Surviving the Teenage Dream

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Summary

They survived falling in love and having four children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. But, a ghost from the past is rearing his ugly head. Follow along as Geekward and Nerdella deal with having teens, battle with the blast from the past and why is Demetri hugging a cow?

ANSOL/TGGTP Sequel. ExB AH/AU

Notes
Thanks, Nat for the amazing banner!
Meet the Cullens...Again

They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlocks), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Surviving the Teenage Dream

Chapter One: Meet the Cullens, Again…

EPOV

“Owen, careful with the brakes,” I barked. He was pumping the brakes of my car, causing it to jerk and give his old man a concussion against the seat rest. “You just need to tap them.”

“Sorry, Dad,” he grumbled as he eased up on the pedal. He pushed his glasses up his face and sighed. “I’m never going to get this. Why do I suck?”

“You do not suck,” I said as I put my hand on his shoulder. “Who told you that? I’ll kick their butts, or ground them if they’re one of your siblings.”

“It’s nothing, Dad,” he sighed. He pulled into a parking spot, putting the car into park and got out. I frowned at his actions and at his now sullen attitude. He’d become more and more withdrawn since his sixteenth birthday. Owen had always been a quiet child, but at least he had had a crooked smile on his face and was a happy kid. Now, he’s just depressed and sad. In fact, our house has been pretty sedate since Kyra’s temper tantrum just prior to Homecoming. I moved the driver’s side of the car while Owen slunk into the passenger seat. He took out his iPod and put in his ear buds, effectively cutting off communication with me.

I miss my sweet children. They were so adorable when they were babies. They loved conditionally and didn’t give lip.

With a sigh, I drove around Wheaton until I got to the Oberweiss off of Butterfield. I poked Owen with my elbow and nodded to the ice cream shop. With a sigh, Owen got out of the car and we went inside, ordering a brownie sundae to share. I wanted some chocolate and REAL ice cream since my lovely wife had me a diet of frozen yogurt and healthy shit. Blech.

“I know that something’s up. You have the same look in your eyes that I did when I was your age.”

“You won’t laugh?” he whispered, his hazel eyes widening.

“Never, Owen. I love you and want to make sure you’re happy,” I said as I put my hand on his forearm.

Owen sighed, running his hands through his unruly hair. “I’m just…shit,” he mumbled. “I don’t
want to get anyone into trouble."

“Owen, if you’re being hurt or bullied, I need you to tell me,” I said.

“It’s Kyra, Dad,” he said. “She puts on this act at home that she’s ‘better,’ but at school, her and her cronies, Mackenzie, Madelyn and Kimmie, they find ways to torture me. Though, it’s Mackenzie who is the worse. Kyra doesn’t actively do anything but she doesn’t stop it, either. Kyra used to be my best friend and now she’s turned into one of those bitches at school who tease other kids who aren’t cool. I’m not the only one but I’m their biggest target.”

I pursed my lips, extremely disappointed in my daughter. We taught her better than this. Despite the fact that she wasn’t an active part of the bullying, her passive behavior toward the situation wasn’t helping her brother. At All. Or her situation with her punishment. “I shouldn’t have said anything,” Owen mumbled. He pushed his glasses and shoveled the ice cream into his mouth.

“NO! Owen, you were right in telling me,” I said. He scowled at me. “No child should be bullied or teased. What your sister is doing is highly inappropriate. She’s your sister. Your blood. She should be your biggest advocate. Not your enemy.”

“Uncle Emmett was your enemy,” Owen said.

“Who told you about him?” I asked, arching a brow.

“Aunt Ali,” Owen replied. “I was talking to Adam and she overheard what I was saying to him. Aunt Ali told me about how Uncle Emmett tortured you as a kid and did all of those horrible things to you as an adult.”

“How much did she say?”

“Not much. Just that Uncle Emmett was the devil here on earth,” he shrugged.

“Well, I’ll tell you about Uncle Emmett, but not now. I’ll probably do it with both you and your sister. She needs to know about him and how her behavior is very similar to his,” I said angrily. “She obviously is not doing the same thing. However, she needs to understand that her actions are having some serious consequences. Have you told your teachers?” Owen shook his head, his head dropping as his hair flopped in front of his eyes. I pinched my nose and took out my cell phone, sending a text to Bella.

