include self-induced orgasms in his dare too.

On Friday morning, I woke up to bright sunlight and an empty bedroom. I pushed myself up into a sitting position and called Edward.

"Hey sleepyhead," he said with affection.

"Hey. When did you all get back?" I asked as I rubbed my eyes.

"Around seven. Alice says the clouds will roll in around noon. So you can either come over here or I'll come over your place this afternoon."

"I'll come over. Just let me get a quick shower and a bite to eat."

"That'll be fine." I heard some commotion in the background. "Oh, Alice wants me to tell you to bring your swimsuit. Everyone's going to want to go swimming this afternoon and we're invited, if you'd like to go."

It was already hot and it was only ten in the morning. "God, I haven't been swimming in ages. That sounds good," I said. Then I cringed to myself as I thought of the only swimsuit I owned, a bikini that Alice had purchased for me earlier in the summer when we made plans to go swimming but then cancelled them in favor of being extra cautious in the weeks leading up to the battle.

We said quick good-byes and I jumped into the shower. I ate some of the leftover chicken salad and then ran out to my truck. Throwing my bag in ahead of me I stuck the key in the ignition and turned it, pressing on the gas pedal. Nothing. I tried again. Still nothing. *My truck!*

I popped the release on the hood and hopped out, then propped the ancient hood on the metal stand. *Who am I kidding? I have no idea what I'm even looking at!*

You know how sometimes your brain thinks things that make absolutely no sense and that, when you're thinking clearly, you know are impossible? I had one of those moments. My immediate thought: *Jake'll be able to fix it.*

But Jake wasn't here anymore.

A wave of sadness filled me as I mourned the loss of my best friend and the apparent passing of my truck. Tears stung my eyes and I batted them away.

I walked back around to the cab of the truck and fished my phone out of my bag.

"I'll be over in an hour, love," Edward answered.

"How?" *Alice.* "Okay."

"Bella, are you all right?"

"Yes." It didn't even sound convincing to me.

"Love, what's wrong?"

"Nothing. Really. It's...nothing. I'll see you in an hour, 'kay?" *I should have waited a minute before I called Edward.* I remained firmly convinced that it was not fair of me to cry over Jacob to Edward. I had done enough of that for a lifetime.

Forty-seven minutes later, Edward's Volvo pulled into my driveway. I was sitting on my front steps staring at my big red truck. I was momentarily surprised when Rosalie stepped out of the Volvo too, but then it made sense. *Rose knows cars.*

Edward came and pulled me into an embrace while Rose poked and prodded inside my engine. "Okay, people, do you want the good news or the bad news first?" she called.

We walked over to her. "Uh, the good news?"

She looked at me. "It can be fixed."

"Okay. So what's the bad news then?"

"It would cost twice as much as the truck's worth and it would take some time to find the parts."

I looked between Edward's and Rosalie's faces. The significance of the moment was written on their expressions. Finally, Edward spoke, "I'm sorry, love. I know you've loved this truck."

I nodded, not trusting my voice. Rosalie dropped the hood back into the closed position and brushed her hands on her jeans. Edward reached into the truck and grabbed my bag.

"Come on," he said, holding out his hand to me. "Let's go have some fun. We'll take care of this situation tomorrow." I had no idea what that meant, but for the moment I set it aside and tried to concentrate on being with Edward.

Two hours later, my transportation woes were nearly forgotten as I swam and splashed and laughed and played with Edward and his siblings in a secluded mountain lake. We'd traveled by foot to get here – or at least everyone else had; I rode Edward's back. The connection between my center and his back for twenty minutes was one of the things that helped push my dead truck out of my thoughts.

I found myself surprisingly more comfortable in my blue bikini than I thought I would be. I realized that was because Edward had already seen all of me, and I was comfortable being seen by him. Still, I pulled a pale pink tank over my head as well; I wasn't necessarily comfortable in front of Jasper and Emmett. Edward seemed entirely happy with that decision.

I came up from wetting my hair at one point and was brushing the water up off of my face when I heard Emmett say in an incredulous tone, "Dude! What is that?!"

When the water was out of my eyes I looked around, and then realized Emmett was not only looking at me but pointing at me as well. "What?" I finally asked.

He just kept staring and pointing.

Finally I looked down. The tank had shifted while I was underwater, as had the fabric of the bikini beneath it. The cursive letters 'Ed' were visible. I lowered my upper body back beneath the water and adjusted my top. But it was too late.

"Dude!" Emmett began again. "Was that what I think it was?" Now he was looking back and forth between me and Edward, who swam up behind me and wrapped his arms around my waist. He pressed a soft kiss to my cheek.

"What's up, man?" Jasper asked, swimming over.

"Bella," was all he said. Jasper looked at me.

I sighed. *Cat's out of the bag now. Plus acting embarrassed about it will only give him fuel to tease me again.* "Yes, Emmett. It's what you thought it was."

"*Dude!*" Emmett exclaimed. I couldn't help but laugh now. Amazingly, each 'dude' had conveyed a different and entirely understandable thought and sentiment.

"Emmett, what the hell are you going on about?" Jasper laughed.

"Bella. Has a. Tattoo!" Jasper's eyebrows shot up. He looked at Alice. I was completely impressed that she had kept it from him. "And it's...it's of...."

"Yes, Emmett. It's Edward's name." All of a sudden, something entirely else captured my attention. As I sparred with Emmett over the tattoo, Edward was getting aroused. His growing erection was pressed snugly against my ass. As we moved together in the soft undulations of the water, he moved himself against me.

"Can we see it?" Emmett asked with no hesitation.

"Emmett!" Rosalie exclaimed with a smack to the back of the head.

"What?"

Only Edward had seen the final product, which was now completely healed, the last of the scab having fallen off two days before. I so didn't want to turn this into a thing with Emmett. Ensuring I didn't pull the fabric to reveal too much, I stretched the tank and the bikini slightly aside to reveal most of the tattoo. For about five seconds. Emmett's eyes bugged out even further. Even Jasper looked...impressed? Edward grew harder behind me. I turned to look at him and his lips crashed into mine. *Note to self: ask Edward what about this conversation is so turning him on!*

Within about fifteen minutes, everyone was agreeing it was time to head back. The other two couples disappeared almost immediately and Edward whisked me up to his bedroom.

No sooner was the door shut than he was pressing me against it. "God Bella. You're so damn sexy and you don't even know it." I thought about answering but his mouth and hands were all over me and I just couldn't manage the words. He kissed down my chest and pulled the tank and bikini aside. He lavished the tattoo with kisses and cold licks. "You have earned me all kinds of, how did Emmett put it?, oh yes, *props*, with my brothers for this."

The feeling of his hands skimming across my heated body combined with the intensity of his mouth and tongue on my skin combined with the huskiness of his voice had me moaning softly and seeking out friction.

"Edward, the dare," I finally panted in between kisses.

I heard a low growl. He didn't stop his attention to my body. "Screw the dare," he finally hissed as he pressed his palm against my breast. *Yes*.

Not ten seconds later, my phone rang in my bag where it sat on the floor outside Edward's closet. I whimpered and Edward growled. It was the ringtone I had specifically set up for Charlie.

Edward stepped back with a grin that went from frustrated to sheepish. He ran his hand through his hair. I took a deep breath to try to calm myself before answering.

"Hi Dad."

"Hi Bella. You okay there? You sound outta breath."

"Yeah, I had to run for the phone." I made a face at Edward, who was smiling.

"I just got home and saw your note. Truck's dead?"

"Yeah, Dad. Rosalie looked at it – you know she's really into cars – well, she said it wouldn't be worth it to fix and it would take too long to get the parts."

"Uh huh."

Edward motioned to me to hand him the phone. I frowned at him but he persisted. "Um, Dad? Hold on. Edward wants to talk to you." I didn't wait for a response.

"Chief Swan?" I heard him ask. "Would you have time for me to come speak with you, sir? Of course....I'll be right over." Edward hung up the phone and tossed it back into my bag.

"What was that about? What do you need to talk to my dad about?"

"Guy stuff," he said in return. *Guy stuff?* I wasn't sure I had ever heard Edward utter the word 'guy' before.

He kissed me on the cheek and then grabbed a set of clothes out of the closet. "I'll use the shower down the hall. You can use mine," he said before grinning at me and heading out of the room.

I stood there. *What just happened?* I shrugged, somewhat annoyed at whatever *guy* conversation they were planning, and showered and dressed.

An hour and a half later Edward returned. I was starving so he made me dinner while I sat at the counter and tried to get him to spill. Esme came in while I was eating and her clothes were all dirty. She offered some weird explanation before scooting out of the kitchen to get cleaned up. *Everyone's keeping stuff from me!* I grumbled to myself.

After sorting through more incoming wedding invitation responses, Alice declared a movie night and we all congregated in the living room. Edward drove me home after the movie was over and promised to return shortly. Charlie was snoring in his chair in the living room when I came in. I tried to wake him but he only half woke up with a promise that he was getting right up. So I grabbed a blanket and spread it over him, then turned off the TV.

With Edward by my side that night, I managed to fall immediately to sleep.

Edward showed up at my house bright and early. Charlie had already left for work. He had traded this Saturday off for next Saturday, the day of my wedding, and had been picking up some extra shifts so he could also take Thursday and Friday off as well.

Edward was giving off the strange feeling that it was Christmas morning. "Bella, love, get your shoes on. I'm taking you shopping," he proclaimed.

"Shopping? What for?"

"A new car," he said with a huge grin.

"What?!" Edward had been trying to convince me to allow him to purchase me a new car for months. But I had my truck and I loved my truck. And even though my truck was no more, I was hesitant about the idea of Edward spending that kind of money on me.

"Before you flip out about this, please listen to my argument in favor," he said as he pulled me down to sit next to him on the couch.

"Fine. Go ahead." *At least he's talking to me about it and not just throwing me over his shoulder. Or, worse, he's not just surprising me with some car I'd hate.*

"First, it would give me great pleasure to provide you with something you need. Second, I am concerned that whatever you are driving is safe enough to protect you. Third, I've discussed making this purchase with Charlie, and he approves. You should know that he has given some money towards the purchase, but has agreed to leave the choice to you within certain parameters. And, finally, you broke a rule last weekend and are still owed a punishment." He looked at me expectantly, absolutely assured of the soundness of his arguments.

My head was reeling as I attempted to sort through everything he said. The last two most caught my attention. *This* was what he spoke with Charlie about? And, what rule did I break?

"Um, explain the last two more," I managed. I crossed my arms over my chest.

"I told Charlie that I wanted to replace your truck as my wedding present to you and I shared with him some of the vehicles I had been considering. I didn't want him to feel that I was assuming his role as provider for you without some acknowledgement. We had a very amiable conversation and he insisted to contribute towards the purchase. And you didn't wear panties out to dinner Sunday night."

"We're not playing the game anymore, though!" I complained.

"Ah, I told you that night there would be a punishment. And, if you'll recall, I never said the game was over." He looked smug.

"Well, if I agree to this, the game is over today. Don't even think you're going to just keep referencing our game to get your way, Cullen."

He bowed his head to me. "Agreed."

"Was that all you talked to Charlie about?"

He sighed. "No."

I looked at him pointedly. "Okay...? So...what else did you talk about?"

"Suffice it to say I had been meaning to have a conversation with him for a while. I wanted to reassure him that what I...did...before...would never happen again. And that I would always take care of you and provide

for you and love you. I wanted him to understand that his 'little girl' would never want for anything, not for love, nor family, nor resources. And I wanted to thank him for supporting you in choosing me."

My breath caught in my throat with that last sentence. I felt the tears prickle my eyes. "You don't fight fair," I gasped around the tears that finally fell.

"Not when your safety is at stake," he whispered against my lips. "So, will you allow me to buy you a car now?"

I nodded, still reluctant, but won over.

Four dealers later, I was trying to make up my mind between two cars. It had been a grueling day and my patience was wearing thin. I was really trying to maintain a decent disposition because I had *agreed* to this and because I knew how much it meant to Edward. Both potential cars fit Edward's and my father's main parameter: they were both on *Consumer Report's* and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's list for Top Safety Picks. The price tag on both of them completely freaked me out, so I couldn't even try to pick the less expensive one as a way of judging.

In the end, while I loved the Volvo SUV, I decided I'd get a different make from Edward's. Plus, I loved the idea of being immortal and driving an Infiniti. Thus, I drove off the lot with a fully loaded blue slate Infiniti EX35. I thought it was very pretty and smelled nice. Charlie, Rosalie, and Emmett all oohed and aahed in succession about all the car's various features and specifications.

When I pulled into my driveway that night, I felt a little weird. I patted the Chevy on the hood. "Sorry old girl," I muttered. I didn't want her to think I had forgotten her already.

By the time I got ready for sleep, Edward was laying in my bed waiting for me. He opened his arms to me and beckoned me to him.

I fell into his arms and buried my face in the crook of his neck.

"You know, letting go of your truck doesn't mean you're letting go of Jacob," he said gently.

I pulled away from him and pushed myself up onto my elbows. "What...?"

He brushed his fingers affectionately along my cheek. "Bella, I know that your truck represents something of a connection with him. If for nothing else than the fact that it belonged to his father and he rebuilt the engine."

"Yeah, but...." I didn't know what to say, really, because on at least some level, he was right. I just didn't think I had been that obvious about it. A stray tear rolled down my cheekbone and Edward brushed it away with his thumb. I thought through my emotions further. "It's not just that, Edward," I began, afraid to continue with this particular line of thought.

"Then what is it, love? I know you've been upset ever since yesterday."

"I have, but honestly, I only just this minute really figured it all out. But I don't want you to get upset."

He looked at me earnestly. "I won't, Bella. You can say anything to me."

I nodded. "I just realized that, in a way, letting go of that truck means letting go of a lot of parts of my life. Not just Jacob. But it was also the first car I ever owned. It was a gift from my father. It was the truck we rode out to the meadow in that first time." He nodded with a small smile. "It just feels like...saying...good-bye."

He studied my eyes for a moment. I could tell he was warring with himself. "I know, love." He sighed. "Is there anything I can do to help?"

I loved him fiercely in that moment. "You just did it, Edward." I leaned forward and pressed a firm kiss on his lips. "You let me express my fears and concerns; you listened to me without trying to guide me to any particular decision. That was exactly what I needed."

He pulled my head back down to him and stroked my hair, occasionally pressing soft kisses to my forehead. "I'll always be here for you, Bella. Whatever you need." He pulled the covers up around me. "Sleep now, love. I'll be right here when you awake."

~*~

Chapter 19: 7 Days

EPOV

Bella.

Is.

Going.

To.

Be.

My.

Wife.

In.

Seven.

Days.

This was the thought that ran through my head in a loop as Bella's digital clock flashed from 11:59 Saturday night to 12:00 Sunday morning. Bella was tucked in a ball against my chest, one arm tossed lightly across

me. I turned my head away from the clock to stare once again at the ceiling, watching the play of shadows there. I was suddenly aware of the huge grin currently reshaping my face.

I wondered at myself. Eighty-eight years. For eighty-eight years I was alone. For eighty-eight years I was single. A one. And the feeling of solitariness became all the more pronounced as my vampire family slowly but surely found their mates and paired up. But never me.

All that changed twenty months ago. I felt a pricking sensation at my eyes that told me I would shed tears if I still had the ability. Because of Bella, I would never be alone again. I would never be just one. I was about to be one of two.

Married.

Mated.

“Vanilla...mmm....”

My brows furrowed and my grin broadened at Bella’s murmurings. She had told me during our truth game that food would be one thing she would miss. So I had been intent of late to get her to try as many different dishes as possible. Now she seemed to be dreaming about food, helping to reaffirm my plan to keep her from missing out on even a single opportunity to partake between now and the time she is changed.

I could discern that the next word she said was ‘chocolate’ even though it came out sounding like ‘chocky.’ I chuckled. Her brain is a wonder. *What I wouldn’t give for just one peak!*

I felt Bella shudder next to me and went to pull away, thinking that the chill from my body was making her uncomfortable. As soon as I moved, Bella followed along, pulling herself into me once again. This time, however, Bella threw her leg across my thighs. *Well, there you have it.*

Though I was looking forward to having even more hours to spend with Bella when she no longer required sleep, I had to admit I would miss her sleeping just a little. First, because her sleep talking gave me the smallest window into her subconscious mind. Second, because I loved the fact that she was entirely comfortable making herself as vulnerable as she could possibly be in my presence. I sighed in contentment.

“So good Edward,” Bella whispered.

I groaned in realization, my body responding immediately to Bella’s increasingly obvious arousal. I wouldn’t miss these erotic dreams of hers, only because once she could no longer dream I planned on acting out these dreams every chance we got.

“How does....”

What? Tell me more, Bella!

She pressed herself against me, now making me feel what I could already smell.

I realized I was clenching and unclenching my fists. *Wake her up. No, she needs her sleep. She can go back to sleep later. Wake her up.* I turned my head towards her and peered down at her face, no longer as relaxed in

sleep as it had been a few minutes before. Her mouth dropped open in a small o and she released a soft sigh. *Damn. I shouldn't.*

"...taste...."

Christ. No matter what she's thinking about it's gonna kill me. God, the way she tastes. I got lost for a moment in my memories of my mouth on her soft folds, probing, seeking, thrusting. Drinking of her was...just...monumentally good. *And she seems to think the same thing about me,* I thought with a little pride. Then my cock grew noticeably harder as I pictured Bella on her knees with her lovely mouth stretched wide around my shaft. I thought of my cum all over her breasts and groaned aloud, pressing my free hand against myself in an effort to provide some relief.

I looked to Bella again. *I had, after all, said 'screw the dare.' I don't know what planet I was on when I thought I could resist being with her in that way after having had her.*

"Does that feel good?"

Mother of God. What are you doing to me Bella? What are you doing to me in that pretty little head of yours?

She needs sleep. She needs sleep.

"Want you...," she breathed.

Screw. The. Dare. I clutched the edge of the mattress, willing my hand to be good. *Let. Her. Sleep. She is getting married this week and it will be stressful enough for her as it is without being exhausted on top of it.* She moaned and pressed herself against me in three small thrusts. *Oh, for God's sake.*

I slid out of bed, leaving a whimpering Bella behind me, and settled onto my knees on the floor beside her bed. Bella had rolled onto her stomach in my absence, an outstretched hand seeking after me. I chuckled at the absolute power she wielded over my body. And I don't even think she realizes she wields it.

Indeed, her power was responsible for my declaration that the dare was over. I shook my head as I thought about my level of frustration as Charlie's call interrupted our make-out session up against my bedroom door. *How many times had I pictured having her against that door?*

As if my fantasy wasn't enough, the fact that the other couples in the house at that moment were all...otherwise occupied...didn't help my resolve. And that had been Bella's fault too.

Leaning my forehead against the edge of her mattress, I thought back to our afternoon at the lake:

Alice had challenged me to a swim to the far side of the lake. It was a ruse to discuss my wedding present for Bella.

No no no no. Oh ho ho. Not possible. No fucking way. Holy shit! Yes way. "Dude! What that what I think it was?" Emmett thought and then asked...someone. I wasn't really paying attention.

I heard Jasper ask what Emmett was going on about. When he said Bella's name in reply, I finally tuned in. Emmett seemed to be losing his mind over something. *Holy shit! No fucking way! Holy shit that is so hot. His. On her. Forever. Fuck. Did he ask her? This chick is not shy. That rocks. Go Edward.*

Whatever they were discussing, she didn't seem embarrassed about it. I hoped he wasn't trying to exact revenge for the prank in the garage. Alice and I swam back in no time and I wrapped my arms around Bella's midsection.

She started a little at my touch, but calmly responded, "Yes, Emmett. It's what you thought it was." I squeezed her a little in question, but she kept focused on my brother.

"Dude!" he finally exclaimed. Bella's laugh was infectious. I smiled too, still not entirely sure what Emmett's deal was.

"Emmett, what the hell are you going on about?" Jasper laughed.

"Bella. Has a. Tattoo!" Emmett nearly choked out. Jasper's eyebrows shot up. "And it's...it's of...."

"Yes, Emmett. It's Edward's name," Bella stated matter-of-factly. She wrapped her arms around mine. I could feel her heart beating faster now.

For a minute, there was utter mental silence. And then the maelstrom hit.

Bella has a tattoo? That's cool. That's hot. Wow – Bella is surprising me left and right these days. She might turn out to be a pretty cool sister after all. God damn. That fucking marks her as his. His name?

I couldn't keep up with who was saying what. Aside from Alice, who was smugly quiet, everyone else seemed to be yelling. I pulled Bella in tighter. I didn't like Jasper and Emmett viewing such an intimate part of Bella's body. My possessive instincts were provoked. I was suddenly overcome with the desire to mark her again, just to make sure they understood she was mine. I realized I was hard but was of no mind to care. Instead I pressed it into her. I needed her to remember she was mine, too.

Only Emmett's voice kept me from acting on these impulses. "Can we see it?"

Rosalie's reprimand helped keep me from going to drown my brother. "Emmett!"

Emmett wasn't deterred, however. "What?"

I felt Bella sigh, then her hands left my arms and reached upwards. *Christ, she's showing them.* I was just about to pull her under the water further when she released the fabric of her tank top and the tattoo was covered again. I looked up to find Emmett's eyes bugging out and Jasper's eyebrows raised.

Then the frenzy of internal commentaries started again. *No freaking way. Fuck. I wanna mark Rosie. Wow, Edward, that's a hot way to claim her. I knew she was going to be a force to be reckoned with. Christ. The panties and now this. How are we supposed to keep this shit out of our heads? It's very pretty against her skin. I wonder if it has a taste. Okay, I need to get Rosie back to the house. Bow chicka mow wow. She took pain for you. A fucking tattoo! You are one lucky bastard, bro. Your. Name. Is. On. Her. Forever.*

I couldn't help it. The combination of my brothers' arousal over the idea of my mate being marked by my name forever with my jealousy at their admiration of her with Bella's surprising comfort and assertiveness during this whole exchange completely undid me. I pressed my now aching erection into her further. When she looked at me with an expression that asked if what she had just done was okay I replied by crashing my lips into hers. I didn't care that the others were there. In that moment, I wanted her so damn bad.

When I pulled away from her I noticed that Emmett and Rosalie had disappeared. Moments later it was clear where they went. Luckily they had swam far enough around the far edge of the lake that Bella couldn't hear them going at it like animals. Emmett was growling "mine, mine, mine" repeatedly. *Great.* I rolled my eyes and look towards Jasper, who appeared to be struggling with the lust everyone was throwing off.

Jasper's eyes bored into mine. *We. Are. Leaving. As. Soon. As. Those. Two. Are. Back.*

Within fifteen minutes, we were outright sprinting back to the house. The last thing I heard from any of them before entering the house was Emmett exclaiming, *Dude, that's some hot fucking shit there. I have to give you some major fucking props for picking such a cool chick.*

I spent the night like that. Reminiscing over Bella's...coolness. Emmett was right. She was one cool chick. I smiled to myself. *Why do I think she would really like being told that? She's so sure she doesn't compare to us, when really she fits with us in every possible way.*

I lifted my head and looked at the clock again. 4:02. I was itching for Bella to wake up. I just didn't want to wake her. She *did* need her sleep, after all. But I really *wanted* her. For a long time I just stared at her, memorizing every aspect of her body as it lay on her bed. But that wasn't helping my patience or my arousal.

Finally, I turned my body around and leaned my back against her bed. As I leaned my head on my arms across my knees, I felt something against my back. It wasn't that it caused me any pain, it was that I couldn't imagine what could be poking me out of an otherwise soft mattress. My first thought was that, whatever it was, it could catch Bella's leg when she got out of the bed.

I turned and noted two things sticking out from in between Bella's mattress and box spring. I grabbed both, not really thinking about it. One was a pen and one was a notebook. It has been the end of the metal spiral on the notebook that had caught my attention. My brain worked sluggishly, first wondering why there was a notebook sandwiched within Bella's bed; then realizing the notebook was probably meant to be private and I shouldn't have pulled it out; then beginning to make sense of the words written on the page in front of me:

30) *On a beach*

31) *In a public place*

32) *69*

33) *Eat an Edward ice cream sundae*

34) *Him in leather*

35) *Have him take me from behind*

What the hell???

I flipped the notebook around and opened it fully in my lap. I couldn't pull my eyes away. At the top of the left-hand page of the notebook were the words 'TO DO'. What followed afterwards was a...list...of, I looked where the list had been continued onto a second page, 35...things – *fantasies?!?* – Bella...wanted to...experience...with...*ME!*

I read through the list. Once. Twice. On the fifth time I became aware of the intensity of my erection. On the eighth time I realized that I was alternating between holding my breath and panting.

She wants to...and...really? Oh. Fucking yes.

I sat, stunned. I was...*Shit....*I was incredulous. To be certain, I was aroused beyond all reasonability. I was also a little, well, if I was honest, angry. *Has she been orchestrating all of our sexual encounters around this little list? But then I shoved that thought away. That's ridiculous. It's normal and healthy to fantasize. Our relationship has been nothing if not natural, wonderful. Perhaps her active imagination and obvious desire for our relationship to progress has just carried over into a confidence and assertiveness that has helped our relationship move to the next level.* Once I rid myself of my knee-jerk defensiveness, I felt a little amused. Amused that she had made such a list. Amused that her sleep talking about vanilla and chocolate apparently had a specific explanation. Amused that we shared quite a few fantasies.

And that led me right back to aroused. I looked over the list again.

Mother of God. The moment my eyes would settle on and consider one entry, another would grab my attention.

How is it possible that I have found someone who is this beautiful and this wonderful and this giving and this courageous and this devoted and this sexy AND THIS ADVENTUROUS???

Seven days never seemed so long as it did at that very moment.

I pledged, right then as I sat on Bella's bedroom floor, that I would make all of Bella's fantasies come true. My Bella would never have a desire go unfulfilled nor a need go unmet. It would be my complete pleasure to ensure that Bella was taken care of in every possible way.

I began formulating a plan. Not only had I tossed out the dare, but Jasper, sensing my growing sexual frustration once again, had pulled me aside and finally wrangled the truth about the dare from me. It was his opinion – and in this moment it seemed an eminently wise one – that attempting to take a hiatus from our intimacy was not a wise move given what we were planning to try on our wedding night. I knew one thing for certain – if I hadn't pulled from the dare before seeing this, I would have immediately thereafter. Looking over the list again, I selected a few specific ideas and beginning planning some adventures for Bella this week.

She's not gonna know what hit her.

There was no chance I would forget the contents of this list. So, taking one last look at it, I began to slip the notebook back between the mattress and box spring when a devious idea occurred to me. I grinned darkly, then put the pen to the paper.

Mimicking her handwriting perfectly, I wrote:

36) Seduce Edward with a striptease and then ride him cowgirl

I slid the notebook and pen back into their hiding place.

Let's see what she makes of that.

I was so worked up by the time the sun began to rise Sunday morning that I had to leave, knowing if anything started between us I wouldn't be able to stop myself. So I left Bella a note, using paper other than that notebook's paper, of course, and departed to go hunt and collect myself.

Hunting, for the first time, didn't help calm me the way I'd hoped. Knowing that Bella was actively fantasizing about watching me hunt was a major turn-on. It surprised me that I thought so. But then I realized it was because it showed how unconditionally she loved and accepted me. Besides, hunting got me thinking about what she would look like when she hunted. And then I was right back to fully erect again.

After sating myself, I went home to change and shower. But the shower held no respite for me either. It seemed we both had a thing for showers. I finally had to relieve myself lest I attack her the moment I next saw her. I had number 32 in mind the whole time. *God damn.*

Really, I had three days to be with Bella before the full brunt of the wedding chaos descended. Renee and Phil were scheduled to arrive Wednesday morning, and I knew I wouldn't see much of Bella afterwards. This was her last opportunity to spend time with her mother before her change, and I intended for her to make the most of it. During the days, Alice was going to require a lot of Bella's time to finalize a variety of wedding plans. So I concentrated my planning on our evenings, which I intended to claim to the extent possible.

I brought Bella over to the house on Sunday and Alice quickly grabbed her. Bella looked at me with resignation as Alice dragged her into the dining room, which Alice had set up as her wedding planning headquarters. I played on the piano for a long while just to be near her. Occasionally, Bella would steal away from the dining room to get a drink or use the bathroom, and I was rewarded with a passionate kiss every time. It made my anticipation for the evening even greater.

Finally, Alice was finished with Bella for the day so I took her home to have dinner with Charlie. I was about to burst at the seams when Charlie finally went to bed at 10. The minute I sensed him fall to sleep I was through Bella's window. Bella was dressed in a tank top and sleep shorts. She would be warm enough.

"Come love."

"What? Come where?" She sat up on her bed and tossed the book aside she had been reading.

I reached my hand up and helped her stand. "It's a surprise. Now turn around."

She laughed at me as I forcibly turned her so that her back was to me. Then she gasped as I draped the scarf around her eyes and tied it behind her head. "Edward!" She raised her hands to the scarf.

"Ah ah – no peaking, Bella." I pressed an open-mouthed kiss to her neck and she gasped again. *Hmm. Blindfolding has all kinds of possibilities. Must revisit that idea later.* I walked around the front of her and knelt down, grabbing her hands to help her climb onto my back. I didn't want to attempt the window with her.

Silently I made my way through her house and out the front door. I walked the short distance to my destination and hopped inside. I settled Bella on the pile of blankets. "We're here."

"Already?" she smiled. "It didn't seem like we went very far."

"You can look now," I said, my voice full of excitement.

BPOV

I knew I probably looked goofy sporting a big grin and blindfolded eyes, but Edward seemed almost giddy so I couldn't find it in myself to mind. I kept waiting for the wind to start streaming through my hair but it never did, and before I knew it I was sitting in a big fluffy pile of something soft. When he told me I could, I grabbed the scarf and slid it up over my head. It took a moment for my eyes to adjust to the twinkling light. And then a sob caught in my throat.

"Oh my God," I managed as I stared all around.

"I thought we could give her a proper send-off," he said, quietly.

I took in the incredibly sweet scene around me. We were sitting in the bed of my now defunct truck. Edward had lined the bed with several thick sleeping bags and a line of downy pillows. Little tea light candles sat around the entire edge of the truck bed and on top the cab. The sky was for once completely clear, and the stars shone brightly overhead. Given the hour, all was quiet save for the sound of the breeze in the trees and an occasional owl. It was mesmerizing.

It was more than I could take in.

Feeling at a loss for words to adequately express my feelings for something so sweet, and *so me*, I finally threw my arms around Edward's neck and held on for dear life. "I just...God, Edward...I just love you."

"And that's all that will ever matter, Bella. You love me. And I love you." I felt him turn his face into my hair and breathe deeply. He sighed contentedly. "I have something else for you, love."

I pulled back, not sure how much more sweetness I could take. He pulled out a small cooler and with great pomp pulled out a dish of vanilla ice cream with chocolate sauce. Then he pulled out a can of whipped cream and sprayed a huge pile of the cold confection on top of it. "I hope you saved room for dessert. I thought you might like an ice cream sundae."

Okay. Who doesn't want an ice cream sundae?!? I laughed. "Yum. Yes, please," I said eagerly as I reached for the dish. I scooted my body back so that I could lean against the truck's cab and Edward laid down on his side so that his face were nearest my body and his head was nearest my feet. As I ate the sundae he leisurely ran his fingers up and down my calf.

His eyes never left my mouth as I enjoyed my sundae. I was reminded of his interest in watching me eat over the weekend and couldn't help but make a show of sucking the ice cream off the spoon and licking whip cream off my lips that "accidentally" stuck there.

"Are you enjoying it, Bella?" he asked after a bit.

"Very much." I thought for a minute. "Are you?" I bit my bottom lip.

He seemed to struggle with a response for a minute. A darkly amused expression flickered across his face before he looked to me again. "Yes. I find your mouth incredibly erotic. As you obviously know."

The scoop of ice cream I had in my mouth at that moment stuck in my throat for a moment. *He can make anything seductive!* Immediately, I thought to one of my newest additions on my list: an Edward ice cream sundae. I couldn't exactly figure out how to...suggest such a thing. But the more I ate the more I thought of that item and the more aroused I became.

The night was warm and my ice cream was getting melty. I took a little bit too much on my spoon at one point and a thin stream of cold cream dripped off onto my chin and down onto my chest. It quickly rolled under the edge of my tank top. I was in the midst of sitting the bowl down next to me to clean myself up when before I knew it Edward was straddling my legs and intently watching the cream move down my skin.

The speed of his motions and the intensity of his gaze caused my heart to begin beating wildly. A thin sheen of perspiration broke out across my body.

"Too bad you don't like ice cream," I managed to murmur.

With dark eyes and his crooked smile he gazed at me. "I'm pretty sure I'll like *this* ice cream." And then he leaned forward and licked from the top of my collar bone up to my lips. I cried out at the sensation of his cold tongue against my overheated skin. I barely had time to process those feelings before he scooted his body back and began laving his tongue against the spilled cream on my chest. He reached for my tank top, then pulled back to seek permission. I nodded, wishing he would just *tear. it. off.* But before I could even verbalize such a request, my tank was laying on the blankets next to us and I was laying exposed in the back of my truck as Edward eagerly licked and sucked at every inch of revealed skin.

"So," I rasped, "*oh...um...just...oh my...to be clear....*" *Oh. Who can talk when he does that to my nipples?*

I whimpered as he pulled away. "Yes?"

"Um, right, so...no more dare?"

"No more dare." He looked at me intently, one side of his lip curling upwards just slightly. "Besides, you won it decisively this morning."

Huh? How could I have won...oh...OH. "I...I did?" His mouth found my nipple again and sucked hard. "Ungh...." I heard him moan 'mmmhmm.' "And...what...oh God Edward...what brought that on, if you...oh...don't mind my...asking?"

He leaned forwards and hovered over me. "Let's just say you inspired me and leave at that?" His eyebrows were raised as if to ask if I *really* wanted to talk right now. I nodded and he smirked.

He lowered his lips to mine. What started out as sweet and soft soon became needful and urgent. I felt his hand smoothing across my breasts and abdomen. I was moaning and pressing myself up against him. I had been thinking I would have to wait another week for this and I was so freaking relieved that wasn't the case. Before I even considered it I was vocalizing my need.

"Please touch me, Edward. I've missed your touch so much. I never want to be without it again."

"Nothing would give me more pleasure, Bella," Edward rasped. Then his cool hand was pressed against the wet heat radiating through my sleep shorts. I exhaled sharply at how good the pressure of his hand felt against my need.

The sides of the truck bed provided a false sense of privacy, of being in our own little bubble. But I couldn't entirely let go of the reality that we were laying here, doing this, in the middle of my neighborhood. What I really wanted in that moment was for Edward to rip off my remaining clothing, but I decided instead to reach down and guide his hand into my shorts and panties. I needed his skin on mine.

He groaned as he realized what I wanted from him but complied readily. "So wet Bella. So hot." *Oh oh ah God so oh yes.*

"Uuhhnn," I cried out as his fingers met the silky slick skin of my center. "This is what you do...mmm...to me, Edward. Oh God."

Edward lie half on top of me, his right leg straddling my left and holding my left leg open and immobile. As he guided his right hand skillfully against me and in me, he alternated kisses on my breasts, collarbone, and neck. I felt him hard against my knee and did what I could to push my leg into him. *Want. Him.*

"More, Edward. Please. Another...."

I grunted and pushed down as Edward inserted a second long finger inside of me. *Want him now.* The position ensured that he was stimulating me everywhere, his palm rocking insistently against my clit.

"You're so beautiful, Bella," Edward whispered against my breasts. "I love the way you feel." He emphasized his words with a slightly firmer thrust of his fingers. "I love the way you taste." He offered one long licking stroke with a flattened tongue across my breast. "I love the way you smell." He nuzzled his face against the crook of my neck.

"Oh God, Edward!"

"And I fucking love the way you sound when you're close." *God his mouth....*

I moaned again, trying with everything in me to press myself up against his glorious hand.

"Oh Edward. I'm...oh...help me...."

I don't know how he knew what I was asking. But his lips crashed to mine as my orgasm rocked through me and I screamed into his mouth. My body was arched up against his and he continued to pump his fingers into me as my body clenched around him.

When he pulled his fingers out I shuddered, immediately feeling the loss of him. He rested his still-wet hand on my side and squeezed me gently as he offered me a sweet and love-filled kiss on my lips. I gazed in his eyes for a moment before reaching down and grabbing his hand. I pulled it up to my mouth.

My wetness coated his hand but the two fingers that had been inside me held most of what I now knew he loved. Yet I couldn't resist the temptation to tease him. With a smile, I offered, "Mmm...one for you and one for me."

When he looked at me questioningly, I motioned to his hand and he finally understood.

Slowly, oh so slowly, I lowered my mouth around his glistening pointer finger as he lowered his mouth over his middle finger. I was overcome by how incredibly erotic that action was. I was almost dizzy with it. Our faces so close we could have been kissing. His exhaled breath intoxicating me. The taste of me and him in my mouth. But mostly it was his now-black eyes. And the growl that rumbled in his chest as he apparently made note of these things as well. I sucked hard and swirled my tongue around his finger.

I pouted when he pulled back.

"Trust me, Bella," he said in a husky voice, "I want more right now so bad that I feel like I'm going to explode."

"Well then—"

"But I can't. I'm afraid the time away from...this...has...."

All at once our past conversations about how spending time with me desensitized him to my blood slowly but surely. Clearly a similar dynamic was at work in terms of building his control over his...desires. "Oh, God, Edward. I'm sorry. I should've thought...."

He silenced me with a soft kiss. "There is nothing to apologize for. I'm...okay...but I just can't go any further...right now."

I nodded.

Edward reached over and grabbed my tank top, helping me to put it back on. Then he scooped me into his arms and settled us into a laying position. Many of the tea lights had burned themselves out by this time, which was just as well as the lesser light helped us focus better on the brilliant starlit canvas that hung overhead. Edward pointed out the constellations and recounted the mythology behind each of them. He seemed to be able to read the whole nighttime sky. Soon, though, the peacefulness of it all began to lull me, pulling me down into sleep. I tried to say "thank you" before I succumbed fully, but I couldn't tell if I actually formed the words.

I awoke the next morning in my bed. I was momentarily disappointed until I saw Edward sitting in the rocking chair with a radiant smile.

“Good morning, love.”

I stretched and yawned. “I didn’t even feel you bring me back in.”

He nodded. “I know. You slept very deeply last night. Not even a dream. I hated to risk disturbing such peaceful sleep but I couldn’t very well have us out there when Charlie left for work.”

I chuckled. “No, definitely not.”

“When you’re ready, you should shower. Alice will be here in an hour. She is taking you shopping this morning and then I believe you have an appointment to finalize your cake choice this afternoon.” I nodded and sat up. We had been to the bakery two weeks ago but after a day chock full of decisions I hadn’t been able to decide between a buttercream cake with raspberry filling and a dark chocolate cake with a layer of mousse and a sweet cream icing. Then our appointment last week had been postponed when the baker was out sick. I pushed off my bed and padded over to Edward. I crawled up into his lap and curled myself into the smallest, tightest ball I could imagine. I cherished these moments of ordinary life with Edward, and looked forward to an eternity of them.

~*~

Chapter 20: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

BPOV

Still feeling tingly from my romantic night in the truck with Edward, I got myself cleaned up and ready for my day shopping with Alice on Monday. It had been a few days since we had been alone with one another and I found myself missing our conversations and her wit and humor.

At exactly the point I suspected we were out of Edward’s hearing range, Alice began interrogating me about our weekend, all of Edward’s recent surprises, the current content of the list, and what had been accomplished. Some of this she knew, but other information she was delighted to be surprised by. At one point when we were discussing the list a vision clearly came to her. Her eyes widened and she momentarily looked like the cat that ate the canary but she refused, including under the threat of my future newborn strength, to reveal what she saw.

The shopping trip was interesting since Edward was keeping our honeymoon destination a surprise. I was glad for that. It was one decision regarding the wedding that I didn’t have to make. And I knew, especially after his choice of The Aerie, that whatever he planned would be stunning and perfect. And, with an unlimited lifetime of opportunities for travel, our honeymoon would simply be the first in a long line of trips we would take together. But this shopping trip was the first opportunity I had to get even an inkling of, at least, what kind of weather our destination had. It *seemed* we would be going somewhere warm, but a large proportion of what we purchased would have been appropriate just about anywhere. It was possible that the warm-weather clothing she was buying was for right now, given the warmth that had descended on Forks this past week. I couldn’t get anything out of her. She seemed smugly proud of that fact.

I had an especially good time in the specialty lingerie store Alice took me to. Knowing how much pleasure Edward took in my undergarments, I truly enjoyed selecting things and imagining his reaction. Alice truly

beamed at my obvious enjoyment of shopping with her. It made me happy to know that my pleasure shopping with her made her happy. That reminded me of something I wanted to do.

I was hoping, this week, to find the time to take each of the Cullens aside. I just wanted them to realize just how much their acceptance of me into their family meant. They had trusted me, not just with Edward's heart, but with their very safety. And they repeatedly welcomed me in and treated me as if I was one of them. I had never before in my life felt the sense of belonging that I now felt. And it was the most wonderful and secure feeling.

"Alice," I began after I finished a quick bite for lunch, "there's something I want to say."

"Oh Bella," she said with a soft break in her voice.

"Did you see this?"

At least she looked sheepish. "Yes, but...."

I cut her off by placing my hand on hers. "It doesn't matter if you saw it. I still want to say it. Alice, I don't know how I could ever make you understand what having you in my life means to me. I have never had a true best friend. I have never had a close girl friend. I have never had a sister. And now I have all those things in you. Without you, Alice, it's very possible that all of this," I waved my hands, but she knew what I meant to be referring to, "would never have happened. If you hadn't seen me. If you hadn't saved me on, God, I don't know how many occasions. If you hadn't fought for me. If you hadn't been there to support me or talk some sense into me when I needed it. I love all of our fun times together, Alice, and how you don't let me take myself too seriously. And it means so much to me how you always accepted me so readily. I just...I want you to know that...I...I love you, Alice. Thank you for welcoming me into your family."

I found myself holding my breath a little as I met her eyes, which appeared a little glassy and impossibly bright. Her lower lip trembled, and I realized that she was crying. One small hand flew to her mouth and then she finally said, her voice full of emotion, "That might be the nicest thing anyone has ever said to me in my entire life. Thank you, Bella. But you have it all wrong. It was your easy acceptance of me, of all of us, and your love for Edward, that was so miraculous. Edward has always held a special place in my heart, and you healed him, Bella. And I can't tell you what that means to me. To all of us." She rose out of her chair and came to me. "Come here, sister," she said, and she threw her little arms around my body when I rose from my seat.

Into her hair I whispered, "That day, Alice, that day you came back to Forks. You saved my life that day. I was never so glad to see *anyone* as I was to see you that day."

"Sshh, sweetie, I know. Me too."

All at once I became aware of the spectacle we were creating and we both pulled away and laughed.

Soon we were on to the bakery, where I finally decide, in the spirit of Edward wanting me to taste some of everything while I still could, to not only get the buttercream and the chocolate cakes but also an incredibly good lemoncello cream torte. The cake would be three layers, each one a different flavor. *One can never have too much cake.*

We arrived back home a short while later. Edward hadn't returned yet from his errands. Esme and Carlisle were both out, but the rest of them were hanging around. I decided to see if I could speak to them as I had Alice. I expected once Renee arrived in, wow, just forty hours, that my alone time with the Cullens would be limited until after the wedding. Alice realized what I wanted to do and squeezed my hand, letting me know that Jasper was in Carlisle's study.

I nodded and took a deep breath. My relationship with Jasper was fine, though still defined by a sense of distance that I understood. I knocked on the door and he called me in by name. I knew he would be able to hear me and feel me before I even got there.

"Hey Bella. How are you?"

"Good. Do you have a minute, Jasper?"

"Always." He had been sitting longways on the leather sofa in Carlisle's study. He had a stack of books in his lap and a notepad in his hand. He moved the pile to an end table and swung his legs around so that I could join him.

"You're nervous," he said after I didn't begin right away.

"No, well, a little," I smiled. "I wanted to say something and I was just looking for the right words."

He nodded. I realized I was about to begin on what would probably be the longest conversation I had had while alone with Jasper. That made me a little sad. I really liked Jasper and couldn't wait until my change would allow me to spend more time with him.

He must've sensed my sadness because he frowned a little and said in a low concerned voice, "What is it, Bella? Are you okay?"

I shifted on the couch to sit facing him. "That's what I wanted to talk to you about. I am, truthfully, better than I would have ever imagined. I am so happy, so filled up with happiness, that my life is turning out the way it is. And that all of you are in my life. And I wanted to say thank you, Jasper. Thank you for accepting me. Thank you for fighting for me and protecting me. Thank you for being willing to tell me things when sometimes Edward isn't. For not treating me like I can't handle it when things get tough. I know my presence hasn't been easy for you—"

"I'm sorry, Bella, but I have to stop you." I blinked at him. "It's true that my thirst isn't as well controlled as my family's and that you being, well, human, sometimes exacerbates my thirst. But that is nothing, *nothing*, compared to the relief you have brought to me." I frowned at him in confusion and he pushed on. "For decades I felt my brother's self-loathing, anger, and loneliness. His pain was my pain, Bella. But it's gone. Bella, it's all gone. He is a new man because of you. The first day I felt the difference in him it was like being administered a pain medication for an ache I thought would never go away. I had lived with it so long it had begun to feel almost normal. Your presence has been more than easy for me, it's been healing, for me, too. Besides, Bella, after what I did—"

Now it was my turn to cut him off. "No, no, Jasper. I know where you're about to go and I'm not going to let you. We've discussed this before. I don't blame you for what happened. Not for any of it. In fact, if...God, I can't believe I'm about to say this...if Edward and I hadn't been separated, it's possible we never would have known the depth of our feelings for one another. It's very hard for me to reconcile the pain of that

separation against the benefits to our relationship, but on some level I'm willing to admit that that's true. I don't want to ever hear you express guilt for or try to apologize for that day again."

He looked at me, eyebrows raised. "Okay," he said, finally, simply. "Bella?"

"Yeah?"

"I need to say one more thing about that day and then I promise I'll let it go. You're the only one who never blamed me for that day. It's not that the others didn't understand, but they couldn't help but be upset at me at least sometimes. But, not you, I've never once felt it from you. Just, I wanted to say thank you. I find that astonishing. It's just so...you."

I smiled at him, then shrugged.

A soft knock at the door interrupted us. Alice stuck her head in. "Hey, Edward's back."

I nodded. Jasper rose as I did. I bit my lip and looked up at Jasper's golden eyes, his soft blond curls fell across one brow. I looked at Alice and she nodded. I took two decisive steps forward and slowly wrapped my arms around Jasper's stomach. His breath caught but then he relaxed against me. I pulled back slightly and motioned with my finger for him to lean down. He did and I placed a soft kiss on his cheek. "Thanks, Jasper."

I gasped. I was nearly stunned with an overwhelming sensation of gratitude, friendly affection, and brotherly protectiveness. I realized Jasper had opened his emotions to me. It was an incredibly intimate and personal gesture and it brought tears to my eyes. I felt the blush coming up to my cheeks and took several slow steps backwards. "Okay," I said. Alice squeezed my arm on the way out as I went to go find Edward.

I made my way through the house but didn't see Edward. I heard voices in the garage so I continued out to find Edward explaining something about his car to Rosalie. She was nodding and offering suggestions in return. His face lit up in a huge smile when he saw me. Rosalie offered a small "Hey." They finished their conversation and Edward wrapped his arms around me.

"How was your day?"

"Actually, really good. We had fun." He kissed me softly.

"I'm glad. Would you like to go inside?"

"Yes, but give me a minute?" His eyes flickered to Rosalie and then he nodded.

"Thanks again, Rose," he called.

"No problem," she muttered distractedly as she tinkered inside the Volvo's engine.

"Rosalie?"

She stood and looked at me, wiping her hands on a rag. Her gaze was neither hostile nor kind, just appraising.

"If you have a minute, there's something I wanted to say."

"Okay. Sure, Bella."

I took a deep breath. This was the conversation that I was most nervous about but that, in a way, perhaps most needed to be had. "I know we haven't always gotten along. And I know that you don't approve of the choice that I'm making here. And I can't tell you, again, how much it means to me that you were willing to explain your feelings to me. I understand why you feel the way you do. And I realize that I may have no right to do so, but I wanted to ask you for your acceptance." She went to interrupt me but I pushed on. "Please, please let me get this out. Because otherwise I'll probably chicken out." She chuckled and I smiled in relief. "Rosalie, I admire you. You are the big sister I always wanted to have. Someone who could teach me things and...just...knew stuff. Someone who would protect me. I love how loyal and protective you are of this family. And if there's anyway, anyway you could find it in you to accept me into your idea of this family, it would mean everything. And I know it would mean a lot to Edward too. I just...."

"Bella, you've known me for almost two years and we're about to be sisters. You should call me Rose."

I stood, mouth agape. My brain struggled for a moment to process her words before coming to this realization: *Rosalie just invited me to call her by the family's nickname for her. Oh my...God!*

I swallowed hard. "Okay. Then, thanks...Rose."

She nodded with a small smile. "My brother's pacing a hole in the floor waiting for you. I'd say someone missed you today."

I smiled back. "Makes two of us." She turned back to the car and, after hesitating just a moment, I returned to the house to look for Edward.

He swooped me off my feet as I was about to start up the steps to look for him and pinned me against the living room wall with a fierce kiss.

Staggered and smiling, I finally managed to ask, "I'm not complaining at all, but what was that for?"

"Because I missed you. And because you never fail to amaze me."

Charlie was going to La Push for dinner so Edward surprised me with a picnic in the meadow. He explained, simply, "This was where we first shared our love. I thought it was important for us to spend some time here before the wedding. I never want to forget how big of a risk we both took in admitting our feelings. Or how very worth it it was."

Tuesday arrived with a full agenda of gown and tuxedo fittings. Alice was going to require the rest of the week to make any final adjustments. I felt like I had been standing in my gown forever as Alice assessed and pinned and pulled. But the gown was incredible and just unlike anything I had ever seen or could have imagined. Alice had worked with a Parisian designer to have my gown custom designed based on some ideas and inspirations she and I had discussed months ago. Seeing myself in my gown all of a sudden made

what was about to happen seem *real* in a way it hadn't fully seemed real yet. Alice smiled as I gasped out my realization. "I'm getting married!"

As everyone was slated for a fitting, the Cullen house was full on Tuesday. I found Carlisle and Esme in the kitchen together and decided that there probably wouldn't be a better time to talk to them. They greeted me simultaneously as I came in the kitchen. "Can I talk to you both for a minute?"

"Of course, Bella," Esme replied.

"Well," I felt myself tearing up and I blinked to stem the flow. I shook my head. "Sorry." I looked up at them again. "I just wanted to take the opportunity, before the wedding, to say thank you to you both. I couldn't ask for a better family to be a part of than this one. You have both never been anything but completely supportive and accepting and gracious towards me. And, with everything that's about to happen, I feel comforted knowing I will have people like you to help guide me through. And I wanted to promise you that I will do everything in my power to always protect and help this family too."

Esme moved around the kitchen island and took me in her arms. "Dear, you have to know how much we love you. Like you were our own. The joy you have brought to this family is immeasurable."

I felt Carlisle squeeze my arm affectionately. Esme released me. "Bella," he began, "I have walked this Earth for a very long time. And I have met more people and had more experiences than could rightly be recounted. But you stand out as unique among them all. Your acceptance of us, your courage, your fortitude, your kindness, your capacity for compassion and love – these are just a few of the qualities I admire in you. I have a special place in my heart for Edward, Bella, and I always will. For the first time in his life I don't have to worry about him, because he has you. And you are everything he needs. You made Edward believe in himself again, and for that I will forever be grateful, Bella." He hugged me and said lowly, "Welcome to the family, Bella. We're just so pleased to have you."

A crash behind us announced Emmett's arrival into the living room. He had flopped down into the couch a little too carelessly and the sofa had skidded back into a table. "Sorry," he called. Esme and Carlisle exchanged an amused glance and shook their heads.

I walked in and sat with Emmett. Edward was in doing his time in front of the Cullen family seamstress at the moment and I knew it would be a few minutes until he came down. Emmett pulled out the video games and challenged me to play. There was one game I had played enough to at least be somewhat competitive. But generally he kicked my butt every time. *Damn vampire reflexes.* "I demand a rematch when I'm changed," I said teasingly.

He tossed the controller on the couch between us and looked over at me with a big grin. "You're a cool chick, Bella Swan. You know that?"

I blushed and chuckled. After a moment, I replied, "Hey Emmett?" He met my eyes. "You're a pretty cool guy, yourself." He smiled broadly. "Seriously, though, I wanted to tell you something. Just, I wanted to tell you how glad I am that I'm getting you for a big brother. I always wanted one and I couldn't have asked for a better big brother than you. I love how you make me laugh and how you always know what to say to make me feel better when I'm down. And I love how protective you are of me, how you've fought for me. I just wanted to say thank you for all that and for accepting me into your family."

He scooted over on the couch and slung an arm around my shoulders. He squeezed me to him. "Li'l Sis, you're very welcome. You make things interesting. God," he chuckled, "I still remember that day you punched a werewolf..." He laugh-sighed as he remembered. "Good times, Sis. And I'm looking forward to many more with you." He pulled his arm back but then leaned in conspiratorially. "And listen, the next time Edward does something stupid or pisses you off and you need me to take care of it for you, just say. I'll straighten his ass out." He nudged my shoulder with his and offered a big goofy grin.

"I don't think we'll be needing your services, Emmett," Edward called as he came down the steps.

"Edward!" I flew up from the sofa and into his arms. "Are we free?"

"We are. Well, we're free from any more wedding planning for today. But otherwise, you're mine."

We called out good-byes to Emmett as Edward led us out of the house to his car. This was our last evening alone before my mother arrived and I knew we were both anxious to spend it together. I had let Charlie know I wouldn't be home for dinner tonight because Edward and I were going out. I got in the Volvo and had just buckled my seat belt when I felt a silky fabric slide around my face.

"Again?" I squeaked, realizing Edward was blindfolding me.

"Hmm. Yes. I find I rather enjoy blindfolding you."

Well, by all means. Perhaps I should add that to the list...it does have some interesting possibilities...

I laughed. "Well, as long as you enjoy it...I don't suppose I can ask where we're going or what we're doing?"

"Oh, you can ask, love. It's just that I won't tell you."