Owen just confessed that Kyra has been involved in bullying him. We need to talk to the two of them. ASAP. – E

I swear that girl is going to spend her senior year on punishment. I’m so disappointed in her. When are you coming home? – B

A half hour. We’re finishing up some manly bonding – E

Are you eating unhealthy food? EDWARD!!! The doctor… - B

The doctor will not begrudge an ice cream with my son… - E

I’ll be home soon, gorgeous. Love you – E

Love you, too – B

“Let’s finish our ice cream, Owen. When we get home, we’re having a family meeting.” I said. He
nodded and inhaled the rest of the brownie sundae, leaving me two bites. “Thanks for saving me some, bud.”

“You know that Mom will kick your ass if she knew that you had ice cream, Dad,” he smirked as he popped the last brownie in his mouth. I growled as I picked up the bowl, depositing it into the garbage. “Can I try driving home?”

“You can, but please, I beg of you, be kind to my brakes,” I snorted, handing him my keys. We drove back to our home and parked in the driveway. I got a few new gray hairs from that drive. Owen sped up too quickly and slammed on the brakes too hard. The kid was giving me whiplash.

Owen and I walked into the family room, where the rest of my children were located. Bella was curled up on the couch, typing on her laptop. Mia was reading a book. Masen was playing with his PSP. Kyra was working on homework.

“Hey, Daddy,” Mia said as she looked at me. Her smile radiated from inside and she reminded me so much of Bella. She looked so much like my wife. “Owen, how was the driving lesson?”

“It was good,” he said as he sat down next to his little sister. “This book is good but the second one in the series is much better. I read it in like a day.”

“Do you have it? I borrowed this from my friend, Cassie,” Mia said.

“I do. Upstairs in my room,” Owen said as he hugged her. “When you’re done with this one, I’ll give you my copy of the second book.”

“Thanks, Owen,” Mia replied gratefully. He hugged her and kissed her forehead.

“Dad, you look like you’re about to murder someone,” Masen chuckled. “Your vein is throbbing.”

I rubbed my forehead and looked at my youngest son. “I don’t want to murder anyone,” I said. “I do want to talk to you guys.”

“Another talk?” Kyra griped. She shoved her homework away, rolling her eyes dramatically.

“Kyra Marie Cullen,” Bella snapped. “Need I remind you about your attitude?” Kyra wrinkled her nose and plastered on a fake smile. I sat down next to Bella who put her laptop on the cocktail table. I took her hand briefly, squeezing it for support.

“Yeah, we need to talk,” I said. “No one is leaving until I’m done. Got it?”

“What is it, Daddy?” Mia asked her brow furrowing.

“Did you know that I have another sibling? Besides Aunt Ali and Uncle Demetri?” I asked. Mia and Masen shook their heads. Owen bit his lip, shooting a look at Kyra. Kyra ducked her head and pulled her legs up to her chin. “Well, I do. His name is Emmett and he’s in jail.”

“Why is he in jail?” Masen asked his brown eyes were filled with curiosity.

“Emmett is a very mean and bad man,” Bella said when I hesitated. Despite the several years of therapy I received after Emmett’s incarceration, I still struggled talking about him and how he made my life hell.

“That’s putting it lightly,” I said. “My brother, Emmett, he tormented me when I was younger. He teased me, bullied me and made my life hell. I was the ‘thorn’ in his side because apparently, I took
Nana Esme’s attention from him. So, Emmett made fun of me. A lot. All the way through my adulthood, he teased me. However, at his birthday party about twenty years ago, I had had enough. Aunt Ali and I prepared a video that showed how awful he was. Along with teasing me, he also stole money from the law firm he worked at, slept with women for money, did drugs and gambled illegally. This video was displayed at the party and long story short, Emmett was arrested after losing his temper. He attacked me and broke my nose, gave me a nasty concussion and did some damage to my ribs.”

“Are you alright, Daddy?” Mia asked as she clambered into my lap. She hugged me tightly.

“I’m fine, now, sweet girl,” I said as I soothed my daughter, rubbing her back. I kissed her forehead and tucked her to my side. “It happened a long time ago. Anyhow, Emmett was put on trial for his crimes. The trial started right after your mom and I got married. The star witness for the prosecution was my dad. My real dad.”

“Not Marcus?” Owen asked.

“Yeah. Carlisle,” I replied. “Carlisle went up on the witness stand, explaining in detail how Emmett screwed over his law firm and made all of these bad decisions. Emmett was livid. I never saw him that mad before. He couldn’t even perform his cross examination. So, he asked for a recess and it was granted by the judge. The night of Carlisle’s testimony, he was attacked and ultimately killed.”

“By who?” Kyra asked her golden eyes filled with tears.