A short while later we came to a stop and Edward was helping me out of my seat. He led me by the hand while I was still blindfolded. We walked a short while and then he directed me to step up. And then we walked further and went through a door. Then we walked a while again through a space that echoed and I heard another door close. It smelled...funny...somehow familiar. I could feel the smile on my face at the anticipation of Edward's surprise.

I felt Edward move behind me. He wrapped his arms around me and whispered "I love you" into my ear. Then his hands slid up to the scarf and pulled it up off of my head.

"Oh my God. How did you...?" We were in our biology classroom in Forks High.

"This is where it all began, love, and I thought, what better place to celebrate us?"

I spun in Edward's arms. "Edward, that's so sweet, and funny, and romantic." I pressed a kiss to his lips and then pulled back. I walked through the classroom to our lab table. There, he had set up a place setting with two tall candles and a bouquet of summer wildflowers tied together with a blue ribbon around the thick bundle of stems.

"Hop up, Bella. I brought dinner for you."

I smiled as Edward turned to a silver foil-type bag on the floor. I felt the heat radiate out of it when he opened it. Removing the lid off the dish, Edward turned and placed a large bowl of mushroom ravioli in front of me. I smiled broadly. Then he opened a cooler bag and pulled out a bottle of lemonade. He twisted the cap off and set the bottle down for me.

"Edward, this is...this is amazing. I can't believe you did all this." I considered everything he'd done here. "The room where we first met. The table where I fell in love with you. The first meal we shared, well, you know what I mean."

He reached in his pocket and pulled something out. "Two first meals, actually." He placed the object on the table top and spun it. After a few moments it came whirling lopsidedly to a rest. I realized the worn disc was a bottle cap. I leaned closer. He picked it up to show me.

Oh my God! "Is that? You kept it?" There, in Edward's beautiful fingers, was the cap to the lemonade bottle I had the first lunch we sat together in the cafeteria. As I looked at the new bottle Edward had just placed in front of me, I saw it was the same brand. The tears that had been pricking at my eyes finally made it to the fore and slowly spilled down my cheeks.

Edward cupped his hands around my cheeks and brushed my tears away with the pads of his thumbs. "Don't cry, sweet girl. I just want you to know I haven't forgotten a single thing."

"Me either," I finally managed. "I love you, Edward. Thank you so much for...this."

"I love you too. Now," he smiled at me, "eat up."

We fell into easy conversation as I enjoyed my ravioli. Alice had apparently snagged a piece of the lemoncello cream torte from the bakery because Edward had a piece of it for me for dessert. I had been done for a long time when we finally noted the time and began packing up our bags.

"Edward, this was so special. Thank you for this night." I wanted to go home and write about it in the little log of memories I had been keeping in my notebook. I never wanted to forget this night.

"You're welcome. I'm glad you enjoyed yourself." Edward collected the bags and was standing in the doorway to the classroom. I turned and looked around just as Edward was about to step out.

With hardly any forethought, I called his name. "Edward?"

He turned and looked at me. My brain seemed to go on autopilot. I stared at him for a long moment before sitting down at a chair at the front lab table. I took a deep breath. "Mr. Cullen? I believe I have detention with you today."

Edward's brow furrowed for a moment before rising incredulously. *Play along, Edward! Play along!* He stepped back into the room, sat down the bags, and shut and locked the door. *Yes!* I could feel my heart begin to race. He reached into one of the bags and pulled the candles out again. He placed them on the front table and lit them. "We don't want the overhead lights to attract any unwanted attention," he explained. The candles threw minimal light in the large space, but it was enough to see him by.

He smirked at me. And then his face fell into a stern expression. "Detention again, Miss Swan?" *I can't believe he's going along so easily!*

"Yes," I whispered.

"Speak up, Miss Swan. I didn't hear you." *Oh. So that's how it's gonna be.*

"Yes," I replied louder this time.

"Take out a pen and paper. I want you to write an essay on—" Edward looked down at me. He placed his hands on his hips. In exasperation, he said, "Where are your things, Miss Swan? Please tell me you haven't come to detention unprepared."

Oooh. Somebody's in trouuuuble!

"I...I'm sorry," I managed, feeling the moisture now staining my panties.

I heard him inhale sharply. *That's right, Mr. Cullen.* "I can't allow you to waste my time, Ms. Swan. If you can't be bothered to come prepared to school, than I can't be bothered to administer your detention. I'll ask the principal in the morning to reassign you to someone else." *God. He's really good at this role acting thing. You'd almost think he'd had some time to prepare for it or something.*

"Um, oh, no, please, Mr. Cullen. Isn't there something else I can do to fulfill my detention? I don't want any trouble. Please?"

He looked at me for a long while. I half believed I was in trouble with a teacher his gaze was so stern. "This is not your assigned seat. Please take the correct seat."

I scurried off of my stool and walked back to my old assigned seat. But when I sat down I didn't see him anywhere. "Edward?" I whispered.

"No talking, Ms. Swan." I jumped six inches off my seat. Somehow he had moved to the very back of the room, which is where his voice now came from. "I have an alternate idea in mind, though I doubt you will be interested."

"I'm sure I will, Mr. Cullen. Really. I'm willing to do anything. I just can't get in anymore trouble." Some part of my brain was thinking, *Does this sound too cheesy?*, but then that part of my brain shut down upon hearing the tone in his next words.

"Anything? Are you sure about that?" he breathed in my ear from behind me.

"Yes, Mr. Cullen." *Oh. My. God! Number. Eight!*

"Maybe...." His voice resonated with any uncertainty.

I was eager to encourage him. *Please keep playing!!* "Yes, Mr. Cullen?"

After a moment, he continued, "Well, you see, Ms. Swan. I have a problem too." He ground his prominent erection into my lower back and my eyelids closed in pleasure. "Perhaps we could help each other out?"

I squirmed on my stool as my body responded to his words. I whimpered and twisted my sweaty hands in the loose fabric of my skirt. An open-mouthed kiss to the side of my neck forced me to focus. "Okay, um, tell me how I can help you."

I squeaked in surprise when I felt myself hoisted off on my stool and up onto the lab table. I was sitting with my legs hanging off the edge and my skirt was now wrapped tightly around my thighs. My heart beat thundered and I finally met Edward's eyes.

EPOV

She looked equal parts aroused and astonished.

Now...how best to make this particular fantasy of hers come true? I surmised what she intended when she wrote number eight, but no matter how badly I wanted to we couldn't go quite that far tonight, not with the wedding just five days away. I hadn't brought her to the classroom tonight because of her fantasy, but as she instigated it I found myself only too happy to try to comply.

I thought for a moment. "Lay down on the lab table, Ms. Swan. I want to have a look at you. Consider yourself a subject for study." I directed her to lay her head at the end closest to the walkway between the tables. Her feet hung off the far end. *I would say that is the very definition of 'on our lab table.'*

Clasping my hands behind my back I circled the lab table twice, soaking in every detail of her as she lie displayed for me. Feeling my eyes go dark, I reveled in her rushing heart beat, her lovely blush, and her sweet aroused scent.

"Hmm," I finally said. "I can't observe you thoroughly with all this fabric. Remove your top." I kept waiting for the moment I crossed a line but each step I took seemed to be received with acceptance and desire. Bella's peasant shirt fluttered to the floor, leaving her radiant in a satin lavender bra with pink lace and her flowing knee-length skirt. *Lovely.* "Much better," my voice rasped.

I placed my hands on her abdomen and she gasped. "Soft," I observed as I slid my fingertips over her stomach. "Perfect," I continued as I cupped her breasts. "Hmm...hard," I corrected myself as my thumbs flicked over her nipples. "Very interesting."

I leaned over and gently pulled a satin-covered nipple into my mouth. She moaned and arched herself further into my mouth. I responded by flicking my tongue over her taut peak and adjusting my now aching cock.

I teased and tasted Bella, walking around the table so that I could more easily reach different parts of her. I hummed with pleasure upon noticing the front clasp on her bra. With a quick flick she lay more fully exposed before me. *Beautiful.* I purposely ignored her midsection and I could sense her exasperation as she shifted and squeezed her thighs. *Don't worry baby. I'll take care of you.*

"I see you may be interested in helping me out after all."

She looked me directly in the eyes. "I would do anything for you, Mr. Cullen."

Her sentiment elicited a low growl and then a hiss as I smelled her arousal increase in response.

"You said you had a problem, Mr. Cullen?" she prompted, eyeing me as I continued to observe and touch and taste all around her. She reached out a hand when I came around to her side and pressed it against my straining erection. I grunted in response. *God damn it's been too long without her touch.*

"Perhaps...perhaps an oral examination would be appropriate?" she suggested as she continued to rub and press against me.

Oral examin...?...holy fucking hell yes sign me up God damn

"Indeed," I finally managed, my voice full of need. I assessed the table; she was a little too high. But I didn't relish the idea of her bare knees against the hard tile floor of the classroom. She seemed to understand my hesitation.

"Edward?" she whispered, dropping out of character. My eyes flew to hers. "Trust yourself."

"What...?" I began, though my voice trailed off as I observed her move on the table. She raised her knees and pushed her body towards the edge, coming finally to rest with her head and shoulders hanging backwards off the table.

Mother of God.

Her long mahogany hair nearly reached the floor. Her breasts jutted out tantalizingly. But what I was most fascinated by was her mouth. Her full red lips hung open invitingly.

"Bella, I—"

"I'm ready for that oral examination now, Mr. Cullen," she interrupted. "Please, Edward," she whispered.

Stunned. Staggered. Flabbergasted. Amazed. Incredulous. I struggled to process my reaction to her offer. There was one thing I absolutely knew: *That is the fucking hottest thing I've ever seen. Well then get out of your head and go to her. Fuck. Right.*

I walked slowly around to the edge of the table. She reached back with her arms and began working on my button and zipper. I helped her, and together we finally pushed my jeans and boxers down around my knees. I stood erect before her and when she licked her lips I swear to God I almost came on the spot.

Now that I was face to face with her, so to speak, I realized what this position would require of me. Every other time she had put her mouth on me, she had been in charge, she had controlled her movements. This position would not allow for that. This position put me in control.

One side of my brain assessed that fact and began to seize up in terrified protest. *This is too dangerous. One thrust out of control would be all it would take to...*

But then the other side of my brain made a realization of its own: this position would require the same kind of control from me that making love to her will require. This would be like

Christ.

Like....

Does she realize?

Like....

I tried to shove the thought away, but the phrase persisted.

Fucking her mouth.

Bella's husky voice interrupted my thoughts. "Come to me, Edward," she called. "You can do this. Just start slow and pay attention to me. I'll let you know if it's too much." Her hands found my waist and she pulled me a step forward, bringing my cock to her lips. She adjusted herself slightly and then sucked the tip of me between her soft lips.

Fuck. That's so good. It's been too damn long.

"Unngg," I grunted. My sounds seemed to encourage her and she indicated with her pulling hands on my waist that she wanted me to come a little closer. After a last moment of hesitation I gave in and felt myself glide further into her hot mouth. *Hot hot hot oh, and wet*

She pulled her hands away and gripped onto the edges of the table, providing herself a little leverage and stability.

She moaned around me and I realized she was prompting me to move. I wrenched my shirt over my head to rid us of the hanging fabric and leaned forward just slightly to rest my hands on either side of her body against the lab table.

Experimentally, I pulled my hips back slowly and then pushed back in gently. *Christ almighty.*

With slightly more confidence, I offered her another small thrust. *Fuuuckk.*

For the moment all my eyes could see was my glistening cock sliding in and out of Bella's beautiful red lips. In and out. Slowly in and out.

Slow thrust. *I'm...God damn...* Slow thrust. *Oh baby yeah.* Slow thrust. *Can't believe...* Slow thrust. *I...I...I...*

I felt Bella's hands on my hips again. As I slowly thrust forward her gripping fingers indicated for me to push further. "Bella, I don't think it's a go—" I began.

But then she completely astounded me. She smacked the side of my ass and then gripped my hip again and tried to nudge me forward.

Fuck? Fuckfuckfuckfuck

I eased myself forward another inch and realized with an animalistic grunt that I had never felt Bella's mouth surround so much of me. I allowed my eyes to move from her lips to her neck and noticed how the position elongated her throat. I refused to go so far as to touch the back of her throat in this position, but I couldn't help but appreciate the picture of her throat muscles working in response to the intrusion of my long cock inside of her mouth. "Oh God, Bella."

The slow pace of my movements allowed me to maintain a thread of sanity. I was teasing myself; it was almost painful to move this slow.

Then an image flashed through my brain.

A sheet of ruled notebook paper, dimly illuminated in a dark room.

A list of fantasies.

Number thirty-two.

Nothing like killing two birds with one stone.

I moved my eyes from Bella's throat to her body before me. My leaned-over position against the table allowed my mouth to reach her breasts, but no lower. However...

I released my right hand from its position against the lab table and shifted on my feet just slightly to accommodate the change. I fisted a handful of skirt material and slowly but surely scrunched it up until Bella's skirt lay draped over her stomach. Bella whimpered around my cock sending maddening vibrations through me.

"Let's see if you are prepared for me this way, Ms. Swan," I ground out.

There was no way around it. From this position I couldn't remove Bella's panties. And there was no way I was giving up her mouth to move so that she or I could pull them down. I grabbed the silky lavender fabric and twisted it between my fingers. The destroyed fabric fell away from Bella's hot center, releasing a more concentrated form of her scent into the air.

Honestly, I didn't know if I was capable of focusing adequately on both activities. But I wanted so badly to make this happen for her. *Try.*

I slid three fingers through her soft slick folds, applying the most pressure with my middle finger, which I allowed to dip teasingly inside of her. She pressed herself up against my hand and grunted around my cock, bringing her teeth down momentarily as she gave into the sensation. I growled at the feeling of her teeth around my shaft and she began using them more and more. *That's it baby. Fucking bite my cock.*

I was soon relieved and so very pleased to learn I could manage my control. To be sure, it required more concentration than I had perhaps ever devoted to a task before, but *God damn* it was so worth it.

I filled Bella's mouth with long slow strokes and worked my fingers in between her legs, circling, stroking, rubbing, penetrating.

The room was filled with grunts and moans and panting and soft exclamations.

"God, Bella. How did I...*Christ*...get so...fucking lucky? Ungh....Oh...Bella, it would...nothing would...give me more pleasure...than for you to....*fuck*...come all over my hand."

She moaned, flicked her tongue over me, and bit down with her teeth all at once and I knew I wouldn't be able to last much longer.

"Oh, baby. Such a pretty little mouth. And so damn hot. Fuck, Bella, I'm not gonna last...."

I began to work my fingers more vigorously, thrusting into her with my middle finger and rubbing her clit with my thumb. *Come on baby. Come on.* I felt her muscles began to tighten around my finger but she wasn't quite there.

14) Get him to talk dirty in general

Would that help?

I swallowed hard and growled, "Fucking come on me now, Ms. Swan."

She whimpered and her body tensed further, but not quite enough. *Fuuuckk...I'm not gonna make it.*

"I love fucking your mouth, Ms. Swan. Now, come for me right now because I'm about to explode."

That did it. Bella's muscles spasmed in a burst and she made a strangled noise around my cock. I hissed and pulled out as gently as I could manage and turned my hips away from her face just as my orgasm ripped through me and splattered to the floor. "God damn fucking Christ, Bella!"

In a moment my brain restarted and I pulled my pants up and refastened them. Then I moved quickly to Bella and scooped her body up bridal style and curled her into my lap as I fell back against a stool. She was panting and sweaty and *fucking glorious*.

I pressed a lingering kiss on her forehead. I gently massaged her neck and murmured against her hair, "That was the most amazing experience yet, Bella. I can't believe how it keeps getting better and better every time when it was so incredible to begin with."

"I know," she whispered against my chest. I felt her body relax into mine. After a few minutes she tried to stifle a yawn.

"Come, love," I said as I gently pushed her body into a sitting position. She looked at me with an amused expression and realizing my words I smirked at her and rolled my eyes. She giggled and the sound was pure happiness.

Her bra was still hanging off her shoulders from when I had released it earlier. She adjusted herself and refastened the bra as I leaned over and retrieved her top from the floor. As she put her top back on I leaned over and retrieved my shirt as well. When we were both dressed she kissed my cheek and then rose. I saw her lean her neck back and forth and I stood behind her. "Are you very sore, love?"

She turned and smiled shyly. *Gah. There she goes again with the sex kitten one minute and the shy girl next door the next. God I love that.*

"No, I'm fine," she replied. "Nothing a hot shower won't take care of." She took a step and then made a face. "Are my...did you...." I watched in fascination as her face blushed crimson. *What in the world could she be blushing about now?*

I couldn't stifle a chuckle. "What are you trying to ask?"

"Um...." She rocked on her heels once as she slid her feet back into her sandals. "I just didn't, um, realize you, um, ripped my panties."

Damn. "Yeah. Um, I'm so—"

She kissed me. "No, no. Don't apologize. I just didn't realize and for a minute I couldn't figure out what I was feeling down there." She blushed again. Finally she smiled against her own embarrassment. She huffed. Then she bent down and reached up under her skirt. A moment later she pulled the remains of her lavender panties down her legs. "What?" she asked when she met my eyes again. "It was uncomfortable."

I. Want. Them.

Apparently sensing my thoughts, she smirked at me. "These would make a nice memento of our evening."

I swallowed. "Yes."

"I'll have to put them away someplace safe."

My eyes flashed to hers. *Mine!* "What?"

Then she laughed. "Oh, would you like them?" *If I didn't have to get her back to Charlie's right now I would so make her pay for this teasing.*

"I suspect you know I would."

She bit her lower lip to restrain her grin and carefully folded the satiny fabric. Then she stepped forward and I felt her push the panties into my jeans pocket. Well after they were securely tucked away she continued to push her fingers inside of the denim until she was ultimately rubbing her fingertips through her panties against my reawakening length. I hissed in response and cupped my hands around her face, pulling her in for a searing kiss. As I explored her with my tongue I could taste myself in her mouth and found it incredibly erotic.

I felt the weight of the clock. We were already later than we should have been, although since she was getting married in five days Bella no longer had a curfew to speak of. Still, we didn't like to push Charlie too far.

Soon I cleaned up the room and we collected our things. I dropped Bella off and parked around the corner. We I climbed through her window she was in the shower. A few minutes later I held her in my arms again. She lay with her back facing me so that I could rub her neck and shoulders. A few minutes later she was

sound asleep. And just not long after that I realized there were only four more days until the incredible creature before me would be my wife.

BPOV

I awoke with a start and feeling the emptiness of the room. Still, I sat up and looked around to be sure. I glanced down again to my pillow and noticed a sheet of folded paper.

Good morning, sweet girl—

I'm sorry I'm not here to greet you in person. As you can probably see by now the sun prevented my staying. It should be gone in time for Alice to accompany you to shop with you and Renee this afternoon. I'll miss you today but enjoy your time with your mother.

With my love,

Edward

I pressed the paper to my chest and struggled to finish waking up. My upper back was achy this morning, though I couldn't regret it in the least (*I can't believe I got him to do number eight!*), and decided to take another hot shower to relieve my muscles.

By 9:30, I was showered, dressed, and had eaten breakfast. I expected my mom and Phil to arrive in their rental car by noon, and then I was making lunch for them before going to Port Angeles to shop with Alice and my mom. I had meant the tattoo as a wedding present for Edward, but I also wanted a more traditional gift, and I knew they both would be more than willing to offer shopping advice. My mom, Alice, and Esme had been speaking on the phone for weeks about wedding details, and my mom was eager to spend some time with Edward's family while she was visiting. A thought occurred to me and I picked up my phone.

One ring in and Rosalie's – *Rose's* – voice answered. "Hello Bella?"

I had never called Rosalie – *Rose!* – before. "Hi, Rose. I hope I'm not bothering you," I rushed, "but I wanted to see if you wanted to join my mom and Alice and me to go shopping this afternoon."

There was a pause on the other end and I cringed a little in anticipation. "You want me to come with you?"

"Yes." *Come on, Rose.*

"Okay."

Yes! I cheered internally. I knew that was as enthusiastic of a response as she was likely to give me. "Great. I'm sure Alice probably already knows this but we should be done with lunch around 1 so just come over whenever."

"The little pixie is now standing here bouncing in front of me nodding. So we'll see you then."

"Okay. Good. Bye then."

"Bye. Hey, Bella?"

I had almost hung up and was glad I heard her. "Yeah Rose?"

"Thanks for the invite."

"No problem. Bye."

I clicked my phone off and smiled. I knew my mom would enjoy getting to know Rose too and I was so hoping we could grow closer. I thought back to the afternoon joking around in Alice's room over pedicures and the night of my bachelorette party and wanted *that* fun, playful Rose. The prospect of an eternity of stand-offishness did not thrill me.

The clock seemed to drag as I waited for my mom and I found myself flopped on my bed waiting. A big grin crossed my face as I remembered some new items I wanted to add to my list and I reached over and fished my notebook out from in between my mattresses. Our recent activities had given me some new ideas and I didn't want to forget them.

37) Blindfolded

I don't know why I found Edward blindfolding me so erotic but it just was. He could move so silently around me that it just create this intense sensation of anticipation when I couldn't see him.

Closely related to that in my mind, I realized was

38) Tied up

I had no idea if Edward would ever go for anything like that. *But how many things have I thought, 'oh, he'll never do that,' and, oh yeah, we've done it!*

I thought back to the afternoon swimming at the lake. I remembered Edward's erection in apparent response to his brother's reaction to my tattoo. And I had a sneaking suspicion about why Emmett and Rose had disappeared.

So next to 28) In the water, I added (in the lake)

I gasped as another idea slithered into my brain. I attempted to beat it into submission but it just wouldn't go away. I remembered a long-ago fantasy of Mike catching Edward and I doing it against the counter at Newton's. I remembered being turned on by the idea that Edward's siblings were so obviously rushing off for some alone time when we returned from the lake. I remembered the thrill of going down on Edward in the theater and feeling him work himself against me on the balcony.

I wasn't sure yet what I meant by this, but I wrote it down anyway:

39) Voyeur

I wasn't sure whether I meant watching or being watched. And I wasn't sure it was something I could ever actually *do*, which was of course the purpose of my list. But at the very least it was, well, *inspirational*.

Thinking about Edward on the balcony that night reminded me of something I very much wanted:

40) Watch Edward pleasure himself

I remembered so desperately wishing I could see what he looked like as he pleased himself against me. The very idea of his long elegant fingers wrapped desperately around his hard cock as his black eyes pierced mine was enough to make me dizzy. I loved the idea so much because it allowed me the opportunity to watch – *There I go with that word again. Hmm.* – him lose control.

All at once Edward's admission at having 'lost' the dare came back to me. *I wonder what Edward fantasizes about when he does that? Whatever it is, I'd do it for him.*

That settled it.

41) Play out one of Edward's fantasies for him.

I'd do anything for him. Anything? Really? I bit my lip as I thought for a minute. Were there things I *wouldn't* do? I knew I trusted Edward completely. And I loved him unconditionally. I'd loved everything we'd done so far. And for God's sake, I donated my blood for the boy. At the moment, at least, I couldn't think of anything I wouldn't do for or with him.

All this thinking and musing had accomplished what I'd hoped. I glanced at the clock and it was 11:40. Knowing my mom would be here soon I slipped my notebook back into its hiding place and went in the bathroom to splash some cold water on my face. I couldn't bear the idea of Renee looking at me suspiciously and suspecting why I was so flushed.

It was great seeing my mom again. We had a nice lunch catching up. She and Phil were so much more talkative than Charlie that it took a minute for my brain to adjust.

The four of us girls had a fun time shopping together. Renee really seemed to like Alice and Rose. Alice had her laughing the entire afternoon. And the girls seemed pleased at how readily Renee accepted them. I found a wedding present for Edward. I only hoped he would like it.

Soon the day is over and I had dinner out with my mom, dad, and Phil. I feared it would be awkward, but it turned out to be really nice. They all seemed unified in their happiness for me. I felt wrapped up in a cocoon of familial love in a way I'd never before. Of course I knew my parents loved me, but, it was like, now that Edward had showed me what love was, I could see it and feel it everywhere.

Renee hung out with me in my bedroom for hours after Phil returned to their hotel. Even once I was in my pajamas and ready for bed, she stretched out next to me and asked me questions about everything and anything. I was glad for it. It reminded me of old times. Sometimes when I was a little girl I would fall asleep in my mom's bed or she would stay and sleep with me in mine after reading me books. "Hey," I said, feeling nostalgic. "You wanna stay with me tonight? Have a girls' sleepover."

Renee got a big smile on her face. "I thought you'd never ask, baby girl. Let me go call Phil and change." I pulled a set of sleep clothes out I thought would fit her and soon we were giggling like old times. I realized this would mean I wouldn't see Edward tonight, but I knew he wouldn't mind.

I finally saw Edward on Thursday, though we never managed any alone time. Renee glommed onto him for hours, asking him questions and telling him inevitably embarrassing stories about me. She had even brought a photo album of my childhood pictures and I could have killed her. But it wasn't like I could physically prevent Edward or any of the other Cullens – of course Emmett was second in line to see it – from looking at it. There was me in all my knobby kneed, buck toothed, frizzy haired, awkward glory. My gut reaction was to be embarrassed and mad, but then I gasped at the realization of why the Cullens were so interested. Besides it being, well, okay, it *was* funny, not a one of them had these kinds of mementos from their own lives, nor had they had the opportunity to see childhood photos of any of the rest of the family. I was sad for them. Jasper looked up at me and offered me a small smile. I know he knew I knew.

Later in the day, after Esme had set out a casual buffet-style lunch that allowed the Cullens to pretend to have grabbed a bite to eat, the girls all gathered around Alice's headquarters on the dining room table to show Renee all the plans that had been made. Then we all retreated upstairs where I treated Renee to a fashion show of my gown. I wanted her to feel included and in-the-know because I knew she regretted being so far away over the past few months.

I collapsed into my bed on Thursday night. It had been a good day. I couldn't believe it was only two days until my wedding. *Holy crow! Those words still make my head a little dizzy with disbelief! Can this all really be happening???*

Edward crawled through my window just before I fell asleep. He could only stay a few hours and then he and the boys were going hunting. With so many humans hanging around so much, all the Cullens wanted to take extra precautions and were feeding more than they usually did. I knew Edward also planned to feed on Friday night, since Alice had already informed him she would be standing watch over me beginning at 12:01 Saturday morning to ensure he did not see me at all on the day of our wedding.

I don't know if it was his absence that woke me up. Or a dream. Or a noise. But I had sat bolt upright in my bed. I was completely wide awake. And something felt...not quite right. I couldn't for the life of me explain that feeling. I got up and went to the bathroom, hoping to distract myself from the oddness. Just as I was finally about to fall back to sleep it hit me.

I had started writing my newest list entries beginning with the number 37. But there had only been 35 entries. Why did I start with number 37? I couldn't let it go, no matter how much I tried to convince myself it didn't matter and just go back to sleep already before the madness descended again.

But I couldn't let it go.

I huffed as I turned over and reached for the light. Half blinded, my hand flailed around as I searched out the notebook. I slapped it down on the mattress and put my hand up in front of my eyes as I attempted to shield myself of some of the light so I could focus on the words on the page.

The right hand sheet of paper read as follows:

30) On a beach

- 31) In a public place
- 32) 69
- 33) Eat an Edward ice cream sundae
- 34) Him in leather
- 35) Have him take me from behind
- 36) Seduce Edward with a striptease and then ride him cowgirl
- 37) Blindfolded
- 38) Tied up
- 39) Voyeur
- 40) Watch Edward pleasure himself
- 41) Play out one of Edward's fantasies for him

I read it twice.

36) Seduce Edward with a striptease and then ride him cowgirl

I didn't write that. Did I? I didn't remember thinking about this one. I *liked* it, to be sure. I remembered being very tired the night I'd written the couple entries above. I must've written this and not remembered it.

Huh.

Glad to have solved the mystery of the odd feeling, I returned the notebook, shut the light off, and tried for a second time to go back to sleep.

Seduce Edward with a striptease and then ride him cowgirl

I found myself mmming appreciatively about the idea of being on top of it, being able to look down at his beautiful face while I used my body to pleasure him.

Seduce Edward with a striptease and then ride him cowgirl

Holy shit!

I bolted up into a sitting position again. I knocked a book off my night stand as I reached again for the light and fished for the notebook.

No. No, no, no. No, no.

36) *Seduce Edward with a striptease and then ride him cowgirl*

I felt a nauseous tingling in my stomach. *It is my handwriting.* I blinked at the words on the page. Then the realization hit: *It looks like my handwriting, but it's not.* I don't know why I didn't see it right away. Two things told me there's no way I wrote this entry. First, I didn't not fantasize about taking my clothes off for Edward. I mean, I wasn't embarrassed about it like I once thought I would be. He seemed to enjoy my body so much that I no longer had the concerns I'd once had about not being able to please him. But I...Did. Not. Fantasize. About. Stripping. For. Edward.

Second, I didn't know it was called 'cowgirl.' I mean, I understood what it meant and, now that I was *reading* it there, maybe I had actually heard it somewhere. But I'm not sure I would have known to write that. I would have just put, like, 'me on top,' or something.

Son of a bitch.

I was nearly hyperventilating. *Oh. My. God.*

This can only mean...

No.

Yes.

Please, God. It can't be. No, no, no.

Oooh! Maybe Alice did it. As a joke!

Oh, yes!

I reached over and picked up my phone. It was only 5 o'clock in the morning but I knew that wouldn't matter. *Please, please, please, pleasepleaseplease*

She answered on the first ring. "Afraid not, sweetie."

"What??" I couldn't even process her words.

"It wasn't me."

"Oh my God!" *ohmygodohmygodohmygod*

"When?"

She hesitated.

"Alice, I swear to God. *When?*"

"Sunday."

Sunday. Sunday?! "Why didn't you tell me???" Oh God. Sunday. So, let's see, think, Bella. Sunday. He surprised me with my truck and dessert under the stars. Oh my God, the ice cream! Oh God! The lab table!

"Hang on. I'm coming over." I didn't really register her words.

Ten minutes later she was sitting on the foot of my bed. I still held the notebook in my lap and the phone in my hand.

I looked up at her. "Oh my God, Alice. He read it."

She appraised me for a minute, probably evaluating if I could handle what she would say. "Yes."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Because...well, first, I knew you would freak out, and second, it didn't seem to matter."

"What do you mean it doesn't matter? Do you realize that he...he...." I couldn't say the words.

"What?"

"He...did...*stuff*...off of the list?"

She squealed and then slapped her hands over her mouth. She paused to listen to Charlie in the next room. His snoring went on undisturbed. She looked at me sheepishly and then finally said, "Um, go Edward?"

I sucked in my breath and then swatted her with the notebook. She laughed and grabbed it from me. "Oh. Maybe I should say 'go Bella.' Very nice."

I grabbed it back from her and hugged it to my chest. "Oh, for God's sake. Maybe we should just pass the damn thing around to the whole family with my baby pictures!"

I think the scene materialized in front of both of our eyes. The Cullens reading my list. *EMMETT READING MY LIST!* It was horrifying. And, well, freaking hilarious.

Before I even knew what had happened we were both laughing uproariously, trying like hell to squelch the sound of it against my pillows and blankets.

Finally, I asked, "God, Alice, what am I going to do?"

"Do? Bella, has it registered with you yet that he *added something* to your list?"

I stopped. Then looked down at the notebook.

36) Seduce Edward with a striptease and then ride him cowgirl

Oh my God. This was one of EDWARD'S FANTASIES! 36 + 41 = Fucking yes!

"Alice?" She looked at me with the biggest grin on her face. "I'm going to need you to pack me a cowboy hat for our honeymoon."

EPOV

I hunted. I read. I listened to music. I lay on my bed and stared at the ceiling.

Time crawled.

Bella was spending all day Friday with her parents. I had no plans to intrude on some of her last hours with them. I would get to see her for a few hours tonight at the rehearsal dinner we were having. I didn't know what there was to rehearse, but Alice insisted, and apparently Renee and Charlie were expecting it.

Emmett was intent on grilling out. He had been practicing all week. Bella had sampled his fair once or twice and assured him he was doing it right.

Time crawled.

I found myself inevitably thinking of Bella's list. I found myself especially fascinated at the moment by the following:

16) See him hunt

17) Have Edward taste my blood

23) Outside during a thunderstorm

25) Role Playing: vampire

These were all items that related directly to my vampiric nature. It wasn't that I was surprised she would fantasize about these things. She had told me on many occasions that she found this part of me appealing. And I had long before recognized that there was an immediate connection between my growling and the state of her arousal. But it never occurred to me that she actively fantasized about such things.

I found it...fascinating. Thrilling. A little terrifying. I fucking relished in the thought of not hiding any part of myself.

Is there a way I could let her see me hunt? Would she really want to see that? I couldn't imagine it. But there it had been in black and white. *Could I resist her if she was there when I let myself go?* Once I answered that question with a resolute 'NO,' but now...maybe?

I soon became aware of my straining erection. Thinking of Bella's list had me searching through my own growing stock of fantasies as I pulled my cock out of my pants and began stroking myself.

I couldn't be mad at her when I clearly had my own list. It was just in my head.

I stroked hard. Harder. Faster.

Bella straddled across my body, impaled on my cock.

Bella bent over and bound to a stool as I plowed into her from behind.

Bella's legs wrapped around my waist as I took her against my bedroom door.

Bella grasping onto a tree branch in the woods, her hair wild in the breeze. She'd be screaming my name as I claimed her from behind. Jacob would see and I would mouth 'mine.' Fucker.

My possessive fantasy did me in and I came in streams against my stomach and shirt.

I cleaned up.

And time crawled some more.

Finally, I was with my Bella again. We were surrounded by our families. Everyone talked and laughed and told stories late into the evening. It felt good. It felt right.

Tomorrow, Bella would be my wife.

~*~

Chapter 21: The Wedding

BPOV

I could hear the violin quartet playing in the back yard as I stood in Edward's bathroom staring at myself in the floor-length mirror. I had a moment of solitude while Alice and Rosalie went in search of something. I hadn't been paying enough attention to know what it was. My mother was due any moment.

In a flurry, Renee swept into the room just then. "Oh, my sweet little girl," she exclaimed, her hand over her mouth as she looked at my reflection in the mirror over my shoulder. She squeezed my shoulders as she stood behind me, hugging me without crumpling my dress. "Oh my God, baby, you look so beautiful."

When my eyes met hers in the mirror I felt the tears threatening to fall. The amazing thing about my mother's words: I agreed. The gown had a halter neckline with a modesty panel (which Alice prided herself on especially after I got my tattoo) and an A-line shape with beaded embroidery at the empire waist. The skirt had beaded lace over a split front and a sweep train. The elbow-length veil was simple in style, just one tier of tulle with a beaded floral lace edging. It was attached to my hair by a beaded hairclip that held the sides of my hair back while allowing the length to spill down over my shoulders, the way Edward preferred.

"Renee, don't you get her crying! Her make-up is perfect!" Alice called from the hallway a moment before stepping back into the bathroom with Rosalie.

I blinked up at the ceiling to keep my tears at bay as we all broke into nervous chuckles. I looked at Alice. "Is he here yet?"

She looked at me, then nodded with a big smile. "He's at least as nervous as you are."

I rolled my eyes at her. The retort I wanted to say not appropriate in front of my mother for a variety of reasons. "I doubt that," I settled on instead.

"Bella, baby, I have something for you." Renee held out a crystal charm bracelet. The charms were bright silver and included a cross, a heart, a book, and a house. "It was Grandma Marie's. I had it cleaned for you. I thought it could be your something old."

I took it from her hand reverently. I always loved this bracelet as a child but had never seen it look so shiny and beautiful. "Thank you. I love it," I said as I tried to put it on. My hands were shaking too bad.

Alice took it from me gently, admiring it as she put it on. "It really is beautiful, Renee." After she secured it to my wrist, Alice continued, "And your dress is your something new, of course."

"Bella?"

I turned to look at Rosalie, who was now standing in the background even though she had been active all morning in helping with my hair.

"If you like it, I would like to offer the necklace Emmett gave me on our engagement as your something borrowed and your something blue. I thought it would look pretty with your gown." She held up the absolutely stunning sapphire and diamond pendant in a platinum setting on a chain featuring small but brilliant diamonds every inch or so.

"It's gorgeous, Rose. Are you sure?" I couldn't imagine how much something like that must have cost. Looking at it, I also imagined it could have been my something old. It had a vintage quality about it that was so appealing to me.

She smiled. "Of course. I hope it brings you all the happiness in your relationship with Edward that I have with Emmett," she said softly as she lifted it over my head and deftly secured it without messing up my hair. It looked stunning and perfectly completed me.

"Thank you, Rose. This means a lot."

I looked down at my hands and saw the dazzling eternity ring Edward had given me during our weekend trip on my right ring finger and my engagement ring on my left. I had never worn so much jewelry in my life but every piece was a meaning-filled treasure.

"It's time," Alice declared. She leaned up on her tiptoes and kissed my cheek, then whispered into my ear, "I'm so glad you're going to be my sister forever."

"Me too," I whispered back, taking a deep breath. "Just give me a minute?"

Alice nodded and she and Rose stepped out. Renee squeezed my hand just as a soft tap on the door revealed Charlie, looking dapper but awkward in his tuxedo. "Wow."

I turned to face my dad. "What do you think?" I asked, holding my hands out slightly to show myself off.

"I think...you look beautiful, kiddo," he said, his voice gruff. He shook his head. "Why does it seem like just a minute ago you were the little girl that I could carry up on my shoulders?"

"Daddy," I whispered. I stepped towards him and we hugged each other as hard as we could without risking my dress and veil.

"Okay," Renee declared in a choked-up voice. "There's a young man waiting for you downstairs. I best go take my seat. I love you, baby." She hugged me and then squeezed Charlie's arm on the way out.

"Ready to go?" he asked.

"Ready as I'll ever be." I smiled up at him. "Don't let me fall, okay?"

He looked down at me, his eyes a little glassy. "Never, Bella. You may be getting a husband today. But I'll always be your father. And it'll always be my job to catch you."

I sucked in a breath, finding myself needing to blink up at the ceiling again. I hoped the mascara Alice used was waterproof because it didn't seem destined to last long otherwise. "I love you, Dad."

Charlie squeezed my hand. "Me too." He led me out of the room and down the hall to the steps, then down the second-floor hall to the top of the main staircase.

Fragrant white flowers of every kind—gladiolas, gardenias, orchids, and roses to name only a few—cascaded down the banister, interwoven with the most beautiful deep blue ribbon and beads. The large living room had been cleared for the most part of its usual furniture, save for Edward's piano, and now in place were a series of round tables topped with deep blue tablecloths and stunning floral and candle arrangements. A white runner led from the bottom of the stairs across the room to the glass doors that led to the thankfully cloud-covered back yard. The wall of windows allowed me to see the profusion of flowers that decorated the arch at the end of the aisle where Edward stood – in absolute splendor – waiting for me.

EPOV

Rose and Alice looked beautiful as always as they walked up the aisle in their individually designed deep blue gowns.

Rose came first, offering a dazzling smile at Emmett who stood at my side, before looking at me. *I'm so happy this day has finally come for you, Edward. Be happy.*

I nodded. *Be happy.* Simple words, but I knew the greater universe of meaning she intended. Rose had been present for most of my decades-long self-imposed loneliness.

Alice came next, clearly having to restrain herself from dancing and skipping down the aisle she was so exhilarated with her joy for us. *Oh, finally, Edward, we're all going to be so happy together. I'm so thrilled for you both. Wait til you see her, Edward!*

And then the music changed. The wedding march began and my eyes moved instantly to the open back doors. I sucked in a breath, completely stunned at the sight before me, as Bella and Charlie stepped across the threshold.

Never had a bride been more beautiful.

She was a complete vision, more glorious than any imagining I had ever done about what she would look like on our wedding day. The gown was exquisite and perfectly true to her style and personality. Together with the soft curls of her long mahogany hair, the white of her gown highlighted her soft blush and flawless skin.

Her eyes quickly found mine and all I could think was, *Finally. I'm home.*

A cacophony of thoughts tried to invade my mind but I pushed everything out and focused on Bella alone. With little effort I found the sound of her beating heart.

As she walked progressively closer to me I realized I was holding my breath. Some part of me felt it necessary lest I do something to ruin this perfect moment and come to find this was all a dream. Because how could it be real? How could I be getting everything I ever wanted and so much I never even knew I needed?

But I was.

This moment. This woman. My life. *Our lives. Forever.*

In what seemed at once to have taken an eternity and to have happened in the blink of an eye, Bella stood before me. Charlie kissed her on the cheek and then helped her step up onto the platform with me. He shook my hand and held on a beat longer than necessary. He didn't say anything, but his thoughts were clear in that moment. *I'm giving you the most important thing I've ever had, Edward Cullen. You better take care of her like your life depends on it.*

I nodded, hoping he would remember my pledges from our recent conversation. He turned and sat down next to Renee.

I grasped both of Bella's hands in mine as Pastor Weber called the ceremony to order.

Soon we exchanged the simple traditional vows Bella preferred. I was delighted to hear the confidence and conviction behind Bella's "I do." And, as for myself, I had never derived more pleasure from the utterance of such a simple but meaningful phrase in my entire existence.

Emmett's whistling finally brought me back to reality as I kissed my new wife, and we smiled and laughed into one another's mouths as we broke apart.

"Ladies and gentlemen, may I present to you Mr. and Mrs. Edward Cullen."

Mrs. Edward Cullen!

We walked down the aisle back towards the house, those gathered standing and clapping as we processed. As soon as we stepped into the shadow of the living room I gathered Bella in my arms and clasped her body tight against mine as I spun her around. "You've made me the happiest man that ever lived. I love you so much, Mrs. Cullen."

She giggled and squeezed her arms tight around my neck. "That sounds so good. I love you too, Mr. Cullen."

I placed her back on her feet and cupped her face in my hands. Leaning down, I kept my eyes trained on hers until the very last moment when our lips met. I felt myself very quickly swept up into the kiss, which started out tender and loving but was very soon filled with all the promise of the coming evening. When Bella moaned I stepped away and rested my forehead on hers. Then a round of catcalls and guffaws began as I realized belatedly that my entire family surrounded and had witnessed us. I found myself not caring and smiled, feeling Bella's blush inside my hands.

Soon the guests were enjoying the open bar, heavy appetizers, and buffet dinner that allowed the non-eating of the vampires to go less noticed. A band Alice hired began to attract dancers to the large outdoor dance floor that was revealed once the chairs from the ceremony were cleared away. Twinkling white lights twisted in white and blue tulle garlands lit up the evening and were draped in soft loops from every hanging surface across the back yard.

After a while, most people were congregated in the back yard, dancing, eating, or visiting with one another. Soon the toasts started.

Carlisle began. "Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to propose a toast to the new couple." Everyone held their champagne glasses at the ready. "Every great once in a while, two people find one another who are so right for each other, indeed, nearly fated for each other, that not even the greatest obstacles can keep them apart. That is the story of my dear son Edward and his beloved bride, Bella. Though they are young, they both have old souls, souls so clearly aligned that they will forever sustain one another and ensure that they will always give what the other needs. My wife Esme and I couldn't be happier to welcome Bella to our family, for she completes it in ways we never imagined possible. To the happy couple."

"To the happy couple," everyone replied, raising, clinking, and sipping from their glasses.

I looked down at Bella, who had finally lost the fight against her tears. I leaned down and wiped her tears away with the pad of my thumb as she smiled up at me.

Charlie stepped forward next, his voice gruffer and less sure than Carlisle's, but no less heartfelt. He looked around for a minute, smiled at Bella, and then began. "Has anybody seen a little brown-haired girl with pigtails, about yay high," he held his hand down by his hip, "who loves animals and probably has her nose stuck in a book? I could have sworn she was just here, but I can't seem to find her anywhere," he joked, and the crowd laughed softly and a few ladies dabbed tears from their eyes. Bella squeezed my hand tightly, steadying herself against me.

Charlie shook his head, and I saw the profusion of images from his memories of Bella as a little girl move quickly through his mind. I couldn't imagine what it would be like to willingly given something as precious as Bella away. In that moment I felt a special kind of respect for Charlie.

"What I wanted to say was this," he continued, "Bella, I couldn't be happier for you than I am right at this moment. And, though it's sometimes hard for me to let go of the idea of you as my little girl, when you have so obviously grown into the most beautiful woman, know that your mom and Phil and I wish you and Edward nothing but the greatest happiness in the world. To Bella and Edward."

"To Bella and Edward," everyone toasted.

"I'd like to propose a toast," Emmett said as he stepped forward. I threw him a look. *Chill, bro.* He smiled broadly. "Edward has a knack for reading people and knowing what's on people's minds," he began. I heard my whole family wondering what the heck he was doing. "What I really like about Bella is that she keeps him guessing. Bella keeps Edward on his toes. She keeps him honest when no one else can. And I think that can only be good for a relationship. So, here's to Bella, my new little sis, may she always come as a pleasant surprise to my little brother."

I smirked at Emmett but I could whole-heartedly toast to that. "To Bella," everyone replied as Bella blushed at the attention.

Just then, a smell came to the fore followed by a mind I hadn't heard in many months.

"I know I'm a little late, but I'd like to make a toast as well," a deep voice called.

I felt Bella jolt next to me. I leaned down and kissed her cheek. "For you, Bella," I whispered as she gazed disbelievingly up at me.

She looked around, and just then Jacob stepped through the crowd gathered at the other end of the dance floor. "Jake!" she called before flying across the floor and throwing her arms around his neck.

"Hey, Bells," he said as he gently hugged her. Over her shoulder his eyes met mine and he nodded once. *Thanks for the invitation. I promise not to make you regret offering it.* I nodded in return.

Seth handed Jacob a glass of champagne which he raised as he began. "I had the great fortune while growing up of having as my best friend the coolest, most beautiful girl in Forks. A lot of impossible things happen in this world, but I'm not at all surprised to find that someone has fallen so completely in love with my best friend. Because," he looked down at her, "what's not to love about this girl?" *I'll always love you, Bells.* "So, here's to love," he called out.

"To love," everyone toasted. I was struck by how different the tenor of Jacob's mind seemed. Despite his obvious sadness at Bella's decision to become a vampire, he seemed more at peace than I'd ever felt him before.

"Thank you, Jake! I can't believe you're here! Now everything's perfect!" Bella said as she hugged him again. And right there was why I had bothered with the invitation in the first place. *If it makes her happy, it's worth it.*

The band struck up the music again and the crowd began dispersing, some to dance, some to refresh their drinks. I moved to join Jacob and Bella at the far side of the dance floor, noting several other Quileutes gathered behind Jacob. "Bella," he said, "there's someone I'd like you to meet."

BPOV

Jake's here! Oh, now everyone I love is here!

As Jake offered the words of his toast I realized I was shaking. I just couldn't believe it. *Edward. Edward did this.* I looked back across the dance floor at him and met his eyes. How I wished he could hear my mind in that moment. I tried to convey with my eyes how much this meant to me. *Thank you, thank you, thank you. Only you would know how much I needed him here today.* He smiled a heart-breakingly beautiful smile at me and I promised myself I would thank him properly later.

Soon the band began playing again and we shuffled towards the edge of the dance floor to move out of the way of the dancers. "Bella, there's someone I'd like you to meet," Jake said.

I saw him hold his hand out behind him. As he did, a Native American woman stepped out from behind Quil and Embry. She was a little taller than me and her build was slim and athletic. She was very pretty with shoulder-length black hair, friendly dark eyes, and a ready smile.

"Bells, I'd like you to meet Samantha. Samantha, this is Bella, my best friend."

The woman held out her hand. "Hi Bella, call me Sam. I've heard a lot about you. Congratulations." Her eyes glanced to Edward, who had moved to my side. Her gaze wasn't unfriendly, but it was cautious enough to tell me she knew what Edward was.

"Hi Sam. It's very nice to meet you." I liked her right away, but was floored. *Does this mean?* I looked back to Jake as I let go of Sam's hand. My eyes were wide, questioning. Jake nodded. *Oh my God! He imprinted?!* Jake's expanding grin confirmed it.

"Oh Jake!" I threw my arms around his neck again, filled with an extraordinary wave of relief I didn't know Jake finding his mate would bring me. "I'm so happy for you!" I stepped back, seeing in his face a sense of peace and happiness I hadn't seen in such a very long time. "How did you all meet?"

He smiled down at Sam and took her hand. "Sam's from Vancouver. Her people have a reservation north of the city. I stayed there for a bit...while I was...away. We met there while she was home visiting one weekend. She's a med student." His voice was filled with pride.

I recalled Seth reporting that Jake was near Vancouver at one point when I had tried to check in on him several weeks ago. "Wow. That's great. You should talk to Carlisle, I'm sure he'd love to talk doctor stuff with you." The words were out of my mouth before I realized she probably wouldn't want to talk to Carlisle.

She nodded politely. "Maybe I will," she said quietly.

Suddenly overcome with a desire for her to like me, to like my new family, I walked towards her. "Sam, I realize we don't know each other at all. But, please, if you know Jake as I suspect you do, you know that things that once seemed impossible aren't. And if you can accept that much, please try to also accept that things aren't black and white, good and bad. Please try to accept that some things are much, much better than they seem." I glanced at her one last time, then up at Jake, before stepping back. She smiled and nodded.

I felt Edward take my hand and squeeze. I looked back at him and his eyes were absolutely filled with adoration. Finally he spoke. "Jacob, I'm glad you came. I know it means the world to Bella. I hope you and Samantha will stay?"

Jake looked at Sam, who nodded, and then back at Edward. "Sure. We'll stay as long as we don't wear out our welcome," he joked, but I could also tell it was some sort of a message for Edward.

"That's not gonna happen," I interjected.

Just then, Alice called for me and Edward. We were needed for group pictures. I turned back to Jake. "Please don't leave tonight without saying good-bye."

"Not a chance, Bells. Save me a dance later, okay?"

"Okay, if you're sure you don't need all your toes."

He laughed. Just as I stepped away, he called my name. "Hey Bella?" I looked back at him. "Before I forget, this is for you. Just...open it later, okay?" The look on his face was puzzling as he handed me a card in a white envelope.

I nodded, then hugged him one last time. "I'm really happy for you, Jake. She seems great."

"She is," he whispered. "Now, go on. It's time for you to resume being the center of attention," he teased.

I rolled my eyes and smiled before walking with Edward through the crowd and back across the dance floor.

By nine p.m., the crowd had thinned significantly, and it was mainly our immediate families and closest friends who remained. "Time to get you changed for your honeymoon," Alice declared. I still had no idea what we were doing, and was overwhelmed with anticipation at the thought of my wedding night finally being here. *Oh my God it's my wedding night!*

Alice took me up to Edward's bedroom where she helped me out of my wedding gown and into a beautiful white cocktail halter dress with a stunning blue sash at the empire waist, the ribbons of which trailed down the back of the dress. In many ways it mirrored the style of my gown, only was knee length and more casual. She removed the veil from my hairclip but left the clip in place. After touching up my make-up, she hugged me tightly. "Have a wonderful wedding night, Bella. I know it will be everything you're hoping for," she reassured.

"Thank you, Alice. And thanks for everything."

She led me back down through the house, and everyone was waiting out on the front porch and in the front yard. We said good-byes to our families before dodging bird seed and bubbles. I laughed at the strings of cans tied onto the back of the Aston Martin and, after Edward helped me in, blushed profusely at the realization that the back seat, small though it was, was completely filled up with inflated condoms.

Edward laughed when he saw my face and shrugged.

"Emmett!" we said simultaneously.

Everyone waved and called good-byes as we pulled out of the driveway. I looked over at Edward, who literally seemed to be glowing with happiness. His eyes were so light they were nearly yellow. His smile took my breath away. "We're officially on our honeymoon," I finally managed.

"Yes, we are," he agreed, his smile broadening impossibly.

"Can you tell me where we're going yet?"

At that he just scooped up my left hand in his right and brought it to his mouth, where he reverently kissed the wedding rings on my ring finger.

Just then he turned and I noticed the road was a bit rougher. I looked back out the front window and quickly deduced we were not headed to the highway. I looked back at Edward, only to find him grinning broadly.

Ten minutes later, Edward pulled the car to a stop. We were in the middle of the forest.

"Um, Edward, I don't mean to be picky or anything, but I'm not really a camping kind of girl."

He laughed, a full genuine laugh that had me giggling through my anxiety.

"Silly Bella. Don't you think I know you better than that by now?"

He got out of the car and came around to my side. He helped me out and then scooped me up in his arms bridal style. I laughed in surprise. "Let me carry you for a bit since your footwear isn't exactly the best for the terrain. Now, close your eyes, please."

I sighed and closed my eyes, aware of the huge grin still adorning my face.

After just a minute he placed me down on my feet. "You can open your eyes now, love."

My gasp was drowned out by the sound of the rest of the Cullens shouting, "Surprise!"

A dozen torches lit up the front of a charming one-story cabin in the woods. It was made out of white-washed logs and had a charming stone path that led to the front door. The door was arched at the top and had a square glass window in the top center. It looked exactly like what I imagined the Seven Dwarfs' cabin looked like.

I was filled with so many questions I couldn't begin to speak.

Esme stepped forward. "This house is a gift from the whole family to you and Edward, Bella. We wanted you to have a special place where you could get away, just the two of you."

"You...you built us a house?" I looked up at Edward, who wrapped his arms around my waist and squeezed gently. Suddenly, all of Esme's time away from the house made sense, as did the many times she returned in

old, worn, paint-covered clothes. "Oh my God, Esme, I can't believe it," I exclaimed as I hugged her fiercely. "Thank you so much."

Edward explained that the main house wasn't far away, but they had all agreed it made more sense for Edward to drive us here than to try to explain to the rest of the guests why we would be walking out into the forest.

One by one each of the Cullens came and bid us well wishes and hugged us before moving off into the dark forest.

Carlisle was the last to come speak with us. "Enjoy your evening, and congratulations again," he said. He looked at Edward for a few moments, and I knew they were sharing a silent conversation, one that was interrupted with a laughing call from somewhere in the forest, "Hope your new house is still standing in the morning little brother!" I blushed furiously as Carlisle tried not to laugh and Edward rolled his eyes.

Soon we stood alone in front of the house. *Our house. Oh my God. I have a house with Edward. Edward and I live together now! Oh my God! No more hiding. No more curfews. No more pretending. No more rules. Oh my God!*

I realized Edward had been watching me while these thoughts worked their way through my mind. He still wore the same huge smile. "Shall we, Mrs. Cullen?"

"I would love to, Mr. Cullen."