“Emmett,” I answered. “He carved in his initials into my dad’s stomach after he beat him to a pulp. My dad lived for some time after his attack but the doctors explained that he’d be a vegetable if he survived. I was given medical power of attorney. He went into cardiac arrest and I told them to not to go through drastic measures. My real dad was an ass like Emmett, but I hated having to tell the doctors to stop.

“Then, Emmett disappeared off the face of the planet, for a time. It appeared he was just biding his time in a small town in Washington State called Forks. He met up with a woman there, named Lauren. She was hired at Whitlock, trying to gain reconnaissance on our family.”

“But Lauren was dumber than a box of rocks,” Bella snorted. “She got fired after a month of working at Whitlock. She would shamelessly flirt with your dad, Uncle Jasper and any other straight man in the office. However, the straw that broke the camel’s back was when she verbally attacked me shortly after Kyra was born.”

“A week after that, Lauren was found floating in the Chicago River. Emmett had killed her, too. He carved that he was back with his initials into her belly. Anyhow, for nearly a year and half, Emmett tormented us with his psychological mind games, culminating in a showdown at a Foundation location in Naperville.”

“There’s no Foundation location in Naperville,” Owen said.

“Exactly. After what happened with Emmett, we pulled out of there. He planted a bomb in the building, shot Uncle Alex, Uncle Mattie and beat me to a pulp, again,” I replied. “Grandpa Charlie shot Emmett and he was arrested. His new trial was in July and he realized that he could never win with the fifty-seven counts against him, including two charges of murder and three charges of attempted murder. I met up with him after he conceded and admitted his guilt. I gave him the proverbial finger. During the sentencing, I was with your mom at a doctor’s appointment while she was pregnant with Owen.”
“What was his sentence?” Kyra asked, her lip quivering.

“He’s set to be executed right after the first of the year,” I answered.

“Have you talked to Emmett since?” Owen asked.

“No. He’s sent letters to me but I’ve thrown away before I read them,” I shrugged. “He’s tried to atone for his sins but there’s nothing he can do to get me to forgive him. He killed at minimum two people, with an additional two others in other states.”

“Now, I bet your wondering why your dad shared that with you,” Bella said. Everyone nodded. “First off, it’s not easy to talk about. For either of us. Emmett hurt both of us in ways we hope that none of you have to understand.”

“But, I’m seeing some of the same behavior in this household. Obviously, not the murdering but the teasing and taunting,” I said sternly. “That is one thing that has no place in this house.”

“I don’t see any teasing,” Kyra said, with a sugary sweet smile. “Everything’s great, right?”

“No, Kyra. It’s not,” Owen snarled. His eyes narrowed behind his glasses at his older sister. She whimpered and shrunk a bit in her seat.

“Mia and Masen, can you go up to your rooms?” Bella asked. “We have some things to discuss with Kyra and Owen.”

“Kay,” they both replied.

“I love you, both,” I said as I hugged Mia who was still in my lap. Masen gave me a hug as well before they went up to their rooms. I turned back to my two oldest children. Owen was glowering at his sister. She was staring indignantly back at him. “Now, the both of you, I don’t know what happened to your relationship but this needs to stop.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Kyra said, arching a brow at me.

“Bullshit, Kyra,” Owen spat. “I told Dad about your little bitch friends who tease me all of the time. You do NOTHING!”

“Maybe you should stick up for yourself, Owen,” she retorted back.

“I do but a little back up from my sister would be helpful. They’re calling me a fag and asslicker. I’m not gay.”

Kyra rolled her eyes. “Whatever, Owen. Get a girlfriend and those rumors will stop,” she said with a dismissive wave her hand.

“It’s a little hard when your friends are spreading the rumors that I’m a fag and that I take it in the ass, Kyra,” Owen snapped. “The one girl I liked blew me off because of those rumors. We were supposed to go to homecoming, but she bailed on me last minute.” Kyra’s cheeks paled. “Let me guess, you had something to do with that? Figures. God, you’re such a bitch, K. You used to have my back but now, you’re a heartless, cold-hearted wench who only thinks of herself.” Owen shot up and stomped to the door, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Do you have anything to say?” Bella asked her voice as cold as ice. Her eyes were on Kyra who was fussing with her sweater. “Nothing?”
“What do you want me to say? Commit social suicide in order to help Owen?” she wailed.

“Aunt Ali did that for me,” I said sternly. “Nothing matters but your family. Your friends will change over the course of your life, but your brothers and sister; they’re all you have, besides your mom and me. We’re not going to be here forever. This behavior is aging me more than the situation with Emmett, Kyra.”

“I don’t know what to do,” Kyra said, her eyes filling with tears. “Owen, you know I love you, right?”

“You have a really shitty way of showing it, K,” Owen said quietly. “If you loved me, you’d stick up for me against your bitchy friends. You wouldn’t go around spreading those rumors. You’d stop them.”

“Kyra, if these friends of yours cannot respect your brother, you may have to reexamine your friendships,” Bella suggested. “Their teasing of Owen is causing a rift between you and your brother, not to mention the issues with us. You still have yet to apologize for your outburst prior to Homecoming.” She mumbled something and crossed her arms over her chest. “Is that your apology? If it is, I couldn’t hear it.”

“I said I was sorry,” she spat.

“Doesn’t sound very genuine, Kyra,” Owen chuckled humorlessly. “It’s obvious that Kyra has made her choice. She’s going to choose her bitchy friends over her family. I’m going upstairs to practice my violin. Thanks for the driving lesson, Dad.” He sulked as he left the room.

“Kyra, I don’t know what to do with you,” Bella said as she pulled at her hair. “Do you not see how your behavior is affecting your brother? Affecting your family?”

“I see it but he’s so sensitive,” Kyra said.

“No, he’s not, Kyra,” I replied. “He’s the most even-keeled kid I’ve ever met besides your cousin, Adam. He takes everything in stride and would do absolutely ANYTHING for you. If someone spoke badly about you, he’d jump at your defense, no matter who it was.”

“He’s done it already,” Kyra murmured. “When I told Stephen that I couldn’t go to the dance with him, he started spreading rumors about me about my tyrannical parents. He also said that I was pregnant with my daddy’s love child.”

_Ugh, gross. What school are we sending our children to?

“Anyhow, Owen got into Stephen’s face about the rumors he was spreading. He pretty much told him to fuck off and to go spread his lies somewhere else,” Kyra whispered. “Owen got into trouble with his teacher but ended up having a lunch detention because of his outburst.” Tears were falling freely over her cheeks and she curled up on the couch. “I fucked up, didn’t I?”

“You did but you can make it better, Kyra,” Bella said as she ran her fingers through our daughter’s hair. “You need to rebuild your relationship with your brother, with your family. I can’t speak for your dad, but I miss my sweet girl. You know, the one who is respectful, who loves her family and gives her affection freely without any pretense.”

“I miss her, too,” I said as I sat next to my daughter. “Kyra, we’ve been disappointed in your behavior, but you have to know that we don’t love you any less. We don’t like you much, but we still love you immensely.”
“I’m so sorry,” she wailed as she threw her arms around Bella, sobbing freely. “I don’t know…Mackenzie forces me…I’m such a bitch!” She clutched to Bella as she cried hysterically. **Yeah, my daughter is quite the drama queen.** It was obvious that his girl, Mackenzie was the culprit behind my daughter’s recent changes in her behavior.

After an hour of crying, Kyra sniffled and went upstairs to her room to take a nap. Bella and I looked at each other, mentally and emotionally exhausted from the afternoon. Then, she smacked me. “You had ice cream!” She was pointing on my shirt where a drop fell.

“Two bites!” I whimpered, rubbing my arm. “Owen ate most of it. He deserved it after the hellish driving lesson and unloading the drama with his sister.”

“Fine,” she scowled. “You better behave, Cullen. I don’t think I can handle these guys without you. You can’t have a heart attack or stroke out because of your cholesterol.” She sighed and curled up against me. “I can’t lose you, Edward.”

“I’m not going anywhere, gorgeous,” I said against her hair. “I love you and you’re stuck with me for another fifty years.”

“Dude, you’d be ninety-eight,” Bella snorted.

“I’d still get hard for you, Bella,” I said, kissing her lips softly.

“So romantic, Edward,” she giggled.

The rest of the evening was spent in relative quiet. Mia and Masen were watching a movie in the basement with a couple of friends they invited over. Owen was practicing his violin something fierce in his room and Kyra was crying. Bella and I were sitting on the couch in the family room, watching some television. She was curled to my side, idly rubbing circles on my belly. “I miss our children, Edward. The relationships they had with each other…they’re not the same.”

“I know, gorgeous,” I said as I kissed her forehead. “I’m hopeful that this conversation we had with Owen and Kyra helped them rebuild their friendship. I hate it when they fight.”

“Me, too,” she said as she moved closer.

“Have you met this Mackenzie?” I asked.