He held my hand as we walked across the stone path. When we got to the door he pushed it open, and then scooped me up and carried me inside.

The inside was even more charming than the outside. It was small but perfect. A cursory inspection revealed a living room, small kitchen, bathroom, and a surprisingly large bedroom. But I wasn't particularly interested in taking the tour just then.

On the nightstand in the bedroom I noticed the gifts I had wrapped that morning for Edward. "Oh." I walked over and picked them up. "I have something for you," I said as I turned with the silver packages in my hands. "Would you like these now or later?"

"I would love to open them now, Bella. But you needn't have. Giving me yourself was more than I ever wanted." I blushed as we sat on the edge of the bed and I handed Edward the first box.

Edward made quick work of the paper and lifted the lid. He smiled as he realized what he was seeing. "Bella, how ever did you do this?" He lifted the cufflinks to examine them further. They were sterling silver and the centers were made out of our lemonade bottle caps.

I realized I was holding my breath waiting for his reaction. Alice assured me he wouldn't mind that I had used the bottle caps for this purpose. I had seen on the internet that bottle caps could be made into cufflinks and found a jeweler in Port Angeles who could do it on short notice (and it turned out Alice was a frequent and important customer....). It just seemed a more lasting tribute than the caps themselves. The cufflink made from the first lemonade bottle, the one I drank in the lunchroom that day so long ago, had a picture of a lemon and in blue said 'So Sweet.' The cufflink made from the more recent lemonade bottle, from our date in the biology classroom, had a lemon wedge and in blue the word 'Swan,' part of the word

Swanson's, the brand name of the lemonade. I was particularly thrilled about how that one had turned out. I had kept the remainder of the caps as keepsakes for him as well.

"Bella, these are wonderful. Thank you so much." He looked up at me, and I could tell he was being completely genuine.

I smiled, glad that I could surprise him. "You're welcome. Now, open the other one," I said, excited for his reaction.

He grinned at my enthusiasm and tore the paper away. His expression was immediately confused and I laughed.

"Um, it's my iPod."

"I know," I laughed. "Give it here."

He handed it to me and I gave him the earbuds and indicated for him to put them on. I turned the iPod on and found the track. "Listen," I whispered, so full of anticipation that I was sure my heartbeat would drown out what I wanted him to hear.

I pressed play.

The look on his face was hands down the most priceless thing I had ever seen. I think if he had been capable of tears, he would have shed them in that moment.

"Oh, Bella," he said, his voice full of emotion.

I bit my lip, absolutely thrilled that he liked the recording of my heartbeat I made using his own recording equipment connected to the computer in his room. I recorded it for a full five minutes. At three minutes I specifically concentrated on my imaginings for our wedding night, and I knew that my heart began to race before finally calming back down at the end of the recording.

He pulled the earbuds out and placed the iPod on the bed in between us, before slipping off the bed and falling to his knees. He grasped my hands and placed his head in my lap. I pulled one hand free and ran it through his hair soothingly. "Bella," he began, but his voice was choked up so he swallowed and began again. "The thoughtfulness of your gifts absolutely astounds me, Bella. They were both more perfect than I can say. I can't begin to adequately express the intensity of the love I feel for you." He looked up at me. "You are everything that is important to me in this world, and I will make it my whole life's purpose to bring you happiness and joy."

"Mission already accomplished, Edward," I whispered, as I leaned down and kissed him.

After a moment he rose and walked over to the dresser, where a larger wrapped present was waiting. He picked it up and brought it back to me. "This one is for you," he said as he presented it to me.

"Edward, you already got me my gifts. The car for one, and Jake. Oh God, Edward, I haven't properly thanked you for Jake. I can't even begin to tell you what him being there meant to me. And, God, he was so happy."

"No thanks are necessary, my love, just seeing you so happy to see him was enough. Now, back to this gift." He motioned with his hand to the heavy blue foil box in front of me.

I bit my lip as I carefully ripped the paper away. I gasped as I saw what lay inside. The box for a MacBook Air laptop lay under a beautiful leather-bound journal and a package of old-time black-and-white-covered composition notebooks. "Edward, this is too much!"

"Nothing is too much for you, Bella. I know it will be a while before you can begin college, but that's no reason why you have to put off your writing. I know that's something you used to love doing and it's something you've talked about wanting to explore further through your education. I just wasn't sure what format you preferred for your writing, so I wanted to cover all the bases."

"Edward, that is so thoughtful. I love it. Thank you," I said as I shifted the box off my lap and hugged him to me tightly, feeling the tears prick at my eyes.

When I finally sat back from him I noticed for the first time how beautiful the room was that we were in. Decorated in chocolate brown, teal blue, and ivory, the room was warm and comfortable. In the center sat a massive king-sized sleigh bed. A nightstand fit on each side and a dresser sat against a far wall. The door to the bathroom and, presumably, a closet, were on either side of the dresser. All around the room were large bowls filled with the same white blossoms from the house. Tea lights flickered from every available surface.

Suddenly it occurred to me that we were in a bedroom. On our wedding night. Alone. I felt my heart rate explode in realization. I excused myself for a human moment and walked into the bathroom, where I stared at myself in the mirror and tried in vain to calm myself down. *It's not like we're completely inexperienced after all!* But now that the moment of actually *trying* was here, I was filled with a nervous energy that felt like it could come shooting out the end of my fingertips. I shook my hands, took a deep breath and prepared to face Edward again, wondering if he felt anything like the excitement and trepidation I felt.

EPOV

After Bella slipped into the bathroom, I took a moment to finally remove the jacket to my tux. Placing the white envelope Bella had handed me earlier on the nightstand, I slipped the jacket over the back of the lone chair in the corner and kicked off my dress shoes as well. I pulled the tie off and undid the top button to my shirt. Then I turned to the bed and collected up the gifts we had exchanged, stopping one last time to admire my new cufflinks, before placing everything off to the side on the floor.

When the bed sat empty before me, the weight of the moment finally pressed upon my shoulders and I sucked in a breath. *Come on Edward, don't psych yourself out. You've done everything but and not once had a problem with control. You can do this. You have to do this. It means everything to Bella. Plus, you want this. Of course I want this, but.... No buts, Edward. Not tonight.*

I took a deep breath and did a neck roll, both unnecessary actions but soothing nonetheless. I took some solace in the fact that we remained close to home for our first effort at 'trying.' I didn't *think* it would, *but*, if something went wrong tonight, we would be close enough to have the help we needed.

Thank God for our increased intimacy over the past four weeks. I could only imagine what I would be feeling right now if I had adhered to my original boundaries for our relationship. As I realized how important all of

our recent exploration was to my feeling of readiness now, I thought of Bella's list. *Bella's love and desire for me is making this night possible. I'll have to thank her properly for that.*

Assuming all went well tonight, as Alice assured me it would, we would depart tomorrow afternoon for Isle Esme, my parents' private island, which remained a complete surprise for Bella.

Just then I heard the door to the bathroom click open and Bella walked out barefooted but still in the beautiful white dress with the deep blue sash.

She was stunning. "Come to me, love."

She walked over to me and I took her hands. I leaned back against the bed and she stood between my legs.

"Before...well...there are some things I need to say."

"Edward—"

"Please, Bella? I...I will feel better if I get this out." She nodded. "First, I love you with all my heart. Know that, always. Second, I am very much looking forward to trying tonight." I squeezed her hand as her heart raced in reaction to my words. "I want you to know that I have more confidence in this than I ever thought possible, and that is largely to your credit, because you have showed me time and time again that I can trust myself. And I'm finally starting to believe it."

"You can, Edward," she interrupted.

I lifted one of her hands and kissed it before nodding. "I need to ask you something and I need to tell you something. First, I need you to promise me you will let me know if I hurt you in any way. Will you, please?"

"Of course I will. But you have to promise to compromise – if we do something that doesn't work, promise me we can try to do it another way."

I blew out a breath. "Okay." She smiled at me and squeezed my hand.

"What I needed to tell you is this. We stayed here tonight, just in case...."

"In case you lose control."

"Yes."

"Okay."

"Bella, how can you discuss this so calmly?"

She sighed. "Edward, first, because you won't lose control. And, second, because I've already fully accepted becoming like you. If it happens accidentally, I'll only regret it because you'll be upset at yourself. Otherwise, it's just a matter of timing."

Her logic astounded me and immediately resurrected Jasper's words in my mind from a conversation weeks ago.

"Okay, so, I'm just gonna throw this out there. Okay? Worst case scenario is you hurt her or bite her?"

"Obviously."

"But then she becomes one of us which is what she wants?" I heard it more bluntly in his mind: what was the big deal if she got turned when that's what we were planning on anyway?

I took a deep breath and nodded to her, acknowledging her words. I brought her left hand to my mouth and placed an open-mouthed kiss over her rings. "Thank you for being mine, Bella," I said in a low voice.

She pulled my left hand up to her mouth and mimicked my actions. "Thank you for choosing me, Edward."

"I would do it over and over again, love."

With that she dropped my hand and leaned her body into mine, her hips tightly wedged between my thighs. "Make love to me, husband," she whispered before kissing me.

"I would love to, wife," I responded around the edge of our kiss.

I don't know how long we kissed. But the feeling of her hot mouth wrapped around my tongue, her small hands tugging at my hair, and her firm body pressing against mine was rapturous. When she needed air I relished in lavishing her jaw and ear and neck and throat with my lips and tongue. Soon she was whimpering against me and the ache in my groin was intense.

She pulled her body back a half step and reached her hands in between us, slowly working down the buttons of my shirt. When she was done she untucked the shirt and then pushed it back off of my shoulders. I hugged her against my bare chest and shivered at the feeling of her warmth against me. Together we worked to undo my belt and open the fastenings on my tux pants. Then I stilled her hands. She pulled back and looked at me questioningly.

"You're overdressed, my love," I smiled. My calm voice belied the intense anticipation and nervous excitement I felt inside, where I was constantly chanting, *Take it slow take it slow*

She smiled and reached her arms back to undo her dress.

I stilled her arms once again. "I want to do it." *I want to worship every part of you.*

I gently spun her so that her back was to me. I reached up and released her hair from the clip. She lifted her hair up for me as I deftly undid the three pearl buttons that held the halter top of her dress up. I couldn't resist tasting of her neck and back, which presented such a flawless porcelain canvas before me. My hands still each holding a strap of the dress, I placed slow, teasing, open-mouthed kisses all over her upper back. She shivered and steadied herself with hands on each of my thighs.

I ran my eyes over her form just inches in front of me. *Four thin and oh-so-fragile layers of material are all that stand in between my cock and her....Stop it! Slow! Gentle!*

Releasing the top of her dress, I moved my fingers down to the middle of her back where I unzipped the material there. Knowing all that held the dress in place was her hands, I spun her to face me once again. She met my eyes as she dropped her hands and the dress pooled at her feet. She stood before me, breathtakingly beautiful and fascinatingly seductive, in a white satin strapless corset with lace edging and matching panties. Garter belts held up incredibly sexy pale white thigh-high stockings.

I realized my mouth was hanging open as I took her in. She blushed under the scrutiny of my gaze. *And now she's perfect.*

"So beautiful," I murmured as I leaned forward and placed worshipping kisses along the swell of her breasts at the top edge of the corset. She leaned into me and wrapped an arm around my head, pressing me into her.

I lowered my mouth and flicked my tongue over her nipple, still concealed beneath the satin. She gasped and fisted her hand in my hair.

"I want you so bad, Edward," she moaned.

Take her. Take her! TAKE HER! No! Slow. Gentle. Fuck.

I continued to flick my tongue over her nipple, alternating to the other side when the first was saturated through from my attentions. I realized she was rubbing her thighs together and pressing into me. The scent of her arousal was now heavy in the room and I inhaled it deeply, needing it like a drug.

Wrapping my arms around her I felt the intricate lacing of the corset and began to work my hands over it. I had begun slowly releasing the lacing when her words stunned me. "Just rip it off, Edward."

"Bella—"

"Please, Edward? I need your hands on me now. Just rip it."

Fuck yes.

The satin fell apart easily under my hands and Bella moaned as I undid the garter clips and pulled the corset fabric away.

As soon as her breasts were free I plunged back in, sucking and licking at them with abandon. Bella moaned loudly. "That's so good, Edward. I need you so much. Oh, yes."

The more vocal she became the more my cock swelled.

Bella surprised me by stepping back. Trying to keep my mouth on her caused me to stand up from where I had been leaning against the bed. Bella reached towards me and pushed my pants down. When they fell at my ankles I stepped out of them and kicked them aside, then reached down and tore off my socks. The silk boxers I wore were stained with my pre-cum. Bella pressed her palm into the dampness and mmmmed.

"Christ, Bella. You're so beautiful and sexy. I'm aching for you."

"Sit back down, Edward," she whispered.

My mind was clouded with love and lust, but I complied. She placed her right foot on my thigh and my eyes threatened to roll back into my head at the concentrated force of her aroused scent before me. Slowly she gathered the stocking into her hand and inched it down her leg before taking it off and letting it flutter to the floor. Then she raised her left foot to my thigh and repeated the process on that leg.

Good God. She's stripping for me.

I couldn't help myself. I needed some relief from the pressure. I pressed my palm against my erection and adjusted myself. *Oh God how I need her.*

Bella took a step back and then looked down at her panties. She hooked her thumbs into the thin straps at her hips. But then, instead of sliding them down as I expected, she slowly turned to face away from me, revealing her luscious bottom which was only partially covered by the white satin. Bending forward, she slowly slid the panties down her legs, laying bare to me her obviously wetness. I swear to God, it took every ounce of discipline I'd developed in a century of existence not to jump forward and plow into her.

She slowly stood back up, tossing her hair around, and turned back to face me, her bare body exquisite before me and the white panties dangling from her forefinger.

I swallowed hard as she offered, "For you, husband." *Every time she says that word it goes straight to my cock.*

I began to lift my hand but then thought better of it. *Time to regain some of the control in this little game, love.* I lowered my hand but leaned my body forward. Opening my mouth, I closed my teeth gently around the satin fabric closest to where it hung on her finger. My eyes on hers the whole time, I sat back down with the panties hanging from my teeth. I chuckled darkly when I heard her gasp and smelled a rush of new moisture from her. Letting the satin fall from my mouth into my lap, I said, "Thank you, wife."

After a moment, I rose from the bed and cupped her face in my hands. I kissed her repeatedly, murmuring my love to her over and over again. Turning her slowly, I walked her back to the bed and, after pulling the covers back, helped her slide up onto it. I crawled up after her, loving the way her hair spilled across the teal pillowcases.

I kissed and licked from her neck to her chest to her breasts to her abdomen, relishing in the way she writhed against my touch and moaned my name. With each new spot, I savored the realization that it was mine. Forever. I suckled at the hollow of her throat. *Mine.* I laved my tongue across her right nipple. *Mine.* I kissed over my name tattooed on her left breast. *Mine.* I felt her squirm as I nipped at her rib cage. *Mine.* I rubbed my hands up and down the soft curve of her waist. *Mine.* I flicked my tongue into her belly button. *Mine.*

When I settled between her legs, I inhaled deeply and felt as well as heard the growl rumble low in my chest. *Mine!* I heard Bella's fists twist into the sheets in response.

"I'm going to taste you now, Bella."

"God, yes, Edward," she rasped, her fingers clutching harder at the sheets.

Oh, so good. So fucking good, I thought as I ran a slow hard lick up through her soft folds. She bucked against me and I grasped her hips to hold her still. Her sweet nectar was enthralling. I found myself alternating between plunging my tongue into her depths to draw her moisture forward to my waiting mouth and pressing my flattened tongue firmly against her needy clit.

She was moaning and grunting and I realized I needed her to cum. I had been rocking my hips into the mattress in time with the thrusts of my mouth and my cock was so painfully in need of her.

Bringing my right hand down I slipped two fingers inside of her. I worked them in and out of her as I worked my tongue back and forth over her clit.

“Oh God, Edward. Oh my God. So good...so....*Edward!*” she screamed as she came around my hand.

“That’s it, baby.” *Scream my name.*

I was surprised to feel her feet press against my hips and I realized she was pushing my boxers down with her toes. Together we worked the silk off and away from my body as I crawled back up her.

“Bella, I need to be inside you now. May I please have you?” *Please, God. Now. I need you now, Bella. So bad.*

“Yes, Edward. Please. Please take me, Edward. Make love to me.”

Yes.

I reached to the nightstand and grabbed a foil packet. I opened it and pulled the condom out, then carefully rolled it down my length.

I leaned down and kissed Bella with all the tenderness I could muster in that moment.

“Now, Edward. I love you.”

Holding my weight on my left arm, I positioned myself between her legs and felt the searing heat of her center against my tip.

Go slow! Be gentle! Stay in control! Please God, let me be able to do this.

I slowly pushed into her and wasn’t far before her heat and the significance of our actions began to overwhelm me. Her hands smoothed down my neck and over my shoulders, helping me to relax.

I pushed in further, feeling the way I was stretching her body. I kept my eyes trained on her face, wanting to be completely aware of her reactions. She appeared tense but not pained. But I knew that was coming.

I felt the point at which I encountered her barrier. I swallowed thickly, shaking with my effort to go slow, be gentle.

I rested my forehead against hers. “I’m sorry, Bella.”

“Sshh,” she cooed before pressing her lips to mine. “Do it,” she whispered.

Steeling myself, I pressed through her barrier. Bella gasped as I was sheathed fully inside of her.

A single tear leaked from her right eye and she took a deep breath. Her thighs were trembling around me.

Oh God. Oh God. "Talk to me, baby," I pleaded. *Oh God.*

"I'm okay," she panted, "just give me a minute."

I used the same mental technique I always used to shut out unwanted thoughts, except in this moment I was using that same blocking technique to try to shut out the incredible sensation of being inside of her so that I could be patient and give her the time she needed. Because, God damn, being inside of her was the sweetest fucking sensation of my entire life and all my mind could think was *Mine! MINE. MINE! More! MORE. MORE!*

I felt her move under me and I groaned. She pulled her hips down into the mattress beneath her causing me to move out of her just a little. Then she pushed back up onto me. *Holy fuck that's exquisite.*

"Move with me, Edward," Bella rasped. "I'm okay. I'm good. I promise," she added, I know for my benefit.

Placing my elbows on either side of her and careful to keep my palms faced down on the mattress, I slowly pulled my hips back before slowly pushing back in.

Mother of God.

The sensation was like nothing I'd ever felt before. And it wasn't just the mind-blowing physical sensation of her hot, wet, tight walls milking my throbbing rigid length. It was also the emotional realization that I was *Making. Love. To. My. Wife.*

"God Bella, I love you. I love you, baby." *So much. So fucking much.*

"I love you too, Edward."

I set a slow, cautious rhythm and allowed us to get used to one another. Still swimming in nearly surreal sensation I peppered kisses all over her face and shoulders, careful to keep my mouth closed lest I lose myself in the moment.

After several minutes Bella began to claw at my shoulders and pull at my hair. When I felt her press her hips up to meet my thrust I grunted and let out a low hiss.

"God, Edward...so...good."

"Oh, Bella. Being inside of you...ungh...is a fucking spiritual experience."

She thrust her hips against me again.

"Fuck, Bella, let's take it slower, softer."

"I can't, Edward. I'm going crazy." *Me too, baby, me too.* "I need it harder, Edward. Please?"

Fucking hell.

I thrust a little harder, experimentally. She grunted out a 'yes' and I clenched my fists, feeling my fingertips shred the sheet.

"More, baby," she pleaded.

Yes. More. Yes.

"Oh, God. That's it, Edward. You feel so good. I love you so...much....ungh."

Fuck. I want to go faster. I want to go harder. It's so fucking good. I was vibrating with my effort at restraint. *Slow. Gentle. Control. Dammit.*

I felt like a taut but frayed rope, and every time Bella spoke she sliced another fiber, slowly but steadily breaking my control.

"Faster, Edward." If her words weren't enough, she wrapped one leg up around my hip, using her heel to encourage me.

I growled as her new position caused me to enter her more deeply.

"Bella...you...I...can't...."

"Sshh, baby, it's okay. Make love to me, Edward. Make me yours."

"Fuck, Bella." Thrust. "Yes. You're mine." Thrust. "Forever." Thrust. "Mine." Thrust. "Mine." Thrust. "Love you."

Thrust. "Yours, Edward." Thrust. "Just yours." Thrust. "Fuck."

"God, Bella, I never knew....Christ...so hot...so wet...Bella, you're so tight." *It's so much. It's too much. It's everything. Oh my Bella.*

"It's all for you, Edward," she panted.

Fucking yes it is.

I couldn't help myself. I started to thrust just a little harder, just a little faster. I kept my eyes trained on her face and swallowed thickly as she threw back her head and moaned my name. "Oh Edward. Just like that, baby. It's so good."

"Bella, oh God...ungh...fuck, baby...I'm...I need you....."

"Just like that, Edward. Don't stop. Please. Oh God. I think I'm gonna...."

"Yes, baby. Get there. Just feel, Bella. Just feel how much I fucking love you...."

"Oh my God, Edward. Oh my God...."

"That's it, Bella. Come on, baby...."

"Edward, I'm gonna...oh my God...*Edward!*" she screamed my name as her body clenched around me with an intensity that was shocking.

"Fuck, Bella. Fuck I love you." I was right on the edge...of cumming...of losing my control...of losing my very mind. I knew I was only strokes away from the most intense orgasm of my life. My body was so tightly wound that my teeth were tingling, just begging to be buried into something, *into her. No! Aw, I need it though. God, I need it.* I thrust once, twice, three times before the world exploded around me. In a last-ditch grasp on my sanity I buried my teeth into my upper bicep, not able to deny the need to fucking bite down on something. It hurt like hell but the pain only added to the exquisite pleasure wracking my body in spurt after spurt.

When my mind finally returned to me, I released my teeth from my shoulder and gently pulled out of her, holding the condom to ensure her safety. The smell of her arousal mixed with the blood of her virginity lured the beast for just a moment before I steeled myself and locked my jaws tight. My eyes raked her body, searching for signs of injury. Bella panted underneath me, observing all of these things as she attempted to catch her breath.

"Oh my God, Edward. You're hurt," she exclaimed, reaching for my shoulder.

I grabbed her hand and squeezed it gently. "It's nothing, love. It will heal. I'm sorry," I added sheepishly.

"Whatever for, Edward. Don't be sorry. God, I'm not."

"I lost control, Bella. I could have bitten you. So easily. I wanted to." *God, I still want to. I have to get her into a bath. The scent of her blood...*

"But you didn't, Edward. You kept enough control that you protected me. You made love to me, Edward. You did it! Don't you dare even think about sulking! Because it was incredible. You've made this the best night of my life." Her face was flush with her conviction.

She'd never looked more beautiful.

And she's right. Admit it, Edward. There's a big difference between almost and actually losing control. Not where Bella's concerned, there's not. Yes there is. You did it. You fucking did it, Edward! Oh my God. I did!

I leaned back down and laid my head on Bella's chest. She stroked my hair lovingly and I calmed myself with the sounds of Bella's strong heart. "I love you, Bella. You are my whole life."

"I love you, Edward. Thank you for believing in yourself enough to try."

I shifted my head so that my chin was resting on her sternum and I was looking up into her eyes. "Bella, please believe me when I say that was absolutely the most incredible experience of my entire life."

"I'm glad," she whispered, blushing lightly, "me too."

"I know you're probably tired, love, but it would be in both of our best interests if I ran you a bath."

She looked at me questioningly. "A bath? Oh. Oh! Of course. Oh God, Edward, are you hurting very much?"

There she goes again, putting me first. God I love her. "It's manageable," I said, and it was just barely the truth. "But it would be better if we got ourselves cleaned up." She nodded and began to push herself up. "No, love. Rest here while I draw the bath." She sunk back down and wrapped an arm under her head.

I rose from the bed and resisted the urge to look back at my love, lest I fall right back into it with her. I walked into the bathroom and flushed the condom and then walked over to the large claw-footed tub to run the water. I squirted some bath bubbles in and watched them grow as the water splashed down. After five minutes, several inches of bubbly water filled the tub.

"Oh my God!" I heard from the bedroom.

My mind immediately in a panic, I flew with inhuman speed to the bedside. "What is it, love? What's the matter?"

"Look," she said, stunned.

Bella had opened the card I had placed on the bedside table. She handed it to me and I read the rough handwriting scrawled out inside of it:

Dear Bella,

I know there's only one thing I could give you for a wedding present that would mean anything to you. I'm done trying to convince you to make another decision. Finding Samantha has convinced me that sometimes you just can't help who you fall in love with, who you're meant to be with. Therefore, I hereby grant the Cullens the permission to take the steps necessary to change you. This decision is made on behalf of the Quileute tribe and is a one-time, and one-time-only, exception to the terms of the treaty, which otherwise remains in full force. Our only demand is that before your change begins you remove yourself from the Olympic Peninsula until such time as you can guarantee your adherence to the Cullens' diet and lifestyle. (Sorry, it wasn't easy to convince the others. I had to give them something.) Any further details will be worked out between the tribe and the Cullens as necessary.

I hope this is truly what you want, Bella.

Your best friend forever,

Jacob Black

Bella was right. 'Oh my God' was the appropriate response. I looked from the card to her eyes, which were streaming with tears.

Every obstacle was falling away. *Carlisle's words in his toast came back to me. It is exactly like we're fated to be together.*

I placed the card on the nightstand and leaned down to press a kiss on her forehead. "I suppose he's growing on me, a little," I teased. Bella choked out a surprised laugh through her tears. I scooped her up and carried her into the bathroom, then gently settled both of us down into the warm water. Bella sat with her back against my chest and rested her head on my shoulder. She mmmmed appreciatively as the warmth worked its way into her body.

We held and touched each other softly, just enjoying being alone and quiet and together in that moment. I reveled in the realization that my humanity had clearly won out tonight over my darker nature. I would never hurt her. I could never hurt her. *Oh my God, her trust in me is warranted!* I thought in delighted surprise.

Finally Bella pressed her lips against my neck and whispered, "I'm going to fall asleep in here soon if we don't get out."

I kissed against her hair and lifted us out, wrapping a thick bath sheet around her before wrapping a towel around my own waist.

Bella finished drying herself and reached around the back of the door and grabbed several articles of clothing off the hook. She threw a t-shirt and boxers at me and slid the white satin nightgown over her head. "Alice," she said sleepily, as if it would explain everything. And it did.

Bella was half asleep on her feet, so I gently lifted her and carried her back to bed. I slid her in between the sheets and crawled in next to her. She immediately curled into my chest and fisted her hand in my shirt. I relished the possessiveness of that action.

"Good night, husband," she whispered groggily.

"Good night, wife," I smiled in response, bringing to a close the absolute best day of my life.

~*~

Chapter 22: The Honeymoon

EPOV

Let her sleep let her sleep let her sleep let her sleep let her sleep. She can sleep on the plane. Let her sleep let her...the plane? The plane! The 24-hours of plane riding that will occupy our time beginning noon tomorrow. Oh, yes!

Bella had been moaning in her sleep for the past fifteen minutes. Lying on her right side, her back was to my chest. Every time I pulled my hips back to avoid poking her sleeping form with my now aching erection, she would scoot herself back into me.

I looked over at the clock. *It's four o'clock anyway. She has to get up at six. It's not that early....*

I groaned. Her aroused scent was now filling the room.

I lifted my left arm from around her waist and scrubbed my hand over my face. That was when the glint off of my wedding band caught my eye. I held my hand up in front of me. I had never worn a ring before. But I loved the way *this* ring looked on me.

My wedding ring.

I'm married.

WE'RE MARRIED!

Ungh. These thoughts are not helping...

As if Bella herself wasn't enough, the fact that we were married was like an aphrodisiac to me. I needed her again. Bad.

Gently, I folded the blanket and sheet back from Bella's body. The short pink satin nightgown she wore had ridden up in her sleep and was bunched around her hips.

Christ. She's bare underneath.

I began kissing across her neck and shoulders, light soft brushes with my lips. I grabbed the waistband of my boxers and worked them over my hips and down my legs, kicking them off under the covers. I leaned back and wrenched my shirt up over my head, smiling to myself when Bella again scooted her body back against me to close the gap.

The heat of Bella's backside against my erection was enthralling and I groaned and pushed against her. I wrapped my arm around her again, lightly stroking her breasts with my fingers as I whispered in her ear, "Bella, baby, wake up. Wake up, sweet girl."

"Mmm, Edward," she purred, turning her head towards me until our lips met. "You must have been reading my mind," she whispered.

Her receptiveness pleased me so and I couldn't help the laugh her words brought forth. "No. Perhaps it's just that great minds think alike."

"Yeah, that might be it," she said as she reached back with her left arm and stroked my hip and side with her warm fingers.

I was rocking slowly against her, wanting so badly to have her from behind. Our position reminded me of the night on the balcony at The Aerie and I groaned, remembering how much difficulty I had in restraining myself from taking her. *Though I am so glad that I did. Last night was wonderful beyond words.*

Bella's hand reached between us and she found my cock. Using the palm of her hand she pressed it into the warmth of her cheeks and rocked her body back against it a few times.

"God, Bella," I moaned, needing her desperately now. "Bella, I want you so bad. But I need you to be honest. Are you too sore for me? I don't want to hurt you, and there are other...."

Bella had pulled her hand away from my erection and reached back over her shoulder and found a handful of hair. She tugged hard, pulling my face over her shoulder so we could look into one another's eyes.

"I want you too. Right now. Like this." She kissed me, then continued, "I am a little sore. But nothing unmanageable at all."

"Bella-"

"Edward, please trust me. I was honest with you. I'm also being honest when I tell you that my desire is much greater than my discomfort."

She slid her hand from my hair and cupped my face. "I love you, Edward."

"I love you too, Bella, so much."

BPOV

The dream had been intense, so real. It was our wedding night. And Edward was playful and sexy and needful and just so...guh!

When the dream began, Edward was already inside me. It was the most incredible feeling I had ever had. His movements made me aware of my body in a way I had never been before. I felt...completed...so filled by him. The discomfort alleviated quicker than I expected, I think assisted by his temperature, which felt absolutely amazing against my overheated and sweaty skin. And the way he was curled around me, like he was encompassing me totally. Just the very *picture* of his naked body hovering over mine, moving rhythmically against me.... One thing I've learned in all these many weeks of exploration is how very visually and aurally stimulated I am. And that picture...I'll never ever forget it.

He was being so careful, so gentle with me. I could feel his love for me pouring through his actions. And it made my love for him swell so immensely that my chest almost felt pained from the sensation of my surely oversized heart.

But it was also maddening. Because he was being so controlled, and I felt myself losing control. I had no power over it, really. My body knew what it wanted and needed.

It was his words that did me in completely.

"Oh, Bella. Being inside of you...ungh...is a fucking spiritual experience."

I couldn't help it, I had to urge him on. I couldn't restrain my hips as they responded naturally and thrust upwards against him, seeking *more*.

"Fuck, Bella, let's take it slower, softer." The grit in his voice was so sultry and sensual. *That's it, baby, let go.* His eyes were all the way black now, and the way his lips fell open and his brows furrowed was proof that he was starting to let go.

But the slowness was killing me. My body was asking for more and I didn't know how to hold back. "I can't, Edward. I'm going crazy. I need it harder, Edward. Please?"

And then he did it. A little harder, and then a little harder still. I thought I would lose my mind. "Yes!" I grunted, my arms wrapping around his back for leverage.

More, please, Edward. I still need more. I pleaded with him and he responded, going a little faster, a little harder. It was everything.

Needing to wrap myself around him, I lifted my leg up and threaded it over his hip, using my heel to encourage him to push into me. He groaned and half protested, his voice filled with his own pleas.

I just wanted him to know I wanted everything he wanted in that moment. "Sshh, baby, it's okay. Make love to me, Edward. Make me yours."

And then he started with the 'mine' talk. It got me every time, but never more than when he was actually inside of me. "Fuck, Bella. Yes. You're mine. Forever. Mine. *Mine*. Love you." He punctuated his words with the deeper harder thrusts I had been needing and it was so damn good.

I reassured him that I was his. It wasn't even a question. The dark smile that overcame his face at my words was dizzying.

When he started going even faster and it was apparent that he was really letting himself go, I really felt how good the impact of his body was against mine. "Oh Edward. Just like that, baby. It's so good." I concentrated on that small patch of skin between my legs and my whole being focused on pressing it up against the hard thrusts of his pelvic bone.

And then his words again: "Bella, oh God...ungh...fuck, baby...I'm...I need you...."

Oh. Oh! Keep talking Edward, please. Oh God. Don't stop. I didn't think.... "Just like that, Edward. Don't stop. Please. Oh God." I ground myself hard against him and gasped. *I really didn't expect...but...oh....* "I think I'm gonna...."

His voice was rough, strained. He was swallowing hard around his words. "Yes, baby. Get there. Just feel, Bella. Just feel how much I fucking love you...."

And then I felt his kisses along my neck and back and frowned. Not at the kisses, but at how he was all of a sudden behind me. I would push back and feel him and it felt so real. I moaned at the feeling of his erection nestled against my butt cheeks and wondered when we changed positions.

And then I felt a tickling breath against my ear. "Bella, baby, wake up. Wake up, sweet girl."

I mmmmed appreciatively as I struggled to wake up from my dream. I smiled to myself - *it's a good thing he's waking me up like this or I would not be happy at being awakened from that dream!*

We softly talked and teased and touched. I couldn't believe how wet I felt, and the feeling was accentuated by the fact that I didn't have any panties on - I had been too tired to look for any after our bath - and could now feel the moisture making my thighs slick.

And Edward was, um, clearly aroused too. *God I love knowing I can do that to him! And God does it feel good!*

Edward asked if he could have me again - there was something so damned sexy about him *asking* - and while I was a little sore, I didn't feel more sore than I thought might be normal. And the way he was positioned behind me...all I could think about was that night on the balcony at The Aerie. I still have no idea how I encouraged him to wait that night. I mean, what happened that night had been one of my top shower-time fantasies over the past two weeks. And right now seemed like as good a time as any for Number 35.

I smiled. I hadn't thought about the list for a few days.

Oh. My. God. We're married! Now he can actually take me against the tree in the meadow. And actually take me against the cold tiles in the shower. And actually take me in his car! Ohmygodohmygod! The list just got a whole new lease on life! No more sorta checking things off baby!

No way Edward was using my discomfort to stop this now. "I want you too. Right now. Like this." I kissed him, willing him to believe me. "I am a little sore. But nothing unmanageable at all."

When he told me he loved me and his hand slipped down between my thighs, I knew I had convinced him.

When his fingers came in contact with my lips, he groaned. "Oh, Bella, you're so wet."

"I was dreaming about you, Edward, about you making love to me. This is what you do to me." I was going to say more but then his fingers started moving in circles against my wetness and the words died in my throat.

He pulled his hand away momentarily and I whimpered. I felt him smile against my back. Gripping my thigh, he pulled my top leg back and rested it on his, opening me further to his fingers. He slipped his middle finger into me and I bit back a whimper.

He stilled but didn't pull away. "Talk to me, Bella."

"I'm a little sore. But actually your coldness is helping. Maybe, um...gently put another finger in and then just be still?"

"Are you sure?"

I nodded, and his second finger wasn't as uncomfortable, the cold already taking away my pain.

"Bella?" he whispered. "Would you please make yourself come for me? On me?"

I bit my lip, surprised by his request, but so loving the fact that he asked me for something. "Would you like that, Edward?"

"Very much, Bella." I felt him move up onto his elbow behind me so that he could look down the front of my body. I melted at the idea of him watching me.

I moved my fingers back and forth through my wetness, coating them, before settling them against my clit. I couldn't help the small sounds I made as I moved my fingers faster, and thrilled at the sound of Edward's breathing becoming quicker and less even.

I flicked my fingers down through my folds several times and came in contact with Edward's fingers, still inside me. I couldn't resist teasing him some, and took a moment to smear some of my wetness against the part of his fingers not inside me. He sucked in a breath and growled lowly and I whimpered in response. *That sound!*

His reaction to my wetness gave me an idea and I pulled my fingers up and held them in front of him. I felt him swallow hard against my shoulder. "May I?" he rasped.

"Please do."

But as he leaned forward, I pulled my hand away slightly, teasing him.

"Bella...," he warned.

I giggled and brought my fingers to his lips. His tongue snuck out and licked vigorously against my fingers. From this angle I noticed for the first time just how damn *long* his tongue was and all at once I needed my fingers back.

I returned my fingers to their job and he growled at the loss. I started shifting my hips now, my body needing more. When I realized that I was moving myself on his hand, it was clear that my body was ready for him, because it wasn't uncomfortable at all.

"Oh, Edward." I turned my face up to his and kissed and licked at his jaw. "Talk to me, Edward. I love to hear you talk."

He hesitated only a minute, before coming out with, "This Bella," he very lightly flicked his fingers inside me, "this is *mine*." *Oh God the mine talk!* "And I intend to use it to give you the most unimaginable pleasure for the rest of your life."

I whimpered and rubbed harder. "Oh, please."

But then I realized I wanted something a little different. I pulled my hand away and lowered it, encouraging him to pull his fingers out. "Bella?"

I was shaky with need and aching from stopping on the verge of my orgasm. "I...I want to come while you're inside me, Edward. Please? I need you inside me."

He groaned and gently pushed my leg off of his. "You have to let me lead this, Bella. We have to go slow." I felt him shift behind me and then heard a wrapper tear, before he rubbed his cock against my opening.

I nodded and whimpered at the sensation, then pushed back, encouraging him to enter me.

And did he ever go slow. Inch by incredible inch, he began to fill me. I so badly wanted to shove my hips back against him, but I knew I had to follow his lead.

"Fuuucckk," he hissed when he was only about half way in. He dropped his head against my shoulder with a thud and stilled. I couldn't see him but could only expect it was momentarily too much.

I gave him a moment and then whispered, "I love you, Edward, with all my heart. You have made me so happy."

I heard him release a breath against my back before he whispered in return, "Thank you, Bella." And I suspected the thanks wasn't for my words but for the way they helped him refocus.

Slowly he began pushing into me again. "Oh my God, Bella, you're so much tighter this way. It's...ungh...." He stilled again, then finally started moving within me. It was heaven. It felt so...intimate and primal at the same time.

He planted a hand on my hip, giving him leverage for his thrusts, but I noticed that he kept his hand open, using his palm rather than his fingers to pull me against him. I loved and hated the gesture. Loved it because I knew he was doing it to restrain his grip on me. Hated it because I didn't want him worrying about hurting me in the midst of our lovemaking.

I laid my hand over his and pressed his fingers down around my hip. "Relax, Edward. You can do this."

"I can't relax, Bella," he rasped, although I noted that he left his fingers curled around me, "because this position is so fucking intense."

I smiled, loving the huskiness of his voice. I snaked my hand back down my front and began rubbing myself again, still intent on fulfilling his earlier request of me. He groaned when he realized what I was doing and hissed when my fingers accidentally swiped along his moving length.

Enjoying that reaction, I opened two fingers up into a 'V' shape and placed them on either side of his cock as it moved in and out of me. He growled, then moaned, "Oh, baby. What are you doing to me?"

He continued to murmur to me as he slowed rocked against me. I don't know how long we had been moving together when I finally returned to stroking myself. As I got closer and closer, I could no longer hold my hips still and began alternating pressing myself back against him and forward into my hand.

"Oh yes, Bella. Oh yes. Oh, fuck fuck fuck!"

Three 'fucks' equaled one intense orgasm and I came hard, crying out his name and thrashing against him.

"Oh my God, Bella," he groaned as my body squeezed him over and over. "Oh...unnnngh...Christ baby...I'm...I can't...." I felt something softly hit the back of my head and realized it was a pillow. And then Edward whipped his face down into it and roared like I had never heard before, stilling after a moment as his cock pulsed out his orgasm. He shuddered out a breath before pulling out of me and rolling onto his back.

I moved around so that I was propped up on my elbows and could look at him. The first thing I noticed was that he looked absolutely stunned. The second thing I noticed was that there were feathers. Everywhere. I looked at the pillow beneath me and noticed the whole side of it had been shredded, straight through the pillow case.

Perhaps it shouldn't have, but the realization that his teeth had been responsible for that was such a turn on. Tentatively, I leaned over and placed a soft kiss on his shoulders. Then I pushed up so that I was sitting on my folded legs. I shoved my fingers into the open pillow and scooped out a large handful of feathers, then threw them up into the air.

A hundred feathers swirled and glided down to us, like soft, fluffy snowflakes. I laughed as I held my hands out to catch some of them again.

I was so amused at the feathers that I laughed.

A quiet voice caught my attention. "You have never looked more beautiful than you look right now, Bella. Truly, you are an angel."

I looked down at Edward, whose expression had relaxed some as he watched me play.

I smiled at him. "It's pretty," I murmured, the first light of morning catching the white fluffs as they descended all around us.

Finally, he sat up, then leaned towards me and kissed me, pulling me to him with a hand threaded behind my head.

"I was embarrassed about that," he nodded his head in the direction of the shredded pillow, "and you go and make it something special and wondrous." He leaned his forehead against my cheek.

I pressed a kiss against his ear than replied, "I'll make you a deal, Edward. I'll never be embarrassed about anything about our lovemaking if you never feel embarrassed either. That was amazing. And the feathers, well, let's just say I *like* knowing that you lose control." Knowing there was something else important that needed to be added, I continued, "And since you do it in ways that don't hurt me, I don't see a problem."

He pulled back and met my eyes, then smiled. "Deal."

I kissed him again, then slipped out of bed, padding across the room to go to the bathroom. I groaned against the bright yellow light and squinted my eyes to make my way around while I took care of business. Then I came back out and snuggled into bed against Edward, who had put his boxers on and laid back down. I draped an arm across his chest and a thigh across his leg and after a few minutes managed to fall back to sleep.

It seemed like the next minute he was calling my name again, urging me awake. "Five more minutes," I half mumbled, frowning at the idea of waking up.

"You've already had three 'five more minutes', love," Edward said with an obvious smile in his voice. I groaned and opened my eyes, the light of morning now more prominent in the room. I looked at the clock on the nightstand and sure enough it read 6:19. "I just don't want you to feel rushed this morning. We have to leave no later than 8:30 and the family is making you a big breakfast."

I nodded against his chest and yawned. "'Kay." After another minute I placed three kisses on him and then rolled over to stumble out of bed. I walked over to where an overnight bag sat near the bathroom door and picked it up to take into the bathroom with me. "Do you want to shower?" I asked over my shoulder.

"Only if you'll let me bathe you," he replied, his lips unexpectedly right against my ear, causing me to gasp.

I dropped the bag then looked up, stopping short at the feathers all in my hair. I looked at my own reflection, then Edward's, then mine again, before bursting into laughter. "Well, that's quite a look," I finally managed.

Edward's serious expression softened and he smiled despite himself, beginning to pick some out and drop them into the small trashcan.

"No!" I called when I realized what he was doing.

"What?"

I held my hand out. "I want to keep them. Give them to me when you get them out."

He looked stunned and then smiled. "I love you, Bella Cullen," he said as he shook his head and placed feather after feather in my waiting palm. *The name sounds sooo good!* When most of them were out, I very carefully leaned down and unzipped a small compartment in my overnight bag, stuffing them in until I could find a better place to store them.

The rest of the morning went smoothly. The family was all smiles and suggestive leers and full of innuendos over breakfast, but I laughed through my embarrassment. Only our short time kept Edward from physically shutting Emmett's mouth. By 10:30 we were sitting at our gate at the Seattle Airport. "We're going to Houston?" I asked, but Edward only smiled.

Of course we flew first class all the way, and I managed to catch up on a good bit of lost sleep from the night before during our travels. From Houston we flew to Sao Paulo, where we didn't have to change planes but new passengers boarded, before finally deplaning in Rio de Janeiro.

Edward simply smiled again when our limo took us to a marina, rather than the hotel I'd expected. He held an umbrella over himself as we walked the pier to our slip, although we didn't see many people. I was completely stumped when we got into a beautiful powerboat, just he and I, and headed out of the harbor towards what appeared to be open sea.

When we were far enough away from human eyes, Edward allowed the morning sun to hit his skin and he was stunningly beautiful. *That's my husband!* As land came into view again, Edward spoke. "That," he said, making sure I was looking at the island and not him, "is our destination, Bella. It's called Isle Esme."

I looked at Edward. *Isle Esme? Surely he can't mean that....*

He nodded. "Carlisle bought it for Esme for their fiftieth wedding anniversary. This is part of their wedding gift to us."

"Oh my God, Edward!" I exclaimed as he maneuvered the boat against the dock, expertly catching one of the pylons and looping and knotting a securing line around it. He helped me out and collected our bags, then ushered me along a stone path through a thinned-out jungle that ultimately led to a landscaped opening and then an absolutely breathtaking beach house.

'Beach house' didn't really do this place justice, though. The house was unlike any I had ever seen.

It was all one story and long, spreading out in equal measure on both the right and left sides of the front door. It made of wood and stone and seemed to meld naturally into the landscape. Four large square windows ran down the length of each side of the house and gauzy white curtains billowed out of them. Edward explained that their caretaker had readied the house in preparation for our arrival.

Setting the bags down inside the front door, Edward turned back to me and scooped me up into his arms, laughing and smiling as he carried me across the threshold. I wrapped my arms around him and kissed him, starting to look around as he placed me back on my feet. I was not at all prepared for what I saw.

It was as if the beach and the ocean came into the house. The large living room that we were in had no wall on the ocean side. The room simply spilled out onto a covered wide open decked terrace, filled with elegant but comfortable looking couches and chaise lounges. Between the terrace and the beginning of the white beach was a blue tiled swimming pool that must have been fifty feet long. The beach was wide and the water was impossibly blue.

Stepping out onto the terrace, I noted that the deck ran the entire length of the house, giving each of the rooms on this side of the house an exterior living space. At two points along the expanse of it, huge old trees had been preserved during construction and both the floor and the roof of the terrace were built around the trees, bringing nature fully inside the house. It was magical.

I finally realized I hadn't said a word. I turned to find Edward staring at me as I took it all in. "Edward, this is...I can't even...just...wow."

He smiled broadly. "'Wow' is a perfect reaction. Esme designed this and decorated it. She wanted the house to have minimum impact on the natural environment. It's as green as was available when it was constructed in the 1970s, and she's made a number of changes to it since then to make it even more environmentally friendly. The entire house is run on solar."

"Wow," I repeated.

"Would you like a tour now, Mrs. Cullen, or would you prefer to rest after our long journey?"

I was too enthralled with the house to want to rest, so he began first leading me down the left side of the house. Immediately off the living room was a large dining area attached to a huge gourmet kitchen. I laughed when I saw the amount of detail that went into it but then grinned in realization that I would get to cook here. Next to the kitchen was a large game room with poker, pool, and air hockey tables and a huge selection of games. Beyond that was a theater room with the largest screen I had ever seen in a house.

Making our way back through this wing, Edward led me through the living room again. A series of bedrooms lined this end of the house, one green, one blue, and one brown, and each more beautiful than the last. The last room was a master bedroom with a curved beachside wall that allowed a panoramic view of the ocean. This room's terrace was private, sectioned off from the rest. The glass wall had been opened and folded back into itself, creating the same wall-less effect as in the living room. I threw myself into the mound of pillows atop the massive king-sized bed and sunk into the pile of white fabric. Gauzy white fabric billowed down from the canopy above, creating the most romantic atmosphere.

"You realize we can never leave here, right?" I looked at Edward, who smiled down at me. Then I yawned.

"Would you like to rest, love?"

I stretched. "No. But a shower would make me feel a lot better."

He left me to it, going to retrieve our bags and get us settled in.

We spent the day exploring the island. I enjoyed being out in the fresh air after spending the previous 24 hours on stuffy airplanes. We walked a long boardwalk built around the one end of the island, sat and watched a gorgeous waterfall, collected the most unique shells along the beach, and Edward made me the most tasty and filling meals.

After a late dinner, he asked me if I wanted to join him for a swim. The sun was setting, only half of it left on the horizon, but the night was still very warm. That was the *first* time Number 28 was fulfilled. I loved the sensation of him holding me as we made love. It was just as erotic the next morning when he did it again in the shower, pressing me up against the cold tiles as he thrust into me. Number six. Check. An evening thunderstorm cooled the air some that night, making it perfect for the hot tub. I was thrilled to feel how much the overheated water in the tub warmed his skin - it felt the same as mine. I was so thrilled, in fact, that Number 29 happened twice, back to back, once with me straddling him and once with me bending over the side of the tub. He was a seventeen year old, after all.

Showering after the hot tub, I dug through my bag sitting in the dressing room part of the bathroom looking for something to sleep in. Not finding anything but silky negligees, I unzipped my second suitcase - all packed courtesy of Alice - to see what else she had included. I lifted up the folded garment bag which held several dresses and gasped. I walked over and pushed the bathroom door shut.

"You have got to be kidding me!" I hissed lowly.

On top of the pile was a bright red cowboy hat with a black star on it. That was scary enough - because wearing it would reveal I knew of Edward's entry to my list, and revealing that would mean having to talk to Edward about my list. And, gah.

Beneath the hat, things got even scarier. "No way," I breathed as I lifted the scary black suede fabric out of the suitcase: a halter top with a deep wide v-neck that would barely cover my breasts, laced arm cuffs, and chaps with boot-cut legs, a cut-out crotch and ass, and that tied up the inside of the legs. All of the pieces were embroidered with a western-style floral motif. I groaned when that wasn't all. Beneath the chaps was a set of red satin lingerie, a bra and barely-there panty, to be worn under the cowgirl get-up. "I'm gonna kill you, Alice." I giggled at the absurdity of it all when I saw the pair of cowboy boots in the bottom of the suitcase.

"There is absolutely no way I'm putting that on," I said to myself.

But then, tucked in the side of my suitcase behind some other scary stuff I didn't even want to consider then, was my notebook, folded open to the list, just as it had been when I last saw it. *Leave it to Alice to think of everything.*

I read over the list. And there it was: 36) *Seduce Edward with a striptease and then ride him cowgirl*

And then, there this was: 41) *Play out one of Edward's fantasies for him*

The first one was his. The second one was mine. Here was my chance.

I took a deep breath, then coughed it out when Edward knocked on the door. "Bella, are you alright in there?"

I put my hand against the door, rolling my eyes at myself in realization of how little that would do if he tried to come in. "Yes. I'll be right out."

"Okay, love."

I shoved everything back into the suitcase and zipped it shut again. Not in the mood for satin and silk again I grabbed one of Edward's shirts off the top of his bag and stepped out in that and a pair of panties.

Edward's eyes bulged. "God that's sexy."

I blushed and smiled as I walked across the room and crawled into bed. "Well, I'm glad you think so, but don't get any ideas, mister. You wore me out tonight."

He laughed and kissed me breathless. "Come here," he offered, holding his arm out and inviting me to lie against him. "After you fall asleep tonight, Bella, I'm going to go hunt. I probably should have gone already, but I hated to leave you. I'll be back before you wake." He must have heard my heart rate tick up; the idea of being here alone felt weird. "There's nothing to worry about, Bella, I assure you. You're perfectly safe here, and I can close up the house if you prefer."

"No, no. That's silly. I'll be fine." I settled into him. "I love you."

"I love you too."

He hummed my lullaby to me and I was very quickly deep asleep. I awoke, eleven hours later, to the smell of pancakes and bacon.

I was nervous that whole day. We were going snorkeling in the afternoon and luckily I could pass my nerves off as excitement about that. And, truly, the snorkeling was wonderful. The water was so clear and there was a whole undersea world. Edward and I stole small caresses of one another's bodies all day, helping to build my anticipation for the evening.

As I finished my last bites of dinner, I pushed my plate back and stood up. "Come with me," I said with my hand stretched out to Edward. He smiled and pushed back from the table, taking my hand and following me down the long hall. When we entered our bedroom, I turned to face him. "Clothes off. Lay down on the bed. And under no circumstances are you to open your eyes until I say so."

His eyebrows arched in surprise and he opened and closed his mouth trying to figure out how to respond. But then he gave me perhaps his best crooked smile ever and pulled his t-shirt over his head.

Momentarily dazed, I pulled myself out of it and headed towards the bathroom. I shut the door and leaned against it, putting my hands against my knees and soundlessly mouthing the words 'I can do this I can do this' over and over again.

I was suddenly filled with nervous energy, and jumped up and down a couple times, flailing my arms around to try to get it out of me. *Okay, Bella. Pull it together. You did Number 18, back when you didn't even*

know if he would do anything, you can do this. That's a good point. Was I the one who poured wax on his chest as punishment? Hell, yes! Then I can do this. Okay. But, ugh, fuckfuckfucketyfuck!

Taking a deep breath I tore off my clothes and threw them in a pile, then unzipped the suitcase and began pulling the scary fabric out. The bra and panties were easy, at least. The halter top was so revealing that it was ridiculous, although I guessed that was the point. The chaps were a little tricky to get on but I finally did it, sliding the boots on underneath them. Then I pulled on the arm cuffs. Picking up the cowboy hat I walked to the mirror with my hands over my eyes. Moving just my pinky aside, I peaked through my fingers, groaning at the image of myself all decked out as a sexy cowgirl. *He really didn't say he wanted me dressed as a cowgirl, Alice, just to ride him like one!* That elicited a giggle. I slapped my hands over my mouth and put the hat on.

Ridiculous, maybe, but, actually, kinda hot. Okay, Alice, I'm wearing this damn thing after all. Now, don't over think it. Just get out there and ride your man!

I turned, yelled "Your eyes better still be shut," and opened the door.

EPOV

Her words thrilled me, as they always did whenever she was commanding. She closed the bathroom door behind her and I removed the rest of my clothing, leaving it in a heap on the floor next to the bed. I pulled the covers back and got in, lying on my back in the center of the bed. I stared at the door for a minute but then remembered her last command and closed my eyes.

Five minutes passed, then ten. *What is she doing in there?* I listened carefully, but could only hear the rustle of fabric and the occasional curse or huffed breath. Her giggle made me smile. *Whatever she's doing, I have a feeling it's going to be good.*

She opened the door and I knew by scent and sound that she was moving around the room. I kept my eyes closed per orders, but turned my head in her direction.

Her weight depressed the bed on one side as she crawled on, then I felt her straddle me, a mix of fabric textures rubbing against my skin. I gasped as her warm hands smoothed over my chest and abdomen. "Edward, is there anything you want to tell me?"

Huh? These were not even in the neighborhood of the words I expected she might speak. "Um, no?"

"Are you sure, Edward?"

All of a sudden I was reminded of the night she dominated me in my bedroom. She had begun with a little interrogation that had led to the revelation that I stole her white panties. But I hadn't pilfered any of her lingerie recently, at least that she didn't know about.