“Once. She seemed nice when she was at the house. She was respectful and polite. Obviously, that’s a front, hiding her true behavior of being a devil spawn,” Bella chuckled darkly.

“Mom!” called Mia. She scampered up to where we were cuddled. “Dad…can Gianna and Taylor stay overnight?”

“Is it alright with their parents?” I asked.

“Aunt Ali said that she’s having a date night with Uncle Jasper,” Mia explained. “Taylor is staying with her grandparents since her parents are out of town, celebrating their anniversary. Taylor’s grandma said it was okay, if it was cool with you.”

“That’s fine,” Bella said. “Do you want to stay in the basement or in your room?”


“So, Ryan and Kyle are staying too?” Bella chuckled.
“MASE! You said you asked!” Mia bellowed.

“Can Ryan and Kyle spend the night?” Masen screamed from the basement.

“Did they ask their parents?” I yelled.

“They’re cool,” Masen said as he ran up the stairs. “Please, Dad? Please?”

“Fine,” I conceded. Bella and I divided and conquered. I set up the basement for the boys while Bella worked on Mia’s room for the girls. The rooms were set up and we told them to go to bed at a decent hour before saying goodnight to Kyra and Owen. Kyra was already asleep and Owen was now reading on his e-reader. “Good night, Owen. Everything okay?”

“As good as can be expected,” he shrugged. “Kyra and I talked but I can tell that it’s going to be an uphill battle, Dad. She doesn’t want to lose her popularity. Mackenzie is the queen bee at our school. You end a friendship with her and you become a black sheep. Shunned by the teenaged population.”

“I so do not miss high school,” I said.

“I can’t wait until I’m in college, Dad,” Owen sighed. “You found your best friend there and you blossomed in college.”

“Yes, I met Uncle Jasper in college but I didn’t blossom until I met your mom,” I said. Owen bit his lip and nodded. “It will get better, bud. I swear.”

“I know, Dad. I also know that I’m not the thing that Kyra’s friends call me. Besides, if I was, it’s okay. I know that you and mom would love me regardless,” he said as he hugged me. “I mean, you love Uncle Alex and Uncle Dem.”

“Very much,” I smiled. “Crazy as both of them are, we love them immensely.”

“No, Uncle Alex is the crazy one. Uncle Dem is sane,” Owen chuckled. “Speaking of those two love birds, do they know about the surprise anniversary party that you’re throwing for them?”

“Not one clue,” I said, ruffling his hair. “I’m surprised that Justin has kept it a secret this long. He’s a bit of a blabbermouth.”

“I think Mom put the fear of God into him, saying that if he said one word that he’d have to spend the entire evening with Uncle Jazz and Aunt Ali, enjoying their meat. Justin blanched and promised to keep his lips sealed. Anyhow, Adam’s picking me up to go to out for lunch and then a movie.”

“Is he picking up his sister, too?”

“Yeah. Good night, Dad. Thanks for talking to Kyra about all of this and hopefully, it’ll work out. Love you,” he said as he hugged me. I kissed his cheek and padded to the door. I checked once on the girls giggling in Mia’s room. I expected to have Mia scowl at me like Kyra did whenever I ‘invaded’ her personal space, but I was rewarded with a warm hug from my girl. She mumbled that she loved me and thanked me again for allowing Gianna and Taylor to spend the night. As I left Mia’s room, I walked to the bedroom I shared with my wife. I could hear her hissing on the phone. Slipping into the bedroom, I could see Bella pacing in front of our bedroom.

“…How did you find this number? Leave me alone, Jacob!” she snarled. “I haven’t talked to you in nearly twenty years and now, NOW, you’re calling me to say that you love me? You’re delusional.”

“Give me the phone, Bella,” I said. She pressed her cell phone into my hand. “Black, you are
fucked up in the head. Did you not understand my warning about you not contacting her?"

“I have to try,” he wailed. “She still loves me. I know she does.”

“I don’t think so, Jacob,” I snarled.

“She picked up the phone. She was talking to me!” he said. “Put her back on, please? PLEASE?!”

“It will be a cold day in hell before I let her talk to you again, Jacob,” I spat, hanging up the phone. Immediately after that, it rang again. I turned her phone off. “We’re getting you a new number, Bella.”

“I just don’t understand why now?” she asked as she sat down on our king-sized bed.

“I can do some research or have Charlie do a background check on him,” I suggested. “But, you’re getting a new number, a new phone and when you travel for the foundation, you’re having protection. Perhaps we can call back Ricky or Johnny.”