Her voice had a quiver in it when she spoke again. "Open your eyes."

My eyes didn't know where to focus first, but ended up working my way up her body. I gulped as I noted the red panties poking out through her...pants? The top she wore created the most cleavage I had ever seen on her. Her waist appeared incredibly firm and slender. Her hair was an untamed mane of waves, and on top of it sat....

Fuck.

A cowboy hat.

Or, more correctly, a cowgirl hat. The kind a cowgirl would wear. Cowgirl. There was only one place I had seen that word recently. *Seduce Edward with a striptease and then ride him cowgirl*

I swallowed. *Well, I was wondering when this conversation was going to happen.* "Bella-"

She pressed three fingers against my lips. "Stripping and riding now. Talking later."

Hell yes!

She scooted down my body, licking the length of my cock and kissing it on her way down, before sliding off the bed and standing before me. *I am in so much trouble.*

I sat up to get a better view. *Mother of Christ.* I hadn't had the full effect with her sitting down. Somehow the chaps were sexier than any skirt would have been. They made her look taller and...powerful. *That's my wife! My wife, who's playing out a fantasy for me!*

Bella walked in a slow, seductive circle. I gasped when I saw that the chaps were assless as well. *We are so keeping those.* She ran her hands down her body, closing her eyes and biting her lip as she brushed over her breasts and mound. I felt my eyes darken in response and swallowed hard. Her hands smoothed back up to her breasts again, where she very slowly pulled down the zipper of her halter top, fully revealing the red satin bra underneath. Arching her back dramatically, she moved her arms behind her, allowing the halter top to slide off of her shoulders and to the floor. I was overcome with the desire to lick the long line from her breasts to her mouth. Readjusting her hat, she walked towards the bed and rested her hands against the mattress, causing her breasts to fall forward. She looked down at herself, then up to me, then smiled, and stepped back.

She is killing me with this confidence. God, she's sexy as hell.

She lifted one leg up and rested her boot against the edge of the bed, holding her leg open so that I could very easily see the dampness of the red satin between her legs. *How easy it would be to rip that open and bury myself in there. I bet she wouldn't mind.* Her soft giggle recaptured my attention, and I knew I had been caught ogling her crotch. One by one, Bella untied the fastenings holding the leg of the pants together, slowly revealing more and more of her soft leg skin. When that leg was all the way loose, Bella changed legs and began the process again on the other leg, drawing out the sweet agony of the striptease. She walked away from the bed altogether then, with her back to me, she unzipped the front and the pants fell to the floor, exposing her ass, and the fact that she was wearing a thong, to me.

"God, Bella," I moaned, barely realizing that I had spoken. I reached down and grabbed my cock, lightly stroking it to try to ease some of the pressure. Her eyes flickered to my hand and she licked her lips.

She turned back to me and stretched her arms up above her, elongating her body and just making her look fucking hot. One by one she grabbed the arm cuffs and let them drop to her side.

Then she walked back to the foot of the bed and crawled back up. With one finger she pushed against my chest, silently commanding to lie back down. *Yes, ma'am!* She settled herself over my erection and with her

hands on my chest proceeded to rub the wet satin back and forth along my hard length. I groaned and pushed up into her, unable to rein in my body's natural sexual instincts. I was so happy to find the more I was with her, the more I could deal with my bloodlust and moderate my strength. Although the need to bite upon orgasm remained intense when I was inside her. I now had three faint overlapping scars on my upper bicep from my own bites.

"Take my bra off, Edward," Bella rasped as she ground herself again. *Fuck me. Dominating Bella plus Bella getting off using my body is just so fucking hot.* I made quick work of the clasp and the bra fell down around Bella's wrists against my chest.

No longer able to restrain my hands, I reached to her and grabbed her hips gently, helping to grind her into me. She began whimpering nonstop, her eyes heavy lidded and her mouth open, inviting. *Come on, baby. Come on.* Remembering her love of my words, I encouraged her, "I want to watch your face when you come, Bella. Watching you above me is so fucking erotic. Damn you look so good."

"Oh Edward!"

"So good, Bella, so hot. Come for me, baby. Come for me and then ride my cock."

Her eyes flew open as her orgasm washed over her and she grunted into it. "Fuck!" she exclaimed as she fell against my chest panting. She began placing open-mouthed kisses wherever she could reach, then realizing her bra was still between us, she cast it aside and pushed herself up. "That was the stripping," she breathed, "now for the riding."

Where is she coming up with this shit? And, please, God, never let her stop!

She rose up to her knees. "Rip 'em. Go on. You know you want to."

You are playing with fire, little girl. Just wait....

But, she was right. I did want to. There was something about ripping clothing off of this woman that drove me fucking nuts. I pulled the shredded red satin to my face and inhaled. Bella leaned to the side and grabbed a condom laying on the far edge of the bed. She opened it and, looking at me - *Shy now? Holy shit!* - positioned it over my cock and rolled it down my length. I don't know why her doing that was so erotic but it just damn was. And she was still wearing that God damned hat!

We had never used this position before but I was absolutely panting for it now that it was about to happen. I wanted to caution her to go slow but I also didn't want her to feel I didn't trust her to be smart about this. Including our wedding night, we had had sex six times already, and never once had we done it without my voicing our need to go slow. *Keep your mouth shut, Cullen.* I took a deep breath as she centered herself over me.

Oh God.

I wanted her to go slow. And she went slow. And I lost my mind. By the time I was fully sheathed within her I was using every bit of restraint I had not to flip her over and plow into her. I closed my eyes, trying to get used to the sensation.

But Bella wasn't having that. "Edward, look at me." My eyes flew open and met hers. "I want to see you watching me fuck you."

Jesus fucking Christ! No wonder she likes to hear me talk so much.

"Yes," the word caught in my throat and I swallowed, "Yes, Bella. I want to watch you fuck me." She lifted her hips up, coming almost all the way to my tip, before slowly lowering herself back down. "Oh, God, Bella, ride me, baby."

After several minutes of slowly raising and lowering herself over me, she leaned forward and grabbed my wrists, pinning me to the bed. Her new position caused her hair to fall against my chest, adding yet another sensation to the mix. *One day she'll actually be able to hold me down.* I groaned, imagining all the things I intended to do to Bella once she was changed. Sex had given me a whole new way of thinking about her change, and while I still wished she would put it off, I was more easily swayed about the benefits these days.

Her forward position allowed me to move my hips up to meet her thrusts, and together we worked, small moans and soft grunts filling the air. She looked beautiful above me, sexy and womanly and fucking fulfilling my fantasy. *I love her. God I love her.*

"Oh, Bella. This feels so good. So good, baby. I'm not gonna last much longer. You're so damn tight this way."

She leaned all the way down and kiss me, then sat back up and released my left wrist. She reached up and pulled a pillow down, propping it against my left shoulder. Then she grabbed my wrist again and rasped, "Turn your head towards the pillow, Edward. And keep it there."

The pure acceptance in that act, those words, completely stunned me. A full moment passed before I had enough presence of mind to comply.

And then she slammed her hips down on me.

"Motherfucker!" I roared, completely taken off guard with my eyes diverted. But she didn't relent. Once more, then again, and again, and I was grunting and growling and she leaned forward and ground herself against me. My sounds clearly affected her, and I felt her body tightening around me.

"Come with me, Edward," she moaned in a high pitched voice. A rising scream began in her throat but then cut off as she bit into my neck and came hard, clenching and unclenching around my cock.

"Fuck, Bella!" I roared in response to her teeth and her orgasm. Mine followed, dizzyingly intense. But I was wound so tightly that I just couldn't be done with her.

As gently as I could in my state, I pushed her off of me and pulled off the condom. Then I grabbed another, scooped her up - knocking her hat off in the process - and flew with her out onto the terrace, stopping when we reached the railing.

She was gasping and trying to ask me questions but I was relentless. I turned her towards the railing, smiling darkly at the lightning flashing in the sky and the soft rolls of thunder, and pushed her to lean on it. "Spread your legs, Bella," I rasped, barely able to form words.

Then I dropped to my knees and without any hesitation buried my face in her pussy. She was sopping wet and sensitive. I plunged my nose into her hole and flicked my tongue eagerly over her clit. She was shaking at how intensely I was eating her and I had to help hold her up.

She whimpered over and over, "Oh my God, Edward. Oh my God."

I pulled away for just a moment. "The stripping and the riding were fucking excellent, Bella. So, why don't you talk now." Then I dove right back in.

"Can't...Edward...talk....when you're...*fuck!*"

Her legs were so weak by the time she came that she was literally sitting on my face and I fucking loved it...as shown by the rock hard erection I had for her once again.

"What do you say, Bella?" I rasped as I put on the condom, "Do you think this counts as Number 23? Maybe even Number 26?" I ground out as I entered her without notice.

She screamed in response. "Oh, yes, Edward! Oh God! Oh Edward! I...ungh...I know you can't give me everything you have, Edward, but...oh...please...please give me...everything you can. I need it, Edward."

Yes. You want it baby. So do I.

Fearing I would hurt her with my hands in this state, I once again leaned my arms around her and grasped the railing. She placed hers on top of mine and the feeling of togetherness she created with that gesture was simply complete.

It was fast. And it was hard. And it was fucking glorious.

"Bella...is this...are you okay?" I just had to check in with her. Despite how hard it would be to rein myself in.

"Yesss," she breathed between moans and grunts.

A peal of thunder cracked louder, directly above us, and Bella startled, thrusting herself back against me.

I growled loudly, the electricity in the air making my whole body feel alive.

"Ungh, I'm gonna come, Bella. I'm gonna fucking come!"

"Unnnh, your fucking mouth, Edward. Give it to me, baby. Come on." *My mouth?*

Ohohohoh I pulled my right arm from the railing and fell against Bella as my orgasm hit. I pinned my arm between our bodies and sunk my teeth into my palm just below my thumb. It hurt beyond words but allowed me to continue thrusting as wave after wave of cum shot out of me.

The rain started. It was falling gently on our bodies, but I couldn't move yet.

"Yes, Edward, I would say this counts for Number 23," Bella gasped out between still-fast breaths. "And Number 26 too."

I released my teeth from my hand and pulled out of her, then fell to my knees. She turned and mirrored my position, both of us sitting naked in the soft warm rain.

"So you're not mad?" Bella asked at the same exact time as I asked, "So you're not angry?"

Then we laughed, and laughed.

"I just wish you could have shared it with me, Bella," I began.

"Well, I kinda didn't on purpose. I mean, when I started it I would have been mortified for you to know about it. It was bad enough when I realized I wasn't the one who wrote...what you wrote." She smiled up at me, a blush coloring her flushed face. "But part of the point of doing it in the first place was to find a way to channel my lust, because I was going crazy for you, Edward, but I didn't want to pressure you anymore."

"I know, Bella, and I'm sorry that I made you feel that way. I was just so filled with fear. I would never want to do anything to hurt you, least of all hurt you just to give myself pleasure." I reached a hand up and stroked her cheek. "I'm sorry if you were embarrassed to see I'd found it. I promise I wasn't snooping. I found it accidentally when I was sitting against your bed one night while you were sleeping. And once I realized what it was, I just couldn't stop reading it even though I knew I should."

"I understand. And, I don't think I could put down a list of your fantasies if I found it either," she smiled. She stopped as something about my expression distracted her. "You don't...you don't have a...list of your own, do you, Edward?"

"No." Her shoulders dropped just a little. "Not written down, anyway."

"What?!" Her face lit up. "Edward has a list??" she mused to herself. "Oh my God! You have to share!"

"But not tonight, love," I said as the storm began to worsen. I rose and lifted her into my arms, then turned and walked back into the bedroom.

"Oh my God, do not even think you're not going to tell me, Edward!" she whined as she beat her fists against my chest, trying to get me to put her down.

I laughed and carried her into the bathroom, getting towels for us to dry off.

"It's late, Bella," I said matter-of-factly, now just teasing her to intensify her reaction.

"Edward Cullen!" She smacked my arm. "Spill!"

"Okay, I'll tell you one fantasy tonight," I finally said as we were each pulling on nightclothes.

She jumped and clapped her hands, looking up at me expectantly. "Okay, okay!" Just as I was about to speak, she stopped me. "But do not even try to say 'seduce you with a striptease and then ride you cowgirl'." She put her hands on her hips and glared at me, obviously having figured out from the look on my face that that was exactly what I had intended.

Damn she's good!

I sighed. "Okay. For real, then?"

"Duh," she replied.

I laughed. "Alright then. How about this one: I fantasize about having you against my bedroom door."

She bit her bottom lip and blushed furiously. "Um, yeah," she said shyly, causing me to laugh out loud.

I threw my arms around her and hugged her to me. "I love you, silly girl. You make my heart happy."

BPOV

We stayed on Isle Esme for eighteen days before it was time to return to Forks. Charlie thought Dartmouth's classes started the Tuesday after Labor Day, and I wanted a few days to spend with him before disappearing from his life, maybe forever.

Because I wanted to remember every last detail of this incredibly special time with Edward, I began a new page in my notebook just to keep track. Reading around a bunch of hatch marks, here's what it said:

19: the number of times we had sex (8 from behind-Edward really seems to like that; 8 were outside)

10: number of times Edward put his mouth on me

9: number of times I did it to Edward

27: the number of list items experienced

I didn't start counting these until the fifth day, but they were just as important as the physical stuff:

36: the number of times he really laughed

49: the number of times he told me he loved me

16: the number of times he referenced our future and my change in a completely accepting way

2: the number of days we stayed in bed all day just talking and holding one another (I loved those days)

Okay, I realize this doesn't give the best idea of our wonderful honeymoon, but I just haven't wanted to take time away from him to sit and write. Maybe I'll have time later. But I just want to make sure I remember how passionate we were, how much in love, how completely lost in each other we were for these eighteen days. It was incredible. It was everything. I wish it could have lasted forever. But I guess, really, it will.

~*~

Chapter 23: Goodbye

EPOV

In just nineteen short days, Bella had made me a completely new man. It started on our wedding day, when she gave herself to me and me alone for all eternity. Her actions that day made me feel I had worth, value, that I was bigger than what I became laying in that hospital bed in 1918. I was someone's *husband*. I was *Bella's husband*. I was a protector. And a provider. And a partner. I had so many more identities now, and they had absolutely nothing to do with the fact that I was also a vampire.

In the eighteen days after, Bella also made me a lover. Touch by touch, kiss by kiss, Bella coaxed me out of my shell with constant reassurance and never-ending understanding. She made me see that there didn't have to be a difference between the Victorian gentleman and the sexual being that both lived inside me. I could be both. She gave me confidence in my ability to control myself, acknowledged my vampiric needs and urges as if they were simply any normal consideration one lover might have to make for another's weakness or vulnerability, and made me realize that sex doesn't have to be serious. That laughing is okay, even desirable. That sex can be fun.

And good. Oh God has it been good. I simply couldn't get enough of her. I find it absolutely impossible to decide which has been my favorite experience so far. Perhaps it was the way she revealed her knowledge of my contribution to her list. And what she'd allowed me to do afterwards. I was just always left feeling I needed more. I never felt more like a seventeen year old than when I stood, ready to have her again, while she still lay panting beneath me from our previous time together.

Or maybe it was the day we went swimming in the lagoon with the waterfall, and she'd let me hold her under the falling spray, both my fingers and the pressure of the water bringing her repeatedly to her climax. Or maybe it was the morning I returned from hunting to find Bella naked on her knees waiting for me by the front door. She'd declared herself hungry and then opened her mouth, pointedly looking at my crotch when I didn't immediately understand the meaning of her actions. Or maybe it was our second time in the shower. Yes, that one was particularly good.

Of course, I knew this was one of her fantasies. And one of her earliest ones, if its placement at the beginning of the list was any indication. I hadn't really thought much about it the first time I'd taken her in the shower. But the second time, the shower had started out entirely innocent. We'd been out at the beach and simply needed to rinse the sand off of ourselves. We washed one another – I loved the feeling of her hands in my hair in any and every way – and spent a long time just touching and talking and being. Then I couldn't help myself, and I pushed her front into the wet tile wall and pressed my awakening erection into her behind as I kissed her shoulders.

Just then, the water started to cool and I pulled away. "Where are you going?" she'd asked.

I reached to shut off the water. "I think we've used up all the hot water," I'd replied.

She looked at me oddly for a moment and then bit her lip. Finally, she whispered, "Leave it."

I went to argue with her – I didn't want her getting chilled by the cold water. That was when it hit me. The water was cold. The marble tiles were cold. *I* was cold.

I used one of her now-famous lines on her. "Bella, do you have something to tell me?"

"No." She made a weak effort to distract me by wrapping her warm fist around my cock. Okay, it wasn't *weak*, because it was in fact distracting. But she fails to realize just how expansive my brain is and how many things it can process at one time.

In a flash I pressed against her, surrounding her in cold—my body against her back, the wall against her front, the water falling down around us. She was shivering, but the overwhelming scent of her arousal told me she wanted this.

I cupped a handful of the water and held it up to her mouth. "Drink," I ordered, my eyes blackening as I watched her mouth and throat work. "Do you like the cold, Bella? Does the cold water feel good?"

She whimpered and finally whispered her assent. "Why, Bella, why do you like it?" I'd already deduced the answer, of course, but desperately needed to hear it.

Her eyes seemed to darken as well. She wouldn't be cowed. "You know why," she finally managed.

I pressed my open mouth against her ear and flicked my tongue inside. "You're right. I do," I hissed. "But I want to hear you say it."

"Fuck, Edward," she moaned as she pushed her behind into my now aching erection.

"Is that an invitation, love?" I asked as I thrust myself against her several times.

"Yes! God, yes! Okay! Okay! I like the cold water because it feels like you!"

Fuck. Me. "Tell me more, Bella." My mind was spinning off the realization at how much she not only accepted my state of being, but fantasized about it. I wondered distractedly if she could really handle me 'playing vampire' with her before she was changed. If *I* could handle it. But then her voice tore me away from these thoughts.

"When...before...*shit*...," I could feel the heat of her blush, "...youknow," she finally blurted.

My mind took a split second to decipher the gibberish that had just come flying out of her mouth. Then it clicked: she used to use the cold water in her shower to get off. "Fuck, Bella," I grunted as I gave in to her, *my*, needs and slid into her wet heat from behind. "Now you have the real thing," I ground out, "and you can have it any time."

Yes, that one was quite good.

I sighed and looked over at Bella's sleeping form in the passenger seat. A man across the aisle from us in first class had a horrible cough and kept waking Bella up as she tried to sleep on the longest leg of our flight home. Now, as we sped back towards Forks, she was tired and more than a little stressed about how she was going to say good-bye to Charlie without actually saying good-bye. Honestly, I didn't know how to help her with this problem. I had never had the opportunity to say good-bye. As I sat and thought about it, I wasn't sure which was harder.

The slowing of the car and the sound of the tires crunching over the gravel driveway finally roused my love from her slumber. She pushed herself upright and wiped at the side of her mouth, then looked over at me and offered me a sleepy smile. "Hey."

"Hey yourself. We're home."

We're home. The full significance of that descended on me. "Bella, do you realize I don't have to give you back at the end of the day anymore? I get to have you with me every part of the day."

She smiled and laughed. "Oh my God, you're right. This whole marriage thing might be okay after all," she quipped, feigning nonchalance. She was biting her lip, trying to restrain a big goofy grin. I could hear her heart rate accelerating as she anticipated my reaction.

I purposely didn't make an audible one, and finally she couldn't resist peaking over at me.

Just to provoke a reaction I had made my face stern and just a tad scary, allowing my eyes to darken some in feigned anger. Once I had her attention, I growled, "You really shouldn't have said that."

Her heart rate spiked and in one smooth move I put the car in park, undid my seatbelt, launched over the center console, reclined her seat, and pinned her against it. Taking a long slow lick up her throat, I rasped in her ear, "Just 'okay,' Bella?" I pinched a nipple through her clothing and she gasped.

"Oh God," she moaned.

"God's not here right now, love. Just me. And what I want to know is, *just okay?*" I held my lips just above hers, lightly brushing her lips but never sinking in to give her the full satisfaction of a kiss.

"More than okay," she gasped out, "great."

"Just great, Bella?"

"Wonderful. Being married to you is wonderful," she murmured as I sucked and licked up her neck.

"Mmm. That's better. But still not enthusiastic as I'd like."

"Incredible. Amazing. Stupendous," she breathed as I ran my hand under her shirt and fondled her breasts. "God, Edward."

Then, as if nothing had happened, I leaned back and sat in my seat, reveling in the picture of her flushed, aroused, and growing more and more indignant by the second. "Two can play at the teasing game, love." I offered her my best smile, then popped out of the car and came around to her side to open her door.

She stood up and huffed, her hands straightening out her shirt, and finally I couldn't take it any longer and laughed. She placed her hands on her hips and looked up at me. She struggled for words for a moment, and then came out with, "Bad vampire!"

I restrained a laugh and pouted my bottom lip. I slowly pressed her body back into the side of the car. I kissed her cheeks, then her eyes, then her nose. "Don't be mad, love. I promise I'll make it up to you," I whispered.

"Hmph."

"Alright you two, break it up already!" Alice's voice interjected. "We've been waiting, like, forever to come out and see you."

Bella's face brightened and she and Alice hugged as the rest of my family trailed out of the house.

Everyone's thoughts ran along the same vein:

Alice: See Edward? I told you everything would be okay. How'd you like that cowgirl outfit? You should see what else I picked out for....

Jasper stood behind Alice as the girls hugged. *Congratulations, man. You have got to be the strongest vampire I know. Or maybe the 'baddest' is more appropriate?* I rolled my eyes at his obviously amused face. I knew it was too good to hope they hadn't heard Bella's frustrated scolding. I'd never live that down.

Carlisle's and Esme's thoughts were more subdued, expressing their pride in me and their happiness for us.

Rosalie smirked at me as she thought: *Remind me to thank you some time for getting married, Edward. Emmett's fixated on the idea that you two not show us up so he....* I had no interest in hearing the rest of that.

Emmett's thoughts were similar, though he was the only one to voice them out loud. "Hey," he bellowed, "my little boy's a man now," he pretend cried. He slapped me on the back as he laughed. When he got his turn to hug Bella, he looked her over once and said, "Look at that. You're still alive!" and then pulled her in tightly, hiding some of the blush that colored her face. I sucker punched him in the kidney, not *too* hard, and he whined, "Ow," then stepped away. "Damn, bro, getting laid is supposed to make you chill."

When the laugh came, it came from an expected place: Bella began laughing at Emmett's escapades, though the blush on her face further enflamed. I was dying to know what was running through her head. But then everyone else joined in, and the moment passed. I'd have to remind myself to get it out of her later.

We spent the rest of Wednesday evening talking with my family. Bella called Charlie to let him know we got back okay and to make arrangements to see him on Thursday. He was taking off a half day on Thursday and all day Friday to spend with Bella before we departed for 'school' on Saturday afternoon. Charlie believed that our semester began on Tuesday after Monday's Labor Day holiday. In actuality, we were departing for my family's home in Alaska.

As committed as I was to keeping my side of the bargain, I was scared of and sad about the purpose of that trip. Not because I didn't want Bella to be with me for all time, but because I wished she didn't have to give up her humanity to do it.

Bella slept in my old room in the main house Wednesday night as I needed to hunt. I was going to have to bite her soon; and I intended to keep myself gluttoned between now and then so that my bloodlust was as under control as possible. Bella didn't want to sleep in the cottage alone, and though Alice offered to stay

with her, Bella felt comfortable in my room and wanted to spend some time there before we departed. I held her as she fell asleep and then departed shortly after midnight.

In addition to hunting, my family spent the night talking about plans for the upcoming change. Changes, really, as there were so many looming on the horizon. Bella's change. The removal of the six of us 'kids' to Alaska. Carlisle and Esme were planning to come for the change itself and Bella's first few weeks as a newborn before returning to Forks. Carlisle had decided it would seem odd if the whole family left Forks at once. So he and Esme were planning to remain there until December and then, citing wanting to be nearer to their children who were all across the country at college, they would join us after Carlisle resigned. It would be a significant separation for my family.

The interesting thing about the time with my family, as we all sat on an outcropping of rocks not far from our house, is that somehow it felt like the dynamics amongst us had changed. Or maybe it was just me. But I no longer felt like the odd man out. I no longer felt alone in a crowd of people, as I had so many times before. I no longer felt like they pitied me or worried for me. I felt...equal, *normal*, for the first time in ninety years.

A thunderstorm erupted violently around five in the morning. Fresh blood running through our veins, the sexual tension became palpable and one by one the couples slipped off into the woods, mumbling various excuses. I rolled my eyes. My knee-jerk reaction was to sink into the resigned aloneness I had for so many years. But then I smiled to myself. I was feeling the effects of the blood and the storm myself. But I didn't have to stifle those feelings; I had someone to share them with.

Within moments I was home. Bella was sleeping restlessly because of the storm so I took the opportunity to take a quick shower. And then I joined her in bed. *Tonight we're hitting two birds with one stone.*

It only took a few minutes until she woke up. She turned into me and smiled. She sensed and felt my arousal immediately, but for a few minutes we kissed and touched tenderly. Then she excused herself for a human moment. *Perfect.*

I had already gotten out of bed when she emerged from the bathroom. The room was pitch dark except when flashes of lightening momentarily illuminated the night. Though I knew for her the effect of those flashes would be to further blind her as her eyes were plunged into blackness once again.

I watched her walk to the bed and climb back in, and then silently smiled when she felt around but didn't find my body. "Edward?"

"Yes?" I said quietly.

Her head spun to look in the direction of my voice, but by the time she did so, I was positioned on the far side of the room. "What are you doing?"

"Watching you," I replied evenly, and relished her intake of breath and pulse spike as her head whipped towards the new location of my voice in the room.

I knew the lightening would momentarily reveal my position and, when it did, I would simply move elsewhere with vampiric speed and stealth. Meanwhile I could see every move she made, every facial expression.

"How did you get over there?" she said quickly, voice full of surprise.

"I'm a vampire, Bella." I let the words hang in the air. "A *bad* vampire."

I bit my bottom lip to keep from chuckling when all at once she blushed brilliantly and the scent of her arousal flooded the room. *How responsive you are to me, my love.* I wasn't exactly sure what she had in mind when she included role playing vampire on her list, but this interpretation would have to do for now until I could coax her thoughts out of her later.

"Get off the bed, Bella, and stand." I watched as she did so slowly, her arms out, reaching for me. I moved positions before I spoke again, purposely keeping her off balance. "Now take your clothes off for me, Bella. Slowly, please."

I could hear her breathing becoming labored as she, as instructed, slowly removed her t-shirt, sleep shorts, and panties. She looked luminous cloaked in the dark.

My next movement placed me immediately behind her. Knowing she would jump, I wrapped my arms around her at the same time as I whispered into her ear, "You look absolutely mouthwatering, Bella."

"Oh my God, Edward," she started, but then she moaned when I pulled her back into my naked erection. I had never dressed after my shower. I ran open-mouthed kisses from her shoulder to her ear, pausing to suck somewhat harder on the soft spot behind her ear, marking her. Then I was gone again and she whimpered and stumbled a half step.

"Can you feel my eyes on you, Bella? Can you feel the weight of my stare on your breasts," I moved again, "your ass," I said from behind her, then moved to a new position a third time, "your sex?"

Each time I spoke, her body responded. She shifted, trying to find me in the dark, as if she was the compass and I was her true north. Her heart was thundering, the scent of adrenaline was now discernible. A shiver ran up her spine as I finished speaking. She was panting now.

I inhaled deeply, purposely letting her hear the noise of it. "You're an exquisite bouquet, Bella. I can smell that you're wet for me already. But how wet, I wonder. Show me, Bella. Touch yourself and hold your fingers up."

She swallowed thickly then lowered her hand to the junction of her thighs. A few seconds later she held up her hand, two fingers raised and visibly wet.

In an instant I stood in front of her, and it just so happened that the lightening flashed as I grasped her hand and began licking her fingers with long languid strokes. She swallowed a scream at the surprise of my appearance before her and my unexpected touch. "Are you okay with this, Bella?" I whispered, not willing to actually make her frightened of me.

She nodded, acting half mesmerized, before finally choking out a hushed, "Yes."

I released her hand and reached up to cup her neck. I found her pulse with my fingers and murmured, "What a lovely feeling, the blood rushing rhythmically through your veins." I leaned into her, replacing my fingers with my nose on her neck. I inhaled deeply. "What a lovely scent." I held my tongue firm and flicked it over her carotid artery. I knew I was playing a little with fire and when the smallest iota of an urge to

partake of her slipped through the wall in my brain, I fled from her, disappearing to a far corner of the room.

"Edward?" she half asked, half pleaded.

I let loose a soft rumbling growl and she gasped and jumped in my direction.

"You are the sweetest torture, Isabella Cullen."

She held out her arms in my direction, and I couldn't help but come to her. In less than a second we were in a heated embrace, pushing our bodies against one another, kissing roughly, hands groping everywhere.

I reached back to my nightstand and grabbed a condom from the drawer, then I walked her six paces until her back pressed into my bedroom door. She gasped and pulled momentarily away from our kiss. But I wouldn't relent. I kissed her again and again as I rolled on the condom. Murmuring around the edges of our kisses, I finally asked, "Mind if we pull one from my list, too?"

"Fuck no," she rasped after a moment, and the sound of the expletive on her tongue lit a spark that had been smoldering since the beginning of our little game.

Instantly I placed my hands on her ass and lifted her. I slid into her slickness effortlessly and we both groaned in satisfaction and need at the feeling.

I knew she liked my words but I couldn't manage more than grunts and growls as I drove into her as hard as I dared over and over and over again. She moaned and grunted loudly, then screamed my name as her orgasm rocked through her.

"*Fuck!*" I growled as my own release gripped me, my bicep once again taking the brunt of my teeth.

The gray light of the early morning became increasingly noticeable as we stood panting against my door. "Wow," Bella finally said, and we both chuckled. I reluctantly pulled out of her and let her down. She moved as if to stretch her back and I just caught her wince out of my peripheral vision.

"What is it?"

"Nothing. Really," she replied. "How about a shower? Or, oh, how about a bath?"

I'd just showered. But how could I resist?

Bella wasn't ready for light yet so, as she took care of filling the tub, I gathered some candles and brought them back to the bathroom. She was leaning over checking the water when I returned, and that's when I saw it: red marks down the length of her spine.

I flipped on the light and she hissed. "Edward!" She threw her hands over her eyes. "Too bright!"

All I could do was stare. *I hurt her.*

It wasn't the first time. After we'd arrived at Isle Esme, I'd seen a faint bruise on her left hip bone and knew immediately it had occurred the night in the cottage when I'd taken her from behind and she'd encouraged me to actually hold onto her. She'd caught me staring at it and followed my eyes, then spent twenty minutes convincing me – and her stable heart rate confirmed the truth of her words – that she hadn't felt any pain and didn't even know it was there. I knew human lovers could cause one another bruises from rough lovemaking, but still hated the thought of bringing her even the smallest discomfort. I struggled not to overreact and with her gentle reassurances was able to let it go.

The second time occurred one night when we were in bed making love and I held her hands above her head, my fist wrapped securely around both of her wrists. I held her through my climax, not realizing that I'd lost control of my grip a little and squeezed her too hard. She hadn't seemed to notice until I let go, and once again she bruised. She'd spent a half hour convincing me that those bruises had absolutely nothing to do with the fact that I was a vampire, that there were a variety of ways that a human man could have caused the same marks. And just the inference that a human man might have her that way fueled my possessive lust, and I forgot about the marks in the throes of another intense bout of lovemaking. Afterwards I wondered if that was her intention all along.

But those marks had never been as big as this, which ran down her spinal column and started just below her shoulder blades and continued to her waist. I had ground her spine into the door. Curious, I flew from the bathroom to the bedroom door. Sure enough, the door had stress fractures in it from my repeatedly thrusting Bella's body into the wood. "Idiot!"

"Edward?" Bella called. She came walking out of the bathroom and stood next to me as I fumed, glaring at the door. "What's the matter?"

Afraid something stupid would come out of my mouth if I spoke, I simply grabbed her arm and as gently as I could manage and dragged her back into the bathroom. I positioned her with her back to the mirror and handed her a hand mirror. After a moment she figured out what I wanted and looked at her reflection, at the red mark down her back.

She looked up at me, kindly, but warily. "I suspected there might be a mark," she stated honestly. "But I didn't suspect it until after. I didn't notice...during."

I huffed out a frustrated breath. "I hurt you," I finally whispered. "I'm so sorry."

She cupped her small hands around my face and pulled me down to her. "Edward, I made a promise to you that I would tell you if you were hurting me. And I've kept that promise, haven't I?" Reluctantly, I nodded. On four occasions during the honeymoon she'd had to warn me about the tightness of my grip or that I was placing too much weight on her. "Okay then. I still haven't broken that promise. I didn't realize this was happening. God, Edward, what happened out there was incredible, so intense. I loved it, Edward. This mark will go away."

"That doesn't make what happened any better."

"Perhaps, but I know what will. Come on." She took my hand and led me to the tub. "You first," she ordered, and I reluctantly stepped into the tub and sat down. She followed immediately, settling herself between my legs and leaning her back against my chest. "The hot water will soothe my muscles, and your cold chest will help my back. See? You're helping me, as only you can."

I sighed.

“Please, Edward?” she said in a small voice. “Please find a way to be okay, to forgive yourself. Because I do. In fact, I don’t even think there’s anything to forgive. And I don’t think I can make it through these two days if I’m worried about you too.”

In that moment, I knew I had to let it go. Because if I continued to concentrate on this admittedly minor physical pain, it was going to contribute to a more significant emotional pain for her. I placed small kisses on her shoulder, then urged her to shift back so she could lay her head down on me. “Your wish, love. I’m sorry.”

She grabbed my arms and wrapped them tighter around her, and then wrapped her arms around mine. “Thank you,” she whispered. The whole exchange left me marveling, for possibly the millionth time in the past year and a half, about what a remarkable woman Bella truly is.

We spent the morning with my family, and Emmett gleefully helped me hang a new door on my bedroom that Alice had waiting in the garage. Bella wisely made herself scarce for that particular home improvement project.

At noon, we left for Charlie’s, where I was dropping her for the next twenty-eight hours. I hated the thought of that much time away – although I knew I wouldn’t be able to stay away at night – but she needed this time with Charlie.

We parked and got out. I walked her into the house. I visited with them for about a half hour before Charlie suggested lunch at the diner and I made an excuse about having plans with my family. I shook Charlie’s hand, kissed Bella, and left her to her good-byes.

BPOV

I had a lot to accomplish in the next twenty-eight hours. I wanted to squeeze in every possible second of time with Charlie, not knowing when, or *if*, I would get to see him again. I had a project I needed to do for our time in Alaska. And I wanted to make Charlie a bunch of food that I could leave in his freezer.

That’s where I started. After lunch at the diner, Charlie took me to the grocery store. Then he sat at the kitchen table with me and we talked about random stuff while I worked making a half dozen dishes that could be frozen for future lunches and dinners. Charlie protested that he was a grown man and managed to feed himself before I came. But I knew he appreciated the gesture. In the end, there was enough in there for several weeks, and that made leaving feel just a little bit better.

Around four Charlie yawned, and I encouraged him to take a nap. We weren’t going to dinner until seven, and there was time. He refused, saying he’d rather just relax in front of a game for a bit. But within twenty minutes he was sawing logs in his recliner in the living room. I smiled at the sight of him and ran upstairs to my room.

I spent the next two and a half hours working on my project. It would have been more poetic if I could have used the paper in the notebook that also held my list, but there was no good way for me to get the notebook out of the house without Edward noticing. So I booted up my computer and sat down. Typing would be faster anyway. And by the time I heard Charlie stumble into the bathroom I had forty-five sheets printed

out. I still had a ways to go. I slipped the papers into the top desk drawer under some files and got myself ready.

Charlie and I were doing something we hadn't done in a long time. We were going out for dinner and a movie. We drove into Port Angeles and ate at Bella Italia. Charlie would never know how special that restaurant was to me, of course, but I was glad for the chance to go there one more time and say a good-bye of sorts. There was no doubt what I would order. The mushroom ravioli, breadsticks, and Coke were every bit as good as I remembered. I had to swallow down the constricting feeling in my throat that signaled impending tears after I ate the last ravioli, realizing I'd never eat one here again (and maybe never again period). But luckily Charlie was too deep into a story about Jake and Billy, who we would be seeing tomorrow, to notice my almost breakdown.

We got home at 11:30 having had a great day together. At some point there were some things I wanted to say, despite the fact that the two of us weren't the kind of people who, well, said stuff. But today was just about spending time and enjoying one another's company.

We had gotten home earlier than I'd expected, and I'd told Edward I thought we'd be home around 12:30, leaving me almost an hour to work on my project some more. Forty-five minutes later – I didn't want to push it too close in case he came early – I had printed out another fifteen pages. *Just twelve more to go.* I was pleased. I could get those done in the morning before I had to get busy making lunch for Jake and Billy, who were due around 11:30.

Edward came at 12:25 just as I was climbing into bed. Before long our hands were fumbling against clothing and groping at one another. This day had been our greatest amount of time apart since the Alice-imposed separation before the wedding. I was feeling a little weird about fooling around with Edward while Charlie was across the hall.

That is, until Edward said, "God, I want you Bella. Right here in your little bed. Where I watched you lay so many nights. Wanting you. God how I wanted you. And now I have you and I want you even more."

"Oh God, Edward. I want you too. But I don't know if I can be quiet," I'd murmured as he kissed and sucked and licked at my neck.

"What if I told you this was on *my* list, Bella? Could you find it in you to be quiet then?"

Oh my freaking God! I was quickly finding that any mention of Edward's list turned my brain to mush. It was like a pavlovian response. And he must know it too, because he held those cards damn close to the cuff.

So we made love in my childhood bed, quietly, worshipfully, slowly, and then I fell asleep in my husband's arms.

Edward woke me up early in the morning to leave before Charlie arose. As groggy as I was, his departure left me time to finish my project before making breakfast. For an hour and a half I worked on the remaining pages. Then I made breakfast and ate with Charlie before coming upstairs to shower and dress. Charlie was on a work call when I got done, so I snuck in another half hour of arranging the printed pages in the order I wanted them and hole-punching them. I pulled an old binder out of my drawer and placed the pages in, pleased so far with the way this was turning out.

Despite Jake's wedding gift to us – the tribe's permission for the Cullens to change me – I was still nervous to see him and Billy. So I busied myself making a big lunch of salad, spaghetti and meatballs, and garlic bread.

When there was only twenty minutes left until they'd arrive, I sat down in the living room with Charlie. I figured the Blacks' arrival would create a forced ending point for this conversation, which I knew both of us would appreciate.

"Dad?" I finally asked, drawing his attention away from ESPN.

"Hey. Lunch smells good."

"Thanks."

"You know you really didn't have to cook. We could have ordered a pizza or gone out or something," he said, shutting off the TV.

"Yeah, I know. I didn't mind." I paused for a moment, willing the words out of my mouth. And then I just began, "Dad, I had some things I wanted to say...."

"Okay." He used his feet to push in the footrest of the recliner, then sat forward with his arms resting on his knees. "What's up, Bella?"

"Nothing, really. It's just...I know we're not really, like, touchy-feely kinds of people. But I really need you to know how glad I am that I came to live here. I love Mom so much, but you and I...well...."

"You and I were made from the same mold," he finished.

"Yeah."

"Though you got all your mother's best parts, Bells. Her good looks. Her willingness to speak her mind. Her bravery." It was both hard and good to hear Charlie say these things about me.

I nodded, biting my lip, unsure how to respond. I took a deep breath, searching for the words that would say everything I wanted to say. And then I found them: "You're a really good father, Dad. I need you to know I think that. I know I'll never live here again, and we won't see each other as much," *and maybe not at all*, "but I'll always remember these two years here and everything you did for me, and I'll always be grateful."

Charlie looked down at the floor, and then at the clock, and then at my shoes, before finally looking at me. His eyes were a little glassy. "You may be Edward's wife, Isabella Marie, but you were my daughter first. And you will always be my daughter. Which means this will always be your home. And I'll always be here for you. I'm so proud of you, of the woman you've become." His voice caught and he covered it with a cough.

And then we heard Jake's Rabbit pull into the driveway.

We both stood up and I walked over to him. "Are you going to be okay with me gone?"

"Absolutely, Bells. You don't have to worry about me. How 'bout you? You gonna be okay without your old man hangin' around and crampin' your style?"

I laughed and nodded. And then he surprised me by wrapping his arms around me and pulling me in for a hug. "Thanks, Bella. I'm really glad you came to live here, too. I love you."

"I love you too," I managed in a whisper, the tears finally falling.

Just then a knock sounded at the door and we broke apart, Charlie walking to get the door and me wiping furiously at my face. I walked into the kitchen and splashed some water on and had dried off just seconds before Jake walked in the room.

"Hey," I started, a little surprised by his entrance.

He looked me over for a second, before his old sunny grin emerged. "Hey."

We stood awkwardly for a moment. He was holding a six pack of Vitamin R and I reached out. "Want me to take that?"

"Huh?" He looked down. "Oh, no, I can put it in the fridge."

I turned and put the garlic bread into the oven while Jake put the beer away. Billy rolled into the room with Charlie a step behind. He gave me the same appraising once over that Jake had and I restrained myself from rolling my eyes. "Hi Billy."

"Hi Bella. Welcome home."

"Thanks. If you guys want to pull up to the table, I'll start setting everything out. The garlic bread will only take a couple minutes."

I was relieved when they all did as I suggested. I brought the food over and everyone dug in. The food provided us with five minutes of conversation topic before everyone was quiet again.

"So when are you leaving for...college, Bells?" Jake finally asked.

The lettuce I had been chewing stuck in my throat a little and I swallowed a gulp of water to wash it down. "Um, Saturday afternoon."

"Hmm," was Jake's only reply.

The rest of the lunch went on generally the same, although Billy and Charlie did finally break off into their own conversation about fishing and the Mariners and some vandalism that had occurred at the La Push Community Center.

I was getting a little frustrated at the awkwardness. Things had seemed so much better at the wedding. That gave me the idea of how to make this better. "So, Jake, how's Samantha?"

His big grin told me I was on the right track. "She's great," he said. Charlie had heard about her from Billy, but didn't know many details, so he jumped in too with questions. Suddenly a half an hour of lively conversation ensued about Jake, Samantha, and their future plans. She was currently visiting her family in Canada; Jake was going there this weekend to join her. I was sure the timing wasn't coincidental, but I kept that thought to myself.

Jake helped me clean up the lunch dishes while Charlie and Billy made their way back in front of the TV. After we were done, we walked out the back door and sat on the deck steps. I knew the conversation we needed to have couldn't happen in front of Charlie.

"So," he finally said, "things are...you're...I mean...."

"Things are really good, Jake. I'm happy."

He nodded. "Good. That's good."

"And you're happy, obviously," I smiled at him, grateful for his happiness with Samantha.

"Yeah. She's really great. I wish you could get to know her."

"Me too. Maybe some day."

"Yeah. Maybe," he said, not sounding like it was all that likely.

"Are you sure about...this, Bella?" When I looked in his eyes, I didn't see the old anger and hate. I saw a friend who was scared for me, concerned. And someone who maybe didn't understand a choice I was making.

"Yes. I am. This is my path Jake. I can feel it. This is what's right for me."

He just stared at me for a minute and sighed.

"Can I e-mail or call you, you know, after?"

His answer was quick and decisive when it came: "You better."

I smiled in relief and scooted towards him on the step. He reached out and put his arm around me and hugged me against him. I heard him make a snuffling noise and looked up at him. He was crinkling his nose. I rolled my eyes at him and he saw me. Then he smiled. "Can't help it. You'll see what I'm talking about."

And then I smiled. Because that was the first semi-accepting comment he'd made about me being a vampire: that once I was finally changed I'd understand why the wolves complained about the vampires stinking and vice versa.

"Hey," he said, pulling away. "Come with me. I almost forgot." He pulled me by the hand up off the step and we walked around the house to his car. He reached in and pulled out a hastily wrapped gift. "A going away present, from the pack," he smirked. "We just wanted you to know, you know, no hard feelings."

I took the bundle as if it might explode in my hands, then gingerly unwrapped it. It was a white t-shirt. I unfolded it and laughed out loud. In black lettering it said "Vampire Girl," and the 'I' in Girl was a stick figure drawing of a female vampire complete with fangs and a drop of red on the corner of the mouth. The back had a large number, like an athletic jersey. It read '08.

And then I started crying. I crumpled into Jake's chest. "Oh, Bells. It was just a joke."

I shook my head against him. "No, no, that's not...." He held me for a minute while I cried. And finally I pulled away. "I'm just...I'm gonna miss you is all. And everyone here."

"Yeah."

We stood awkwardly for a moment, and then I held the shirt out again. I turned the front towards him. "They don't have fangs, ya know."

He got a huge grin. "Yeah. I know." I rolled my eyes, then thought of our earlier conversation.

"This is gonna smell like wolves, isn't it?" I said, holding up the shirt again.

His grin got even wider. "Without a doubt." I smacked him, then had to shake the pain out of my hand. By then he was laughing out loud.

I felt good about the visit by the time they were gone. Jake and I had said our peace. And he was happy with Samantha. It was the most I could have ever hoped for where Jake was concerned.

Edward came at four o'clock to pick me up. He came in and visited with Charlie for about an hour and then I packed up a bag of last-minute things and after some promises to call, a final offer from Charlie to fly out to college with me, and some awkward hugs, we left. Charlie was working part of the night shift for a colleague who called in sick and so he needed to sleep beforehand. Since he was already scheduled to work tomorrow, the day we were leaving, there really wouldn't be a chance to see him again.

In a way that was good. I wasn't sure I could handle saying good-bye to him again anyway.

I showered when we got home because everyone kept wrinkling their nose around me. *Damn supernatural creatures. Everyone smells just fine to me.* That made me think of the shirt, and everyone laughed when I held it up to show them Jake's present. Emmett said, "But we don't have fangs," which made everyone laugh harder. The parody was just lost on the big guy. Rosalie confirmed that it absolutely reeked of wolf, so I threw it in the washing machine along with the clothes I had been wearing while with Jake.

Then Edward surprised me with a picnic basket and took me to the meadow. The ground was still damp from yesterday's morning thunderstorm so we triple folded the blanket and enjoyed the last hours of the day together in the place where we had first realized our love. Edward asked about my time with Charlie and Jake and listened as I poured out all of my feelings about my good-byes. A soft mist began to fall and we made our way home again. This time we spent the night in our cottage, though we weren't intimate. The day had been a little too draining for me to be in the mood, so Edward gave me what I most needed: affection, reassurance, comfort.

The vampires had apparently spent the night packing for our trip, because when I awoke in the morning to blueberry pancakes and bacon in bed, nothing remained to be done before we departed.

But I wasn't quite ready to leave.

"Do you think," I began, "do you think maybe we could all, I don't know, watch a movie or something? Before we go?" I knew it was a stupid request. But I really wanted one more memory of all of us together in this house. In this place where they could truly be themselves. In this place where they made me one of them in almost every way.

And so they humored me. We decided stupid humor was the most suited to the moment, so we watched *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* and were having so much fun that we moved on after that to *Office Space*. Then it was really time to go. I ate a quick sandwich for lunch and we left: Emmett, Rose, and Jasper in Emmett's Jeep, and me, Edward, and Alice in his Volvo. The Cullens had arranged for a car carrier to pick up Alice's Porsche, Rose's BMW, my Infiniti, and Edward's Vanquish and deliver them to Alaska. Carlisle and Esme were driving to SeaTac Airport and flying up. Since they weren't staying as long right now, they didn't need a separate car up there. And their arrival before us would allow them a day to get the house opened and set up before we arrived.

And so we set out on the two-day trip to Denali, Alaska, where I would finally experience the beginning of my forever.

~*~

Chapter 24: Countdown To A Change

BPOV

We arrived at the Cullen's house in Denali on September fifth. Well, 'house' was a loose word for the compound that really comprised the Cullen's place. Edward explained that the property had once operated as a fishing camp for tourists; you could hear the Sustina River rushing along in the distance as spring waters fed down from the many surrounding mountains.

The main house was a large two-story cabin with lots of interesting dormers and towers and covered porches. Over the years, similarly designed additions had been constructed, turning the house into a quirky but charming rambling piece of architecture that appeared both cozy and spacious at the same time. Tall green pines towered over the house on two sides and also provided a bucolic setting for the nearly dozen two-room cabins that dotted the property. Some distance from the house, a huge detached garage stood that would easily accommodate all of our vehicles, plus the small snow plow and several four wheelers and snowmobiles already stored there.

Inside the house was all warmth: large windows brought the forest inside; multiple floor-to-ceiling stone fireplaces blazed with welcoming fires; rich earth tones covered the walls and furniture; and each bedroom was actually a large suite ensuring as much privacy as possible for each of the couples in the family.

It felt good to be out of the car. Though we'd stopped frequently for me to eat or stretch or take care of my human moments, it had still been nearly forty hours in the car. So when Edward gave me the option, we decided to go for a walk as he gave me the ten-cent tour of our new home.

If I was honest with myself, saying my goodbyes had made me a little sad. But now that we were actually *in* Alaska, and it was no longer a far-off distant someday plan, I was starting to feel a little better. *Leaving* had been harder for me than *having left*. And the more we walked around the rustic buildings and through the tall pines, the more like myself I was beginning to feel.

"You seem better, my love," Edward said quietly, watching me from his caring topaz eyes.

I smiled. "I am." I glanced at him. "Sorry for—"

He spun us around, pulling me into his body as he settled back against a tree. "There's no need to apologize, Bella. I'm just worried about you."

I relaxed my body against his and leaned my head against his chest. He rested his chin on me and the moment resonated with the most intimacy we had been able to have in the past couple days.

"You know, love, there's no rush. Nothing says you have to do this now. And no one will question it if you want to postpone or change your mind."

I remained silent as he spoke, knowing he felt the need to make sure I knew I had options. But my decision was firm. "I hear what you're saying, Edward. And I appreciate it. But just because I'm a little nervous doesn't mean I don't want to do this." I lifted my head to look at him. "I'm sorry that all of this makes you nervous, though."

"Bella, I'm not nervous...exactly. You know I would do anything to keep you from pain and that I want you to have absolutely everything the world has to offer. I don't mean to dredge up issues we've resolved, but changing you violates both of those."

"Anything good is worth fighting for, Edward. Our whole relationship has lived that cliché. I don't mean to be flippant, but, so I have to fight through some pain to have what I want. I'm willing to do it. Because what I want—you, us—is worth it. Our future is everything I want in the world."

"Me too," he said as he nodded and sighed, a sound full of not only resignation but also acceptance. He leaned down and kissed me and I noted that he pressed his right hand firmly into the side of my neck. Through the pressure of his touch I began to feel my pulse thrum against his palm. Then I realized that was why he was touching me that way. I willed down my impulse to tear up. I didn't begrudge Edward his last encounters with my humanity.

"Do you mind if we head back? I think I'd like to take a shower and get out of these clothes."

"Of course. Would you like to walk or would you like me to run us back?"

"Walk, if you don't mind. I'm not in a hurry."

"Me neither."

The rest of the day was filled with learning my way around, catching up with the family members from whom we'd been separated for the past two days, and unpacking and readying the house for our stay.

That night in bed, Edward and I made love slowly, softly. His touch was so filled with reverence that I couldn't help but give into my tears. He kissed them away, both of us communicating with words things we found hard to say in that moment.

The next morning, I awoke in a better frame of mind, and the smile my improved mood brought to Edward's face only fueled the conviction and enthusiasm with which I'd decided to pursue my remaining human time.

As I finished breakfast, Carlisle asked Edward and me to join him in his study.

"So, Bella, I realize we have a few days, but I just thought we should touch base," Carlisle began.

"Okay." Edward and I sat on a leather couch in front of Carlisle's desk, and Edward grasped my hand when he heard the tremble in my voice.

"I assume you're still intent on beginning the transformation before your birthday."

"Yes. Actually, I'd kinda like it to be complete before my birthday."

I felt Edward shift next to me and I looked over at him. I caught the pain in his expression for just a split second before he smoothed the lines from his face. "It's just...I thought...."

"It's only a few days' difference," I justified, trying to explain the decision I'd come to in the car on the way here. I had originally planned on beginning the change on the 12th, the day before my birthday, but in the car had decided it made more sense to do it so that I wouldn't technically turn nineteen. That necessitated moving things up by two days. And, from the look on his face, Edward was feeling the loss of that time acutely.

He opened and closed his mouth, struggling to rein in his own needs so that I could have mine. And as I sat and watched my husband try to overcome the only thing he feared in the whole world – my death – I realized he needed this. This time with human me. More than I needed to not be nineteen. *And*, I tried to convince myself, *what's another few days and a number in the course of eternity?* I gulped down my old insecurity about our age difference and, when the images from the dream where I turned into Gran threatened to invade my mind's eye, I shoved them away, secure now in the knowledge that I would never grow old and gray while the love of my life was eternally young.

I squeezed Edward's hand and met his eyes. "Never mind. We'll do it on the twelfth, as we planned."

His eyes widened in surprise and relief and love. "Bella—"

"It's okay, Edward. I promise." I turned back to Carlisle, realizing at once that he'd been present for the exchange. Of course he had. "So, the twelfth, then."

Carlisle nodded. "I wanted to try using Morphine to see if it would lessen the pain of the experience." He looked at Edward. "We just need to get it in her veins in advance of your venom. So, when you're ready—"

Edward nodded, cutting Carlisle off. "I'll call you when she's ready for your assistance."

I watched for a moment while Carlisle and Edward shared a silent conversation that for some reason still made me blush. I'd have to ask Edward about it later.

Having settled on the details of my change, that left me six days of humanity. Each of the Cullens, in his or her own way, made efforts to pack in as many "important human experiences" as they could.

This began when, on the morning of the 6th, after our conversation with Carlisle, word of the confirmed date spread through the house. Alice came running up to me as I ate my lunch. "Now that there's no further debate on the date, we have to schedule you a spa appointment."

"Um, Alice—"

"No, Bella, trust me. Have you ever had a massage?"

"Well, no, but—"

"Then it's settled." Edward sat watching us in amusement and I glared at him, making his smile brighten. "It's something you should experience at least once," Alice continued. "Plus you should get your hair and nails done just how you want them – after all, this is forever – not to mention you should think about...." Here, Alice cut herself off and looked pointedly at Edward, "well, let's just say there are some things you might want to take care of."