“Ricky is retired and living in Fort Lauderdale,” Bella quipped. “Johnny is avoiding Chicago at all costs because of his breakup with Eric. I don’t need protection. I’ll be fine, angel.”

I pulled her over my legs, straddling my waist. “Jacob is obviously not in his right mind. He called you after I explicitly asked him not to,” I said as I took her face into my hands. “Just like you give me shit about eating the damn rabbit food, I feel the same way about you. I can’t do this without you, Bella. Our children need both of their parents.” Bella bit her lip, toying with my hair at the nape of my neck. “So, can I get you protection when you travel for the foundation?”

“If you are unable to come,” she said, arching a brow, “then you can provide protection. Okay?”

“Okay,” I said as I brushed my lips against hers.

“Hmmmm,” she purred. “You know what I need?”

“What’s that, gorgeous?” I asked as I kissed down her jaw to her pulse point. I nipped at her soft skin, inhaling her fresh, clean scent.


“Holy shit,” I whimpered. In my jeans, I felt a stirring in my boxer briefs. “We’ve got several guests, Bella. You and I both know that we’re not quiet.”

“A challenge,” she snickered. She hopped off my lap, locking the door to our bedroom. “I want you to make love to me, Edward. I want to feel you inside of my body, baby. I want you to make me come with your tongue. I want to suck you off until you’re spilling your jizz down my throat.” As she said this her hands began unbuttoning her blouse, revealing her black bra underneath the dark fabric. She shrugged off her blouse. My wife of nearly eighteen years looked as gorgeous as she did when I first saw her. Her pale skin was flawless and perfect. Her body changed from having four children, but it was improvements, not detractions. Her breasts were larger, hips were rounder and her ass was perfect for me to grab. She was still slender and sexy as hell, but a more mature version of herself. “You’re ogling, Cullen.”

“Can’t I look at my beautiful wife?” I asked as I stood up, crossing to my bride. I glided my fingers along her warm skin, tracing her collarbones. Nestled between them was her diamond encrusted heart necklace that I gave to her on the eve of our wedding. She never took it off except when she
had our children. I never took mine off, either. The key still hung above my heart.

“You can look all you want, Edward. But you’re wearing too many clothes,” she said as she reached for the hem of my sweater. I ripped the sweater from my body, revealing my bare torso. “Shit, you look so fucking good, Edward.” She was giving me open mouthed kisses along my chest, nibbling on my nipples. Her hands reached the belt buckle of my jeans, making quick work of it. Soon, my pants were pooled at my ankles as she kissed down my body toward my now very tight boxer briefs.

“Oh no,” I said as I stood her back up. “My recovery time isn’t what it used to be, gorgeous. If you give me head, I will not have recovered to make love to my wife.”

“But, I want to taste you,” she frowned.

“Later,” I said as I covered her mouth with mine. I swept her up into my arms, earning a quiet squeak against my lips. I carefully deposited her onto the bed, peeling her jeans off her sexy body. She lay on the bed with her brown hair surrounding her face like a mahogany halo. Her breasts were heaving in their black bra, begging for me to kiss and suckle them. Her skimpy black panties were drenched and glistening from her arousal. I desperately wanted to bury my tongue between her thighs and lick her until she screamed. No screaming tonight, though. She’d have to come silently. “Hmmm, you’re all laid out in front of me. What to do first?”

“Edward,” she whimpered.

“Take off your panties, Isabella,” I said. “I want you to play with yourself.”

“But…” she countered.

I pinned her with my body, swiveling my hips against her body. “Do I need to ask you twice, Mrs. Cullen?” I growled. “I want to see how fucking wet you are. Do it. Now.” She quickly pulled her panties off her body and spread her legs for me. Her arousal was spilling out of her core. “Take your finger and roll it over your clit, Isabella.”

“I’d rather it be you,” she said as she snaked her hand between her legs, massaging her slick flesh. “Oh, Edward. I’m so wet. You do that to me. Just by looking at me, I get wet. Listen.” She slipped her fingers inside of her body, sloshing them inside of her pussy. “I’m drenched.”

“I see that, Isabella,” I said as I sat down in front of her. “Take out your hand from your pussy and play with your ass, baby.”

“Are you going to fuck my ass, Edward?” she purred.

“Not tonight. We’re too loud,” I smirked. She frowned as she removed her fingers from her pussy. She turned around and waved her ass toward me before coating her fingers with her juices. Slowly, she inserted a finger into her ass. Her lip disappeared as she bit back a moan. “Feel good?”