Edward's mouth dropped open a little in surprise at something he heard in Alice's mind before he caught himself and made his expression neutral again.

Rosalie walked into the kitchen just then. "So, when are we doing this spa shindig anyway?"

I looked up at her, a little surprised in her interest. Things had been good with Rosalie but I could tell she was struggling hard to keep her opinions to herself now that the actuality of my change loomed.

"I'll call now and get it set up," Alice replied casually as she skipped out of the room.

"Thanks a million, there, Mr. Cullen. Some knight in shining armor you are," I grumped at Edward.

He leaned in close and kissed my cheek, then pressed his lips against my ear. "Hmm, so, I'm wondering, is that another role playing fantasy, Mrs. Cullen?"

I drew back from him and a half-formed "what?" escaped from my mouth before I got it. *Knight in shining armor*. All at once a stream of images flooded my mind that involved me and Edward looking an awful lot like Guinivere and Lancelot. And horse riding was involved somehow. And then Edward wasn't in medieval garb anymore at all, but in a cowboy outfit. You know, 'cause of the horse. And then....

Rosalie's disgusted grumble interrupted my daydreaming. "Oh, ick. TMI, people, TMI."

Edward chuckled as Rosalie left the kitchen and my face erupted in flames of embarrassment.

"I'll take that blush as a 'yes', love," he said with a cheeky grin. I just shook my head in defeat, because, really, what was there for me to say?

"So," Alice called as she danced back in, "it's all set up for the 10th. Girls' day at the spa. Okay?"

I sighed. "Okay, Alice."

For Jasper, who struggled the most among them against his bloodlust, his main concern was that I get as much time out doing public things as I could, with the idea that it would be a long time before I would be able to do anything like that again. Everyone thought that Jasper's idea was a good one, so after he suggested going to the movies that night, which was a Saturday, everyone took turns coming up with other ideas. On Sunday we went bowling in Fairbanks, which was Emmett's idea (*thank you very much Emmett*). Although, I suppose that was better than what he wanted to do – paintball – which I wasn't particularly interested in due to the fact that my opponents would be supernatural beings with perfect hearing and sight and probably equally perfect aims. Not to mention that Edward didn't particularly approve of an activity that involved shooting me. On Monday, we went to the mall courtesy of Alice, although Edward managed to negotiate me some serious time at a bookstore, which I loved. On Monday night, Jasper also shared with me and Edward the hot springs he and Alice had discovered years before and I reveled in the relaxing sensation of the warm fragrant water around my body while the chilled air hovered above. And, then, of course, Wednesday was spa day.

Everyone got in on the idea that I needed to eat – *as much as possible* – before my change. Each morning I'd come downstairs to stacks of pancakes, huge Belgian waffles, mounds of fresh fruit, bowls of fluffy scrambled eggs, or monster muffins. They'd all sit around watching, urging seconds on me.

On Sunday morning Emmett had whipped up the pancakes – a dozen pan-sized ones no less – and he looked so disappointed when I was only able to eat two and a half.

"Don't you like them?" he asked, and I laughed at the sight – Emmett was enormous and fierce-looking when he wanted to be. But just then he looked so damned earnest.

"Of course I like them, Emmett, but these are huge!" He still didn't look appeased. "Okay. Make you a deal. I'll eat one more if you eat one."

He blinked in surprised and then got a huge grin on his face.

"Ugh, Emmett, don't even think I'm holding your head while you puke it up later," Rosalie chided with a grin that said she knew there was no way he'd pass up the challenge.

"No problem, baby," he replied as he reached for a pancake. He slathered it with butter and syrup and I stared in wondrous horror at the amount of goop covering his plate. "Dig in," he said, raising his fork in a toast-like gesture.

So I grabbed another for myself and we all sat around laughing at Emmett as he choked down huge pieces of pancake while syrup dripped off his chin and he made faces like a big wad of peanut butter had gotten stuck in the back of his throat.

"So," I said as we took our last bites, "is watching a vampire throw up something I should add to my bucket list?"

Emmett barked a laugh and was going on about how that definitely *wasn't* something I was going to want to see when all of a sudden the two of us noticed how quiet everyone else had gotten. I started looking around at the others, a silly grin still half on my face, trying to figure out what had happened.

Finally my eyes settled on Edward, who was visibly upset. "Edward?"

He played it off and after a few minutes excused himself with some quiet words and a kiss on the forehead. One by one the others headed out to take care of the things they had on their personal agendas for the day, leaving just me and Alice in the kitchen putting away the dishes.

I waited, knowing she would know I was wondering what had happened.

As she closed the dishwasher door, she laid a soft hand on my forearm and met my eyes. "Bucket list," was all she said before she smiled gently and headed out of the room. "Oh," she called over her shoulder, "we'll probably leave for the bowling alley around three."

I nodded, mulling over the first part of her comment, before I finally understood just why Edward had been so upset. He was willing to accept the choice I was making. But he didn't appreciate my gallows humor. At all.

"Shit," I murmured as I threw the dish towel on the counter and headed upstairs. I knew just how I'd find him – sitting in the window seat in our room, elbows resting on drawn-up knees as he stared out the window. Even in the few short days we'd been at this house, I'd already recognized that as a pattern of his when he wanted to think.

So it was with great surprise that I walked in and found him standing in the center of the room waiting for me. From his shoulders down, every bit of his 6'2" frame was covered in black. Black leather pants covered a pair of black leather shitkickers on his feet, and a tight black t-shirt rested under a black leather duster than hung to his knees. Between the boots and the duster he easily appeared another few inches taller. My apology died in my throat as my brain and my female bits attempted to process the image – number thirty-fucking-four – that stood before me.

"Uh...I...."

"Close the door."

I hurried to comply, accidentally shutting it a little louder than I'd intended.

"Come to me."

I swallowed thickly and moved across the room, suddenly feeling exposed in the black yoga pants and long-sleeved shirt I was wearing. "Edward, I—"

"Quiet, please," he interrupted.

He ran his fingers down the front of my t-shirt as if he was considering it, and I knew for sure that he had read the new entries on my list. See, we had come up with an agreement. If I left my notebook in the drawer next to the bed, that meant he could read it. But if I removed it and put it somewhere else, then that meant I wasn't ready for him to see it yet. There was really no sense in hiding the list anymore; that ship had

already sailed. But I was free to set the pace at which he learned of anything new I might add. And currently it sat in my drawer.

I'd made the additions during the car ride to Denali. I remembered how his eyes flared when he saw me pull it out of my book bag. He was nearly salivating to see what I'd written, but I'd purposely angled my body so that my back was against my door and the notebook rested on my knees, which meant he could watch my face as I wrote – which he most studiously did – but couldn't see the words. A couple times he tried to lean forward to peak, and once he tackled me, trying to kiss me into a distraction during which I wasn't supposed to be noticing his effort to get the book out of my hands.

Here's what I'd added:

42) Have you (now that I knew he was reading it, I addressed my words to him) rip my clothes off with your teeth and/or hands

Something else was different about my entries too – they came complete with editorial comments, since, again, I knew he'd be reading them. After 42's entry, I wrote:

--inspired by you ripping my panties off during our honeymoon...

43) Biting

--hopefully this doesn't freak you out, but watching you bite yourself when, you know, is enough to make me, you know, all by itself

44) Be able to French kiss in *your* mouth

--your mouth being off limits is a huge freaking turn-on, Edward. Let me just say that it's going to be a good thing neither of us will need to breathe after I'm changed. (I made a little smiley face after that, and gave it fangs)

45) Toys?

I didn't offer any commentary there, because I didn't exactly have any specifics in mind. But it seemed a whole category filled with possibility.

46) Masturbate while you watch

--hehe

47) Outside under the lights of the aurora borealis

--I'm so excited to be able to see that up close!

48) You standing up holding me while we...

49) Whatever it is I need to do to make you growl and/or purr

It was at that point, thinking about the times during the honeymoon when our actions had elicited one or the other of those responses from him, that I noticed Edward's eyes darkening. And, when I thought about it, I realized working on the list was making me aroused, which he smelled. I promptly shoved the notebook back in my bag and squeaked for Alice to pull over at the next possible stop.

Her bemused "good idea" told me she had a pretty clear idea about what was going on in the backseat while she drove. If the bathroom of that damn Exxon hadn't been so disgusting, I would have gladly bent over the damn sink for Edward. When we saw how bad it was, we both burst out laughing – it was the only release we were going to get in that moment.

After we'd arrived at our new house, my bag sat on the floor next to the bed, and he felt the need to reassure me that he wouldn't invade my privacy. That was when he'd come up with the idea of the drawer.

And, coming back to Edward standing in front of me like a leathered god, I knew by the way he was petting my shirt, almost as if he regretted the damage that was about to be done to it, that he'd seen number 42.

"You are aware," he finally said, "of my dislike of those jokes." His voice was quiet and serious. Even. His fingers continued stroking the front of my shirt. My nipples hardened in response to the closeness of his touch.

"I'm sorry, Edward, I wasn't thinking."

He nodded. "Hmm. Perhaps there is a way to make it easier for you to remember," he said, almost nonchalantly.

Then he startled me by raising both hands to the top of my shirt and, gripping the neck, wrenched it apart down the middle. From collar to hem my shirt hung open in a ragged line of loose threads and torn material.

I gasped and felt my heart thundering in my chest as the cool air of the room met the skin of my chest and abdomen.

"Shall I punish you, Bella? Would that help you remember?" He stepped around me and pulled the shirt off my arms as if it was a coat. Then he leaned in against me and I felt the cool supple leather of the duster against my back and shoulders. A leather-clad arm reached around me and squeezed a breast. "What do you think, love?" He punctuated his question with a pinch to my nipple and I whimpered.

"Yes, Edward, yes."

"Good girl," he replied, coming back around to the front of me.

"Remove your bra and pants but leave your panties on," he commanded.

As I was doing so, I noticed the bar stool from downstairs that must've been positioned behind him when I came in the room. I wanted to ask about it but knew enough from having played the game before that I shouldn't talk.

He tossed a pillow on the floor. "On your knees," he ordered when I was done undressing. I groaned when he undid a panel in the front of his leathers that allowed his cock to fall free while keeping him otherwise dressed.

I was eager, so even as he ordered me to open my mouth was already waiting for him. I gripped his hips, the leather allowing me to gain purchase against his skin, and sucked and licked and swallowed around his hard length in a way that I hoped communicated how much I wanted this pleasure to replace whatever pain my thoughtless words had caused him.

"Mmm, Bella," he groaned, and the combination of the taste of him, hard and heavy in my mouth, along with his own incredible scent and the earthy scent of the leather, along with the need in his voice, all sent a rush of moisture into my panties. Knowing he'd smell it, I opened my legs wider and, as if on cue, I heard him inhale deeply and curse.

He'd felt me shift, and knew I'd done it on purpose. He came right back at me, knowing his command would further my arousal: "No hands."

I dropped my arms but didn't let up on the intense suctioning sensation I was generating with my mouth.

He rocked his hips against me three times, then pulled away. "Enough." He tucked himself back into his leathers. "Rise." I did. Then he retrieved my destroyed shirt off the ground and ripped one of the long sleeves off of it like he was tearing a piece of paper. He walked back to me and, winking a reassurance before he cut off my sight, lifted the fabric around my head and tied it into a blindfold. "Take two steps forward," he said as he guided me with his hands on my hips. I felt the cool wood of the bar stool against my thighs. "Bend over and grab onto the legs."

My stomach settled against the soft padded leather of the seat as my hands found the legs on the far side and I adjusted my position to get comfortable. I felt incredibly exposed like this, which I knew was the point.

I heard Edward moving around the room, the leather brushing against itself as he walked, and then he was near me again and the sound of fabric ripping sounded loud in my ears.

Soon, my shirt held me to the bar stool in four places, and while I wouldn't say it was altogether comfortable, I noted that he had wrapped my wrists and ankles in such a way as to place layers of cloth between my skin and the wood of the bar stool, thereby offering some extra padding where I was bound.

He placed several soft kisses across my lower back. Then I felt a tug at my panties and heard them rip, the material pulling against my hips until it fell loose. My imagination was on fire trying to figure out whether his teeth or his hands had been responsible.

When the first strike came it surprised a scream out of me because I hadn't expected it – or, at least, I did kinda expect it given my position, but I just hadn't been able to hear or see anything that led me to expect it just then. My surprise was also because of what, after a few seconds, I realized had landed with a smack across my raised ass: my notebook.

Edward. Was. Spanking. Me. With. My. List.

"You think I don't want your tongue in my mouth, Bella?" *Smack*. "You think I don't want to bury my teeth in you every time I come?" *Smack*. "You think I don't want *your* teeth buried in *me*?" *Smack*.

I moaned and whimpered as the notebook came down on my rear and thighs. Oddly, I found that it didn't hurt nearly as much as I wanted it to, and he seemed to purposely bend the book so that the spiral ring didn't touch my skin. But it made a satisfying noise as it hit me.

"You know why I wanted to do this?" *Smack*. "Now? Why I wanted to spank you? Because of the lovely shade of red," *smack*, "your skin turns as your blood rushes to the surface. You see," *smack*, "this is a human experience that *I* wanted before you're changed. Not that I won't spank you once that happens – because trust me, I will." And then he leaned down to my ear. "And I won't have to hold back then either, love," he hissed as he stroked my cheekbone. He stood back up.

I heard a soft thud behind me and then felt Edward's cold hands on my now warm ass. He pulled my tender skin apart with his fingers and I screamed again when I felt him lick and slurp up the juices gathering between my thighs. "Fuck, Bella," he groaned.

I tried to push against him and grunted my frustration. The bindings had me completely immobilized – *fucking number 38* – but he seemed to read my body's signals and he sucked and licked and rubbed against me until I was sure that, right now, or any minute, or, *oh God please don't stop doing that*, I would come.

And then he stopped. He was gone. I whined in frustration and turned my head, trying to use my ears to compensate for my lost sight but then remembered how silent he'd been as he'd played vampire in his room. I hadn't been able to hear him then, either, and I wasn't even blindfolded that time.

"Edward, please," I finally whimpered.

"What's wrong, baby?" he cooed, his voice revealing that he'd been kneeling next to me. I turned my head in the direction of his voice and felt a cool exhale against my lips. "It wouldn't be punishment if I let you come right away, now would it?" I opened my mouth to protest but he continued on. "Now, stick out your tongue and clean my face. You made a mess of me, love."

His breath on my face gave me a chill and I moaned as I tasted myself on his sweet skin. I couldn't see what I was licking, of course, but he seemed to guide me with movements of his head. Then I heard a hiss and a growl and when I went to lick again my tongue couldn't find him. "Edward?"

"One moment, please, Bella," he ground out from somewhere far away.

I startled a little when his cold hand stroked the length of my spine a few minutes later. "So beautiful. You look glorious bound there, open for me."

"Are you okay, Edward?"

"Yes. More than okay. Because..." his hand left my spine and I felt him fumbling immediately behind me, "...because I'm going to take you now." He stroked the head of his erection against my wet opening, delaying the fulfillment of his words. "You're completely at my mercy right now, Bella. That makes me so fucking hard. And you like it, don't you?"

"Yes, Edward. God, yes." His words, my need, the position – all were starting to make me feel a little dizzy.

With no further prologue, Edward penetrated me. I felt his balls slap against me and I moaned his name. Again and again he worked himself inside me and his flesh met mine in a way that set me on fire. As his pace quickened I felt his cold forearms settle against my sides and realized he was holding onto the stool to provide him the leverage he needed.

"Edward...*unh*...hold *me*, use *me*. Please."

"I...can't, Bella...I can't...oh God."

"God, Edward, I can't wait until you can pull my fucking hair."

"You're not...gonna know what hit you when I can."

I made a noise that was half scream and half strangled chuckle. "Neither...neither are you."

He groaned and moved a hand under my hip so that I was hitting his fingers on each thrust.

"Come on my fingers, Bella. Come on my cock," he hissed, his voice tight.

"I...I...oh...." Then all conscious thought fled my brain as my orgasm hit and I screamed his name and my whole body tensed around the stool before dissolving into a pool of boneless flesh.

"Oh God, Bella...oh God...fuck I'm coming," he groaned. He pumped through it and I felt him twitching inside my body, over and over.

He pulled out of me and in four quick flicks of his fingers the strips of shirt fell away from my wrists and ankles. He picked me up off the stool like I was a doll and gently carried me over to the bed. He rubbed each of places where I had been bound. As lucidity returned I realized he was still fully clothed.

I reached up with one liquid arm and cupped his cheek in my hand. "I really am sorry, Edward. I shouldn't have been so thoughtless."

He turned his face into my hand and pressed a kiss to my palm. "I know, Bella. And I don't mean to be so sensitive. I'm just so damned nervous...."

He didn't continue and I watched him for a moment. "About what?" I finally asked when he didn't go on.

"About everything. About biting you...about hurting you...about the pain you'll go through...about the possibility of you regretting it...about you not realizing all that you'll have to give up or just how long eternity truly is...."

I reached my other hand up and took his face in my palms. "Kiss me, Edward."

His leather shifted as he leaned down and pressed a soft open-mouthed kiss on my lips.

"I'm holding everything that is important to me in the world in my hands." I brushed my fingers over his cheekbones to drive home the point. "I don't know everything, Edward, but I know that. And I could never regret any decision that would lead me to you. I would never regret *you*."

He leaned his forehead against mine and for some amount of time we laid there like that. Finally he pulled back. "Thank you, by the way, for trusting me." He nodded his head over to the stool, which I noticed had tears in the padded top where his thumbs had been.

"With my life, Edward. Always," I replied as I dropped my fingers down to the tear I noticed in the shoulder of his duster. He grabbed my hand before I could probe the opening.

"There's some venom there, love. I don't want it to get on you." He brought my fingers to his mouth and kissed them.

That made me remember something I had been wondering about. "Um, can I ask you a question?"

"Of course," he replied as he reached out a hand and stroked the sweaty hair back from my face.

"When, um, when I was...well...licking....?"

"Ah. You want to know why I fled?"

"Yeah."

He sighed and searched my eyes. "I wasn't thinking for a moment and opened my mouth. You licked my teeth."

My heart rate responded at the thought.

"Where my front teeth meet my gums," he offered.

"Did...I mean...was it uncomfortable?"

He closed his eyes for a moment and then shook his head. "No," he said as he looked at me again, "just the opposite."

I couldn't help glancing at his mouth as he said this. "It felt good then?"

"Very."

"Like...how good?" I whispered, now absolutely fixated on his mouth as it hovered above me.

"My teeth are...very sensitive, Bella."

I swallowed, my body responding to this revelation. I shifted my thighs and I saw his eyes flicker down my body and then come back up.

Ideas were forming in my head then, ideas I so desperately wanted to try but didn't think he'd ever go for.

"What are you thinking? I can almost feel your mind going," he smiled.

"I'm thinking...I'm thinking I'd like to touch your teeth." I rushed on, "I know I probably can't, but I'd promise to stay away from the edges and keep my touch in the same place, where your teeth meet your gums."

He opened and closed his mouth once, and his lack of an immediate 'no' gave me hope.

"Please?" I whispered. "I promise I won't make you regret it. I promise *you* can trust *me*."

He chewed on his lip for a minute and I reached a tentative finger towards his face. Echoing his earlier command, I whispered, "Open."

EPOV

I shouldn't let her do this. I shouldn't let her do this.

But then I went and opened my mouth, drawing my top lip back in a way I knew could make me look fierce, aggressive. But if she perceived those things, it didn't show. In fact, the sight of my teeth seemed to heighten her arousal.

I kept my teeth clenched tightly together, and sucked in a breath when her finger made contact. I jerked my head back.

She gasped and bit her bottom lip, then drew her finger away. I grabbed her hand and brought it back. "It's just...a little surprising. Do it again," I whispered.

She smiled and gently made contact again, then rubbed her finger gingerly back and forth across my front teeth and I made a sound she'd described before as a purr. My erection responded immediately.

She withdrew her hand and shifted up onto her elbow, bringing her face close to mine. "Don't move," she said as she wove her hand behind my head. "I want to try something." She leaned in then met my eyes. "Trust me."

And then, so very slowly and so very cautiously, she stroked my top row of teeth with her tongue. *Christ.* I growled and flew across the room, so filled had I become with the need to bite.

"I'm sorry," she gasped.

"No. I liked it. I loved it, Bella. It was just too much."

"Come to me," she said gently with her hand extended, once again echoing my words.

"You look amazing in that, by the way," she said with a smile as I climbed back up on the bed.

"Hmm...I don't know...." The leather coat and boots I felt okay about, but the pants....

"No, Edward, trust me. That outfit is a panty-dropper." She blushed intensely and slapped her hand over her mouth.

I laughed out loud. "Well, in that case, love, I'll never take it off."

She smacked me and pulled me down to her. "I love you, Edward. So much."

"As I do you," I replied as I pressed kisses on top of her head and laid down next to her.

"I want you again, Edward," she whispered around our kisses as she climbed up on top of me. "How do you...," she began as she looked down at the flap in my leathers.

"Allow me," I rasped, and I groaned as my knuckles grazed the moisture coating the skin between her legs. I pulled my erection out and was about to slip into her when I remembered the condom. She leaned over and retrieved one from the nightstand and as soon as possible I was inside my Bella. This time our lovemaking was slow and intimate and our lips barely left one another the whole time. Afterwards Bella slept in my arms until Alice's thoughts told me we had only forty minutes til we were departing for bowling of all things.

I wasn't really complaining about that though. The movies, the bowling, the girls' trip to the spa – I appreciated my family's contributions to helping her make the most of her remaining human days. When they weren't coming up with activities for her, which she was being a great sport about, they were making her food. Esme, in particular, was going out of her way to offer Bella a variety of culinary delights. And Bella probably hadn't eaten so much at one time in her life.

God time is passing too damn fast, I muttered to myself as the girls left for the spa on Wednesday morning. Intellectually, I knew what was going to happen on Friday. I was going to bite Bella. But when I tried to visualize it, when I tried to imagine *actually doing it*, my brain just didn't seem to be able to process the information.

Knowing I'd be sitting around trapped in my head while Bella was out with Alice, Esme, and Rosalie, the guys took me hunting. They were quiet, apparently not knowing what to say to ease the discomfort they all thought I felt. And they were right.

"Edward," Jasper began after we'd taken down a herd of moose, "would it help you to know that I'm not sensing any regret or hesitation from her? Not even much fear, really. She is entirely committed to you and to doing this."

"It does help, so thanks. I'm just...it's just that I've spent two years finding every way imaginable to avoid biting her, and now that's what I'm supposed to do. It's...weird. And then...then I think about Rosalie and Esme, and how much they wanted children to be a part of their lives...."

"It's true," Emmett interrupted, "the kid thing is a big part of Rosalie's disapproval of Bella's choice. But you know what, Edward? Bella has never struck me as the maternal kind. Well, that's not really what I mean – Bella would be a great mother, just look how she takes care of everyone around her. But, I mean, I think the fact that she had to take care of her parents and spent so much time taking care of herself fulfilled that part of her. I don't know, I'm not making any sense."

"I disagree, Emmett," Carlisle followed. "I think you're making perfect sense. And, Edward, biting her for the specific purpose of changing her is worlds' different from biting her to drain and kill her. She wants this. The two of you decided together that this was what was right for both of you. So it's not you giving in to your dark side. It's you doing something incredibly difficult for the woman you love, and who loves you."

I sighed and nodded, grateful for the pep talk. It helped.

When the girls returned that evening, I was desperately in the mood for something fun. I had it all set up when Bella returned.

"Hungry, love?" I asked when she walked through our bedroom door.

"Hey, Edward, I'm—" she stopped when she took in my appearance. She coughed out a laugh as she walked across the room. "What's all this?"

I flashed her the smile I knew she loved. "It's number thirty-three, of course." I was laying on my side on our bed naked, my head propped up on my hand. My erection pointed out at her like a divining rod. "There's chocolate and vanilla ice cream, chocolate sauce, cherries, and, of course, whipped cream in a can. All the fixins for an ice cream sundae. Except no bowl, that is."

She bit her bottom lip and giggled, setting her coat and bag down on the floor.

"Your hair looks lovely, by the way. Did you have fun?"

"Yeah, it was nice. I liked it more than I thought I would," she replied as she stripped off her jeans and top. "I hope you don't mind," she joked as she tossed her undergarments aside.

"What kind of question is that, silly girl," I said as I reached out and stroked her bare hip. I sucked in a breath when she turned to face me, getting to see for the first time the changes that had been made *down there*. "This is nice," I rasped as my fingers reached out and stroked her.

She blushed and watched me look at her. After a moment I grasped her hand and pulled her down on the bed next to me.

"You know," she chuckled as she ran her finger into the chocolate and brought the scoop to her mouth, "I haven't had any dinner yet."

"Well, that's okay. You can have dessert first tonight." She laughed and the sound was just what I needed. "So, consider me at your disposal," I joked as I lay back on the bed. "It's been a long time since I had ice cream. Remind me how to make a sundae."

"Oh, well, I'm happy to be your instructor," she quipped as she reached out for the container of chocolate. She got a scoop and held it over my stomach, watching to see if I would have a reaction, then she let it drop onto my skin. The cold registered but it wasn't bad, and I was more focused on the minute I would get to see her eat it off of me. "It's not too cold?" she asked.

"No, Bella, not at all. I'm actually finding it to be incredibly hot."

The comment had caused the reaction I'd hoped – a blush flooded her face and she shook her head. She set the chocolate down and grabbed the vanilla, and before long a scoop of that fell on my chest. "Multiple flavors are important in a sundae," she began her instruction. "If we had a banana, we could make a banana split," she mused, "although perhaps we can make do." She ran the cold scoop down my hard length and giggled as I sucked in a breath – clearly she'd gotten the reaction *she'd* hoped for.

"Now," she continued, "toppings are very important for turning mere ice cream into an actual sundae." She took the bottle of chocolate sauce and turned it upside down. I chuckled at her conservative application. She squirted some immediately on the ice cream and then, looking at my face first, moved off target and covered one nipple as well. "And, whipped cream is an absolute requirement for any sundae, particularly an *Edward* ice cream sundae." She smiled then met my eyes. "Plus, I've always wanted to suck whipped cream off your cock." And, with that, she shook the can, twisted her body and sprayed a solid line of the fluffy confection along my entire length before spraying it on the ice cream with less precision than she had the chocolate sauce.

I reveled in the sound of her elevated heart rate and respiration. The scent of her arousal was pronounced and mixed with the floral scent of whatever hair products they'd used at the salon.

"Now," she said as she sat the can back down, "for me personally, cherries are a big no-no. First of all, they turn the whipped cream all pinkish-red and, second of all, they overpower the taste of the ice cream, in my opinion. So, I hope you're not disappointed, but no cherries on this sundae."

"I was hoping you would provide the cherry on top," I rasped, incredibly turned on by this whole display, by the very fact that she was going to eat off of me.

Her blush was furious and she looked down at her lap to hide an embarrassed grin. "Okay, moving right along," she finally laughed. She started to lean over then stopped herself. "Hold that thought!" She hopped off the bed and strolled over to her dresser, and after a minute she twisted her hair up behind her head. Then she climbed back up and without any build-up whatsoever licked the line of whipped cream off my cock.

More! I gasped and tensed, wanting more so damn bad. With a devious glint in her eye she grabbed the whipped cream again and made a second application. This time she didn't lick it off. Instead, she held the base of my cock in her hand and lowered her open mouth over my length, sucking the whipped cream off as she went. It was noisy and I could feel her mouth and throat working around me and it was so fucking intense. I groaned and I felt her smile around my cock, which only served to drive me further insane.

When her mouth had cleaned me off there, she settled her body between my legs and lay so that her mouth was over the ice cream on my abdomen, a position that resulted in her breasts surrounding my cock, a fact not at all lost on her as she wiggled against me. I stared at her in fascination as she opened her mouth and lowered her lips around the chocolate ice cream. She giggled when whipped cream got on her nose and cheek.

Out of nowhere another set of images flashed through my head: Bella, changed, in the woods, leaning over a moose, her teeth buried in the animal's neck. Her hair would be wild from the speed of her running and when she was done feeding, she would pull away, a feral look in her eyes and her lips smeared with blood.

I couldn't help the growl that erupted from my throat. *Fuck I want her.*

"Eat. Fast," I ground out.

She shivered and smiled and began earnestly licking.

Every flash of her pink tongue. Every working of her throat muscles as she swallowed. Every bit of messy confection that got on her nose or cheeks or chin. Every little noise she made as she ate – including the little moans of pleasure. Every. One. Was. Driving. Me. Fucking. Insane.

“So good,” she rasped as she finished the chocolate.

I groaned and clenched my fists, willing myself not to grab her and flip her over so I could bury myself to the balls in her wet heat.

The scoop of vanilla was on my chest, and to get to it she wriggled herself up my body, settling my aching erection under her taut stomach. She let her legs fall to the outside of my thighs. I couldn’t avoid rocking my hips against her.

The vanilla scoop had been smaller, and she made quicker work of it. *Thank fuck*. But as she ate it she kept her eyes on mine the entire time.

Again, my fantasies shot through me. And I found myself wishing that white cream coating her lips was red blood. ‘Cause Jesus Christ if I wouldn’t come just thinking about licking blood off of her body.

“Edward?” she whispered.

I couldn’t answer. I simply seared my now-darkened eyes into hers.

“I’ve had enough.” Her voice was low, sultry.

“Yeah?” I managed.

“Yeah.”

Without warning, I did what I’d been wanting to do and flipped her over so that I was on top. She gasped out her surprise and I felt her heart thundering between our chests. “Well I haven’t.” I grabbed the condom I’d laid out next to us earlier and rolled it on, then detoured with my fingers long enough to ascertain...*fuck, she’s absolutely drenched for me*. I slid two fingers into her and pumped several times until she was writhing against my hand. I brought my hand back to my face. “A little dessert for me,” I murmured as I sucked my wet fingers into my mouth.

She whimpered. “Please, Edward.”

I pushed into her in one smooth stroke and we both cried out at the feeling.

“God I needed to be in you, Bella.”

She moaned in response and wrapped her legs around my hips as they rose and fell over her time and time again.

God did I want it to last. I was starting to view everything in ‘lasts’ now, which I knew was ridiculous. But there wouldn’t be too many more opportunities to lay with her as she was now – warm, face flushed with sweat, heart thundering against me, hot breath against my neck, human.

Fuck. It feels better and better every time I'm in her.

Her sounds were getting more urgent and her muscles were starting to tighten around me. I knew she was close. So when she began to speak, I was a little surprised.

"Ed...ward. Unngh. When...when it's time. Oh. I want...I want it to be like...like this. I want you to...bite me, Edward. I want...*oh God*...you to bite me when you come." And then she screamed my name as her body began clenching around me and her words made my teeth tingle with need and my body slammed into her as hard as I dared trying to milk every last ounce of pleasure out of her orgasm for her.

I couldn't think. I could only feel. *And Jesus Christ she feels like life and love and eternity.*

"Easy baby," she warned and I realized I was gripping up underneath her shoulder with too much force. But she was alternately stroking and pulling my hair, actions that said 'I want this, keep going' and 'I'm okay, you're okay.'

And then it was all too much and I drove into her one last time and turned my head away so that my teeth found my bicep as I grunted my release.

When I came back to my right mind I lifted my head up to look at her and her eyes were so filled with love for me. "I adore you, Edward," she said, cutting off the apology I was about to offer for holding her too hard. "Best ice cream sundae ever." She smiled.

I lowered my head to her shoulder and kissed the finger-shaped bruises that were appearing there. And then I lifted back up so I could see her again. "When it's time, Bella, I will do as you wish," I said quietly.

Tears rushed to her eyes. Despite the fact that we both needed showers now, I rolled us over so that I could hold her on my chest and use my fingers to wipe the slow tears that rolled unbidden down her cheeks.

We didn't leave the room that night. And the next morning Alice sat a tray of food outside our bedroom door with a silent *I know you want her all to yourself today. Let me know if I can bring you anything else.*

We spent Thursday cocooned in our room. The only time I separated from her was when Carlisle called me to discuss some last-minute logistics related to our plans for Friday. But, save for brainstorming ideas related to the administering of the morphine, there wasn't much to arrange.

I worshipped Bella as much as she could handle on Thursday. Not just with my body, but with my words. I read poetry to her. I sung to her. I told her stories of my favorite moments together with her. I repeated my wedding vows to her. And, when we just needed to be quiet and still, I held her, saying with my strong arms and smooth hands all that needed to be said.

She slept restlessly on Thursday night, which I regretted deeply as it would be her last night of sleep. When the black night turned a dim gray in the early morning, she opened her eyes and reached up and kissed me. "I have something for you," she rasped, her voice still thick with sleep. She pushed up off the bed and reached into her book bag by the bed.

Wordlessly she handed me a green package tied up with white curling ribbon. "What is this for, love?"

"It's for you. Open it."

I pushed myself into a sitting position and tore the paper away; it was a dark blue vinyl binder. I looked at her curiously and noticed how serious her expression was. Her heart revealed her nerves.

I carefully flipped the cover open. The title page read:

Dear Edward--

Because I love you

and I want you

and I want this

and I know you'll worry

and beat yourself up

and I don't want you to.

So read

and remember these words

my love and hopes and dreams for you and us

and memories of all that we've shared

and feel the truth of it all

and know that I'll return to you

just as soon as I can

and then I'll be yours forever

Love, Bella

My throat thick with her gesture, I went to turn the page and she stopped me. "You can start reading...after. There's a page for every hour. That's important, Edward. No reading ahead. This way I'll be able to talk to you while...I'm out, uh, under, whatever."

I set the book aside and pulled her into my chest, rocking us slowly as I pressed kisses into her hair. "I love you, Bella. Forever."

"I love you too, Edward," she replied, her tone warm and satisfied. "Make love to me?"

Not yet. Not yet! No!

"Yes," I replied.

Without sound we slowly removed each other's clothes. She settled on her back and opened her arms and legs to me and I lowered myself to her, covering her face and neck and chest with kisses. She stroked my hair and shoulders, moaning softly at my ministrations.

"I'm so ready for you," she whispered.

I made my way back up her body and kissed her languidly. And then I pushed into her, gently, slowly. It almost felt like that first time, not wanting to hurt her, not sure if I could really handle what I was about to do.

This time, there was nothing separating my skin from hers. I didn't have to worry about the potential harm the venom might cause her given what I was about to do. The significance of being fully connected to her felt like a weight on my heart – it both grounded me and sent me flying.

She moaned and clutched at my shoulders. "Oh, yes, Edward. Be with me."

I groaned as my full length was sheathed within her and held still for a moment.

"Edward, *please*."

She read my delaying tactic for what it was, so I began to move within her, driving us both towards the release that would unbind her from her human existence.

We moaned into each other's mouths as we kissed and whispered words of adoration. I ground my hips into her pubic bone, wanting her to know pleasure before I caused her pain. Finally she cried out, "Edward, oh, Edward," and her body came for me.

"Again, Bella, I need you to come again," I cried as I picked up my pace and thrust into her harder. I was gritting my teeth now, willing my own release away, almost overwrought with the need for her to get there again first. I worked myself against her, in her, over and over, and when she cried out again I couldn't hold back.

And time moved in slow motion.

I felt the muscles in my groin contract hard and felt the first wave of cum shoot from my body.

Then my instincts kicked in, and the need to bite hit me. Hard.

My head was almost programmed now to turn away from her. To find a piece of myself to satisfy the urge.

But this time, instead of turning right into my shoulder, I turned left, and found my face buried in the side of her neck.

I heard her moan. I felt her shift her face to the side, further opening herself up to me.

I registered my mouth opening.

And then I was pure instinct.

My teeth sunk through the sweet flesh.

Sucked.

Swallowed.

Warm.

Another pull.

Thick.

Sweet.

And another.

Rich.

And another.

So good.

Glorious.

Bella.

~*~

Chapter 25: The Book And The Change

EPOV

I sucked. Swallowed. Pulled again and again. What flowed over my tongue and down my throat was stunningly good. The sensation was exquisite...glorious...full of life.

It was...Bella.

Where a moment before, time had stilled. All of a sudden, it sped up.

Realization slammed into me and I unlocked my jaw. I was so horrified that I fought the instinct to swallow the blood in my mouth and it dribbled out and down my chin, falling into Bella's hair and onto the pillow.

Bella trembled and moaned and her eyes fluttered open and shut. "Bella?" I rasped.

“Edwa....”

Just then, the door flew open with a bang and then something – Emmett – crashed into me and tackled me roughly to the floor on the far side of the bed. I hissed and struggled. Not because he was keeping me from the blood, but because he was keeping me from my love. I was tight—in control of my bloodlust now—but my mind was racing so fast that I couldn’t get the words out of my mouth.

Others were there too, working around the bed.

“Get...off!” I finally managed. “I’m...okay!”

Emmett grunted and redoubled his grip. Alice’s voice saved me. “Let him up, Emmett. He’s okay now.”

Emmett appraised me with a frown, then looked back to Alice who nodded. He sprung off me, but stayed in a half-crouched position between me and the bed.

As I stood, a wad of fabric smacked me in the chest and I caught it instinctively. My pajama pants. *Right*. I yanked them on and stepped around Emmett, daring him with my eyes to stop me.

Fifteen seconds had elapsed since her blood had last crossed my lips.

“Carlisle?” I croaked as I gently climbed on the bed and grasped Bella’s hand. Tears streaked down her face and mumbled utterances that sometimes resembled my name sounded out of her quivering lips.

Carlisle’s words were fast, spare, mechanical. “I got it in her tibial and femoral arteries and into her brachial artery on the side opposite the bite. The common and internal carotids are gone, as we expected, but I’m fairly certain I was successful in using the external carotid on the opposing side”

I nodded. After Bella’s request that I bite her during lovemaking, Carlisle and I had strategized about how the administration of the morphine might still be possible. Carlisle theorized that if we could get inject enough in at least some places in advance of the venom, it would still do her some good. It was the best we could hope for; Bella was adamant that her change be a reflection of our love, and not just a medical procedure.

Someone had thoughtfully draped the sheet across Bella’s body, granting her dignity as we stood vigil over her.

Even as the morphine quieted her shaking body, small moans and whimpers rattled her from her throat.

As Carlisle measured her pulse and listened through his stethoscope, I pressed my lips to her knuckles. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry,” I whispered.

A hand settled on my shoulder and I flinched. “She’s going to be okay, Edward. I promise.”

Alice’s voice did little to soothe the intense guilt I felt in that moment. *How selfish of me! To have ever talked to her! To have wanted her! To have done...this...to her!*

"Edward, don't go there," Jasper ordered through a strained voice. "Mourning the loss of her human life is one thing. Regretting what has transpired here is another. It's worthless. And it's wrong. She wanted this, Edward – she *wants* this. You better fucking get it together and be there for her. She needs you."

I groaned, closed my eyes, and shook my head back and forth. Not against his words. Against the dark place my mind was trying to take me to. *Be there for her. Be there for her. Fuck, this is not about me.*

That was the resolve I needed.

I opened my eyes, threw a nod of thanks to Jasper, and looked down at Bella's still form where she lay at my knees.

"All is how it should be, Edward," Carlisle's said, "now we wait."

The family sat and stood around the bed, seven of the world's most powerful creatures made weak and vulnerable by the worry and anxiety we all felt for Bella.

The room brightened as the sun rose behind the cloud-covered sky. The light brought two things into sharp relief. First, subtle changes were already reshaping Bella's body – most notably, her skin appeared paler and more luminescent. Second, the blood I'd spewed earlier was like a giant gash, red and jagged in her hair, on her shoulder, and against the bedding. Though I'd caused both, I could only do something now about one of those.

Without removing my eyes from Bella, I spoke softly. "I want to thank each of you for...this morning. If it wouldn't be too much to ask, would you please leave for a while? I would like to bathe and dress my wife."

Would you like some help, Edward? Alice thought quietly, hopefully.

I shook my head. I needed to take care of her. Me. I needed to do these things for her.

Each member of my family offered gentle words or thoughts of encouragement and assurance as they filed out. Finally, it was just me and Bella.

Hating to leave her but having no choice, I raced to the bathroom. With a frown, I rinsed out the empty plastic trashcan and filled it with warm water, then grabbed some towels, washcloths, and clean sheets.

With reverence, I removed the stained sheet from her body and stroked her sweat-stained body with a cloth soaked in the warm water. I was gentle in my touch, noticing that her body would shudder if I put too much pressure on her skin. When I'd cleansed her body, I lifted her hair into a hand-held ponytail and dipped it into the now-cooling water, which ran pink with the blood I had spilled.

When I was satisfied that I'd done right by her, I lifted her as gently as I could and laid her on top of a blanket I'd spread out on the floor. I quickly changed the sheets and settled her back on top of them.

I found her favorite loose yoga pants and lavender tank in a drawer and slipped them on her body. I imagined for a moment she was sleeping, then shuddered away that worthless indulgence. *Look forward, Edward, not back.* It was the only way.

I pulled an arm chair up to the side of the bed and sat on its edge so that, when I rested my elbows on the side of the mattress, I could easily hold her hand without moving her too much.

At ten, a soft knock on the door and Carlisle's thoughts alerted me to his presence. "Come in," I called softly.

"How is she?" he asked as he stood next to my chair.

I exhaled an unnecessary breath. "You tell me," I replied. "Okay...I guess? Much quieter than the others were, but then they didn't have morphine. Every once in a while she shakes or shudders, or her breath is halting, or she makes a low moan."

Carlisle checked her over. He lifted her eyelids to reveal heavily bloodshot eyes. He took her pulse, which I could have already told him was elevated, and I was right – it came in at 148. He noted the firming and cooling of her skin that I'd progressively sensed where I held her hand.

Then he laid a fatherly hand on my shoulder. "Everything seems normal, Edward. I would agree with your assessment that her quiet is the result of the morphine. And that's a good thing. It means she's not feeling any pain."

"Right," I murmured, "good."

"Edward? Can I come in?" I looked over my shoulder to see an unusually restrained Alice standing at the door. Jasper stood in the shadow of the hallway behind her.

"Yes, it's alright," I replied, knowing Bella would want the family around her.

Alice and Jasper whispered furiously for a second before walking in hand in hand. I frowned at their obviously false thoughts.

"Tell them," Alice whispered.

Jasper hung his head.

"What?" I asked, panic already rising in my throat.

Jasper heaved a breath. "I don't think it's working."

"What? What's not working?" I said, looking back and forth between Jasper's serious expression and Bella's obviously transforming body.

"The morphine. I don't think the morphine's working." Jasper's shoulders slumped as he passed on his impression.

"Why do you say this, Jasper?" Carlisle asked.

"Shit. Because I can feel her suffering."

I sucked in a breath.

"It's not as intense as other transformations I've witnessed – I can say that. But I've been present for enough of these," he nodded at the bed, "to know how it...feels."

A soft 'fuck' left my lips as I looked down at Bella. I looked back to Carlisle, who stood rubbing his brow in thought. "What can we do, Carlisle? What can we do?"

"Damn," he muttered in a surprising use of the vulgar. He stepped closer to the bed. "Nothing, son. I know this isn't what you want to hear – it's not what I wanted, either – but the transformation is what it is. And it will pass."

I hung my head, a constant chant of 'No' running through my mind. *I'm sorry, Bella. I thought we could make this better for you. Dammit! I'm sorry.*

"I can help."

Jasper's quiet words cut through my troubled thoughts and I snapped around to face him.

"If you don't mind my staying close, I can help."

"Oh, God, would you?"

"She is my sister, Edward, and your wife; I would do anything for the both of you."

I looked to Alice and marveled at the adoration I saw on her face. But her thoughts were significantly less composed – not because she didn't want Jasper to help, but because she knew the toll this would take on him.

"Please."

Jasper stepped forward and then sat on the floor against the foot board of the bed. He rested his arms on his pulled-up knees and then settled his forehead against his arms.

I knew the minute his presence made a difference. The flickering of her eyes behind her lids slowed and her pulse rate dropped by at least fifteen beats per minute. Jasper was calming her, soothing her.

Alice rubbed comforting circles across Jasper's upper back for a moment and then looked up at me. "You can help her too, Edward. Talk to her. Let her know you're here."

I pulled the chair I'd been sitting in even closer to the bed. As I went to sit, my foot kicked something underneath the hanging bed skirt. I reached my hand under and fished around until my fingers encountered a hard plastic rectangle. I grasped the object and pulled it out – it was Bella's gift to me, the binder I was supposed to be reading each hour of her change.

It had been lost in the confusion of my family's interruption of the bite and I'd been so wrapped around myself that I'd forgotten about it.

I brushed my hand over the cover reverently, replaying with perfectly clarity the memory of the moment she gave it to me – the way she looked and smelled and sounded and felt.

"I have your book, Bella," I said softly. "I promise I won't miss any more of my reading assignments." I smiled. "You were very clear about what I was supposed to do."

I gently lifted the vinyl cover and reread the inscription on the front page.

Dear Edward--

Because I love you

and I want you

and I want this

and I know you'll worry

and beat yourself up

and I don't want you to.

Ah, how well she knows me. Her reassuring words were like a salve and all at once the book in my hands was like a lifeline – to her, to my sanity.

So read

and remember these words

my love and hopes and dreams for you and us

and memories of all that we've shared

and feel the truth of it all

and know that I'll return to you

just as soon as I can

and then I'll be yours forever

Love, Bella

'Return to you just as soon as I can'. *Oh God, Bella, please, please come back to me.*

For one moment I felt self-conscious speaking in front of Alice and Jasper. Then I disregarded that feeling altogether – Jasper was otherwise occupied, and Alice probably knew everything anyway.

"I'm holding you to these words, Bella. Do you hear me? Come back to me just as soon as you can, my love. And I'll be yours forever too."

I looked at the clock. It was 10:48 a.m. I'd bitten her some time after six. So that meant I was behind on the first four entries, the ones I should've read at seven, eight, nine, and ten.

I was torn between wanting to devour her writing in mere seconds or savor it forever.

I turned the page like it was the most fragile thing in the world and read what Bella had written for her very first entry.

1.

I thought number one should start at the beginning. God, Edward, that first day in biology. I remember seeing you and thinking, oh my God, I get to sit next to THAT guy?? And then I saw the look on your face and your black eyes and could feel the hatred rolling off of you. And you know my immediate reaction? Damn I was so pissed at you because it was my first day at that dumb school and I already felt like the center of attention and then doesn't it just figure that the cutest guy in school is disgusted to have to sit next to ME. The next day and the next I was entirely ready to give you a piece of my mind, but you didn't show, and I remember thinking, that guy is damn lucky he didn't show because I would so have given him a piece of my mind. Little did I know you were a vampire and wanted to kill me. Talk about life being stranger than fiction! You couldn't make up a story like ours!

God, Edward, I wouldn't trade a minute of it.

I'm okay and I love you.

Savor, definitely. I reread the entry over and over. I smiled at her feistiness and shook my head her assumption that there was something wrong with *her*. Then I ran my fingers over the very last line.

When I couldn't stand the temptation any longer, I turned to the second entry.

2.

Do you know when I think of the night at Bella Italia in Port Angeles, my heart STILL pounds with the same adrenaline it did then? I mean, first of all, I can still hear your voice clearly asking me to distract you. I know you were just about as murderous that night as you've ever been in my presence, and yet I felt nothing but SAFETY, RELIEF, and COMPLETION sitting in that car with you. And then, when you played along with my questions, when you were willing to share yourself with me, I was so thrilled. I don't know how I got that ravioli down because my stomach was already filled with a million butterflies.

Since then, I've realized how much your Volvo was like Cinderella's magic carriage that night. And you were Prince Charming. And it's so incredible, because, for us, midnight will never come.

I'm okay and I love you.

I choked back a sob when I got to the end of the entry. 'Midnight will never come'. And she was right, because she was my midnight sun – no matter what, she would always light up the darkness for me.

I tried savoring, I really did. Then I just couldn't help it and I turned to page three.

3.

I know it may be a long time before this can happen, but I see a picture in my mind's eye that I want to come true so badly: you and me, making love in our meadow, the sun shining on our bodies, the breeze blowing through our hair.

I want to have you in the place we first voiced our love.

You know, if you would have bitten me that day and changed me to be like you, I wouldn't have regretted it. Even then. Because you already had my heart.

I'm okay and I love you.

While the picture she painted of us together in the meadow was incredibly appealing, the most meaningful part of this entry was her declaration of not regretting the bite. God how her words were healing, giving me strength.

I turned the page immediately, eager for the fourth and final entry on which I was behind. I laughed. Random thought, indeed.

4.

Hey, this is a random thought, but can vampires wear contact lenses? I have a really hard time imagining you with green eyes. I bet you would look so different that way.

But then:

How many times have I lost myself in your golden eyes? And, it's not just that they're golden. It's that they're YOUR eyes. I mean, all the rest of our family has golden eyes too, but your eyes are so much more fascinating. I guess it's not surprising why: they say that eyes are the windows to the soul, and that's why yours dazzle me so. Because all that makes you you – your kindness, thoughtfulness, protectiveness, loyalty, intelligence, talent, humor, passion, morality – all shine through your eyes.

And, no matter the color, I would see that.

Don't even get me started on what your eyes do to me when they're black.

I'm okay and I love you.

I slumped back into my chair and clutched the book to my chest. *This settles it. Isabella Marie Swan Cullen is the most amazing creature on the face of the Earth.*

I heard Alice chuckle.

"What are you laughing at?" I asked.

"Enjoying your present?"

"So you knew about this?"

"Yeah."

"It's the most amazing thing anyone has ever given me," I declared with complete sincerity.

Just then, the flashing red of the LED display on the bedside clock caught my attention, and it read 11:00.

I sat forward and turned to the fifth entry. Then I looked up at Bella. "I'm on time this time, Bella. And I'm loving every word of it."

I looked back down, anticipating where her words would take me next.

5.

Here are some places I want to go with you. I can't wait to talk to you and together we can flesh out a travel plan and spend forever working through it:

New York City (I'd love to see Times Square at night—maybe for New Years?)

London (we could just go from theater to theater!)

Ireland (I want to see if it's really as green as it looks in pictures)

Niagara Falls (okay, maybe a little corny, but I wonder how loud the falls are)

Germany (I would love to do a tour of castles)

Paris (Eiffel Tower and the Louvre)

Egypt (maybe by night? Guess there's not a whole lot of sunless days there. But I'd love to see the pyramids. That would put a whole other spin on eternity, I think)

New Orleans (I want to catch beads thrown from a Mardi Gras parade float!)

Where would you love to visit? Make a list on the other side of this page for me. I want to see it when I wake up.

I mean it – go, get a pen, write.

I'm okay and I love you.

I stared at her command with a wry smile. *Was she serious?* I reread the entry. *Yeah. She really was.*

I reached down into her book bag and fished out a pen and a notepad as well. I just couldn't bring myself to mar the pages of the book with my writing.

Twenty minutes later, I'd filled two pages, just as she'd instructed. I chuckled. She was in pain and unconscious and giving me homework. *I love you, Bella.*

With forty minutes before I could legitimately read another entry, I set the book and pad aside.

I crossed my arms on the mattress and settled my chin down on them, then hummed and hummed softly.

That's...helping..., I heard Jasper through a strained thought.

So I hummed straight through til noon.

6.

I have a lot of favorite parts of your body. But I think I have to start with your hair. Because you're a guy, you probably don't get the hair thing, Edward. But...holy crow. I love the way it falls onto your forehead and I love its wavy messiness. I'm never more jealous of your hands than when they're pushing back through your hair. (I'm saving your hands for another entry....) And the color...so amazing. But more than anything, I love the way it feels. Your hair is so thick and soft. And I'm crazy about the fact that it's long enough for me to grab and tighten my fists in. I'm so glad that you like when I pull it, because I don't think I could resist doing that. Oh my God! I just thought about this: you've told me how much more sensitive your touch is than a human's – that means my hands will get even more pleasure out of the feeling of your hair once I'm changed. Wow. Now there's a thought worth thinking about for a while.

And, it must be said, I go insane at the feeling of your hair tickling the skin of my thighs.

Yeah.

I'm okay and I love you.

I gulped and shook my head with a wry smile. *Evil, evil woman. How I love her.*

As the hours passed, members of my family came and went. Carlisle checked on her. Esme checked on me.

There were some constants: Jasper's calming influence, Alice's quiet strength, Bella's silent endurance, and my impatient vigil, filled with humming and storytelling and expressions of love and adoration and gratitude. And the hourly passages in the book.

As promised, Bella did get around to talking about my hands.

9.

An earlier entry got me thinking about your hands – they're just simply beautiful, Edward. They're long and refined and strong and sexy all at the same time. I love to watch your hands against the ivories of the piano keys. They seem magical then, able to create music out of thin air, able to command the piano to do their bidding. I love the feeling of your hands on my body. Your fingers in my hair are so soothing; your touch on my face is so comforting.

That first time in my bedroom, when...well, when you caught me and then instructed me how you wanted me to touch myself. And then you touched me too. Your fingers were so cool against my hot skin, but they also electrified me. When you slipped inside me, it felt like a key in a lock. I felt like I'd come home. You made me feel like I had a place to belong. And I felt so safe in your hands that day, as I do everyday. I know your hands,

your arms, will always be there to catch me. And I'm just so glad that my arms will now be strong enough to catch you in return.

I'm okay and I love you.

Sometimes I just didn't know what to say to the intense depth and thoughtfulness of her words.

I was simply stunned.

Every five entries, Bella gave me homework:

At 10, she told me to write a list of my favorite books because she wanted to read and discuss them with me.

At 15, she issued a similar command, except with popular music from over the years she wanted to listen to.

As the eighteenth hour of her transformation came at midnight, the whole family sung Bella 'Happy Birthday'. It was the wee minutes of September 13 and Bella wasn't even conscious, but never would I be able to let the day of her birth pass without celebrating and giving thanks.

At hour 20, she asked for my favorite movies ever, and at 25 it was a list of the vampire movies I thought were the worst, funniest, or for some other reason worth watching.

I used the writing of these lists to fill the time, and then I read them to her to help distract and comfort her from the pain of the venom.

Those entries took me through the first day. As light filled the room on the second morning, the changes in Bella's appearance were significantly more noticeable.

Her skin had paled and was almost all the way changed, although of course it felt 'normal' to me. She was no longer breakable. An examination of her eyes revealed them to be maroon in color, a mid-transformation mixture of her former brown and her future red. Blood had pooled behind the skin of her lips, making them a tantalizing and inviting ruby. Most, striking, though, were the changes to her hair. Overnight, Bella's hair had thickened and its color was amplified. Beautiful mahogany and dark cherry highlights added texture and depth to her chestnut locks.

She was perfection.

As the 27th hour came and went, Jasper started to struggle. He'd put in a heroic day of absorbing her pain and expending his energy to calm her. His torment captured my attention when he started chanting *Bella needs you, Bella needs you* over and over in his head. I thought he was talking about me, but his constant repetition of it and Alice's increasingly worried expression told me he was trying to encourage himself.

"Get him out of her for a while, Alice. He's hurting himself."

Alice stood and tried to rouse Jasper, but he fought her.

I walked to the bedroom door. "Emmett? Need some help up here," I called.

Emmett was at the head of a caravan that included my whole family. "What's wrong with Bella?" he asked.

"Not Bella, Jasper. Maybe take him hunting for a while. Get him away from here. He needs a break."

It took Emmett and Carlisle to make Jasper leave. I heard his thought apologies and I realized like a punch in the gut that he was trying to make up for what had happened on Bella's eighteenth birthday.

"Please stay with her," I asked the women as I followed the men out of the house.

I hated being away from Bella for even one second, but this needed addressed.

We got Jasper into the woods, far enough away from the house that he was freed of Bella's tortured emotions. We could tell because he gasped in relief.

"Jasper, your assistance has been invaluable. And when you can, please come back. But you get this through your head, brother – do *not* do this as an apology, do not punish your body as a...penance. Do you hear me? Because, feel me, I harbor no resentment towards you, Jasper, and neither does Bella. *Feel* me. You know it's true. It's done and forgiven."

His dark eyes flashed to mine as he knelt on the forest floor. "Okay," he rasped, "okay."

He reached out a hand to me and I grasped it and pulled him into my chest. "Thank you. Now go take care of yourself for a while. I have a sister and a wife who will kick my ass if you're not in one piece at the end of this."

He nodded against my shoulder.

Emmett and Carlisle helped Jasper to his feet as I fled back to the house.

At the end of that hour, the twenty-eighth entry couldn't have been more appropriate:

28.

Can I tell you how much I love your family? And how proud I am that they're my family now too?

Alice...somehow I was lucky enough to find the love of my life and my best friend all at the same time. And I know she's so special to you too. Besides you, she's the person in the world who understands me best. And I love her.

Jasper...sweet Jasper. I feel a special kinship with him in a way. I think because he hasn't always felt like he's fit in. And I've felt like that myself for a lot of my life. And I know without question he'd step in front of a bullet for me. I can't wait to get to know him better.

Emmett...do you think he made people laugh as much when he was alive? What I love best about him is that he's a clown and a teddy bear and a fierce protector and a true friend all in one. I still can't believe I managed to pull off that prank on him. His reaction was priceless. I hope I remember it.

Rosalie...I hope I'm as strong as she is, in every way. She is loyalty personified, and I completely understand her fierce need to protect your family at all costs. I would never let anything hurt any of you either.

Esme...has been as much of a mother to me during the last two years as Renee was during past five, at least. The maternal spirit simply infuses her. I look forward to her guidance and wisdom.

Carlisle...to see all that he has seen, and to still be the kind, compassionate, wise man that he is. He is a hero to me, Edward, the way he's lived his life and the way he helps people. Carlisle is goodness personified.

There is something in each of these people I admire and strive to be. I couldn't be happier to spend eternity with them.

I'm okay and I love you.

This one I read aloud, because I really wanted the girls, who sat all around the room, to hear what Bella had to say about them. I'd share the entry with the guys as well when they returned. I knew how much Bella's acceptance meant to them.

Around the thirty-sixth hour, Bella's heart started racing and she moaned in the back of her throat. A human probably wouldn't have been able to hear it, but the pained sound was perfectly audible to us.

I cupped my hands around the skin of her face and she seemed to sigh. *My touch...she seems to be responding to my touch.* That gave me an idea. I stripped off the shirt I'd put on earlier and crawled in bed beside her. Then I rolled her tank top up so that she was only covered over and around her breasts. When I pressed my skin against hers, the moaning quieted some and her heart rate slowed just enough to confirm my suspicion. I missed a number of entries as I lay wrapped around, touching and cooling her wherever I could and humming into her ear.

When Jasper returned in the dark of the forty-first hour, he looked markedly better. His bright gold eyes told me he'd fed, feasted even.

Wordlessly I asked and he assured that he was okay to be back.

Bella's ease allowed me to sit and catch up on my reading, but I continued to smooth my hand over her face and forehead.

The third day dawned with a thunderstorm that seemed to electrify the air and unsettle Bella. Carlisle made another visit to check on her and seemed startled by what he found.

"What? What is it?" I asked.

"She seems to be much further along than I would have expected."

"Really? What makes you say that?"

"Her heart rate, for one, and the solidity of her extremities. Plus her eyes have completely changed."

Alice spoke from her perch next to Jasper on the floor. "She'll wake up before the sun sets today."

"You've seen this? Why didn't you say something sooner?"

She sighed. "Because a watched pot never boils, Edward. I didn't want you to drive yourself crazy wondering if every minute was the minute she'd awaken."

"Then why—"

"Because Jasper needed to know too...he needed to know how much longer he has to hold out. And don't even think about ousting him again. You know as well as I do the worst is yet to come and he has no intention of leaving her before then."

"Jasper, can you really handle this? She'll be okay either way. You know that. You don't have to hurt yourself."

I'll live, was his only reply.

I sighed and looked back down at Bella. Alice was right: the news did wind me up like a coil.

Fortunately, though, she gave me a bit of homework in her fiftieth entry that offered some much-needed distraction.

50.

Okay, our second day is down. I imagine you could really use something big to distract you now. So I've provided two pieces of blank paper behind this one (since you've lived for over a century, I thought perhaps you might have a lot of ideas and need a lot of space...).

It's time for you to write down your list. Don't even act like you don't know what I'm talking about either. You have one. I know you do. You've seen mine, now show me yours.

I'm okay and I love you.

I choked on a laugh and stared down at the brown-haired beauty walking through fire next to me to so she could be mine forever.

You want a list, love? I'll give you a list. Your wish. My command.

I turned to the page she provided and at the top wrote "Edward's List." I underlined the words for emphasis.

I wrote and wrote. I wrote straight until eight o'clock, when I only paused in the morning light to read number 51, which simply said, "Keep writing." How she managed to make me laugh and smile in the midst of this situation was a miracle. And the only way I could thank her in the moment was to do as she asked.

Two pages were not enough.

At four in the afternoon, Alice oddly left Jasper's side. I crawled down the bed to check on him, wondering what could possibly motivate her to leave. He remained in the same upright fetal position he'd been in for most of the past two and a half days.

Just then a sound in the hallway alerted me to Alice's return. She came in carrying three garment bags.

"Alice, what—"

"I was thinking we should get her ready for when she awakens. Look how beautiful she's become, Edward—"

"She's always been beautiful, Alice."

"Oh, of course she has. I just meant, she is going to be so surprised to see herself this way, and I thought maybe we could make the occasional truly special for her by..." she hung the bags up and unzipped them with a flourish, "...dressing up."

"Alice, Bella's not a doll."

She huffed. "I know that, Edward. But—"

"Being changed into a vampire is not a formal occasion, Alice." I coughed on a laugh as a memory of another time I'd uttered a similar sentiment ran through my mind: prom, her junior year. She'd thought we'd gotten her all dressed up so she could be changed. And I'd teased her for it. "No way, Alice. Becoming a vampire does not change the fundamental makeup of who you are as a person. Bella didn't like clothes and dresses as a person, and there's no way she'd appreciate waking up in a...what is that? A satin gown? No." I looked down at her. "Real clothes, I'll go for. But no dresses."

"Edward," Alice pouted.

"Real clothes, Alice."

She huffed. And in a blur of fabric and bags she disappeared and returned again. She grudgingly laid out a few choices on the empty side of the bed and I chose a pair of cropped leggings and a longish peasant top with a colorful rope belt almost entirely because they appeared the most comfortable. I knew jeans would have been Bella's first choice, but I feared the denim would irritate the skin on her legs.

Alice wanted the outfit to be just right, so I let her dress Bella. She lovingly brushed out her hair, but left it loose to show off its new luster to best advantage.

At seven p.m., I read these words in Bella's book:

61.

Have I told you lately how much I appreciate you? I appreciate how you care for me. I appreciate the way you love me. I appreciate the adoration I see in your eyes and feel in your touch. I appreciate your attentiveness and how you meet all my needs.

And I appreciate that you chose me. Love me. Want me.

I can't thank you enough for being in my life, for turning it into the great love story it has become. So, thank you, Edward. Truly.

I'm okay and I love you.

I was still musing over her words six minutes later when Jasper audibly groaned. And Bella's heart started to thunder. Carlisle came through the door, having heard the change in pace and intensity from elsewhere in the house. He looked at me with an expression that was part sympathy and part anticipation. We both knew what the sound of her heart meant like this: it was the beginning of the end.

Occasionally, Bella's mouth would fall open in a silent scream or her fingers would twitch or her shallow breath would hitch.

But what most captured our attention was the sound of Bella's heart. I listened. I cherished every beat. I counted them so that I would remember them.

At 7:13, her heart shot up to 161 beats per minute.

At 7:18, her heart beat 168 times per minute.

At 7:29, her heart started to slow, and beat 139 times.

Then 118 by 7:36.

Then 78 by 7:40.

59 by 7:43.

38 beats pounded through 7:47.

I began holding my breath. I was listening to the life beat out of my wife's chest. And for a set of minutes, the fear got the best of me. Jasper groaned at the additional weight of my emotions, but I couldn't rein myself in.

Only 20 beats happened at 7:50. By 7:52, more seconds elapsed in silence than in pulse.

The four beats of her heart that filled 7:54 were so loud, so forceful, that they would have been audible some distance from the house.

Then, at 7:55 on September 14, Bella's heart exploded in one final clenching beat that made her body arch up through her chest as if she was a puppet pulled by a string.

I sucked in a breath, wide-eyed and mouth agape, and waited, and waited.

~*~

Chapter 26: Awake And Alive

BPOV

Awareness returned to me in stages.

First there was the roiling pain of molten fire moving at a torturous pace from my fingertips and toes up my arms and legs. As the heat receded from my extremities, the cooling relief was barely noticeable as the conflagration got sucked into focus in the middle of my chest.

Then there was a strangling explosion in my heart that suffocated me and stole my equilibrium. The agony of it threw my body into uncontrollable convulsions and all I could think was 'oh, please, let this be the end'.

Then everything went dark, still, and silent. I was floating, suspended, in merciful nothingness. Neither here nor there.

And then the world exploded around me in an orgy of sensory input.

I gasped down a sucking breath that brought in smells, scents, tastes. Some were familiar but so different from what I remembered or expected; some were completely foreign – intriguing and terrifying at the same time. Sounds met my ears but were garbled, indecipherable – and at any rate they seemed deafeningly loud. I tried to send the message to my hands to cover my ears but couldn't tell if my arms responded or not. Struggling to make sense of the cacophony of existence surrounding me, I finally managed to get my brain to relay the message to my eyes to open, but was so overcome with the Technicolor vision that fed back up through my optic nerve that I groaned and rolled over and buried my face into...wait. *Where am I?*

Still folded in on myself, I pushed my head up a little and chanced my eyes again. I recognized the thing that I was looking at – it was soft and flat and warm and comfortable – but couldn't immediately find the word for it. At lightning speed my brain sorted through my available vocabulary and though the words were familiar, I was having a hard time matching words together with their meanings.

Through the myriad sounds, one caught my attention on an instinctual level. It was a small noise, hardly noteworthy amongst the symphony of sounds my ears perceived. Just the soft brush of movement across a surface. But it told me something very important, and I froze: *I'm not alone.*

I looked up and found two sets of brilliant gold eyes staring down at me.

A screaming sound roared through my ears but I couldn't be worried about that as I scrambled across the soft surface in an effort to get away.

My back slammed into a barrier that made a cracking noise as I ran into it. But then I was trapped, cornered.

"Bella?"

As opposed to the screaming noise from a moment ago, this sound was beautiful, melodic. And it captured and held my attention in a way nothing else had so far. My ears traced the source of the sound to the owner of one pair of those gold eyes.

My whole body erupted in tremors as I brought my eyes to his.

"Bella. Oh, Bella," he encouraged softly. "You came back to me. You're okay. It's all okay."

A quick scan around the room identified seven others here with me: six with gold eyes, and one with black. I stared at the black-eyed a beat longer than the rest. He had the most peculiar expression on his face – it was fierce and concerned and protective and relieved all at once. I had the curious sensation of both being afraid of him and wanting to...thank him?

But it was the golden-eyed, bronze-haired one closest to me that most held my attention. I felt a primal pull to him that frightened me because I didn't understand it, or him.

A chance glance downward distracted me. I gasped as I saw the way the lamp light reflected off the...*damn, what is the word? Oh, come on!*...the shiny, glassy stones on the...ring!...on my finger. Colors refracted that I didn't have names for, not because my brain wasn't pairing words and meanings together, because they were colors I'd never before seen.

I looked at the man. "What is this called?" I finally asked in a dry quivering voice.

He glanced down and got the oddest expression. "It's your wedding ring—"

"No. This," I clarified, pointing to the shiny part.

"A diamond?"

"Diamond!" *Of course!* I looked down again and tilted my hand back and forth to see what new colors the light would create for me. I was, quite literally, like a child with a new shiny toy.

"Bella?"

I cowered away from him as I glanced back up. But then the look on his face was filled with so much longing and need and something a hairline away from panic that I began to feel...concerned...for him. I fingered the diamond and a fleeting image flashed through my mind. "You gave this to me?" The words came out of my mouth in a gasp and I surprised myself, but I knew on an elemental level it was true.

I watched in wonder as the hint of a smile played on the face of the achingly beautiful creature in front of me. "Yes. Yes, I did," he replied, then he extended his hand toward me and I flinched back into the...wooden...thing...*headboard!*...behind me. He withdrew his hand, his face a mask of patience and understanding. "No one's going to hurt you, Bella. I just meant to show you my ring. See? You gave this one to me."

I looked at the masculine band on his third finger, and then back down to the rings on my own hand. My band matched his.

I inhaled to speak but when my eyes met his, they didn't see him, but instead a series of memories in my mind. They all involved the ring on his strong hand: shopping for it with...the little dark-haired one...Alice...*oh Alice!*; placing it on his finger as we stood together in front of a large group of people; spying him admire it when he didn't know I was looking; sucking the finger with the ring so far into my mouth that I could wrap my lips around it as well.

With wide eyes, I looked up at him. And it all came back to me in a disorienting and fuzzy rush. I moaned and swayed and felt hands grab my arms and shoulders. When the dizzying sensation passed and the world righted itself again, I crawled across the bed at an inhuman speed and launched myself into the lap and arms of the love of my life.

I sent us tumbling straight off the side of the bed and Edward absorbed the impact with his back and a grunt but his face was all concern for me. A fleeting image of him once tackling me flashed past my mind's eye but I couldn't hold onto the details of the memory.

"Edward! Edward!" I croaked as I wrapped myself around him and clutched him to me.

"Oh, thank God," he moaned as he drew his arms tighter around my back. "You came back to me, Bella. You came back." Lying on the floor with me on top of him, Edward rocked me gently back and forth.

"I never left, Edward," I rasped, "I was right here the whole time. And I...sometimes I could hear you...and feel you...and I—" My voice died in a choked sob that erupted at the force and variety of the emotions running through me.

"Sssh," he soothed. He smoothed my hair and rubbed my back and held me for a long time.

I pushed up to look at him and was fascinated by his appearance. Everything about him was the same, only better. His beautiful bronze hair was there, of course, although now I could perceive lighter golden highlights and darker copper lowlights throughout. I reached up to touch it and *oh!* I gasped. "It's *so* soft." I apparently said it out loud as his face lit up with a smile so dazzling that I forgot about his hair. His teeth were brilliant white and, while they had always just appeared as perfect teeth to my human eyes, now I could detect the sharpness of their edges that set off a niggling sense of danger to my newborn instincts. Inhaling a calming breath, I noted that his lips were redder than I remembered and somehow soft and powerful at the same time. The cut of his jaw and of his cheekbone seemed more defined to me now, which added to his intense masculine beauty.

And his scent.

His warm spicy scent set off a series of interconnected reactions: my chest clenched in recognition of the smell of him that I'd always found so appealing, and now found downright intoxicating. My mouth watered...*venomed?*...*oh, like the word matters!*...I was literally salivating over his scent. And there seemed to be a curious connection between the flow of venom in my mouth and...elsewhere. His scent was making me want to...taste him...*have* him. I swallowed thickly and noted with a raised eyebrow that his eyes followed the movement of my throat.

He watched me look at him for a long time, allowing me free rein with my exploring touches and gazes. Then, after a while, he chuckled as he gently pushed me back.

"What?"

"Nothing at all, you're just very strong."

"Oh. Oh! I didn't hurt—"

"No. Well, a little," he chuckled again. "It's nothing."

"Is this really happening, Edward?" I whispered.

"Yes," he whispered back as he leaned forward and pressed his lips softly against my own.

The feeling of his kiss set loose an instinctual reaction, an instinctual need – one that had been simmering as I took him in. I moaned and pressed my lips harder against his. *Oh, his taste!* I stroked my tongue out over his lips and groaned. Cupping his face, I lapped at his lips as a kitten would a bowl of milk and he opened his mouth. When our tongues met tentatively in the space between us, I whimpered and pulled him into me and tried to get my body closer to his.

He moaned into my mouth and a chuckle caught my attention.

I frowned and pulled back.

Oh my God! I forgot about...them, I thought as I lifted my head and met the amused expressions of the rest of our family. I hid my face against the side of Edward's neck as he patted my back with a huge grin on his face. I noted wryly that I no longer felt the blushing heat that once occupied my cheeks on a regular basis. That was something I wouldn't miss.

The next moments passed in a joyous reunion of hugs and greetings and accidents that revealed I didn't know my strength. It was a bit...overwhelming. And then I caught my reflection in the dresser mirror.

I gasped and stepped towards it. Edward saw and came up behind me.

The woman in the mirror was...striking: curvy with full red lips and creamy white skin and long thick brown hair that fell in loose waves down her back. I gaped as I took in the reflection of the wild red eyes that looked back at me. "Oh," I breathed as I leaned forward. The eyes were beautiful, and terrifying. I'd seen eyes like these before. I shuddered and felt Edward's fingers gently brush my hip.

"They'll start changing in a few months, Bella. Don't worry. You're beautiful, love, absolutely stunning."

I nodded absently, too intrigued to look away from the image before me for even a moment. I reached a hand up to my cheek tentatively, like it was someone else's, and it felt like...me.

I rubbed my fingers along my lips, noting with pleasure that my bottom lip was still somewhat fuller than my top, and opened my mouth to look at my teeth. They were white and straight and gleamed in the low light. I ran the pad of my forefinger over the edge of my bottom teeth and hissed in pain as I pulled my finger back and clutched it to my chest.

I looked up and met Edward's concerned eyes in the mirror. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah. But, damn, they're really sharp."

"Yes," he chuckled, "they sure are."

I turned in his arms and looked at the headboard I'd smashed into, the lamp I'd knocked over when I sprung from the bed with too much force, the picture frame I'd crushed when I'd tried to pick it up, the way

Edward's shirt had shredded from my grip, and the iron towel bar Emmett had disconnected from its brackets so he could watch me bend it.

"Holy...crow!" Edward's eye brows flew up, surprised by my outburst. "How did you do it?"

He frowned in confusion.

"Be...with me?" I fingered a hanging flap of fabric where it hung on his chest.

"I would have done anything to be with you." His expression was filled with a deep sincerity, but also something else.

"What?" I asked.

He sighed and his smile was wry. "You've just given up your human life and endured agony to be with me, yet your first thoughts are of the sacrifices *I've* made, which of course weren't sacrifices at all."

A little embarrassed, I bit my bottom lip, then sucked it into my mouth just as quick. I was going to have to unlearn that habit, fast. I looked up at him. His face was full of wonder as he watched me discover my world. His expression was so endearing that I cried out, "God I love you," as I grabbed his face and pulled him into a long, deep, exploring kiss.

Someone cleared their throat and I pulled back, having forgotten myself again.

"I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I need to go for a while," Jasper said quietly. He was tightly gripping Alice's hand and his eyes were still black.

I walked over to him and he braced himself defensively in front of Alice. I frowned at his action but couldn't stop the impulse to embrace him. I threw myself around him and heard the low growl in his throat. His body was all coiled tense muscle.

"I felt you," I rasped. "I was trapped...in...it was like a room of fire. And I saw you. It was like you were outside of the glass room I was in and you sucked the fire out of my room and pulled it into yours. And then because the roar of the flames was gone I could hear Edward. You gave him to me."

Jasper's body didn't relax and I finally let go. Then I felt awkward and I stepped back until I crashed into Edward's chest.

"I'm sorry," I said quietly. "I just wanted to say thank you."

Jasper walked up to me and his black eyes were so intense that I had to fight the urge to cower against Edward's chest. "How are you doing this?"

"What?"

"Being so calm, coherent?"

I choked out a strange strained laugh and the words tumbled out of me. "I'm *not* calm. I feel shaky in my skin. I can't remember the words for half the things I see. Shiny things keep distracting me. My own eyes freak me out. And it feels like I only hold one emotion for about six seconds before a different one slams into my brain."

We stared at one another for a moment until I swallowed thickly and Jasper caught the movement of my throat.

"She's thirsty, Edward," he groused. Then he looked at me again and his expression softened. He took a deep breath and his shoulders fell as if in relaxation or defeat. "Ignore me," he said, "I'm not quite myself at the moment." He gently squeezed my shoulder as he started to walk past. "I'm happy you're...here, Bella. Really. I'll see you later."

A smiling Alice followed behind him and pulled me into another bone-crushing hug. "Don't worry, he's okay. He'll be a new man after a good hunt," she whispered. Then she pulled back. "We'll be back soon, sister! And then we're going to have so much fun!" She bounced and hugged me again and I couldn't help but smile as the tangible level of her excitement.

Soon they all filed out and Edward and I were finally alone. But now that Jasper had put the idea in my head, all I could think about was how damn thirsty I was. Where before I couldn't find the words I needed, now words tormented me: *dry, dehydrated, arid, parched, desiccated, baked, waterless, scorched....* I grabbed at my throat and Edward understood immediately. He held out a hand and I placed mine in his. I noted with pleasure that his touch no longer felt cold. It simply felt...like me. The thought of our sameness was so gratifying that I couldn't help the smile that enlivened my face. He smiled in return and motioned towards the door. Hand in hand, we hurried through the house and out the front door into the moonless night.

Once outside, the reality of what I was going to have to do descended upon me and froze me in place.

"What's wrong, love?"

"I don't know how...."

"You don't have to *know* how, Bella, your body will just do it. Trust me. You're going to be a natural at this."

I looked up at him doubtfully.

"Come on. You're going to love running."

He jogged backwards a few steps and beckoned me to follow. My gut instinct was to protest the idea of running in the dark, but I realized I could see everything – even down to the individual tree branches on the trees at the edge of the forest in the distance – in clear detail.

As soon as I resolved to give it a try, my body shot out and I passed Edward in a flash.

It was...incredible. I laughed out loud, my exhilaration echoing off the trees we were now flying through. I was amazed at my agility and grace, realizing that I'd been half certain I'd end up the one clumsy vampire in the world. But instead I was fluid and sure-footed. I laughed harder and harder and never once became winded.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Edward vault easily over a fallen tree and I marveled at his actions. When an outcropping of rocks appeared up ahead in my path, I yelled out to him, "Can I jump that?" He laughed an "Easily" back to me and he...was right! I squealed in delight and thought I could run like this forever and I wondered why Edward ever walked normally when he could do *this*.

Then new sensory input brought me to a skidding, halting stop.

I took off in a new direction and heard Edward behind me. But whereas before Edward's presence had felt fun and safe and playful, now I was...irritated by his presence, threatened by it. As I closed in on my destination, the compulsion to *warn him away* settled over me and I came to a dead stop, whirled on him, and...growled.

His darkening eyes seemed to confirm the appropriateness of my instinctual reaction. "Bella?" he asked in a low voice.

"*Mine*," I growled.

He took a step back and raised his hands in surrender. "Yours," he agreed.

I continued to eye him suspiciously for a moment before the scent pulled me away in a blur and I took off again. I raced through the trees, leapt across the small stream that served as their watering hole, and landed with a thudding crack of bones around the large thick neck of a caribou.

I grunted in frustration as I searched with my mouth for the most constant flow of blood. When I finally found it, I groaned in ecstasy at the relief the blood provided. It was warm and earthy and full of life and wet, so wet.

But it was gone too soon and I whined and growled again, needing more.

A sound caught my attention and I snapped my head in its direction only to find a now black-eyed Edward standing forty feet away. Between me and him were two more caribou laying on the forest floor. "Yours," he said as he pointed to the animals.

I was wary, my natural instincts raised like hackles, but my need was too great and I sprung from the empty beast to one that promised more relief.

When all three were gone I knelt between them, panting in satisfaction and relief. I just felt *so damn good*.

The ingestion of blood lifted a fog from my brain and I could finally think about something else besides my thirst. A small breath of breeze blew and brought Edward's scent past my nose, reawakening my earlier reaction to his warm spiciness. I looked up and found him still in the same position as before by a distant tree.

Then another instinctual need rose in me and I flipped up off the ground and stalked in his direction. I didn't know if it was despite the blood or because of it, but I was still lusting. *For Him*. I couldn't help the low growl that rattled in my throat as I got closer and his scent intensified in my nose.

Edward's body was tense, braced. His nostrils flared and his mouth hung open. He stepped towards me tentatively, then with more determination, and finally we came together in a crash of hard bodies, open mouths, stroking tongues, and groping hands.

"Oh God," I gasped around the edge of our kisses.

Edward's tongue was everywhere, tangling and swirling with mine, tasting the remnants of the blood still coating my mouth. He groaned and licked the blood from my face and I felt a dizzying rush of moisture between my legs in response.

"My...God....In me. In me. Need you," I panted as I writhed and pressed against him.

With a frustrated grunt I ripped his ruined shirt off as he more carefully removed my own.

"Now, now, now," I begged.

He pushed me until I backed into a large tree and then fell to his knees. He wrenched my pants down and we impatiently pulled them free of my ankles. Then I screamed when he lifted a leg, threw it over his shoulder, and buried his mouth with abandon into my wet heat.

EPOV

She was perfection, brilliance, beauty, and grace.

The joy she so clearly exuded as she raced and leapt through the forest lifted whatever regret and hesitation that remained for me. When her instincts kicked in and she went from playful to a huntress, it was hands down the most erotic thing I'd ever seen. My mate. Was hunting.

I'd followed her – it was stupid really to push her to such an instinctual reaction – but as she whirled and growled at me, my erection responded immediately. She was glorious in her territorial fury. When she turned to pursue her hunt again, I sprinted off in a different direction that allowed me to come around on the herd from the opposite direction.

Her approach was noisy and scattered the animals in a panic, so I took down a few more for her to have, knowing one wouldn't suffice. As unpracticed as it was, her attack was also full of majesty. The way her body moved so lithely, the way she abandoned herself to her need so completely. Her body wrapped sinuously around the neck of the beast and her throat and jaw worked rhythmically while a rivulet of blood trailed down her chin.

I was unhinged.

But it wasn't until she stalked towards me, black-eyed with the scent of her arousal washing off of her and over me, that I lost the resolve to restrain myself and gave into *my* need. To claim. To mark. To possess.

And I knew what I wanted first – to feast on her the way I’d wanted for so long but hadn’t been able to. I fell to my knees, wrenched her pants down and off, and opened her up so I could settle myself between her legs.

I was fucking relentless. I licked and sucked and stroked and penetrated and fucking nipped at her *with my teeth* until I thought I’d lose my mind. The change had enhanced her natural nectar so that it was richer, sweeter, more pure – *SUCCULENT!* I couldn’t get enough of her, and her responsiveness only served to egg me on.

I couldn’t help but remember that first time the desire to taste her this way had gripped me. That Sunday of the weekend we’d spent together at the Forks house. *How is it possible that was only a matter of weeks ago? It feels like a lifetime.* I’d come home from hunting and found her playing at the piano, and it was the first time we’d bared ourselves fully to one another. How I wanted her that day.

“Bella, I want...there are things I want to do right now. Things I can’t do. Things I shouldn’t do...yet.”

Her voice was breathy as she pleaded with me. “Tell me. Please, Edward? There’s nothing that you would want to do that I don’t want too.”

I remember kissing her, summoning the courage to voice my desire to her. “I want to put my mouth on you, Bella, everywhere. I want to taste you so bad. But I’m too afraid that I could lose control, there, if I do it now.”

She moaned and voiced her understanding, but I didn’t think she understood just how bad I wanted to do that for her. “Do you, Bella?” I’d asked her. “Do you understand that I want it? Bella, as soon as it’s safe, you have to know....I am going to feast on you, Bella. I am going to eat you alive.”

I smiled as I compared the memory of that unfulfilled desire to the ecstasy of the actual experience. The abandon with which I could pursue her pleasure thrilled me.

She screamed my name in one, two, then a third orgasm and I drank down everything she offered me with a smug feeling of pride.

With a grunt she reached down and pulled me to my feet. Her hair and her eyes – erotically black with a red ring – were wild as we fumbled together to remove my jeans. I didn’t even worry about removing them completely. By the time they’d gathered at my knees, I’d already lifted Bella by her ass.

She was grasping against me and mumbling “now, now, now, in, in, in.”

And then I slid home. I groaned an “oh my God” into her hair and she hissed and grunted and wrapped her arms and legs around me. I leaned her now durable back against the rough bark of the tree for leverage and slammed into her again and again.

I marveled as I took her in – her skin was luminous and flawless, and her breasts were fuller with dark pink nipples. I gasped as I saw how the change had impacted the tattoo of my name on her chest: in an apparent effort to expel the foreign matter from her skin, the venom had pushed the ink outward, giving a three-dimensional quality to the mark that now sat slightly raised across her left breast. I leaned down and licked over it and grunted as I felt the contours of the letters of *my name* ridged under my tongue.

“Oh God, Bella,” I rasped.

“More, Edward! More!”

With each stroke, I pulled my erection nearly all the way out of her before driving in to the hilt again. My body was a flexing mass of taut muscles and unrestrained need as I pistoned into her.

Bella grunted and mewled and moaned and pulled my hair until I hissed. Her grasps dug into me and her pulling fingers stung my scalp and the mixture of pleasure and pain was a fascinating new sensation.

“Oh...ungh...*pleasepleaseplease*...harder, Edward.”

It was against two years of trained instinct, but *fuck it*, I gave it to her just the way she wanted. It was a biological imperative. I had little choice.

And....

Oh, God, I thought in a state of euphoria, *Oh the relief!*

I thrust myself into her in a frenzy and she encouraged and taunted me into giving more with soft strokes and words one moment and with hissed commands the next.

My mind flashed an image of that very first intimate experience with her, also against a tree – that day in the meadow had been such a surprise, a revelation. How it felt to hear her call my name in ecstasy, how she looked when she gave herself to me so completely.

I could now have that every day for the rest of forever. And so could she.

The thought drove me harder and I grunted out a string of strained expletives when her body clenched and convulsed around me and she screamed my name.

Her orgasm was fascinating in its intensity. Her muscles literally screamed in response to her release and her venomous arousal flowed freely down our legs. The smell of it created a steady flow of venom in my mouth that I found myself having to swallow again and again.

As if that myriad of sensation wasn't enough, Bella sunk her teeth hard and unapologetically into my left shoulder. I was immediately at the brink of explosion, but so badly wanted to prolong the phenomenal pleasure of this moment.

Bella released her jaw and in a panting heavy command grunted, “You better fucking bite me back this time. *Don't. Hold. Back!*”

Her words hit me in a primal place and my orgasm shot out of me in wave after wave of need fulfilled. I sunk my teeth into her neck just behind her ear, where she'd always wanted me to mark her when she was human. Her venom in my mouth was like a shot of the most high-quality liquor: biting and warming and smooth and intoxicating.

I released my jaw from her skin once my orgasm played out and we stood for a long time, completely wrapped up in one another, panting against the ancient pine. Finally, we sunk down to the ground together and for the rest of the night I held Bella's strong bare body in a ball on my lap.

In quiet tones we exchanged relieved and grateful words of love and commitment. She asked tentative questions about things she was feeling and experiencing, and I reassured her as best I could that she was exactly as she should be. *And so very much more.*

We talked about her experience of the change – as Jasper suspected, once the venom had circulated through her system, the morphine hadn't helped ease her pain, only her expression of it. I was sure Carlisle was going to want to hear more about this, but I would see that the conversation was delayed until Bella was more able to tolerate the memory of it.

We were both curious about how she'd visualized herself during the change – trapped in a glass room in her mind and seemingly shielded by what she imagined was an invisible wall that separated her from Jasper's absorption of much of the conflagration. I remembered nothing of the sort from my experience, but then I hadn't had Jasper's assistance.

And we talked about the entries in her book – what a difference those had made for me. I thanked her profusely and she looked down and away, allowing me to identify the facial expression that would reveal to me her embarrassment. Now I'd know what to look for, since I no longer had her telltale blush. We made plans to read together the remaining eleven entries I hadn't had the chance to read. She couldn't wait to read my homework...and begin to work through it.

As morning dawned, Bella looked up at me shyly. "I'm sorry I growled at you last night. I don't know what came over me."

I pressed kisses into her hair and her temple. "Bella, don't apologize. It's part of who you are. And it was my fault for following you so closely. Besides, I liked it."

She quirked an eyebrow at me and I laughed.

"It was sexy, trust me."

She laughed softly. "So...does that mean...."

"What, love?"

Her face turned somber again. "Does that mean you like me...like this, I mean?"

"Oh my God, Bella," I exclaimed as I drew her to me again in a tight embrace. "You're beautiful. You're perfect. Like you? God, I love you more now than ever before. Bella, you need to know this: I would have lived happily with you as a human for as long as I could have, but you, like this...I feel free. Because I know I can't hurt you, and I know you'll never suffer from illness, and we'll always be together. You've given me everything I've ever wanted and so much I didn't even dare to hope for."

She blew out a shuddered breath and nodded.

"And how about you, love, how you do feel...about this?" I'd always worried that she might grow to regret it; the thought still nagged at me.

"I feel...well, outside of the messiness of my state of mind...I feel...strong. I...like the way I feel. And look. I feel...don't get mad...but I feel like I belong beside you." She hushed me when I tried to interrupt. "Not that

you ever made me feel that I didn't, and, really, not that I didn't feel like I belonged by you...but now...it's just...we fit. We're the same. We're equals, Edward. Finally, equals. I love that. And I love knowing you can relax, that you don't have to worry about hurting me, which you never did, but I like knowing your mind can be more at ease. It makes me feel more at ease too."

I stroked her cheekbone with my thumb while she spoke. I imagined my face wore the adoration I felt.

After a while, she leaned up to me and we kissed – long, soft, worshipful kisses full of love and gratitude and comfort and acceptance.

"I love you, Edward," she whispered.

I cupped her face in my face. "I love you too, Bella. Forever."

~*~

Epilogue: A Million Tomorrows

BPOV - One Week Later

God I was thirsty. In one way, my fears had come true - I thought about blood all the time and needed to hunt nearly as much. So here we were, a week after I awoke from my change, hunting for the seventh time in as many days.

This time the girls were taking me in a probably vain attempt to salvage my clothing. Between attempting to learn my own strength, blood stains, and the urgency with which I *needed* Edward, most of my wardrobe was beyond repair. And because the destruction was mostly the result of spur-of-the-moment decisions, Alice hadn't been able to foresee just how *much* clothing I'd go through. So, though I'd had no patience to sit in front of a computer and order replenishments, Alice had taken care of it for me and the UPS driver was sure to hate us when he realized just how many boxes he'd be unloading later today.

At least hunting had come naturally to me, as Edward assured me it would. Not that I had much of a choice in it. When I encountered the smell of animal blood, my body simply reacted.

Alice, Rose and I stepped off the front porch of the rambling cabin and I reluctantly dropped Edward's fingers from my own, hating the idea of parting from him. His expression was as forlorn as mine - now that we *could* do everything together, we did. But even I had enough awareness to realize that time apart was healthy. And I didn't want us to ignore our relationships with the rest of the family. So I was having a girls' day, and Edward was doing...whatever it is that boys do when they're unsupervised by women.

"Okay," Alice chirped, trying to distract me, "last one to feed has to give the other two pedicures!"

I looked at Rose, whose lips bore the hint of a smile despite her rolling eyes.

"Um, Alice, you do realize that if I lose this, you're going to have a jittery attention-deficit newborn wielding paint at your person, right?"

She just laughed and took off.

Determined not to have to spend time petting the girls' feet, as pretty as they were, I took off a second later, Rose on my heels.

Running was my third favorite activity these days, behind feeding, of course, and sex. Those two were really tied for first, particularly as one usually led to the other. So at least *all* my fears hadn't come true - I definitely *could* think of things other than my bloodlust.

"I'm going to want every toe a different color," Rose taunted as she shot in front of us.

I was just about to respond when Alice's face clouded and a scent so delicious came over me that I tore off in a separate direction.

I heard Alice yell my name and then Rose's, but I was too intent on finding the source of the succulent scent wafting through my nose and calling to my veins.

"Bella, no!" Alice called.

Mine! I jeered inwardly, casting a glance over my shoulder to ensure they posed no immediate threat. Rose was closer than Alice, but still a good seventy yards behind me.

Intellectually I knew that the others wouldn't take my hunt from me, but instinctually their proximity continued to raise some defensive and possessive response. It wasn't as intense as that first hunt, though.

Alaska had a large and varied wildlife population. And, its generally thin population density combined with the Cullens' 1000-acre tract of land ensured us a plentiful food source and a large area within which to find it. So far I'd had caribou, deer, elk, one moose, and some dall sheep. Without question, in each instance the blood had been thirst-quenching. But nothing had tasted even remotely as good as this smelled.

"Bella! Bella! You don't want this!" Rose called from somewhere closer behind me.

I pushed my body, determined that she would not keep me from that scent.

The terrain began to incline, and I was dodging rocks now as well as trees. I burst through a line of dense scrub, taking out a swath of it with my hard body, and came upon them.

"Bella! Don't!" someone called behind me.

My less-than-stealthy approach had startled them, and some scattered.

Wolves. I'd zeroed in on a pack of wolves.

I propelled my body over them, rather than into them as had been my initial intent as I'd followed my hunt.

Internally, I warred with myself because I. Did. Not. Want. To. Eat. Wolves.

But, *holy frickin' crow!*, they smelled better than anything, *anything*, I'd yet encountered.

Rose shot through the brush next and followed my lead, flying over the two adults who remained in teeth-bared defensive stances in front of a group of pups trying to hide themselves or scramble over some rocks that blocked their flight. Rose landed next to me and threw her arms around me at the same time that Alice caught up with us.

I trembled in Rose's arms. She was already dragging me backwards away from the amazing-smelling meal the wolves' scent promised. When one of the wolves snarled aggressively and took a step in our collective direction, Alice turned and growled viciously, and the adult bit back a whimper and turned tail.

So much venom was flowing in my mouth that a bit drooled out the corner of my lips.

"We know, Bella, hang in there. We'll make it better."

My bloodlust prevented me from knowing what I was saying. "I...I...want...I....God," I whimpered incoherently.

Rose continued to manhandle me as we lost sight of the tantalizing creatures. When we were far enough away, they each grasped me by an arm and guided me. The challenge now was that other animals seemed to be scarce, and so we had traveled some distance before we came across a small herd of black-tailed deer. It was like the difference between iceberg lettuce and filet mignon.

But my bloodlust remained urgent enough that my instincts rose just the same. The girls stepped back and let me take my fill first, knowing that I'd be too possessive to let them partake until I was sated.

Two large deer did the trick this time. And then Rose and Alice moved in to take one each for themselves.

I was fascinated watching them. It was my first time hunting with anyone besides Edward. Given our nearly constant frenzy for one another, and the way that hunting only seemed to heighten that need, neither of us had been willing to bring the others along.

But as I lay on the forest floor watching dainty Alice handily immobilize and devour a large buck, and beautiful refined Rose with leaves in her hair and dirt under her nails, I was...intrigued. I felt like such a voyeur in that moment, seeing something I'd never seen before and finding it...um, *shit*, arousing. *Dammit! Vampire hormones are a bitch!*

Rose looked up with a smile, her lips redder than usual from her meal. "Don't worry, Bella, watching you feed is every bit as interesting." She licked her lips and laughed at whatever expression she saw on my face. "You would *so* be blushing right now if you could."

"Now, Rose, don't torment the newborn," Alice chuckled as she brushed off her jeans.

"Yes, Rose," I gulped.

Clearly, I was as visually stimulated as I was aurally. I recalled the first time I saw Edward hunt. *Holy hell*. It was my fourth time hunting - I'd been far too possessive to allow him to feed in my presence beforehand. But as he always took care to provide for me, my vampire brain learned quickly that he wasn't there to deny me. Still, as always, he'd let me take my fill first. Then he'd knelt down at the side of the elk furthest from me and, with his dark eyes on mine - they always darkened as they watched me hunt, which I *loved* - he lifted the animal's thick neck in his hands and sunk his teeth into the soft, warm flesh. His eyes flashed

instantly black in reaction to my heated gaze. Slowly I crawled on hands and knees towards him. My mouth was salivating again in response to his actions. His eyes caught every movement of my body, and in a flash my hunger flared up again.

He'd pulled his own mouth away and held the beast out towards me. I'd clamored closer to him until our knees nearly touched, and then I sliced my teeth into the carotid on the side opposite Edward's initial bite. I grasped his hand where it supported my meal and I squeezed, pulling him incrementally towards me, trying to communicate an invitation. Finally he understood, and carefully he leaned down and reattached himself. I tilted my face slightly in his direction. We were eye to eye. Wisps of my hair blew across his face. The intimacy of the moment - our first truly shared meal *ever* - gripped me and I moaned. Together we made quick work of the large male and it ran dry.

I pulled back with a whimper and wiped away a trail of blood on my cheek with the back of my hand.

Edward grunted, shoved the spent elk away, and lunged on top of me, knocking me backwards into the soft bed of the forest floor.

"There's something else I need to share with you," he'd ground out in a raw scrape of a voice. And seconds later another pair of my pants had been laid to waste for our need, but with Edward's heavy cock filling me so deliciously, I couldn't have cared less. The intensity of our joint feeding had turned us into a grunting, hissing, growling pile of entangled limbs, frenzied thrusting, and deep, devouring kisses.

And now...now...I could explore *his* mouth. My change meant Edward no longer needed to protect me from his teeth. And I reveled in the feeling of his sucking on my tongue or scraping it lightly with his teeth. The elk's blood in his mouth heightened his own incredible flavor and I'd groaned and bucked against him. We parried with our tongues, each of us dominating and submitting by turns.

"Earth to Bella, come in, Bella."

I looked up to find Alice standing in front of me, waving her hand in front of my eyes.

"Must've been some daydream," she teased.

"Um, yeah," I mused as I stood up. I was more worked up than ever - between hunting, watching them feed, and remembering Edward feeding and our time together afterward.

We all brushed off and I pulled a couple of leaves from the back of Rose's hair for her. We decided the hunting bet had turned out a tie this time, so we simply agreed to a general afternoon of girls' fun.

"Hey Bella?"

"Yeah, Rose?" I said, bracing for a taunt of some sort.

"I just wanted to say that what you did back there was very impressive."

I frowned at her.

"Restraining yourself, I mean."

"I didn't do that. You did. I was...I wanted...I-"

"No, Bella, you did that. You were standing at the far side of the pack when I broke through the brush. I only made sure you didn't change your mind."

I gulped, not appreciating the reminder of the pack. "Why-"

"Because they're carnivores," Alice replied, not needing me to voice my question to know what I wondered. "Carnivores taste and smell better than omnivores which taste and smell better than herbivores. You'll be able to tell their scents apart, eventually."

"Oh."

"Don't worry," she continued, "there are other meat eaters out there besides wolves."

"Good," I breathed. "Cause they smelled...." I trailed off, not able to finish my thought.

"Would you be very mad at me if I said they taste as good as they smell?" Rose asked.

"Rose!" Alice and I both chastened at the same time.

"Shit, Rose! No. But, shit!" I hissed, annoyed both by the temptation and by her obvious enjoyment of making me squirm. But Rose didn't have the same compunction against eating wolves as I did, so I couldn't hold her willingness to consume them against her. Luckily my glutton stomach enabled me to beat down the temptation.

We took off through the forest in the direction of home, and the physical demands of the pace helped ease my tension. Light rumbles of thunder shook the morning sky, and when we emerged from the forest's cover, we felt the first drops of rain. Soon, the sky opened up and large, fat drops fell in a deluge. The thunder intensified, and as we saw the first bolts of lightening, the mid-day atmosphere thickened and electrified.

Christ, I groaned. This is not helping my situation.

With the house some distance ahead, I stopped and bent over, resting my hands on my knees. And I heard Edward's voice: *"A good storm adds a certain level of...intensity to the experience....When the violence of the weather combines with the violence of the hunt, it apparently makes their...alone time...more...intense."*

Shit.

"Come on, Bella, we'll take care of you," Alice urged. We took off at a jog. When we reached the first of the outlying one-room hunting cabins from the days when the property served as a touristy lodge, Alice caught my arm with her hand. "Why don't you wait inside to get out of the rain, Bella? We'll go get Edward for you." The look on her face was filled with understanding, and a little mischief too.

I nodded, my voice too choked by the competing urges that seemed to fill my throat. I really didn't mind this crazy lusting over Edward, as long as it could be satisfied. I'd just never not had him with me when the need hit.

I skipped up the two old wooden steps, jogged across the wooden porch, and pushed through the old door with squeaking hinges.

And crashed into something hard and unyielding. My nose registered his scent before my eyes even had the chance to focus.

"Oh, thank God," I groaned as my lips found his.

"Good hunt?" he asked around the edges of our kiss.

But I wasn't willing to release from this much-needed contact and I simply moaned as I grasped and clutched at him, pulling him closer.

"Let's get you out of these wet clothes, love," he whispered, and within seconds we had stripped bare. Some of our clothes had made it off intact, some hadn't.

I glanced down at the pile of fabric and Edward chuckled. "Don't worry. The UPS truck got here an hour ago."

I nodded but was right back on him again, kissing, licking, tugging at his hair, and running my hands over his sculpted body. As I pawed and groped at him, we walked backwards through the otherwise empty room until he hit the dingy wall with an impact that caused a splintering crack.

I crushed myself against him, my breasts flattening out against his chest, and he wrapped his arms around me and pulled me in further, our lips never separating. The kiss became so urgent that our teeth crashed and both of our lips were coated in the other's venom. I needed closeness so desperately that I was rubbing myself against him, lifting my leg up to stroke his outer thigh from hip to knee. I sucked hard on his tongue, doing my best impression of a blow job on the sweet muscle in his mouth, and moaned in relief when his hands slipped down my ass, kneaded and squeezed my cheeks, and then lifted me up and around him.

He spun us around, slamming my back against splintered board he'd cracked, and it now wiggled freely within the wall.

"I got ya, baby," he cooed as he bent his knees, angled his hips, and thrust his cock into the dripping heat of my pussy.

"Oh, fuck," I groaned.

He pulled out slow and pushed back in even slower with a grunt, movements he repeated twice more.

"Aw, no, no, no," I groaned. "Faster."

A dark smile crossed his face, and he slid back again, slower still if possible - he was fucking torturing me on purpose.

"God damnit, Edward!" I shoved us off the wall, pushing the loose board and its neighbors out entirely. Fat drops of cold rain splashed through the opening against my back. Edward now held my weight entirely and

I tightened my grip around his neck, using my arms as leverage so that I could better control the pace and depth of our coupling.

I grunted and leaned my head into his neck as I slammed myself down on him.

"Fucking hell," he murmured as my slapping thrusts against him reverberated around the room and wore down his ability to torment me.

I grinned in satisfaction as Edward abandoned all pretenses at control and thrust into me with abandon. Again and again, Edward drilled his hips up into me as I pounded my body down onto him, impaling myself on his engorged cock.

I loved the feeling of him supporting me this way, but after a few minutes I felt his thighs trembling each time my bottom slammed against them. I released my legs and slid my feet down to the floor.

Edward frowned. Panting, I looked around the barren room, then met Edward's black eyes as I grabbed his hand and led him over to the window sill. I placed my hands on the sill and bent over, my spread legs issuing an invitation.

"Oh, yes," Edward hissed as he stepped forward and plunged into me in one slick, hard thrust.

I cried out in satisfaction - he could go so much deeper this way.

"Hold me, Edward, use me. Give me everything," I pleaded in a hoarse voice.

With one hand gripping my hip bone and one curled tightly around my shoulder, Edward hunched himself around me and pounded into me. When I paused to think about it, it was astounding just how much Edward had had to hold back in our lovemaking when I was human. Because just then he came at me so hard that my fingers shredded through the wood of the window frame as I attempted to brace myself against his movements.

"Yes, Edward. So....*uh my God...*so damn good."

He grunted and thrust harder and angled his hips to hit new and deeper spots inside me. An explosive orgasm consumed me out of nowhere. I screamed and gasped and felt my juices dripping down my thighs. Not paying attention, my right hand had tightened so fiercely that I tore the window sill out completely, shattering the bottom half of the glass pane.

Edward let up for just a moment and I growled, "Don't you dare stop, Edward. You told me thunderstorms made this intense. I want it intense. Now!"

"You want it rough, Bella? Is that what you're saying?" he growled back.

"Yes, Edward. Fuck!" I screamed as he grabbed a handful of my hair and pulled, wrenching my body into an arc in front of his.

"Grab the back of my head, Bella," he rasped.

I reached back, feeling the amazing softness of his bronze locks, and threaded my fingers together behind his head. The position arched my back as he held my hips firm and I could only give in and throw my head back.

"This, Bella, this fucking position is on *my* list," he ground out as he filled me hard and fast. "You look so incredibly hot like this. I knew you would. My God."

My arousal heightened at the mention of his list, as always, but particularly as I now knew it existed in written form. Only, I hadn't read it yet, because my newborn nature made it too difficult to concentrate enough to read for more than a few seconds at a time. I was literally *chomping at the bit* to get at it. And Edward was having way too damn much fun taunting me with what might be on it. *For Chrissakes, he'd needed more than two pages!* That much he had taken great pleasure in telling me.

This position strained every muscle in my body but ensured that with every thrust he rammed into that special place inside me that seemed directly connected to my orgasms. I was whimpering loudly each time he made connection with it. "Your cock feels so good, Edward. I needed it so....oh God....so bad. Need it...so bad."

"It's all yours, Bella. All...ah, Christ...I'm gonna...gonna need you to come again, Bella. Want you to," he groaned as his forehead fell heavily against the crown of my head. He moaned and whispered and hissed into my ear.

Then, whispered words of gratitude left his mouth that brought my orgasm crashing down on me: "I'm so fucking grateful I get you forever, like this."

The complete acceptance and guileless joy of those words caused my body to erupt in tremors. My quaking muscles were unable to support my body in its current position, and my knees buckled. My hands around the back of Edward's head pulled him down on top of me. We fell together until we crashed into the rotted wood floor with so much force that we took the whole corner of it to the ground.

Edward roared out his orgasm as his body fell heavily on top of mine and stilled himself as his cock pulsed again and again inside of me.

In the next instant, a creaking groan from somewhere above sent Edward sprawling his body to cover as much of mine as he could as the whole corner of the ancient cabin caved in on top of us.

"Bella! Bella!" Edward called out in a rasping voice.

"Edward, holy shit! Are you okay?"

"Yes, I'm fine. Are you-"

"I'm...I'm...okay...Ed...Edwa...." And then I completely lost it. I was laughing so hard I knew I'd be crying if I could. And it was even funnier because the weight of the partial roof and wall on top of us was holding Edward firmly inside my body, and so as the hilarity gripped me, my clenching stomach muscles grabbed on to Edward's still firm length inside me. I knew I didn't need to breathe, but between our recent activities and the force of my laughter I felt completely breathless, and couldn't get any words out of my mouth.

Edward pressed a smiling kiss into my cheek and slowly sat back up off of me, using his back and shoulders to lift a segment of the roof up and away.

His removal of the debris allowed the rain to sheet down onto us, which for some reason made the whole thing funnier. Here I was, laying face down in pile of ancient rubble that I'd helped cause, naked, with Edward's fluids still dripping out of me, in the pouring rain. And I was laughing so hard my face muscles were starting to hurt.

Edward rolled his eyes at me but had a big crooked grin on his face. His expression was so filled with mirth and pride that I could've kissed him.

He extended his hand down to help me up at the same time that his face snapped away from my gaze.

And that was when I heard it.

Clapping.

Ignoring Edward's hand, I pushed my upper body up just enough so that I could see over a remaining part of the foundation.

And there, about fifty feet away, stood Alice, Jasper, Rose, and Emmett.

Clapping.

They were fucking applauding us!

I groaned and ducked my head, mortified beyond belief. And I knew I had two options: 1. Be embarrassed and have them use this against me for eternity. *Eternity! Like, actually, forever.* Or, 2. Woman up.

I pushed myself back up so I could see them. "I'm planning to hate all of you forever, just so you know."

Now the clapping stopped, but only because they were all clutching their stomachs and leaning on one another for support, they were laughing so hard.

"Now, go away," I continued, ignoring their annoying display. "I'm not done fucking my husband yet."

With that, I flipped myself back over and reclined against an intact but downward-slanting piece of floorboard and pulled Edward down on top of me. His face was a mixture of disbelief, amusement, and arousal, and I grinned hugely at him.

"Atta girl," Rose chuckled.

"Bravo! Bravo!" Emmett shouted obnoxiously. "Encore!"

"Go away!" I hollered, before pulling Edward's lips down to my own. I kissed him over and over, both of us still full of smiles. "One of us should have put 'destroying a building' on our list," I joked.

"Who said I didn't?" he deadpanned.

I gaped. "You are incorrigible!"

"Truly, I am," he said with that killer crooked grin.

Drops from his rain-darkened hair fell onto my face and I smiled. The thunder had lessened now, and was back to being just soft rolling rumbles. "Hey Edward, we're actually *outside* now."

He looked up at the sky and squinted against the steady shower. "That's for sure," he quipped, turning and shaking his hair purposely to get me wet.