“Not as good as your cock,” she whispered. “Do you like watching me fuck myself with my fingers?”

“I love it, Isabella. I love you,” I said as I moved closer to my fucking sexy wife. “Do you want help or do you want to come with your own hands?”

“I want your tongue inside of me, Edward. Taste me. Eat my pussy,” she said as she wiggled her ass some more.

“All in good time, gorgeous,” I said as I moved my fingers to her soaked pussy. I slapped it lightly,
earning a moan from my girl. Yeah, my wife and I are quite kinky. Not BDSM but we have a
healthy sex life. I’m surprised we don’t have more children with the amount of sex we have. Oh,
right. Bella had me snipped after we had the twins. “Keep fucking your ass with your finger, Bella.”
She whimpered as she kept moving her finger inside of her ass. I languidly rubbed her clit with my
finger tips. With my other hand, I unclasped her bra. Her breasts tumbled out of it as I twisted her
nipple.

“Edward, I need more,” she pleaded. “I need to feel you. Please?”

“Since you said please,” I said as I removed my boxer briefs. “But, next time we make love, I want
to watch you make yourself come. I want to see you come all over your hand. You understand me?”

“Yes, angel,” she breathed. “Now, fuck me.”

“Impatient little thing,” I laughed as I lined up my cock with her dripping pussy. Achingly slow, I
pushed inside of my wife, being surrounded by her silken walls. Even after all of the time we’d be
together, this never grew old. Nothing was perfect as being with my wife, making love to her. “So
good, Bella.”

“I know,” she breathed as she slowly sat up on her knees. She removed her bra and twined her
fingers in my hair. Her face was turned toward me as I moved in and out of her from behind. “Touch
me, Edward. I want to feel your hands on me.”

“Show me where you want me to touch you,” I said as I kissed her neck. Bella moaned and took my
right hand, guiding it to her swollen bud between her legs. My left hand was placed on her breast.
The movements in and out of my wife were slow, reverent and deep. Each stroke inside of her pussy
earned a guttural groan from my girl. My beautiful wife. “Feel me, Isabella. Feel me filling your
body. It’s how much I love you.”

“Edward,” she whimpered. “So…fuck! I need to feel more of you. Harder, baby.”

“No. Tonight is about me loving you, Bella,” I crooned against her sweaty temple. “Do you feel me
love you?”

“Yes,” she gasped as she arched her back against my chest. “I love you. Edward, you are so much
more than my husband. Words cannot describe what I feel for you, baby. GOD!”

“Shhhh, gorgeous,” I whispered against her mouth. “We need to be quiet, baby.” She bit her lip and
nodded fervently, staring into my eyes. “You’re so perfect, Bella.” She squeaked and swiveled her
hips against my erection. “That’s right, Bella. Move with me. Take me deeper inside of your body,
gorgeous. I want to feel you quiver around my cock, Bella. Can you do that for me?”

“Oh, shit. Yes. I can. I’m so close right now, Edward,” she whimpered. “Do you feel how wet I
am?”

“I do, baby. So wet,” I growled as I crashed my lips against hers. My hips began thrusting into my
wife more erratically. “Who makes you this wet?”

“You do. The love of my life,” she cried as tears came out of her eyes. “I love you, Edward. I love
you!”

“I love you more,” I said as I increased the speed of my hips, plunging my cock into her warmth. My
fingers slid easily over her clit due to her wetness. “Come, Isabella. I can feel you around me. Come
for me, baby.”
“YES! YES! YES!” she chanted as she clenched around my cock. Her very vocal response triggered mine and I spilled inside of her pulsating walls. I wrapped my arms around her waist as I came hard. Her fingernails dug into my forearm. With one more thrust, I slipped out of Bella’s warmth. She fell forward, lying on her side. I curled around her, running my fingers along her arm and kissing her neck. “So much for being quiet,” she giggled.

“This is why we’re on the opposite end of the house, Bella,” I snickered as I turned her head. She smiled, pressing her mouth on mine. “I love you, baby.”

“I love you, my Geek Charming,” she laughed.

“Some things never change,” I sighed.