"Hey!" I protested with a laugh. He kissed me softly and after a few minutes I pulled back. His eyes were still dark but not as pitch this time. "Make love to me outside during a thunderstorm, Edward?"

"With pleasure, Bella," he said, as he carefully settled himself in the cradle of my thighs and slid home. Whereas earlier we had been intense and needy and urgent and rough, now we were tender and worshipful. And I wrapped myself around him knowing I had everything I'd ever need right there in my arms.

Three Weeks Later

I walked into the kitchen and came to an immediate halt. They were all standing there, holding a large cake with lit candles.

Then the singing started: "Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you..."

"Um, guys? It's not my birthday."

"...happy birthday dear Bella..."

"And, um, also, uh, that's people food."

"...happy birthday to you!"

I stood staring at them, completely perplexed by the display in front of me. They all had the hugest grins on their face, particularly Alice who was bouncing as she juggled the cake. Edward's face was the picture of amusement as he watched me try to figure out what the hell was going on.

"Thank you?" I finally said, since none of them were explaining.

"Happy One Month Birthday!" Alice finally exclaimed.

One month birthday? Oh. "Oh, really?" I mused, not having realized. "Wow." I looked at the half-sheet in Alice's hands. "But what's with the cake?"

She rolled her eyes and slid it onto the island counter. "Atmosphere," she proclaimed. "And, you can still blow the candles out and make a wish."

I smiled. "Okay." I flicked my gaze to Edward and kept my eyes on him as I blew out the candles. *I wish that Edward and I stay as happy forever as we are right now.* Though I didn't really think I needed to wish for that, I figured it couldn't hurt.

"Now presents!" Alice clapped.

"Oh no, guys, really?" I looked at Edward. "Did you know about this?"

"Guilty," he smiled, "but I'm a sucker for any opportunity to celebrate you, so I was on board from the beginning."

I rolled my eyes but took his hand.

From out of nowhere a pile of presents materialized. Edward pulled out the chair at the head of the long kitchen table for me and I sat. He sat next to me, and everyone else took their seats too. Alice was perched on Jasper's lap and handed the presents to me one by one.

"This one's from Rose," Alice announced.

I looked at Rose with a raised eyebrow and took a deep breath. I was a little scared of what was likely to be in this box, but I ripped the paper away, noting with satisfaction that my control over my strength was improving every day. A month ago I would have ripped the box *and* its contents in half. Keeping the box tilted towards myself and Edward, I peaked around the tissue paper and...the leather and lace peaked back out at me. I slammed the tissue back down and looked up at Rose. She laughed at my expression and it took Edward tucking the box of unmentionables behind his back to keep Emmett and Jasper from fulfilling their demands to see its contents. "Um, thanks, Rose," I said, meaning it, but already thinking of some way to get her back.

"Open mine," Emmett said as he reached his large box across the table to me.

It was heavy. I threw him a look. "I'm even more scared now," I said. He grinned hugely in return. And then he guffawed loudly, along with everyone else, when I opened the box with two tool belts, two hammers, and two boxes of nails. The two belts were personalized with "Mr. Cabin Wrecker" and "Mrs. Cabin Wrecker" on them. Edward reached across the table and smacked Emmett upside the head, but I noted when he sat down that he was smiling.

"So, was this whole birthday idea to actually celebrate my birthday or just a fancy way of torturing me?" I asked as I looked at a gleeful Alice. I wasn't mad at all and, actually, Emmett knew Edward and I were talking about rebuilding that cabin. So his gift was much more thoughtful than it seemed on its face.

"Both!" Alice laughed as she slipped me another box. "This is from me and Jazz. I hope it's okay," she said with the most reserve of the entire event. Something about her tone gave me pause.

I bit my bottom lip and winced - that was proving a hard habit to unlearn - and tore the paper away. The package was book-sized and, in fact, it was a book or, more precisely, a photo album.

I opened it and the first page had an 8x10 photo of Charlie in his uniform. I gasped, my fingers immediately falling to touch the side of his face. My throat got thick and Edward's hand curled around the back of my neck and offered a comforting massage. "How?"

I looked up at her. "Last weekend, Jazz and I went back."

I gasped. They'd been so close to him.

I turned the pages slowly, savoring every image. The first five pages were all of Charlie going about his daily life. He clearly didn't know he was being photographed, but somehow the shots were portrait quality.

"Jasper took them," Alice supplied. That much I'd already figured. Now that I could spend more time around him, one of the things I'd learned was that Jasper was a first-rate photographer. Since he couldn't always tolerate being close to humans, he could at least feel close through the end of a zoom lens. And did he ever have an eye. He had also agreed to teach me photography - he'd seemed so pleased when I'd asked if he would consider helping me learn. We just had to wait until I could hold the camera and operate all of its buttons and functions without destroying the instrument.

"This is the best," I said in awe as I continued to turn the pages. Seeing Charlie hurt, I can't deny that, but it was also *so good* to have physical evidence that he was okay. The next page I turned stopped me cold, though: Charlie was standing with Sue Clearwater. Well, more like, Charlie was standing in front of Sue, very close in fact, looking down at her. It looked like the moment just before a kiss or a hug. I looked up at Alice and she wiggled her eyebrows up and down.

"No way!"

"Yes way," she laughed.

"Trust me," Jasper added, "there's something going on there. I felt it."

"Oh my God," I gasped as I looked back down. All of a sudden I threw myself out of my chair and at Alice and Jasper. I wrapped my arms messily around them. This evidence that Charlie might possibly have someone in his life to keep him company and help take care of him was the source of the greatest relief to me. "Thank you so much for showing me this. It's just...I can't even-"

"I know sweetie. You're welcome." Alice and Jasper both smiled at me, and then at each other. They'd done good. "Okay, next," Alice chirped as she handed me a small box.

It was hard to pull myself away from the album, as I still hadn't finished all the pages. But I also didn't want to feel rushed when I saw the pictures for the first time, so I folded it closed and accepted the small silver package from Alice's hand. I pulled the paper off and lifted the rectangular velvet box out.

"This one is from Esme and me, Bella," Carlisle offered.

"You guys...," I murmured as I turned the box so I could open it facing me. Everyone's joking had stopped and everyone was watching me closely...too closely. I glanced up at Edward and his expression was serious too, full of emotion. I lifted the lid. Inside sat the most exquisite antiqued oval locket hanging on a silver chain. It had four small sapphires set into the chain - two on each side of the locket, spaced about an inch apart from the locket and each other. The oval was about an inch long and a half-inch wide, and...

...featured the Cullen crest.

"Oh my God." My eyes stung with tears that couldn't fall. I looked up at Edward, whose face was now as filled with pride as I had ever seen, and then I looked at Carlisle and Esme, whose expressions could only be described as that of proud parents.

"Welcome, again, to the family, Bella. We all have a piece of crest jewelry. It's only right you do too. Esme designed your piece, as she did all of ours," he explained.

I looked at Esme. "This is...Esme, God, this is exquisite."

Her smile was filled with affection and satisfaction. "I'm so glad you like it, Bella. I've tried to put our personalities into each piece of the crest jewelry."

"And you have more than done so," Alice complimented, fingering her choker. I nodded enthusiastically, thinking of how much I liked Edward's cuff during those rare times when he wore it.

I didn't want to chance harming the necklace, so I turned to Edward. "Would you?"

He smiled and kissed my cheek, then scooped the necklace into his hands.

"Wait, Edward," Esme called. "Show her the inside, first."

"Right," he said as he gently pried the locket open.

It had an interesting interior. Two oval spaces sat where I expected them, but then a third oval could be twisted out so that it ended up centered out and above the other two. In the space at right was a picture of Charlie; to the left was Renee; and the one now top and center held a picture of Edward. "This couldn't be more perfect," I whispered, awed once again. "Thank you."

"You're welcome, Bella," Carlisle and Esme said together.

Edward slid the chain around my neck and hooked the clasp, then sat back down beside me. "Just one more, love," he said as he passed a shirt-sized box to me.

I ripped the paper off threw the lid to the side, then stopped when I saw a plain blue three-ring binder. "The book," I said, thrilled to see it. Edward had had it squirreled away for weeks. Only in the past several days had I finally developed the patience and attention to read again. And Edward had been adamant that we'd only look at it again when we could both read it together.

"Well, ladies and gentlemen, I'm pretty sure this is our cue to leave the lovebirds on their own," Jasper joked as he and Alice rose. They'd both been in the room and knew about the book, its contents, and the homework assignments.

"Wait, you don't have to leave," I protested, a little half-heartedly. The book was like a hot potato in my hands.

Everyone rose from the table and we exchanged hugs and words of family and togetherness and gratitude. Then Edward and I were together with all my gifts, an untouched cake, and our book.

"Shall we?" Edward asked, his hand outstretched before me.

I nodded and we made our way to our far-off bedroom suite. Edward closed the door and we crawled up on the bed together. We sat side by side, our backs against the new headboard, and laid the open book across both our laps.

Edward asked me to read the eleven remaining entries to him. He wanted to hear them in my voice. He would glance back and forth between the page and my face as I read, and his expression was full of wonder. Finally, I got to the end.

72.

So, this is the end. Or, really, the end of the beginning. And I thought I'd take a moment here to make you realize just how much you've changed my world - just how much I see you in the world around me. I can barely look around without a million reminders of you, us, and our life together, which I love. I mean, so many little things remind me of you: Italian food, classical music, biology, lemonade, silver cars, Romeo & Juliet, sunshine, twilight, wildflowers, school, pizza, Volvos, ice cream, piano music, baseball, tents, soft humming, the color blue, gold and bronze, speed, crooked smiles, flying, hot tubs, cowboy hats, panties, candle wax - Ah! I could go on and on. All these things reflect and sum up so many special moments between us, and I cherish each and every memory.

I'm okay and I love you.

Edward spent the next hour telling me stories about some of the items on that list I didn't fully remember. I remembered more than I expected from my human life, but many things were dull or fuzzy or partial.

Finally, he said, "Turn the page."

I did. All of Edward's "homework" were on new pages inserted behind the seventy-second entry. The first one reflected places he'd like to travel. Despite his long life, he hadn't traveled that much more than I had. That is, beyond the places where he and Carlisle had settled and resettled early in his changed life. Number one on that list for him was what he labeled a classical music tour of Europe - visiting the homes, schools, and concert halls of the great composers like Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Mendelssohn, and others.

Next was a list of more than two dozen books, Edward's favorites. I was excited to finally be able to consider reading again. The third list included Edward's favorite popular music - this list went onto the back of the page and represented a real eclectic mix of music from across nearly six decades.

Four pages in I found Edward's favorite movies, another list that extended most of the way down the backside of the page.

I laughed out loud when I turned to the fifth page. It read: "All of them are the worst. And none of them are worth watching."

I shoved him with my shoulder as I laughed. He grinned and turned the page, where he did, in fact, humor me by writing down a *few* vampire movies worth watching for one reason or another. Apparently, Edward was not a big fan of fictional vampires.

On Edward's writings went. I'd asked him to write in as much detail as he could any human memories he still retained. I'd asked him to write down his memory of three major historical events or moments he'd witnessed. For hours we sat and read and talked and kissed and touched.

And then, finally, we came to the tenth list. *The list. Well, that doesn't really work for a title, now, does it? 'The List' is mine. Edward's List, then.*

Edward's List, indeed.

There were many differences between our lists. Whereas I had simply listed specific acts, Edward's list consisted mostly of paragraph-length descriptions of positions, experiences, or 'scenes' that he'd fantasized about and hoped to play out at some point. It wasn't role playing, really, it was just that Edward had had so much time to think about his fantasies that they were much more well developed and conceived than mine.

For example, number one involved him wearing a suit and me wearing a gown he'd apparently *already found and purchased* from 1917. He wanted to take me on a date as he might have in his own time. And then he wanted to bring me home and very carefully take that gown right back off.

And, on the opposite side of the spectrum, I apparently wasn't the only one intrigued by the idea of leather....

He put his hand down across the page.

"Hey!" I protested.

"Are you sure you want to read it, Bella? Don't get me wrong - I wrote it down *for you*, just like you asked me to. And I'm more than willing to share. But are you sure you wouldn't rather be surprised and just *experience* it?"

I thought about it. I looked at him and his face was just filled with so damn much erotic promise. And then I looked down at the book, and words tantalized me where I could see them between his fingers. I could make out the words "cause structural damage" between his thumb and forefinger.

I frowned, and frumped, and crossed my arms, and harrumphed. "Oh," *I am so gonna kick myself for this*, "alright. I'll be surprised. But I reserve the right to change my mind!" I qualified.

"Absolutely," he said, clearly delighted that I was going to let him take the lead in unveiling his fantasies to me, one by one and in the moment. He pushed the book off of our lap and it fell closed beside him. Then he rolled towards me and captured my face in his palm and my bottom lip in between both of his. "Why don't I show you one right now?" he offered seductively.

"Why don't you?" I teased back in between kisses.

"Are you open to anything, love?" He pulled back, his eyes already dark and heavy lidded. Whatever it was, it appeared the very thought of it thrilled him.

"Of course, Edward. There's nothing you want that I don't want too. Remember?"

"Mmmhmm," he murmured, his mouth now attached to my throat. He lingered to kiss the overlapping scars of several bite marks below my ear. "Well, I know you'll like this one, Bella, 'cause it's also on your list too. Although I had a very particular version of it in mind."

"Show me, Edward," I pleaded in a whisper.

Moments later, our clothes were shed (and intact!) and I was lying flat on my back on a blanket on the bedroom floor.

For one second, I thought he might back out of whatever it was, but then he dropped to his knees beside my head. He leaned forward and gave me a deep, wet sideways kiss. And then he straddled my head, the front of his body facing down the length of mine.

"Are you sure-"

"Show. Me. Edward."

With that, Edward dropped forward so he was on his hands and knees, and then he leaned down again so that he supported his upper body on his elbows.

The engorged length of his erection hung down the side of my face and rubbed provocatively against my cheek. My mouth sought him out and with a moan I wrapped my lips around the side of him and slid my lips up and down.

"God, Bella," Edward groaned, and then his hands pulled my legs apart and his silky hair brushed my inner thighs a moment before he sucked my clit in between his lips.

And then, as my incredible husband threw himself into our joint fantasy with every bit of his heart and soul - licking and penetrating me with his skilled tongue while shamelessly pursuing his own pleasure in my mouth - I knew we were looking at an eternity of boundless, adventurous passion supported by a love so true that it had survived death so it could live on forever.

Almost Ten Weeks Later, Christmas Night

Edward and I laid in front of the fireplace in our newly rebuilt, renovated, expanded, and decorated cabin. The work had been a group effort. All of us had pitched in to tear the old place down and build a new cabin on its footprint, expanded to add a fireplace and a spa-style bathroom complete with a shower like the one at The Aerie. As their Christmas gift to us, the girls had done all the decorating and furnishing, and the interior was now a charming shabby chic full of sumptuous fabrics reminiscent of a French country farmhouse. For their gift, the boys had wired the cabin for cable and electricity and decked it out with all the electronics we would ever need.

We still hung out in our suite at the main house, but prized the idea of our cabin for privacy and escape. I knew Edward appreciated the opportunity to quiet the voices in his head, particularly as a new voice had started to make an occasional appearance there.

Mine.

As my newborn behavior and urges began to even out, the Cullens' old friends the Denalis started coming to visit. Apparently Carlisle had asked them to delay their welcome of me until I was more stable, fearing that I might feel overwhelmed in the presence of so many largely unknown vampires.

The sole male in the coven, Eleazar apparently had the ability to detect other vampires' abilities. And he was certain I had one, evidenced in part by the ineffectiveness of Edward's telepathy on me. Eleazar called it a 'shield,' and said that once I learned how to control it, I would be able to block other vampires' abilities or, alternately, to enable them past it and into my head.

And, so, I practiced. Using my memory of the glass room from my change - something which Carlisle and Eleazar now felt quite sure was my transforming vampiric brain's way of seeing my shield and trying to make sense of it - I began trying to visualize pushing my glass bubble out around Edward to see if he would be able to hear my thoughts.

It took a long time to figure out how to make the visualization work for me and, once it started to work, it took a long time to hold my concentration sufficiently to test Eleazar's theory.

But one day in November, Edward heard my thoughts for the very first time.

We began to pursue more and more time alone so that he would be sure to hear my thought-voice when I was finally able to open my shield around him. This was part of what motivated our rebuilding of the cabin.

"One more present to open, love," Edward murmured into my ear as he reached down to the floor and grabbed a wrapped box. We had waited to exchange presents until we were alone, and had our presents for each other waiting under the small Christmas tree we'd decorated together on Christmas Eve night.

I smiled at him and made quick work of the paper. "Oh, Edward," I exclaimed as I saw the web cam equipment. I lifted out another piece of paper to learn that Edward had also sent one to Charlie and to Jacob. He had just given me all my men back.

"Now that your eyes are starting to change, I thought you'd like to be able to see them - well, especially Charlie - when you talk to them, rather than just talking to them by e-mail."

"This is...Edward, you always know what I need." I leaned into him and he tucked me under his arm. I pressed small kisses against the side of his neck. "Thank you. This has been the best Christmas ever."

"I couldn't agree more." He kissed my hair and leaned his head on top of mine.

"Your turn," I said as I pulled away and grabbed his box. A flock of butterflies took up residence in my stomach. Taking a deep breath, I handed it to him and he laughed as he took it into his hands.

"This feels empty."

I just smiled.

Like a child on, well, Christmas Day, Edward tore through the paper and into the box. "It *is* empty," he exclaimed with a big smile on his face.

I concentrated hard and felt it the moment I'd brought him inside my mind. *Wanna play a game?*

He raised an eyebrow in response. "With you, of course."

There are pretty strict rules you'll have to follow.

His eyebrow raised impossibly higher.

First, you have to follow the written instructions you'll find. Second, you have to remember I love you beyond all reason. And, third, you have to follow the clues to come find me.

"Hmm...this sounds very intriguing."

I smiled in response and tried very hard to keep my thoughts neutral. I rose to my feet, still clad in the red jersey wrap dress I'd put on for the festivities with the family earlier in the day. I pulled an envelope from behind my back and handed it to him. *Happy hunting*, I thought as I started to walk away.

"You're leaving?" The way his confusion furrowed his brow was downright adorable.

"No, Edward, you are," I finally said out loud. "*Read*," I urged, motioning to the envelope now dangling from his hand.

I watched Edward as he pulled the card out of the envelope. He simply smiled at the words I knew he found there: "The treasure hunt begins in our bedroom at the main house." He stood up, kissed me on the cheek, whispered "this is fun," and then left.

I let out a huge breath, trying to calm my now electrified nerves.

Tonight was finally the night for The. Gift.

Giving it to him had proven more logistically difficult than I'd expected, which was why it was so many months into my change before I was finally doing it. Alice's visions had made it clear that I couldn't be anywhere around it. Anyway we worked it, Alice saw me not only devouring the bag of my donated blood before Edward even knew it existed, but she also saw that ingesting my human blood would significantly weaken my ability to remain a vegetarian in the future. And I wasn't willing to risk that.

So I couldn't be personally involved in giving it to him or, unfortunately, watching him drink it. But part of me also wondered if he wouldn't prefer privacy for that anyway.

Alice also saw that Jasper couldn't be around once the blood was out in the open, so they needed to stay away while this was happening. I felt bad for chasing them away on Christmas night, but they both assured me they were happy to help out. That left Carlisle, as the only one who could definitely handle being in the presence of the blood, to assist in setting it out for Edward, a fact that was a little mortifying if I thought about it, so I purposely didn't. Afterwards, the whole family left to give Edward privacy for his gift. I knew he would find the house unoccupied when he got there.

Now that he was gone, I needed to set up the rest of the treasure hunt and finish arrangements where he'd find me later. I pulled a bag out from under the bed, shoved my feet into a pair of cowboy boots that Alice had bought for me that went great with my dress, and headed out into the darkness of the Christmas night.

EPOV

Full of anticipation, I jogged up the front porch steps into the main house, surprised to find quiet and stillness. The house was empty. Apparently, everyone was out celebrating or...something.

The day had been wonderful- for the first time in 91 years, I had someone with whom to share the magic of Christmas. Bella fit in so naturally with the family and had become so comfortable in her skin that it was sometimes hard to remember that she hadn't been with us, in this life, forever. I admired her tremendously for the way she had adjusted to the new realities of her life and was so damn proud of her that I sometimes thought I would surely burst.

I pushed through the front door and...stumbled in confusion. *Bella?* I was about to call her name when I realized that the scent - *that* scent - was no longer Bella's, exactly. *What the hell?* I thought as I swallowed the venom now coating my mouth and throat.

In a flash, I stood in front of our bedroom door, on which another envelope was taped. I pulled it down and read what she'd written on the card inside:

You don't know how long I've wanted to give this to you. My hope is that you'll see this as evidence of my love for and acceptance of you, which is my intention. I just always wanted to be able to take care of you in every possible way. And I wanted to be able to give you everything you ever wanted.

I love you, forever. This is for you.

I dropped the card to the floor and pushed the door open. Standing still, I watched the door swing until I could see the small table set up in the middle of the room.

On it sat a beautifully designed crystal goblet. Full of what could only be Bella's blood.

"Jesus Christ."

Swallowing convulsively, I stalked slowly towards the table. My back and shoulders were full of tension and I felt it as my eyes darkened.

I can't...believe...I can't...can I?

I fell heavily to my knees, prostrating myself before her gift. It was then that I noticed the small card leaning against the stem of the goblet. It read, simply, "Edward, drink."

I had tasted Bella's blood before, of course - three times. Two times were of necessity: the first time to save her life, and the third time to change it. And there was the second time, during our weekend getaway, when I'd tasted the traces of blood from between her legs. It was that particular memory that caused the venom in my mouth to flow even more freely as I knelt on the floor.

Oh Bella, you crazy, silly, amazing girl. How I love you! How you surprise me again and again.

It occurred to me how much she had done and planned to make this possible. At some point she had...donated this blood. Presumably that meant Carlisle was in on her surprise, then? And they'd discussed this? And....

The pooling in mouth caused me to swallow forcefully and interrupted any further chance at rational thought. Bella's blood, as it had from those very first moments in a biology classroom far, far away, was calling to me. And was laid out for me to finally have.

I didn't know whether to run away or kneel before this most precious of scents forever and ever.

'Edward, drink': the words on the card told me Bella didn't want me to do either.

Then, before I could overthink it or talk myself out of it or run away or do something else to ruin the sheer glory of her selfless gesture, I reached out a shaky hand and wrapped it around the stem of the goblet. I reached out my other hand as well, cupping it gently around the curve of the glass, to ensure I didn't spill - waste - even a drop.

"To you, Bella," I rasped.

By the time the edge of the glass touched my lips, my body was trembling, my breathing was labored, and my erection was fully and painfully engorged.

"Uuuuhhhnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnh hhhhhhh," I groaned as the first drops of Bella's life force exploded against my taste buds. I might've had Bella's blood before, but never when it didn't represent some risk, some danger, for her. I might've had human blood before, but never blood that had been made specifically for me, that connected to my own being on some primal level. As more of the smooth warm fluid flowed down my throat, everything I thought I knew...everything I thought I remembered...about the pure satisfaction, about the dizzying fulfillment, and about the deliciously succulent taste of this kind of blood went right out of my head. Never in my life had I experienced this kind of pleasure from blood before - and it wasn't just that it was Bella's blood, it was the meaning, the intention, the emotion behind the gesture.

The room was filled with the wet sounds of my thirst and the constant moaning from low in my throat that Bella probably would have described as purring.

When I realized the goblet was half empty, I slowed my consumption, not wanting this amazing moment - a moment that would, *could*, never happen again - to end too soon. Though I knew it would no matter how slowly I drank.

My nose was filled with the heady scent of Bella's humanity and I felt the stinging in my dark eyes that would have been tears had that been possible. I groaned in tortured pleasure, wishing so desperately that Bella could be here with me. But I understood both that, really, she *was* here, and that she absolutely couldn't be.

And, to the extent that I was capable of a coherent thought, I was so very grateful to have this all to myself. If I lived a thousand years - and damn did I hope we would - I would never, ever, ever forget this moment. Or the gratitude I felt for the exquisite creature who had made it possible.

As the flow thinned significantly, I whimpered in realization that the blood, *Bella's blood*, was almost gone. The thin flow transformed first into a trickle and then into heavy drops, and from there into occasional drops only. And then all that was left was the translucent sheen of blood that remained on the inside of the goblet.

I wasn't too proud to scoop that remaining coating out with my fingers and lick from them every last remaining drop.

And then, it was gone.

I was panting, and the end of each breath rumbled with a low growl of need. A new need now. One that I *had to have Bella* to fulfill. I needed to thank my wife properly for the best Christmas gift ever given.

But first....

I carefully returned the goblet to the table and pulled off the green knit shirt I had on. I spread the material out on the carpet and then retrieved the goblet. I laid it on its side on the shirt and then I folded the material around it, forming a layer of cushioning I hoped would protect the glass for all time. I gathered the cards Bella had left for me so far and tucked those inside the folded edge of the shirt. And then I carried the wrapped treasure to our closet where I found my keepsake box tucked way in the back. I opened it and had to rearrange some things inside, but I was able to make just enough space for the remnants of Bella's gift to fit safely. I secured the box and returned it to its place, then stood. I looked at the clothes hanging around me, but knew clothing wouldn't be necessary for what I now intended to do.

Now, where to next? I asked myself, remembering this was supposed to be a treasure hunt. Finally, my eyes settled onto a card taped to the wall immediately next to the door leading out to the hallway. I pulled it down roughly and read: "Go to the place where I can see you in many different poses."

I growled. *She is so going to pay for this.* I thought and thought. *Poses...poses...pictures! The darkroom!* I raced through the house to Jasper's darkroom, where Bella had been spending a lot of time lately as Jasper taught her everything he knew about photography. I entered and, sure enough, this was the right place.

I growled again as I saw that a pair of Bella's pink panties hung with the next card on the drying wire above the developing table. I pulled both down, stuffing the panties in my jeans pocket after pausing to determine...sniff, *Christ, Bella, you're killing me.* This card offered the following clue: "Go to where you keep my green satin thong...and you thought I didn't know...tsk, tsk."

My eyes bulged. *That little sneak!* I grinned, chagrined and impressed, as I raced through and out of the house to the detached garage. Inside, I made my way to the Vanquish and opened the passenger-side door. In the glove box I found the green satin thong I'd torn off her the night our dancing had made it impossible for me to keep my hands to myself once we got in the car. I'd...procured that thong after we'd gotten Bella home and dressed that night.

The card that sat with the thong in the glove box had a smiley face at the top. *A fucking smiley face! Ohhoho is she gonna get it!* Then it said. "Come to me Edward. I'm waiting for you in our special place. Hurry."

That last word, so simple but so filled with need and urgency, turned my playfulness into a soulful longing.

And I had no doubt about where she meant. I ran, full-out and with abandon, feeling as if her presence was essential to my very survival. And it was.

As I raced through the forest, I remembered the day back in September that we'd happened upon the unusual ridge on a nearby hill. It was sheltered on two sides by a medium rock formation and in the fall a grouping of flowering trees bloomed pink and provided a penetrable wall on the third side. The open side looked out towards Denali National Park and offered a direct vista of the awe-inspiring Mount McKinley. It had become the Alaskan version of our meadow back in Forks.

When I broke through the line of trees, I came to an immediate halt, completely overwhelmed by the beauty of the sight before me. First, Bella had decorated the ridge. Somehow she had erected a pole on the ridge's edge and run three wires from it to anchor points in the rocks. Battery-powered Chinese lanterns in every color hung at alternating lengths from the wires, casting a warm multihued glow around the space. That glow was brought further to life by the undulating green and red lights in the sky. In and of itself, the aurora was truly a Christmas miracle.

Bella had also made a sumptuous bed on the ground - a mountain of thick pillows lined one part of the rock wall, and sprawling out from there were several layers of thick comforters.

And then, first and foremost, there was the beauty that was Bella. She sat demurely on the makeshift bed wearing only her crest locket, her wedding rings, and the eternity ring I'd given her so many months before.

I whimpered in need and amazement and adoration.

"Come to me, Edward," she whispered.

"Bella," I rasped, my voice cracking.

"I know, baby. Come here."

She held out her arms and I fell into her embrace.

So many thoughts fought for expression at the same time that I was incoherent as I rambled to her of my love, gratitude, pleasure, and need. She stroked my hair as I laid my head against her breast.

Her thoughts were so filled with emotion. *I just wanted you to have everything, Edward. I hope it was okay. I hope you're not mad-*

"Never," I vowed as I silenced her fears with a searing kiss. "I will cherish what you did for me forever."

"Oh, Edward," she cried as she kissed all over my face.

"Need you. Need you now, Bella. So much."

"So take me, Edward. Take me and know you'll have me for all time."

"Oh God," I moaned as I removed my pants and then came right back to her.

And then I was in her. Home. Heaven.

We moved together, giving and taking by turn. Her gift had wound me up so tightly that we made love until the dawn broke. I couldn't get close enough. I couldn't get deep enough. But we tried over and over again as we both made it our entire purpose in life to bring the other pleasure, and to use our physical connection to express our eternal love in every way we could.

Neither of us wanted the night to end. Neither of us wanted to leave that secret, sacred place. But Bella assured me, as she always does, knowing what I need even when I don't.

"Don't worry, Edward, we can come back tomorrow."

"And the next day too," I added.

"We'll have a thousand tomorrows to share together."

No. More. I'd need much more. "No, a million tomorrows, Bella. Even after a million tomorrows, I'll always want more of you. Because you taught me love and gave me a life so wonderful that I never, ever want it to end."

"A million, then," Bella agreed. "Sounds good to me." Then she chuckled. "How many years is a million days?"

"Hmm," I mused, "uh, about 2,700, give or take."

She laughed out loud. "Well, then," she joked, her voice so full of the most delightful humor, "we're going to need longer lists."

~ *The End* ~

The List:

(Those things italicized were accomplished at some point; those things bolded were accomplished in this epilogue):

- 1) *Against the tree by the meadow*
- 2) ***Feel his full weight on top of me***
- 3) ***French kiss***
- 4) ***See him naked***
- 5) *Shower together*
- 6) *Against the cold tiles in the shower*
- 7) *In his car*
- 8) *On our lab table*

- 9) *On his leather couch*
- 10) *I want him to come in my hand*
- 11) *IN MY MOUTH***
- 12) *His mouth on me, there***
- 13) *Whatever it takes to get him to say FUCK again***
- 14) *Get him to talk dirty in general***
- 15) *Submit*
- 16) *See him hunt***
- 17) *Have Edward taste my blood***
- 18) *Dominate*
- 19) *Phone sex*
- 20) *His mouth on my breasts, suckling me*
- 21) *On his piano*
- 22) *Mark me*
- 23) *Outside during a thunderstorm***
- 24) *In front of the fireplace in the Cullen's living room*
- 25) *Role Playing: teacher, doctor, police officer, vampire*
- 26) *Rough***
- 27) *Get spanked*
- 28) *In the water (in the lake)*
- 29) *In a hottub!*
- 30) *On a beach*
- 31) *In a public place*
- 32) *69***
- 33) *Eat an Edward ice cream sundae*
- 34) *Him in leather*
- 35) *Have him take me from behind***
- 36) *Seduce Edward with a striptease and then ride him cowgirl*
- 37) *Blindfolded*
- 38) *Tied up*
- 39) *Voyeur*
- 40) *Watch Edward pleasure himself*
- 41) *Play out one of Edward's fantasies for him***
- 42) *Have you rip my clothes off with your teeth and/or hands***
- 43) *Biting*
- 44) *Be able to French kiss in your mouth***
- 45) *Toys?*
- 46) *Masturbate while you watch*
- 47) *Outside under the lights of the aurora borealis***
- 48) *You standing up holding me while we...***
- 49) *Whatever it is I need to do to make you growl and/or purr***

~*~

FGB Outtake - REMINISCENCES

2nd Epilogue

EPOV

I smiled as I looked down at the yellowed pages, years ago preserved within now well-thumbed lamination. Bella's Book remained one of my most prized possessions, so filled was it with love and devotion and commitment.

The book was filled with lists – some of which we had written individually, some together – of things we wanted to accomplish in our shared life, and these were some of the most care-worn pages. Over the last fifty years, we reveled in slowly checking items off these lists, so that now Bella's Book had become a book of memories, a way of remembering all of our adventures together: places we had traveled, books we had read and discussed, movies we had watched, goals we had accomplished.

Love we had made.

All these years later, we continued to add items to our lists and surprise one another with playing out those fantasies. Our fantasies got incrementally more daring and creative once Bella was no longer confined to the isolated wilds of Alaska. Always unique, Bella needed only a few years before she was able to control her bloodlust enough to be in the presence of humans. Then her ideas of how and where we might share our physical love slowly but surely got more risqué. I loved her playfully passionate nature. She continued to own my heart and soul like no one or nothing else ever could.

"Hey, whatcha doing?" Bella's voice pulled me out of my reminiscing as she walked into our bedroom. She was as lovely as the day she awakened from the change but appeared even more beautiful in my eyes for her way she knew me and took care of me all these years. I'd never imagined just how wonderful having a partner to share life with would be.

I folded the book closed in my lap and smiled up at her. "Just thinking." I pulled my feet up on the wide window seat bench so she could sit down next to me.

She sat and leaned herself against my legs and rested her chin on my knees. "You ready to go?"

"Absolutely."

"I've liked living here," she said quietly. "Toronto's been good to us."

"It certainly has." I pushed the book off my lap as I swung my legs to the floor and pulled Bella into my arms. We'd been in Toronto for nearly a decade, both of us working on doctoral degrees at the University. The rest of the family lived in the city as well, although we hadn't lived in the same house with them in recent years.

Bella tilted her face up and her soft lips found mine. Her kiss was tender and compassionate. I was leaving behind a job offer to teach music at the university that I regretted not being able to accept. I loved that she understood the extent of my disappointment. Her kiss spoke of reassurance and support.

I threaded my hand into her thick hair and pulled her closer. A low moan rumbled in her throat and I pressed my body more forcefully into hers. Supporting her head, I slowly laid her back on the bench and lowered myself onto her.

I felt her smile against my lips but I couldn't let her go. I nipped at her lips, her jaw, her neck, her ear. Her smile grew, and finally I couldn't resist looking at her.

"What?" I smiled down at her.

"The others will be waiting for us." Her tone was not at all convincing that she really wanted me to stop.

"They'll figure it out."

I laughed at her expression. I'd learn to read her vampiric equivalent for blushing – her mouth would drop open and her eyes would dilate.

She smacked at my bicep and I grabbed her wrist and held her down, then lowered my head to lave at the slender column of her throat.

She hummed in response and weakly whispered, "We really should probably go."

"Sshh," I hushed against the shell of her ear, "I'll be quick."

That elicited the sound I'd hoped for: the glorious ring of Bella's laughter. "Oh, great."

I pulled back and frowned down at her with a raised eyebrow. "Was that sarcasm I just heard, Mrs. Cullen?"

"Yep."

"Is this a challenge I'm hearing?" I pressed my hips into the cradle of her thighs and she licked her lips. "Quick can be...good."

She forced a nonchalant expression that I knew was a complete act, even without hearing what I was sure were her excited thoughts. She struggled against my hold for a moment and then finally relaxed, looked up at me, and whispered, "Show me."

Just then, my cell phone started vibrating in my pocket. We both knew it was Alice without looking. I pulled it out, silenced it, and tossed it down on the carpet.

"Better be a little quicker, Mr. Cullen, because you know we're gonna have company within the next fifteen minutes if we don't answer that phone." The ringing of Bella's cell phone in the pocket of her coat she'd hung on the bedroom doorknob confirmed her point.

I sat up on my knees and pulled my shirt over my head. The rest of our clothes were packed in the truck waiting out at the curb – we didn't have time to replace shredded clothing.

Bella ran her nails from my pecs down to my stomach and I shivered under her sensual touch.

I reached down and pulled at the hem of her sweater, then slid it over her head. I leaned forward and, rather than removing her bra altogether, tugged the cups of her blue satin bra down, exposing her peaked flesh. The bra served to push her breasts up and in, creating an irresistible exaggerated cleavage that I couldn't help plunging my tongue into. Bella's hands flew to the back of my head and fisted in my hair just the way I liked.

I rocked myself into her hips over and over as I licked and sucked and pulled at her increasingly sensitive nipples. I'd come to learn just how much pleasure she could receive from stimulation to her breasts – it was a particularly fun way to torment her when circumstances prevented a more full expression of our lust.

"Please," she whimpered. I smiled down at her as I stood up, freeing her to pull her jeans down, which she did as I continued to pinch and twist at her nipples. Every mewl and moan reverberated directly to my cock, which sprung free at her as her hands worked at my jeans next.

I loved when she was so free and direct with what she wanted.

Bella's phone started ringing again and we both smiled as I returned to the bench, to the tantalizing space between her shapely legs. Holding my weight with one arm, I grasped my hard length and rubbed my engorged tip against the bundle of nerves at the top of her sex. All these years later, the sights and sounds and smells of our lovemaking continued to enflame me, continued to set me ablaze with lust and need.

"Unless," she panted, "you want an audience for this," she whimpered as I pressed my length against her even harder, "oh Edward...*please!*"

Bella's phone started ringing again and I smiled down at her before plunging in to the hilt.

"Oh God!" Bella screamed as she wrapped her leg around my hips and squeezed me tightly against her.

"Damn, that's so good, Bella."

Limited time and heightened need drove our pace, and I thrust into her again and again as we both whimpered at the exquisite goodness of her body clutching and sucking at mine. She grasped at me and tugged at my hair and clawed at my back. Her wet heat gripped my cock until I thought I would lose my fucking mind.

Bella's hips met mine thrust for thrust and we were wrapped around one another so tightly it was hard to tell where one of us began and the other ended. I tilted my hips and she screamed and I smiled as I went deeper within her.

"You are mine, Bella. Mine. Your body...*fuck*...you were so made for me."

Out of nowhere her muscles quickened and exploded, rhythmically milking at me as warm moisture flooded around my body as it still moved hard within her.

"Oh, Edward," she whimpered hoarsely as I clutched at her tighter and, with one final drive forward, stilled and erupted into her, my orgasm sending stream after stream of release into her still spasming core.

Bella's phone started ringing again and, through our panting, we both started chuckling.

"Mmm," I murmured as her shaking body tantalized my length, still sheathed deep within her. I moved my hips experimentally a few times and we both moaned softly.

"Okay," she smiled up at me. "You made your point. Quick can be good."

"Just good?"

She rolled her eyes but was grinning now. "Does your ego *really* need stroking?"

I thrust into her a little more firmly. "I suppose not, but something else—"

She started laughing. "I set you up for the cliché and you so went for it. Now, get up you big oaf." She pushed at my chest and I leaned down to kiss her. "I really don't want to be naked when everyone gets here."

I kissed her one last time, absolutely cherishing how comfortable and natural we were with one another in our intimacy. She'd done that for us, for me. Her list had slowly guided us through the progression of our physical relationship and, through that, had greatly intensified our emotional connection as well. "I love you, Bella."

"Me too, Edward. Now, scoot."

I rose with a grin on my face and pulled her up with me. We were cleaned up and dressed again just as the banging on the front door started.

Really, Edward? Could you two get your horndog butts down here now?

"Alice is a little annoyed," I chuckled.

Um, hello? I heard that!

"Come on, love," I said as I took her hand and mine and brought it to my mouth for a soft kiss. "Time to go break in a new house."

The melancholy over leaving Toronto was somewhat diminished by everyone's excitement to be returning to the vicinity of the Olympic Peninsula. We had been back for a few visits here and there, mostly in the early years after Bella's change when it wasn't yet so obvious that she wasn't aging. But in general, it had been a long time since we'd spent any time there. We couldn't go back to Forks yet – fifty years wasn't quite enough time to ensure no one would remain who might remember our teenage selves. But living north of Vancouver would put us closer than we'd been in years and make it possible to sneak into Forks now and again.

After years of busy schedules and demanding course loads, Bella and I planned to take some time "off." I was going to spend some time composing, and she was going to try to do some writing. We were both looking forward to the more relaxed pace.

Halfway through the trip to our new home, Bella insisted on taking a turn at driving, despite the fact that I wouldn't, of course, tire. I finally relented, knowing how important it was to her to be my equal in all things. This, of course, was completely ridiculous, as she would always be more than me.

The free time and the lulling motion of the truck relaxed my mind and once again set it afloat to think and reminisce. One particular memory took hold.

Our fifth wedding anniversary.

Bella had just recently been able to be around humans again – or so I thought.

It turned out she was doing something else during all those times I thought one of the other of my family members was taking her on extended hunting expeditions or experimental trips to be around people.

BPOV – two weeks before their 5th anniversary

"I'm so nervous, Jasper."

He chuckled. "Uh, yeah, got that."

I smirked at him. *Of course he did.*

"It's going to be great, Bella, you'll see."

"But what if he's mad? What if it upsets him? What if—"

"Not possible, darlin'. He's going to flip – in a good way – when he learns what you've been up to."

I sighed. "These are really good," I said as I shuffled through the photographs we'd gotten retouched and enlarged.

"Yeah. They really are. Come on, let's drop them off at the framing store so we can get the rest of this stuff done."

Jasper had been keeping me on track from the beginning of this project. A project I was at once so excited about I thought I might explode, and so nervous about that I could barely sit still.

It all started one day a few months after my change when Edward and I decided to write out everything we could about a favorite childhood memory. Edward's memories were less full than mine, but he managed to recall his mother standing in the kitchen of their house making him cookies. He could remember that they were his favorite kind, and she was making them just for him. But he couldn't for the life of him remember what kind of cookies they were. As we shared what we wrote with one another, I learned what little he remembered about his human life.

And I was stunned to learn, in the course of that conversation, that Edward still owned his childhood home in Chicago.

He had never returned. He wouldn't really say why, though I suspected he found it difficult to face such a big reminder of the life he never had the chance to lead. But even back then Carlisle had a contact who could manufacture documents when necessary, and they made it so that the house passed into the possession of a distant Masen relative who was, of course, Edward. Carlisle advised Edward to retain the

house as an asset – while Carlisle was well off, I'd learned that the Cullens' crazy wealth hadn't accrued until after Alice joined the family.

I hadn't given much thought again to Edward's house until I began wracking my brain for his Christmas gift for our fourth Christmas. Edward was a consummate gift giver – he always bought me the most unique and perfect gifts, gifts that showed just how well he knew me. I, on the other hand, always struggled with what to give, although he always assured me that what I got him was perfect. For our fourth and most recent Christmas as a married couple, I'd toyed with the idea of somehow doing something with or at his house, but I just couldn't figure out anything that seemed good.

And then this past Valentine's Day, an idea came to me, and I knew what I had to do. And when I wanted to do it.

I'd come into our bedroom the afternoon of Valentine's Day to find a large wrapped box with a big pink velvet bow lying on our bed. It was the third time I'd found such a thing and I knew what it was, just not *when* it was from.

See, one set of Edward's fantasies was for him to take me on dates with both of us dressed as if it was a different era in the past. The first time Edward had given me an exquisite, and original, blue sequined flapper dress from the 1920s. That night, he explained that he wanted to add me into his memories of the long century he'd spent alone. So we'd both dressed up just as we might have had we known each other long ago, and he'd gone all out in making every aspect of that date, and those that followed, just as if they really were taking place some time in the past.

The second time I'd received a 50s outfit, complete with poodle skirt and saddle shoes, and he'd taken us to a drive-in movie theater that was having a classic movie marathon. We saw 'Singin' in the Rain,' though it was hard to pay attention to the screen with Edward decked out in a stunningly sexy James Dean get-up. The drive-in hadn't been very busy, so we played with a little something off my list when we climbed into the back seat of the classic Studebaker he'd rented and I'd straddled his lap, poodle skirt flowing around us, until we were both completely spent.

This past Valentine's was the third and most recent time he'd given me one of these vintage outfits. I'd held my breath as I opened the box, completely expecting it – as I did both of the other times – to be the dress that had topped his fantasy list. It was one of the few parts of his list I'd seen in those spare seconds before he managed to get me to agree not to read it, and I remembered it well:

....number one involved him wearing a suit and me wearing a gown he'd apparently already found and purchased from 1917. He wanted to take me on a date as he might have in his own time. And then he wanted to bring me home and very carefully take that gown right back off....

Instead, what I'd found in the Valentine's box had been a seventies minidress and knee-high white leather boots. We'd boogied to 70s dance tunes in our private cabin until the touches and body rubbing and grinding had driven us to the bedroom. He'd commanded me to keep the boots on while he took me again and again.

As I'd hung up my minidress the morning after our disco night, I'd fingered each of the vintage outfits hanging in my closet: the blue sequins of the twenties-era dress, the satin of the pink poodle skirt from the fifties, and the big floral print of the seventies minidress. As I looked at the three dresses, I'd remembered Edward's words about wanting to add me into his memories about the past.

And I'd remembered his number one list entry.

And I'd remembered his house.

And I'd known. I'd known just what I wanted to do for Edward.

I wanted to both make that first fantasy come true, and I wanted to give him his childhood back. I wanted to make it okay for him to think back on his human life. I wanted to take some of the pain away so that he didn't feel that he had to avoid his place of birth. I remembered how it had felt that day that I'd shielded Edward from the sun during our weekend in Victoria and, once again, I wanted to save him from something – but this time what I wanted to help save him from were the demons in his own mind.

That realization was the beginning of what had sent me head long into a months-long project, with Alice and Jasper most involved as co-conspirators, to renovate Edward's house so that I could take him there to celebrate our fifth anniversary.

The only problem was that, to keep it a secret, I had to lie to Edward about where I was when I was actually in Chicago. Sometimes the cover story was a girls-only hunting trip. Sometimes Emmett would demand some "man time," allowing me to escape while the guys were all away. I didn't need to go too often, as I'd hired contractors to do what I wanted done. But I needed to check in every once in a while and make sure things were going just right.

The first time I'd gone to his house was in March, and Alice and Jasper had come with me for three reasons: moral support, curiosity, and to ensure that I was as in control of my bloodlust as I thought I was. I'd discovered, while out hunting with the girls one afternoon that January, I could resist the scent of human blood. Quite by accident we'd come upon a hunting party of three males, and the girls had nearly panicked until they realized I was able to restrain myself. I hadn't told Edward because I wanted to surprise him – my control would free us from the isolated existence we'd been living in Alaska. Neither of us minded, nor did the rest of the Cullens, really, but my control would give us options.

And my control was a big reason why I was able to pull off this project.

As we'd turned onto his street that first trip, I was enthralled with Edward's house from the very first glance.

The Masen house was a dark red brick detached Victorian townhouse that sat back a little from the street in the close-in Lincoln Park neighborhood. It had a massive ornately carved wooden front door with a huge stained-glass fan above and windows of all different shapes and placements on the front façade. On the right front corner, a conical tower was topped with a decorative weather vane.

Carlisle had given us the keys and I inserted them in the lock and pushed the door open with great reverence.

No one had lived in this house since Edward's family died. And the weight of nearly a century of silence and stillness descended on us as we stood in the dingy and dust-filled foyer.

I don't know what I'd expected. But I was in awe of everything I saw.

After five minutes of walking around the first floor, I realized I'd been holding my breath, not wanting to disturb the ancient air with my exhalations.

The rooms were empty of furniture, though all the ornate Victorian architectural details – the chandeliers, the marble mantles, the electric wall sconces, the hand-carved moldings – remained in place and undamaged.

I turned in the middle of the empty parlor and realized I was shaking.

"Upstairs?" Alice whispered, feeling my reverence for this place that was so unlike what any of the rest of them had.

I nodded and we made our way up the wide staircase and stopped to admire the huge stained-glass window at the landing.

On this floor were a series of chambers – bedrooms, presumably – and a room with a large claw-footed bathtub, but no other modern plumbing fixtures.

I felt like I should be able to *feel* which of these rooms had been Edward's, but of course I couldn't. I tried picturing him in the space, but it was so hard for me to imagine Edward – green-eyed and flush-skinned – as a child playing with toys on his floor or laying in his sleep-rumpled bed.

"Let's go up," I whispered, in search of the room Carlisle had described to me.

Apparently, in the early years of the century, they'd hired a caretaker who lived in a carriage house at the rear of the property. Once more modern security systems were available, they'd done away with the caretaker. At that time, to deter nosy neighbors or burglars from exploring the house further, they'd had all the remaining furniture and other items moved into a storage space on the third floor.

I could barely wait to see what was in there.

The chambers on the third floor were mostly small and windowless. There were two exceptions: first, the round room in the top of the tower had two stained-glass windows that threw a multi-colored kaleidoscope onto the walls. And, second, the room at the rear was dark, but large, and filled with drop-clothed furniture.

Even though we could see, Jasper pulled from his backpack the lantern he'd brought. He knew I didn't want to miss a detail.

And, oh God, what we'd found.

Pristine Victorian antiques – a large dining table and chairs, a pair of beautiful carved settees only in need of reupholstering, a huge mahogany sleigh bed with matching chests of drawers, a stenciled rocking chair, a smaller 4-poster bed with the frame for a canopy – *could this have been Edward's?* – and so many other small tables, chairs, and other pieces.

I was drawn like a moth to a flame to two wardrobes that must've taken four men a piece to carry up here. I opened them hoping for treasure, but found both of them empty. Someone had removed the clothing long ago.

As the three of us moved around the room, we came up with a game plan. I didn't want to change anything that didn't absolutely have to be changed.

We were going to clean, freshen up some paint, bring the electrical up to code and modernize the plumbing in the single bath. And then we were going to return the furniture to the main part of the house.

And for months I was a nervous wreck about it all.

This past weekend, Jasper and I had made the last trip to Chicago before the big reveal. Our fifth anniversary was in just two weeks and I needed one final trip to ensure that everything was done.

And, perhaps most excitingly, to look into a few discoveries the workmen had made as they removed the furniture from the storage room.

In the back corner, behind the wardrobes, were three crates and a huge roll-top desk apparently filled with papers.

As the history buff, Jasper had begged to be the one to come along to see what treasures might await, and I'd readily agreed. Our joint interest in photography had given us something in common and we'd become fast friends now that Jasper could stand to be around me. A weekend-long photography workshop had been our cover.

After we'd arrived at the house, I stood, mouth agape, admiring the way it had all come together. But within seconds my brain drove me upwards to solve the mysteries of the crates and the desk.

"Oh my God," I exclaimed as I ran my hand across the nailed-on lid of the first crate. They were huge – easily three feet tall by four feet wide. "Help me," I murmured as I grabbed the closest corner to pry the top off.

Between the two of us, we made quick work of the lids and set them aside.

I think Jasper was as in awe as I was.

Books. Dozens of them. A cut-glass chess set. Several paintings – three landscapes and two portraits, but I didn't know of whom. A beautiful mantle clock and dozens of figurines that must've been part of a collection and were probably priceless. A silver tea service was in need of polishing but was otherwise beautiful, and sat nestled amongst a variety of dainty rose-covered pieces of porcelain.

I couldn't stifle the sob that ripped through me as I lifted the straw packing material from the top of the third crate and saw a large wooden train. It was five cars long, with an engine at the front and a caboose at the end, and each car was painted a different, if faded, color.

"Jasper, do you think—"

He squeezed my shoulder and smiled at me. He was equally at a loss for words.

The third crate was the true treasure chest.

Jasper lifted the train out gently and set it on the floor.

Each and every item that followed ratcheted up the emotional intensity ricocheting between me and Jasper.

A folded and yellowed muslin cloth revealed a family Bible complete with handwritten genealogical entries in the front cover. I could only imagine Edward's reaction.

Three pieces of hand-embroidered fabric were folded together, and I could only wonder if Edward's mother was responsible for the fine craftsmanship.

A two-inch thick folio of sheet music caused me to grip onto the side of the crate, and made me wonder what had happened to the piano I assumed his family had owned.

A rusting round tin revealed a dozen small metal figures that I realized were supposed to be soldiers. There was no way those weren't Edward's.

"He is going to completely freak out," Jasper whispered in awe as he fingered one of the toy soldiers. He looked at me. "In a good way, of course, only in a good way."

I wasn't so sure. If I was this amped up, I could only imagine what Edward would feel.

A rectangular box on its side in the crate looked vaguely familiar and I realized it made me think of the dress boxes Edward gave me for our dress-up dates. I pulled it out and lifted the lid. And gasped.

On top was an off-white Victorian gown, heavily beaded and laced, that I could only imagine as a wedding gown. Below that was a second gown, dark green velvet in color. And in the bottom of the box were pieces of loose lace and a long sheaf of it that must have been a veil. There also two pairs of gloves – they were so small – and a beautiful if not well preserved pair of silk high heels. *This has to have been Elizabeth's trousseau...holy crow.*

I already had my gown—an authentic 1915 muted red silk scoop neck with an empire waist and lace arms—picked out for our anniversary dress-up date, but...just...wow.

Beneath the wedding trousseau was an intricately carved wooden box that I recognized as a jewelry box immediately. I lifted it out, completely mesmerized. I don't know what the box once held, but there were a lot of empty spaces inside. In light of the other treasures here, I felt silly being disappointed that Elizabeth's jewelry had at some point been pilfered, especially as I wore her very own wedding ring on my left hand, but I felt angry on Edward's behalf. Still, there were a few bracelets and necklaces that were still likely valuable given their age and condition, even if they were probably costume.

One personal treasure after another came out of that crate. But the best one of all was the thick album of photographs at the very bottom.

The album left me utterly speechless. I imagined Edward would react to it just as I had reacted to the photos of Charlie that Jasper and Alice had given me for my "first birthday," only I was sure that Edward's reaction would be mine times a hundred.

His parents' wedding photos, a very formal portrait of his father with his hand tucked in his suit coat, a full-length portrait of his mother in a long gown with a train that was fanned out behind her. And pictures of

Edward. Edward with his parents standing on the front steps of the house. A formal portrait of the three of them. It was the baby picture that did me in, that took me to my knees in a tearless sob. He was such a beautiful child, of course he was. But to see it....

It was those photographs that Jasper and I stood admiring, that we'd had enlarged and retouched and were dropping off at the framing store. I also had extras made to take back to Alaska. Edward didn't have to display them wherever we lived if he didn't want to, but I wanted him to have them close regardless.

Luckily, Edward thought our photography workshop wouldn't be over until tomorrow, so when we couldn't convince the framer to finish the job today, we still had a second day to pick up our items before we had to catch a flight back to Alaska – on a private plane (I was pretty controlled, but there was no sense pushing it in a tightly confined space for so many hours).

As the days until our anniversary ticked down, I was nearly overwrought with nerves. Of course Edward noticed. And of course he was worried.

But I'd managed to convince him that I was simply nervous about a surprise I was trying to pull off for our anniversary – I just couldn't avoid telling him that much. And he bought it completely.

It was, after all, the truth.

"Love, please talk to me," Edward said on the morning of August 12, the day before our anniversary. "I'm worried about you."

"I'm sorry," I said as I rained kisses on his face. I absolutely couldn't wait until I didn't have to lie to him anymore — I hated it beyond words, even though I knew it was for a good reason. "Worry no more. Get dressed, Edward. We're taking a trip."

He quirked an eyebrow at me.

"As in...?"

"As in, you and me are getting in the car and going somewhere, trip."

"Bella, love...."

"I'm about to give you my first anniversary present, Edward. Are you ready?"

He smiled broadly. "Always."

I took a deep breath. "I can be around people. I can handle it. Especially if I hunt beforehand."

He sucked in a breath and grasped my face in his hands. "Oh, Bella. I'm so proud of you. How long?"

"Please don't get mad."

He pressed a warm kiss to my lips and lingered, then pulled back and whispered, "Never."

"I only didn't tell you because it relates to another surprise." I took another deep breath. "Since January, or so."

"Eight months! What...why...?"

"I promise, if you get ready for our trip, you'll understand everything."

His expression went from a little hurt, to confused, to exasperated, to intrigued.

"Please? You don't need to bring anything but whatever you wear today. Everything else is taken care of."

"Hmm, this sounds intriguing," he said, his face now full of what I could only describe as awe — I was after all the only one who could surprise him. "I rather think I like mysterious Bella."

I chewed my lip — something I still hadn't unlearned five years later — and within the hour we were on our way to the airport. We took a private plane with a destination of Milwaukee, so that Edward wouldn't be able to guess where we were going based on hearing the pilot's thoughts and flight conversations.

Once on the ground, we got a rental car and Edward was all crooked grins and grabby hands as he tried to get the surprise out of me.

Once in the car, I shoved him away playfully from where he was nibbling on my neck, trying to seduce it out of me, and held up a thick piece of black cloth.

"What's this?" he asked with a smirk.

"Your blindfold. Put it on, please."

"Mmm...kinky. I like it." He waggled his eyebrows at me as he obligingly lifted it to his face and slid it on.

I chuckled and smiled at his good-natured playfulness and double checked the blindfold's position to make sure he couldn't peek. I'd already checked the thickness of the cloth to make sure he couldn't see through it.

The drive to Chicago wasn't long, only about an hour going as fast as I was. And that was a good thing. With each passing mile my stomach tightened with anxiety, lessened somewhat by Edward playing feelsy with his blind hands. I kept smacking them away with a laugh, though it did little to deter him from trying again.

I hoped his good mood would hold.

Finally, I pulled into the small driveway behind the house.

"We're here," I whispered. "You gotta do what I say, okay?"

"Bella," Edward said, "whatever it is, I'm going to love it."

Though he couldn't see me, I smiled at him because he knew me so well. I reached over and squeezed his hand, then got out and came around to open his door.

It was minutes before the last light of day would fade away, and the house was silhouetted against the dark blue of the summertime sky. Lights fully illuminated the house, inside and out, as per the directions I'd left the workmen. I wanted Edward to be able to see everything.

I opened his door and he stepped out into my waiting arms. "I love you so much, Edward."

"Hey," he said, reaching for his blindfold.

"No, baby, you gotta leave it on."

He dropped his hands to my shoulders, and then felt his way up to my face, where he cupped my cheeks gently. "What's the matter, love?"

I took a deep breath, willing the anxiety from my voice. "Nothing's wrong, Edward. I promise. Come." I grasped one of his hands in mine and pulled him along. "It's a straight sidewalk. Just come with me."

He followed until we paused at the tall gate that separated the rear yard from the street front. I opened the gate and we walked through, and it snapped shut behind us. The sidewalk curved to the front porch. I paused momentarily, still unsure whether I should remove the blindfold before we went in or after, but then decided to take him in first.

"There are three steps up."

He smiled in the direction of my voice and confidently stepped up.

And then we were at the front door.

Here goes nothing.

I fumbled with the keys momentarily and then the door was open. "A small step over the threshold," I murmured.

He stepped in, and the set of his shoulders went rigid. He inhaled deeply.

I did the same, wondering what he was reacting to. I smelled paint and cleaning products and stain and the newness of the Oriental rug I'd purchased for the parlor.

His jaw clenched. "Bella...."

I closed the door gently and quickly stepped in front of him. I gently grasped his face in my hands. "I want you, Edward, every part of you. I always have. And I want you to have everything. And so," I reached up and pulled the blindfold from his face and over his thick hair, "happy anniversary."

His eyes burned with emotion. He had yet to look from my face. "Where are we?" he whispered, his voice strained.

"It's okay, Edward, I promise. I'm right here with you."

"It smells...Bella," his voice broke, "it smells familiar."

I blinked at him.

Of course. I hadn't even considered that, but every house, every building, has its own smell. I could close my eyes right now and recall the smell of Renee's house – a mixture of paints and incense. And, even after I moved in, Charlie's house always had the baseline smell of a place where a man lived alone.

I managed a small smile and stroked his cheekbones with my thumbs. "Yeah, baby, I guess it would."

Edward slowly dragged his eyes away from my face, though he continued to stand stone still in the safe embrace of my hands and arms. His eyes slid around the foyer, up the steps, and into the adjoining parlor before settling back on my face again.

He swallowed thickly.

"I...you...."

"Would you like to look around?"

He nodded, and I leaned in and kissed him softly, then dropped my hands and stepped back.

He walked through the first floor, just soaking in everything. Occasionally, he'd stop and stare at something, and then he'd move on again. I hung back and gave him space to absorb what was happening, where he was. I don't know how many minutes passed, but I finally realized I hadn't taken a breath. But I couldn't. I didn't want to make even the smallest noise to distract him from his observations.

I saw him point as if he was having a conversation with himself, and finally he murmured, "That was over there."

I followed his musings, and realized he was pointing to the sideboard in the dining room.

Oh my God! He's remembering!

This was one thing I wasn't sure about. I wasn't sure how much he would remember. But clearly the physical presence of the house was resurrecting long-buried memories.

Finally, he looked up at me. His eyes were bright and shiny. "This is my house."

"Yeah."

"You...," he spread his arms, indicating the space around him, "you did...all this?"

I nodded.

"Upstairs too?"

"Yeah. Do you want to...?"

"Yes."

He walked towards me where I stood in the archway between the parlor and the foyer. He was walking uncertainly, almost as if he was walking through a dream, and I thought he was going to pass me by completely when he stopped, took a half step back, and grabbed my hand. He tilted his head to the side slightly, just enough to say, *Come with me*.

I resisted the now burning need I felt to throw out my shield. I was dying to hear his reactions, but I wanted to give him the privacy to react without concern for my feelings.

On the landing of the staircase, Edward paused and looked around for a moment. "I fell down those steps once," he said, pointing to the last five steps that connected the landing with the second floor. "I was....," he paused for a long time. "I don't remember how old I was."

He walked faster up the rest of the steps and headed directly, with purpose, to the rear bedroom. "This was mine."

I squeezed his hand and smiled. It was the room I'd guessed.

He dropped my hand as he walked further into the room. "The bed was over there." He turned. "And the dresser was here."

"You can change any—"

"No. I'm just saying...."

I nodded.

"Oh my God." He walked over to the corner, where an old wooden chest sat open. "This was my toy box." He sucked in a breath and knelt down. "This was my train. I can't believe I remember this. How is this still here?" he murmured to himself.

Once again I stood back, marveling at his discoveries, seeing them through his eyes. As I watched him, my eyes burned with tears that couldn't come.

We went through the entire house that way.

All of his comments were observational. He had yet to say anything that told me if this, if *he*, was okay.

After viewing the third floor, which was largely unfurnished except for the sitting room I'd created in the round room in the tower, we came back to the second-floor hallway.

I stood there, awkwardly, watching him think for innumerable minutes.

EPOV

The first smell sucked me back in time, nearly a hundred years. It was disorienting and disconcerting.

I smelled the kitchen fireplace, the faint hint of roses my mother had once displayed religiously in every downstairs room, the lingering hint of my father's pipe, the lemon oil cleaner with which the maid had waxed all the ornate foyer woodwork....

Singly, the smells were meaningless. Together, they could only mean one thing: I was in the Masen house.

My family's house.

My house.

As I began to walk through the first floor, I felt as if I was walking through a haze. Every once in a while things would get clear, and a memory from my human life would surface. In that moment I could compare the way things looked now with the way they looked then. I could remember enough to know when a piece of furniture was out of place or to notice that the updated electric lights shone much brighter now than they ever did then.

By the time I found myself standing in my childhood bedroom – my *human* bedroom – the haze had mostly dissipated and I felt like I was walking through the past and the present at the same time. In the midst of that disorientation, in the midst of the oddity of seeing my memories after so long without them, it was hard to focus on Bella, though I could tell she was there. In my mind I was exclaiming every moment of the epiphany of remembering myself, my home, and embracing the fact that returning didn't entail the sadness and regret I thought it would.

But when we'd finally made it through the house and stood face to face in the hallway outside my old room, I finally stepped out of the haze of memories and reactions enough to actually see the uncertainty and anticipation on Bella's beautiful face.

And I realized she didn't know. She didn't know what this meant to me.

I hadn't told her. Yet.

Without even thinking about it, I was on her. My chest and hips pinned her to the wall in between the bedroom doors and my hands grasped her face and tilted it up.

"Thank you, thank you," I whispered as my lips found hers and I tried to communicate the intensity of what I felt through my kiss, my touch.

"Edward—"

"Thank you," I exclaimed in an emotion-choked voice as I ran open-mouthed kisses across her jaw and down her neck.

Her hands found my hair and alternated between soft soothing strokes and the tight fisting she knew drove me absolutely crazy.

"I need you," I rasped with my lips against the smooth skin accessible in the v-neck of her blouse. "God, Bella, thank you." I began working my fingers down the buttons.

"Off, Edward, just off."

I groaned as I wrenched the fabric apart and buttons went skittering across the hard woods as she sighed deeply.

I kissed and licked and nuzzled against her cleavage and was more gentle with the enticing pink lace that supported her chest than I'd been with her top. I stripped the delicate fabric away and caught the warm, plump skin in my hands as her breasts spilled free. "Thank you," I sighed as I captured one dark pink peak in my mouth before moving on to torment the other.

"Oh Edward," she breathed as her hands kept up the same tantalizing stroking and pulling in my hair.

"No one has ever taken ca—"

I couldn't finish the thought. Because standing here, in this place of all places, I realized, I *remembered*, that it simply wasn't true. Someone *had* taken care of me once like Bella does now. Once, I had been my mother's top priority, her biggest joy, her first thought.

And I realized I'd constructed this whole story of my life: a story in which I was so alone, so isolated, so without the solace of caring.

And it pained me to realize, as I did in that moment, that I'd had more caring than I'd acknowledged: to be sure, I'd had a century of Carlisle's and Esme's affection. And, really, I couldn't have asked for better foster parents. And, beyond that, I'd had seventeen years of Elizabeth Masen's devoted mothering. After all, this was the woman who with her dying breaths made arrangements for my survival with Carlisle. Her first and last thoughts were always of me. And somehow, I'd forgotten. I'd forgotten that I actually once had been the center of somebody else's world.

And the realization brought me to my knees, right there in the hallway outside my boyhood room, with my furrowed brow resting against Bella's bare stomach and my hands gripping her hips.

"What is it, Edward? Talk to me," she soothed as she hugged my head to her in a sheltering embrace.

"I...I just...you've made me remember...you've made me remember that I've had good in my life."

"How could you not, Edward?" She leaned down and kissed the top of my head. "How could you not have had good in your life when you yourself are so good?"

I gripped her hips tighter and pressed a lingering kiss over her belly button. "You, Bella," I rasped, "you are the good. And I need you so much, baby." I tilted my head back and looked up at her.

"Then take what you need," she whispered.

And all at once the need was ferocious.

I needed her touch. And it was electrifying.

I needed her warmth. And it was all-consuming.

I needed her understanding. And God damn I miraculously had it.

I needed to be in her.

I rose, lifted her up, and carried her to the thick blue circular rug covering my bedroom floor.

"Take what you need, Edward," she said again as she undid the buttons on her jeans and shimmied them down her legs. "Take anything you need."

Christ if she only knew what she was offering. How much I need. How I want to devour her until she is inside me for all time.

Soon I matched her nakedness. I was on my knees with one of hers over my shoulder, and my mouth was buried against the soft, swollen folds of her center. I moaned "thank yous" against her until the vibration of my voice and the force of my probing tongue made her fall apart around me.

And her taste wound the coil inside me tighter, just as it always did.

Then she was under me. She lifted her body slightly until her tongue could lap at my face and I groaned. She knew what it did to me when she tasted herself on me and I could do no other than slide myself home, deep inside her.

And I was home. In every sense of the word.

She arched her head back and I pressed kisses to every inch of skin I could reach. I shuddered as her thighs squeezed my hips and her legs wrapped around me, lifting her pelvis just enough to allow me to go deeper. And it was...simply....

"Oh, God, Bella....You are...*Christ*...you are so much...."

"Take as much as you...as you need," she panted. "I want you....to have...everything....mmmm." Her words trailed off into a moan as I lifted myself up with my hands on either side of her head so that I could thrust into her harder.

More. How I always want more. I can never get enough.

I ground my teeth together, the tingling in my jaws reflecting the primal need to bite that coiled there when I gave myself over to such abandon.

One of Bella's hands came up and stroked my clenched jaw and she cupped her hand behind my head and pulled me down to her. "Don't...hold back, Edward."

And then my need was right there. She turned her head to the side, still holding the back of my head in her hand, and pulled me down to the soft column of her neck. I thrust harder, moved faster, and then the

muscles in my groin exploded and I unlocked the beast inside of me – the one that needed to control, to possess, to dominate – and sunk my teeth into the tender spot behind Bella's right ear. The strained groan I was making turned into a feral growl as the feeling of my teeth in her skin unleashed Bella's orgasm, and her tight sheath clenched around me over and over and over again as I continued to move in her, playing the end of my release out while I tried to elongate hers.

I covered the bite mark with soothing licks and worshipful kisses, then pulled my body back just slightly until I slid out of her and could lay my head down on my chest.

"Happy Anniversary," she whispered as she went back to running her hands through my hair. Now she alternated between long, soft strokes and running her fingernails against my scalp.

I squeezed her in response, not quite feeling in control of my voice yet.

I thought in this room of all rooms I might just find the ability to sleep once again, so complete in my own skin did I feel in that moment. And while, of course, I couldn't, it didn't stop us from laying there, wrapped tight around each other, silently sharing the stillness of the Chicago night, just as if we were lovers who actually could fall asleep from the exertion of our completely satisfying and soul-restoring lovemaking.

As the sun illuminated the blue walls of the room, I whispered words of thanks and love and devotion into the shell of Bella's ear and the curve of her neck as I worshipped her slowly with my body.

When we were done and resting on the floor once again, Bella asked, "So, this is okay? You're okay?"

I looked up at her. "I'm more than okay, Bella. This is...I never expected to come back here." I looked down as I traced patterns on her flat stomach with my fingers. "I was afraid to come back here. I thought..." I glanced back up at her, "I thought I would feel the loss of my humanity too greatly here."

She opened her mouth to speak, a panicked look in her eyes. I reached up and kissed her concern away.

"My fears were unfounded," I said quietly. "Coming here, seeing this house look so much like it did when I was alive, and having you here with me...I remember things I haven't remembered for so long, things I thought were lost. You did so much more than restore this house for me, Bella. You gave me my memories back. My human memories. And while having them is a little sad, it made me remember my mother's love, and my father's pride, and that..."

"What?" she asked softly as she ran her fingers over my forehead, smoothing away the frown lines I could feel there as I struggled through my speech.

"Bella, I'm not that different from what I was then."

Her eyes searched mine for a moment while she considered what I'd said. And then her face broke into a beatific smile. She leaned up and kissed me. "Of course you're not. You're still Edward. I'm so glad you see it now just as all of us always have."

Finally, we pulled ourselves from the floor and collected our clothes and cleaned up. We walked through the house in the full light of day and the sunshine playing in the rooms brought back some additional memories. Each new revelation had me offering a new round of gratitude to Bella. She had really done a first-class job restoring the house.

Back on the first floor, Bella pulled me into my father's study and led me to the roll-top desk where he'd always stored his papers and accounts. There had once been a flat-top desk in the room as well, but that had apparently been lost to time.

"I left this for you to go through," she said. "The papers looked a little fragile, and I didn't want to chance damaging anything before you'd had a chance to look at everything."

As I rolled up the antique top I felt like an archaeologist, unearthing treasures that hadn't been seen since antiquity. Bella and I pulled up chairs and she sat with me as I went through all the drawers and files and nooks in the old desk. Most were mundane house and business accounts, though I still looked at them with awe as they smelled of my father and his tobacco. I smiled at the small framed photograph of my mother in the corner of the desk, proof of my father's feelings for her.

One drawer was locked and I regretted doing it but I had to break it to open it, the key long lost. Inside was a metal document box that I carefully lifted out, and I grimaced as I found it necessary once again to break the locked box to get to its contents.

I sucked in a breath as I realized what I was looking at: birth certificates for myself and my parents. My baptismal record. My parents' marriage certificate and a copy of their wedding invitation.

Bella rubbed my back in reassurance as the significance of the documents settled on us. One of the hardest things for me to adjust to when I was early in this life had been the anonymity of it. Days and weeks could pass without anyone knowing you even existed. It wasn't until Carlisle and I finally settled in one place for the first time that I felt like more than a ghost. I couldn't imagine how Carlisle had spent so long alone as he had done.

I chuckled.

Bella smiled at me, some surprise in her eyes and voice at my laughter. "What?"

"I was just thinking...it's stupid, but these records just made me think of *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Did you ever read that book?"

She nodded. "I always loved that book."

"It was published not long after I was changed though I didn't read it for the first time until much later. And then I never read it again, because it made me sad."

"Why?"

"Because the rabbit only became real with the boy's love. And I felt like I didn't have that kind of love. And being a vampire can make you so invisible."

"And the papers help you feel...real?"

That was my initial thought, the initial reaction I had to the documentary evidence of my life.

But I shook my head. "No, Bella, you make me feel real. You gave me back this house. You gave me these papers. Without you, I'd have never come back here. Never found any of this."

"You are real, Edward. You are my entire reality. And you always will be."

She allowed me the whole day to rediscover the house. It was too sunny to go outside, though I was eager to see what if anything I'd remember of the neighborhood. As we spent the day together, she finally told me the full story of how she'd pulled this off. And I was simply amazed at her, as I always was.

When the late afternoon finally brought clouds across the summer sky, Bella seemed to sigh in relief.

"What is it, love?" I hugged her from behind as she peaked at the front parlor windows.

She turned in my arms and smiled up at me. "We have plans this evening, Edward."

I quirked my eyebrows at her. "More surprises?"

She nodded with a big grin.

"You realize you'll never be able to complain about surprises from me again, right?"

Her grin dropped and I laughed out loud, throwing my head back with the force of my good humor. I looked back down at her smirk and kissed her forehead.

"Yeah, alright. I guess I walked into that one, huh?"

"I'd say so," I said through a continued chuckle. "Okay, then. Why don't we go get showered?" I waggled my eyebrows suggestively and she laughed.

She ran up to the bathroom first while I grabbed our bags from the car. She was already in the shower and I joined her just as she was finishing up.

She stepped out of the shower while I was washing my hair and called from somewhere in the bathroom, "I'm laying clothes out for you in your bedroom. We need to be ready to leave in an hour."

I poked my head out. "Clothes?"

She glanced at me then quickly away, but it was long enough for me to know she once would've blushed. I loved that I could still read her.

"Play along," she said in a sing-song voice as she wrapped herself in a towel and padded out of the room.

What else could she possibly have up her sleeve?

It didn't take me long to find out.

Laying on the bed in my old room was a three piece suit, dress shirt, tie, straw hat, and an elegant walking stick. None of the pieces were modern.

I laughed out loud when I realized what she intended, and my grin widened when I heard her laugh in response in the next room, where she was dressing in secret.

And that made me realize what I was going to see when she stepped out of that door: Bella was going to be dressed as if it was...I glanced down at my own outfit...as if it was the 1910s. It was the very first item on *my list*, and one of the few entries on it that she'd seen.

God I love her!

I quickly threw on the clothes, smiling at the way the different cut of the clothes felt as I pulled them on. I flipped the hat up off the bed and plopped it on my head, where it fell at a rakish angle I rather liked.

Then I walked out in the hallway to wait.

When I heard her hand on the door, I pushed away from the wall and stood, eager to see my Bella dressed as if movies were still black and white and silent, the rage militaire of World War I still gripped the country, and roadsters and touring cars still dominated the roads.

Her appearance was more than I expected, and I sucked in a breath in wonder as I took her in.

Her gown was youthful and elegant at the same time. The muted red silk accented her curves beautifully and, together with the sheer chiffon bodice and lower skirt and white lace sleeves, perfectly set off the pale creaminess of her skin and dark loveliness of her hair, which was pulled up on the sides and held back with a series of pearl pins.

I went right up to her. "Bella, you are an absolute vision." I grabbed her hand and brought it to my mouth, where I lingered over her delicate knuckles with my lips.

"Thank you, Mr. Masen," she replied.

I couldn't stifle the soft growl that thrummed in my chest. She knew what it did to me when she addressed me formally. I couldn't help but remember our role playing back in our biology classroom, and her dominating me on my black leather couch, and so many other moments when she had submitted to me.

But it also affected me because I knew that she was also using that means of address because it was how we would have addressed one another in my time.

"You're welcome, Miss Cullen." Role playing or not, she was keeping my name. "Well, m'lady, you lead, and I will always follow."

She smiled and looked down, and I marveled at the conundrum of her obvious shyness in a moment when she was once again surprising me by besting me at my own game.

We made our way downstairs and she peered out a front window and then led me to the front door. She smiled as I took in what awaited us: a horse-drawn carriage sat at the curb. One large brown horse, decked out in dark blue decorative halters and reins, pulled a covered shiny white carriage. The driver stood waiting, in a costume of his own, near the door to the carriage.

I don't think the smile on my face ever faded: not as I watched Bella step up into the carriage, not as we rode through the streets of my hometown together, not as we waved to small children in passing cars. It was magical, and I couldn't imagine how nervous I would've been to truly be 17 and courting a woman as special as Bella.

Within forty-five minutes we pulled into Lincoln Park, the huge lakefront park in which I had spent so many family outings during my human life. Bella had the whole evening planned out: we strolled through the zoo, laughed as the animals reacted to us (Bella nearly choked on her laughter when I growled back at a lion), made up stories about why we were dressed the way we were (for a while we were living history interpreters, for a while we were celebrating a theme wedding—the story changed from telling to telling). I bought Bella a stuffed lion to remind her of my prowess against the caged beast and she laughed as she hugged it to her.

Next Bella directed the carriage to drive us to the other end of the park, where the Lincoln Park Conservatory sat surrounded by acres of formal gardens. Again, we strolled through, laughed, talked, and just enjoyed each other's company – just as we would have in another time.

Bella was dazzling. Beautiful. A vision. Wholly captivating.

And once again she'd given me something that I'd never had. While the park, zoo, and conservatory had all been in operation during my life, I'd never had the opportunity to take a woman on a date, to these places or any other.

The late evening air was refreshing as we rode back to the house. She leaned her head against my shoulder and was so still and soft I could've imagined she fell asleep on me, lulled by the gentle rocking motion of the carriage.

When we returned home, I helped her step down and we thanked our driver profusely. He had struck just the right mixture of tour guiding, entertaining conversation, and professional quiet to give us privacy.

Her hand threaded around my arm, we walked up the front path, and I stopped to admire the house I once knew so well from the outside. It had held up remarkably over the years.

Once inside, she led me to the sofa in the parlor, and bade me to wait on her. A few minutes later, she returned with several wrapped gifts.

"Bella, love, what more could there possibly be?" I asked, astounded at the degree of planning and coordination and thought that had gone into every aspect of this trip.

She smiled and set the gifts on the floor in front of me.

I picked the first one up as she sat down. I gasped as the lifted tissue paper revealed what I realized was our family Bible. I saw my mother's handwriting listing the genealogy of my family and ran my fingers across it.

I knew just what needed to be done.

Before Bella could even ask, I had run to my father's study and returned. Pen in hand, I flipped the Bible open.

"Edward, what—?"

And here's what I wrote as the very last genealogical entry:

Edward Anthony Masen Cullen m. Isabella Marie Swan, August 13, 2006

"Now it's perfect," she murmured, and I couldn't have agreed more. "Here open this one, next."

The box was large and heavy. I made quick work of the bow and shiny paper and lifted the heavy cardboard lid. There were several large flat objects inside, wrapped in a heavy plain paper. And I couldn't have been more flabbergasted as the beautifully framed portraits of my parents and myself emerged from the wrappings.

"There's a photo album upstairs. It's what we made these enlargements from. And I also made enlargements to take home with us."

I nodded, overwhelmed. The photos lent clarity to my memories. For the first time in a century, the details of my parents' appearance were crystal clear.

"Look at you, Edward," Bella smiled. "Look how cute you were."

"Were?"

She smacked my arm and her playfulness and delight helped lighten the mood.

"Bella, I love...everything. Our time here, every detail that you planned...it's all been perfect. I can't thank you enough."

"You're more than welcome, Edward. I'm so happy that you're happy."

I leaned into her, the portraits flat on my lap. "Happy Anniversary, love."

"Happy Anniversary to you, too."

The kiss was long and lingering and full of love and acceptance and completion.

I carefully set the portraits down. "Now, you're not the only one with a little bit of something up your sleeve," I said through a smile as I rose. "I'll be right back."

Moments later, I reappeared with my own gift in tow. I handed the small box to her. What I had in no way compared to what she had done for me, but I could do nothing but celebrate the success with which she'd pulled off this massive surprise.

"This is ironically fitting," I murmured as she ripped the silver paper away.

"Oh my God, Edward. This is amazing." Bella lifted the ruby and diamond garland-style bracelet out.

"Here, let me help you," I offered. It looked incredible on her wrist. "It was my mother's, Bella. My father gave it to her on their tenth anniversary." I smiled up at her. "I couldn't wait that long."

She smiled as she fingered the precious stones. "I'm honored to have it, Edward."

"And I'm honored to have you wear it, love. And my mother would have been, too. I remember enough now to *know* that's true, thanks to you."

She kissed me sweetly as she slid the remains of the gift wrap to the floor. Her touch, her taste, set me on fire, and I crushed her against me as I deepened the kiss. She smiled as we kissed when I lifted into my arms bridal style, and made my way across the parlor to the foyer, and from there up the steps.

That night, I worshipped Bella, I adored her, and I made that clear with every touch of my body against hers. And it was everything.

"Hey, where are you?" Bella asked as we crossed over the Vancouver city limits.

"Right here, love. Of course I'm right here." I reached across the seat and grabbed her hand.

"What were you thinking about?" I took in her face as oncoming headlights illuminated it for me.

"Chicago."

She smiled. "I love Chicago."

"Me too."

"When do you think we'll be able to live there again?"

"Hmm." After leaving Alaska, our family had split apart for some much-needed alone time. It happened every once in a while. Once it was clear Bella could tolerate the scent of human blood, everyone had been eager to move on from Alaska, but we hadn't been able to agree on one destination. So we took a year to travel on our own before rejoining our family in none other than Chicago. Bella and I lived alone in my, *our*, house, and she'd finally had her first opportunity to go to university: she finished her first undergraduate degree at Northwestern and loved every minute of it. We'd stayed in Chicago for eight years before our inability to age made any further residence too dangerous. "Well, it's been thirty-six years since we last lived there. Maybe after Vancouver, now that I think of it."

Bella beamed at the thought of being able to return there. "I miss that house."

I smiled broadly. "Our house – that's what I was just thinking of...our fifth anniversary when you'd surprised me with it."

"That *was* a good one."

"The best," I agreed as I lifted her hand to my mouth and pressed kisses to each of her knuckles.

Minutes passed in companionable silence until we finally pulled into a mile-long driveway that led back to a huge modern home, all grey limestone and expansive windows. It was the biggest house in which the Cullen clan had ever lived, and we were all excited about its amenities: in-ground swimming pool, media room with theater seating, game room complete with pinball and other arcade games, and four separate bedroom suites for each of the couples in the family. The house sat on two hundred acres of prime forested hunting land. It was everything we could have ever wanted.

But, really, I didn't need any of that. As the truck rolled to a stop behind the rest of my family's caravan, I looked to my left. There, I found all I'd ever need: my wife, my partner, my brave little lamb, my beautiful Bella.

Together, we were on to the next adventure in what I hoped would be a very long forever.

~*~

Outtake - Edward's Fantasy

EPOV

Despite the conservative era of my birth and my proper upbringing, I couldn't help succumbing to improper thoughts of my beloved Bella from time to time. I was a man, after all, and Bella was a beautiful, sensual, wonderful girl, young woman really, a young woman who had increasingly been expressing her desire for me.

She expressed it in the way her heart raced when we embraced. She expressed it when she grasped at my hair to hold me to her when we kissed. She expressed it in the disappointment I saw when I had to pull away. She expressed it in the aroused scent I was smelling more and more frequently when our kisses became heated. And she was increasingly expressing it vocally as she slept. That was the hardest for me because she was so much freer with her expressions than I could ever allow her to be when she was awake. It was very clear to me that Bella was...ready for more, much more.

I found it terrifying. And exhilarating.

And I couldn't help it. It got me thinking about what that 'much more' might entail.

A century of seeing into others' minds gave me a huge catalog of images and fantasies to pull from. The problem was that while I found many things appealing, my fantasies tended to trend towards things I had a hard time imagining doing to or with a wonderful innocent girl like Bella. Bella deserved to be worshipped, treasured, *made love to*, didn't she? That's what she would want, isn't it? Thinking so made me feel all the worse when my fantasies were considerably less worshipful and more, well, shall we say...rough...possessive...dominating.... *Ugh*.

Perhaps if we hadn't been going through what we were going through at that time, I wouldn't have so fully developed fantasies of these types. It was the whole situation with Victoria and her newborn army, and the fact that we needed the wolves' help to successfully defend against it, that helped shape a good bit of the fantasy material in my head.

First, because that situation strongly brought out my protective instincts. Bella. Was. *Mine*. And I would have done and did do whatever I had to do to protect her.

Second, because that situation strongly brought out my jealous instincts. Requiring the wolves' assistance meant greater interaction with Jacob, who took every opportunity to shove his own fantasies in my face. Fantasies of Bella big and round with his child. Fantasies of laying with Bella in his own bed. Fantasies of Bella screaming his name as he....

Fuck.

Third, because in the midst of that situation, Bella finally agreed to marry me. She had agreed to be mine forever, to join her heart and soul with mine before God, man, and immortal. And while I certainly imagined the sweet lovemaking that would hopefully be possible on our wedding night, I had to admit that the idea of her being *Officially Mine* did fuel the possessive fantasies, a bit.

All of this came to a head when Bella, Jacob, and I were trapped in that damned tent together the night before the battle. Jacob was having quite a moment with my beloved, able to provide her what I could not – warmth. It was galling, actually. I was so jealous that night that I could barely see straight. And his fantasies, and her occasional nighttime murmurings about “my Jacob,” did little to help.

Time and time again I pleaded and demanded for Jacob to reign himself in.

He really started to get out of line once Bella's body relaxed against him and she fell asleep. Finally I couldn't stand it anymore.

You've got to be fucking kidding me. “Please!” I hissed in an effort to maintain civility in front of Bella. “Do you *mind?*!”

“What?” he whispered back, surprised.

“Do you think you could *attempt* to control your thoughts?”

“No one said you had to listen,” Jacob muttered, defiant, though still embarrassed. “Get out of my head.”

“I wish I *could*. You have no idea how loud your little fantasies are. It's like you're shouting them at me.”

“I'll try to keep it down,” Jacob whispered sarcastically.

A few moments later, Jacob started to relax into sleep. “Sleep well, Jacob. Enjoy the moment.” *Because you'll never get one like it again.*

His fantasizing began almost immediately.

Not again. I groaned. “I didn't mean that quite so literally.”

“Sorry,” Jacob whispered, although his mind belied his apology. “You could leave, you know – give us a little privacy.”

"Would you like me to *help* you sleep, Jacob?" I offered, already imagining how easy it would be to bring unconsciousness to the mongrel.

"You could try," he replied, unconcerned. "It would be interesting to see who walked away, wouldn't it?"

"Don't tempt me too far, wolf. My patience isn't *that* perfect."

Jacob smothered a laugh. "I'd rather not move just now, if you don't mind." He projected his observations to me about how tightly Bella's warm body was wrapped around his massive form and I began humming to myself to try to drown out his thoughts.

That was the night I came up with the sexual fantasy that thrilled me the most, made me the hardest, and, when I allowed myself to succumb, never failed to get me off the fastest and with the greatest intensity.

Given the situation, I didn't feel the least bit bad as I thought up my little revenge fantasy...:
+

Bella and I arrived at the campsite in the afternoon, several hours before Jacob was set to arrive. We got the tent situated. Bella was nervous, tense. I wanted to help her relax. In my fantasy, it was a warm spring day, not the freakishly cold and snowy day we actually endured. So we decided to go for a walk around the campsite area and get a feel for the perimeter of our encampment. Bella liked the idea because it gave her a sense of usefulness, of being included and in-the-know.

Fantasy Bella traded out the sensible jeans and boots she had actually been wearing for a form-fitting dark blue tank top and a flowing white skirt. Her long chestnut hair fluttered around her in the breeze, bringing her luscious strawberry scent to me in tantalizing gusts. We walked for a while, enjoying the warm air, holding hands, enjoying soft touches, and talking. It worked; Bella began to relax.

At a certain point the trail turned into the sunlight, catching the highlights in Bella's hair and making her flawless skin glow. I grasped her hand tighter and pulled her to me, needing in that moment to taste her full lips.

"Bella," I murmured, before pressing my needful lips against hers. Immediately she responded, her heart racing, her breath hitching, and her arms coming up to wrap around my neck so that she could tug and fist at my hair. *I love when she does that.*

"Oh, Edward," she rasped as I kissed across her jaw, allowing her to catch her breath.

I leaned back against the large tree behind me, pulling her body into mine as I continued to place kisses on the sensitive spots behind her ear and down her throat. I felt her swallow thickly and the working of her throat muscles against my lips was so erotic. My mind couldn't help but wander to the idea of those same muscles working around my cock. That thought instantly made me hard.

Bella felt my need for her and pressed her body into me, fisting her hand in my hair tighter. I reciprocated by fisting my own hand in her long locks and tugging gently backwards, causing her head to fall back and allowing me greater access to her throat and chest. She moaned and whimpered as my lips and tongue explored and I smelled the scent of her arousal. *Oh yes.*

It was her words that started to break me down though, her pleading getting to me as it always did.

"Edward, please...."

"Please, what, Bella? What do you need?" I murmured around open-mouthed kisses and hard licks across her collarbone.

"You, Edward, I need you."

"I'm here, Bella," I rasped, purposely ignoring what I knew she was really asking.

"Yes, but...oh God...Edward, I...I need you *inside* me."

I pulled my head away from her body and guided her head up so that I could see into her eyes, which were alive with need and lust and desire.

"Bella—"

"No, Edward, you listen to me." Her voice was forceful and I found this side of her surprisingly appealing. "Neither of us knows what is going to happen tomorrow. All we know, all we have, is this moment. Right here. Right now. Tomorrow could bring..." she couldn't go on. "But today, right now, everything is perfect. Everything is as it should be. I want you...no, I *need* you, right now, while everything is right. *Please* Edward."

"Bella, everything will be fine. There's nothing to worry—"

A tear traced down from her left eye, followed quickly by another from her right. "Please, Edward," she whispered.

How can I resist her? When she's asking for something I want so badly myself? She's already agreed to be my wife. And she will be, as soon as this whole mess is over.

"I just need to feel you, Edward," she pushed on as she gently stroked my face, "I just need to know we were here, we were together. I need us to have this moment in case...." Her voice cracked and the sound of her fear and anguish overwhelmed me.

"Oh, Bella. I can resist you nothing. But," I looked around, "here Bella, like this? You deserve so much better. You deserve romance—" She pressed her fingers against my lips.

"All I want is you. Being with you in any way would be perfect. Please."

I hesitated and she sensed it. She leaned forward and kissed my cheek. "Please," she whispered. She slid her nose across my jawline to my neck and kissed there. "Please." She pushed up on her tiptoes, sliding her body against mine, and pressed her lips and her hot breath against my ear. "Please." She brought her hands up to my chest and grasped at my shirt. "Please."

Oh God. Oh God. I shouldn't. Do it. She wants you to. But...no buts. How can you deny her? She deserves better. She wants it here and now. And so do I. I know but....

Then Bella bit down on my earlobe. Hard.

Fuck.

I couldn't help the growl that escaped me. Nor could I help noticing the increased scent of her arousal that followed my growl. *She fucking liked that?! Oh God.*

I lost myself.

"Okay, Bella, you want me?"

"God yes," she moaned.

"I want you too, baby. So bad."

"Oh, please, Edward," she rasped as she rubbed herself against me.

"Don't beg, baby. You never have to beg for me again."

I pushed her off of me and held her waist as I guided her to take a step back. "Can I see you, Bella? Can I see your beautiful body?"

She nodded shyly and together we lifted the blue tank top over her head. Her hair spilled around her shoulders, long tendrils of it falling to the tops of her heaving breasts. The white lace bra that covered her was sweet and sexy at the same time but it was blocking what I wanted now so desperately. I stepped forward and placed kisses along the top edge of her bra, causing her to pant and push against my mouth, as I reached around her and unclasped the lacy garment. It fell to the grass at our feet and she gasped as the breeze blew across her sensitive skin. Her nipples pebbled immediately at the sensation.

"Beautiful," I murmured as I cupped her breasts in my hands and enjoyed the warm weight of them. I kissed all over her full mounds until finally I had to take her peaks into my mouth. *Taste her!* And fuck if she wasn't the most exquisite flavor I had ever had the pleasure to savor. Wrapping my lips carefully around my teeth, I sucked her into my mouth. She wrapped her arms around my head and held me to her, moaning out pleas to me and God. "Bella, you're fucking exquisite," I praised as I switched breasts. I laved my tongue against her, thrilled at how responsive her body was to me.

More!

The subconscious need caught me off guard but I instantly agreed with it.

Yes. More. Everything.

I felt one of her hands grasping at the hem of my shirt. "Edward, I want to see you too. I want...oh God...to feel you against me."

I stepped away and tore the shirt over my head then immediately embraced her body against mine, bringing our bare chests together for the first time. We both moaned at the contact and fell into a fiery kiss that obviously heightened Bella's arousal and that caused my cock to now ache.

Get. Inside. Her.

I groaned.

Slow. Gentle. Remember this is Bella.

But just then, remote snippets of someone else's thoughts began to invade my mind. Jacob. *Jacob's coming. Fuck.*

In that moment, I had two choices: risk disappointing Bella by pulling away yet again. *Not advisable or desirable.* Or, continue on and risk getting caught. *Bella would be embarrassed, but I bet her happiness at our intimacy would ease that. Plus, Jacob...Jacob. Would. See.*

Fuck. I grew infinitely harder. *I'm not stopping for him.* "Bella, I want you now. I need you, too."

"Say that again, Edward."

"I want you. I need you, Bella. So bad."

She moaned and clawed her nails against my shoulders. "I love hearing you say that so much. Show me, Edward. Show me how much you want me. Show me you need me. Please."

Fucking yes. My mind began to race, running through ways to do this, to make it safe, comfortable, and enjoyable for her. Finally an idea came to mind and I smiled darkly at the picture of it in my mind.

"Turn around, Bella, and place your hands around this branch." She complied readily, lifting her arms above her head to hold the branch, and gasped at the sensation of how exposed the position made her.

"Fucking beautiful," I murmured as I cupped my hands around her breasts from behind. I slid my hands down the soft curves of her waist to her hips and slowly gathered the material of her skirt in my hands, hitching it up until it was gathered around her waist. The position revealed the seductive white lace panties she wore. I groaned at the realization that her moisture not only saturated the fabric but also collected on her thighs. "Oh, Bella, you're so damn wet for me," I ground out as I stroked my fingers against the slick skin of her inner thigh.

"Edward, please, I need more."

I'll give you more, baby. "Spread your legs for me, Bella," I commanded, thrilled at how she yet again so readily complied. I thought for a moment – I really didn't want to disturb the beauty of her position before me. So finally I wrapped my hands in the lace fabric of her panties and ripped – the lace shredded easily and Bella whimpered at the realization of what I had just done. I brought the wet lace to my face and inhaled, allowing my tongue to flick out against her moisture. *Oh fucking hell that's God damn exquisite. I need more of that. I want to bury my face in that.* Just as I was about to kneel down, though, the snippets of thought became somewhat more pronounced. *Dammit I don't have the time. Fucking dog.* I shoved the lace in my pocket as I considered what I wanted to do next.

I still want to make sure she is ready. Not just wet, but fucking needing me to be in her.

I knelt down after all, but restrained myself for now from what I really wanted. I placed open-mouthed kisses along the backs of her thighs while I reached my hand forward and began stroking her amazingly

wet, hot, soft folds. Her legs began to tremble. My hand was almost instantly coated with more of her flowing juices.

"Oh God, Edward, that's amazing...oh...oh my...yes...*fuck Edward!*" she screamed as my fingers came in contact with her clit and circled it firmly. *Fuck yes. Hearing her scream my name is my new favorite sound. And 'fuck' rolling off her tongue has got to be the one of the most erotic things I've ever heard.*

"That's it baby. Just feel. Feel me. Just let yourself go, Bella. I've got you."

She writhed and moaned and grunted and cursed and her sounds were making me ache for her. I could have fallen to the ground and kissed her feet when she called out, "I need more, Edward. Please. I need you in me. I just...*please, Edward...oh God!*"

I stood up immediately, undoing my jeans and pushing them down off my hips. My aching erection sprung free and slapped against her bottom. She whined and pushed back against me.

The outsider's thoughts attempted to invade again. *There's no way we're not getting caught.* I smiled inwardly.

"Bella, are you sure?" I asked one last time as I began to rub my cock along her folds, coating myself with her arousal. *Please say yes, please say yes.* At that point, it would have taken every ounce of discipline I'd garnered in a century of existence not to sheath myself inside her.

"Edward Cullen, fuck me. Now!"

That was the point at which I apparently fully freed our fantasy selves from all the usual inhibitions of our true characters.

"Your wish is my command, Isabella," I replied lowly, my voice full of desire.

I positioned my cock at her entrance and slowly pushed forward.

Oh, holy Mother of God this is the hottest, slickest, softest, wettest, tightest, hardest thing I have ever felt and God I want it all and for it never ever to stop fucking hell

Fantasy Bella felt no pain as I buried myself fully inside her. She grunted and wiggled herself against the fullness of me in her, but quickly we were engaged in a slow but hard pace. I curled my body around hers, my hands grasping alternately at her breasts and shoulders, as I thrust again and again.

"It's so good, Bella, so fucking good being inside you." *I'm home. I'm fucking home. What the fuck was I waiting for?*

"God, Edward, I feel whole. You're filling me up. It's so...ungh...."

His thoughts were clear now. And way too focused on *my Bella* for my taste. The distraction made me growl in disgust. Bella whimpered, bringing my attention fully back where it belonged.

Oh God I never knew. “Bella, oh baby, you feel so good. You’re so tight. I’m...ungh...I feel like I’m...losing my mind, baby.”

Bella didn’t respond with words. She simply slammed her hips back into mine.

I hissed and saw stars behind my eyes. “Fuck, Bella!”

As she did it again and again, I realized I was growling nearly non-stop, it sounded almost like a loud, rough purr to my ears. Bella was mumbling and whimpering. When I saw her bite down on her bicep I knew I wouldn’t last long. In that moment, her teeth were surprisingly appealing, particularly as I was trying so hard to ignore mine, which were nearly tingling with anticipation.

“Don’t hold back on me, Bella. I want to hear every word. Every grunt. I want it all, Bella.”

“Fuck, Edward!” she screamed as she released her teeth. “It’s so good, Edward. You’re so big. It’s....ah...oh....”

One arm still cupped around her shoulder, providing me leverage to thrust into her, I brought the other arm down and around the front of her hips. I pressed my fingers into her slick lips and quickly found her clit.

“Oh, yes! Please, Edward. Faster. Please!”

I rubbed her more firmly as I picked up the pace of my strokes, loving the feeling of her moisture coating us so thoroughly.

Where? What the fuck? Jacob had arrived at the campsite. *What is that...? No. No, no. There’s no fucking way....*

I grinned against Bella’s back. *This was going to be interesting.*

“Baby, I want you to feel good. Do you think—”

“Yes, Edward, just don’t stop. Don’t you fucking stop!”

“I won’t, Bella. Feel me baby. Feel how much I love you.”

“Oh yes.”

I felt his eyes on us from the end of the trail closest to the campsite. I didn’t acknowledge him. Yet. His mind was nearly devoid of thought, in shock of the scene before him.

“Bella, oh God. I love you. I...ungh...I fucking love you, Bella. You are...my whole life.”

“Oh, I...I love you...too, Edward. Oh God. I’m...I think....”

“Yes, Bella. Come for me. Give yourself to me, baby. Show me what only I can do to you.”

I'm gonna fucking kill him.

"Oh yes...."

Bloodsucking asshole!

"Look at me, baby. I want to see your face when you come." She turned her head over her left shoulder. Her eyes were glazed with desire. I saw it the moment that she saw him. But then she clenched her eyes closed and screamed.

"Oh...oh Edward...oh my God...*Edward!*" Her face was a beautiful mask of satisfied passion. Her body clenched around me, milking me with an intensity I never expected. That sensation combined with my intense pride in her calling out *my name* pulled me over the edge with her.

"Fuck, Bella!" I hissed as my orgasm hit. I finally looked to my left, quickly finding the outraged and murderous eyes of Jacob Black thirty feet down the trail away from us. "You're mine, Bella, only mine," I roared as my orgasm burst through me in wave after wave.

"Yes, Edward. Only yours. Oh my God. Yours."

I couldn't help the smile that spread across my face then as Jacob processed our words. While he watched helplessly, I pressed an open-mouthed kiss onto Bella's back, then mouthed 'Mine' to him. *Fucker.*

Fantasy Bella turned around, spied Jacob in the distance, and though her blush belied her embarrassment, she still couldn't help herself. She turned her gaze back to me and kissed me with as much passion as she could muster. "That was fucking incredible, Edward. I love you, always."

"I love you too, my Bella."

This fantasy did much to appease me that night as I was forced to lay there and suffer the love of my life lying in the arms of my biggest rival and mortal enemy.

As I lay on my bed the day before my wedding, trying desperately to pass the hours until I could see my love again, until she would be my wife, until I could *actually* make love to her for the first time, I couldn't help the straining erection that began to take over my thoughts. Just a few days ago I had found Bella's list of fantasies – the existence of which floored and thrilled me at the same time – and my cock had been ready to stand at attention nearly immediately ever since. The contents of her list went a long way to reassuring me that Bella and I were not as sexually incompatible, if her fantasies were any guide, as I had been fearing we might be.

Thinking of just how colorful some of her fantasies were, I couldn't help the wash of anticipation that came over me. *I can't wait to explore some of her, my – oh God, OUR – fantasies in the days to come.* At that thought I pulled my cock out of my jeans and began stroking, sorting through some of her list items and some of my own to get me where I so badly needed to be.

From her list: 11) *IN MY MOUTH*

From mine: *Bella straddled across my body, impaled on my cock.*

From her list: *6) Against the cold tiles in the shower*

From mine: *Bella bent over and bound to a stool as I plowed into her from behind.*

From her list: *15) Submit*

From mine: *Bella's legs wrapped around my waist as I took her against my bedroom door.*

From her list: *25) Role Playing: teacher, doctor, police officer, vampire*

I stroked harder. Faster. Then I settled on the fantasy of mine that always got me there, the one I thought up that torturous night in the tent:

Bella grasping onto a tree branch in the woods, her hair wild in the breeze. She'd be screaming my name as I claimed her from behind. Jacob would see and I would mouth 'mine.' Fucker.

My possessive fantasy did me in and I came in streams against my stomach and shirt.

I cleaned up.

And time crawled.

But I could be patient a few more hours. Tomorrow, Bella would be my wife. Nothing – and *no one* – would ever get between us again.

“Argh!” I vented my frustration into my pillow, hoping Edward was far enough away not to hear. Emmett and Jasper had just come to claim him for an overnight hunting trip, but not before we had spent the previous hour on my bed, kissing me into a frenzied state of arousal. I had no idea how I would possibly make it through the next four weeks until the wedding without literally exploding.

Something needed to give.

Don't get me wrong. I *love* Edward's kissing. I love kissing him. And he has been willing to push his boundaries, even if only a little. The first time he let me take his tongue into my mouth, for example, I almost passed out. Having not only the sweetness of his breath but the incredible nectar of his taste inside of me caused a nearly overwhelming sense of euphoria. The first time he licked me from collar bone to jaw my heart threatened to pound out of my chest. One time he even wrapped his lips around his teeth and nibbled on my ear. This was all unbearably good.

But then, there was always that point when Edward would pull back. And he'd either leave to go hunting, like he had tonight, or wrap me up in a cocoon of blankets, effectively separating our bodies. Either way, I'd end up wanting more, *much* more. And feeling frustrated.

I understood his rationale completely. I know he's afraid of hurting me. And I know he is committed to his early twentieth century sense of morality. And I love both his protectiveness and his gentlemanliness.

But, seriously, there's only so much a girl can take.

As I lay there on my bed, I couldn't help the fantasies that started to play out like movies against the insides of my closed eyelids.

In one, I came into my bedroom from just showering. Not realizing Edward was there, his presence startled me, and I dropped the towel I had wrapped around my body. In my fantasy, I wasn't at all self-conscious about Edward seeing me naked, and no longer able to control himself, he lunged at me—in a good way, of course—finally claiming me for his own.

In another, I managed to coax Edward *into* the shower, just so we could get used to being naked around one another, you see. I convinced him to wash my back for me (I couldn't help myself—I snorted—I could so tell this was a fantasy—Edward was touching my naked body!), and finally he couldn't help himself, and he pressed me hard up against the cold tile and entered me. Ungh, the very idea of the cold hard tile pressed *behind* me at the same time as Edward's cold hard body pressed up against the front of me. It was almost like being with two...

Oh God, there's something wrong with me.

In yet another, Edward got jealous of Mike Newton's advances at my work, and took me from behind against the check-out counter while Mike watched from the back of the store. Wait. *What?* Where did *that* come from?

I sat up in my bed. My brain was *not* helping the situation between my legs.

All of a sudden, an unbidden thought occurred to me. There was a way I could make this better.

Could I really? Despite being eighteen years old, I was not particularly familiar with sex in *any* of its forms. Years ago, I experimented with pleasuring myself. But I was never completely comfortable with doing so, both because I was often left with a painful sense of longing *down there*, and because one time my mom came into my room right after, and I swear she knew. I didn't want to chance it again.

But, maybe, it was worth trying again. The benefits seemed manifest. First, I could avoid exploding. I think anyone would agree that was something to be avoided. Second, I could avoid pushing Edward beyond his (limited) comfort zone. He would probably appreciate that. Third, maybe I could release some of this pre-wedding stress. Alice's list of 'decisions that needed to be made' was driving me completely insane. And, fourth, I could avoid exploding.

Clearly, between my make-out sessions with Edward and my overactive brain, I had plenty of material to, um, stimulate any such efforts.

Screw it. I slid off of my bed and walked into the bathroom. Charlie was long asleep but there was little chance of the shower waking him. It would take a freight train running through his room to have even the chance of rousing him.

I locked the door behind me—just in case—and turned the shower on, adjusting the water to the perfect warmth. Stripping off my clothes, I stepped in, feeling a little silly now, but even more, feeling incredibly aroused at the very idea of some release.

I looked up. *I can't believe I'm going to do this!* I was both incredulous and excited. Gotta love those removable showerheads.

I pulled the showerhead down and adjusted it to the firm massage setting and held it against my neck and shoulders. The pulsating water felt wonderful on my back and relaxed me immediately. *If nothing else, I should do this more often.* I could already feel some of my tension melting away. I bent over slightly and moved the nozzle down to spray on my lower back and felt my body relax even further.

Slowly, my movies started playing in my head again. I moved the showerhead around to my front. *Oh!*

This was better than I even imagined.

I let all the movies play out again, several times through, and even came up with a couple more: me finally getting to have Edward in my mouth; Edward taking *me* in *his* mouth (ungh); Edward pressing me up against a tree on the side of the meadow. The possibilities were endless!

But then I felt the frustration again. I was *so* close. But I couldn't quite get there. And then the water started to run cold. Great. I guess this little experiment is over.

But then, something happened. I liked the cold water. The cold water was *good*. The cold water...*felt...like...him*.

And with that image of him pressing me up against a tree in our meadow still fresh in my mind, I finally found my release.

I threw one hand up against the tile to avoid falling over, the orgasm that finally found me being so strong that it almost knocked me to my knees.

At least a minute passed before my brain fully returned to me. I was still breathing hard, and started giggling. Holy crow! If that was even a fraction of what it would be like when I was actually *with* Edward, I was going to die. And I couldn't freaking wait.

I shut off the water, now freezing cold, and towel dried myself. I was shivering, whether from the cold water or the aftereffects of my little experiment, I wasn't sure. Either way, it wasn't unpleasant.

Returning to my room, I threw on a pair of flannel pajama bottoms, a tank top, and a sweatshirt to try to warm myself back up. I crawled into bed, actually feeling like sleep was a remote possibility this time.

I looked at the clock. It was 12:30. Edward would likely be back in about six hours. I needed to get some sleep or I would be a zombie tomorrow. I couldn't help giggling at that. *Like we need anymore mythological creatures in this town.*

My body was sated now, but my mind was on a mission. Those fantasies had done the trick. They had gotten rid of my frustration, kept me from exploding, and ensured that I would be a much happier Bella

tomorrow when my love returns. I needed a stockpile of such ideas to keep me going for the next four weeks, and as I drifted off to sleep, my mind was busy conjuring up more ideas for the next time.