A/N: There’s the first chapter for the final story in the Nerd Trilogy. I hope you liked it. It will be more light hearted than my other stories, so yay! Pictures for this chapter (and the other stories) are on my blog. Mainly, I have the characters and the Wheaton house. Link to my blog is on my profile. Also check out my facebook group: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation or find me on twitter: tufano79. Next chapter will be the surprise anniversary party for Demetri and Alex. Leave me some loving!
Parties and Working Stiffs

They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlocks), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Chapter Two: Parties and Working Stiffs

EPOV

The next few days in our home were much better. Kyra and Owen were talking again. Their relationship was improving but still had a long way to go. The relationship with us, however, was on thin ice. Kyra ignored her mother and tried to sweet-talk her way with me. The behavior of my oldest daughter was troublesome. I hated this distance that it was wedging between us. Bella was cranky and moody. I had a shorter fuse and was over it.

On Friday, my wife and I were hosting a party for everyone in honor of Alex and Demetri’s fifteenth wedding anniversary. She was cooking tirelessly in the kitchen for the party with the help of my mom and Mia. Masen, Owen and Kyra were currently scouring their rooms and the rest of the house for the party. I was putting some finishing touches on the decorations in the backyard, which was set up with a large tent, dance floor and a DJ station. Justin was in my office, editing a video for his parents as his present for their anniversary.

“Uncle Edward,” came the deep voice of my nephew.

“Yeah, Justin,” I replied as I turned to him. He was tall with toffee colored skin and light brown eyes. His hair was in curls that stuck up from his head. His dad was African American and his mom was white. Justin was a striking young man. He had many people who crushed on him, both male and female. Though, he’s struggling with his sexuality. Being raised by two gay men and molested by his mom, encouraged him to be turned off to women. However, he wasn’t all too keen about being in a relationship with a man, either.

“I need help,” he said. “I can’t get this to line up to the song I chose.” I followed him into the office and saw the video program opened. “I want the final montage to start with ‘When I Fall In Love.’ I’ve tried it several times and it just isn’t jiving.”

“I need help,” he said. “I can’t get this to line up to the song I chose.” I followed him into the office and saw the video program opened. “I want the final montage to start with ‘When I Fall In Love.’ I’ve tried it several times and it just isn’t jiving.”

“I’ll see if I can do it,” I said. “I’m not much of a video guru. That’s my sister.”

“You’re better than me,” he chuckled. I fussed with the video and got it to work to Justin’s approval. “Uncle Edward?”

“What’s up, Justin?”

“Can I talk to you about something?” he asked, furrowing his brow.
“You can talk to me about anything, Justin. Why don’t you want to talk to your dads?” I gave him an encouraging crooked grin.

“Because, it’s about a girl,” he said, his skin darkened slightly. “I love my dads but their view on love is a little skewed. I mean Dad calls you his straight boyfriend but loves Pops.”

“Alex is definitely a character,” I laughed. “Anyhow, what about the girl? What’s her name?”

“Meghan,” he said. “She’s in my biology class and we’re partners. She’s really sweet and pretty, not to mention brilliant. I don’t know how to go about talking to her outside of class. I mean, I’m socially retarded when it comes to girls since I’ve never, EVER felt this way about anyone because of my mom and what she did to me.” Justin’s eyes darkened with the hatred for his birth mother. His hands were clenched in rigid claws.

Gently massaging his shoulder, I looked at him and gave him a reassuring glance. “Justin, you just need to be yourself. Don’t change who you are because you like this girl. Anyhow, perhaps after class, invite her out for a coffee or lunch. Get to know each other as more than just a lab partner. As for the other stuff, take it slowly with her. If she truly cares about you, she won’t push you.”

“I’m afraid that if she knows about my past, she won’t want to be with me,” he said, running his hands through his curls.

“Justin, get to know her first before you air out your dirty laundry. If you see a future with this girl, then talk to her about your past. Okay?” I advised.

“Yeah,” he said. “Thanks, Uncle Edward. I appreciate it since I was stressing over this for a couple of weeks now.”

“Let me know what happens, yeah?” I smiled.

“Cool,” he replied as he finished his video, loading it onto a DVD. “Can I leave this here? I want to head back to the house to change before the party.”

“I’ll make sure it’s by the projector,” I replied. “See you in a few hours, Justin.” He gave me a hug and left the house. I put the DVD outside before heading into the kitchen. Bella was putting finishing touches on the vegan meal she had prepared for Justin and Alex. For the rest of us carnivores, she made prime rib with garlic mashed potatoes. I wrapped my arms around her waist, nuzzling her neck.

“Smells delicious, Bella.”

“Thanks,” she said as she put the prime rib into the warming oven. “I hope everyone likes it.”

“I’m certain it will be perfect, Bella,” I murmured. “Care to join me in getting ready?” I thrust my hips against her ass. She giggled. “Please?”

“Ugh, you two are obnoxious,” Kyra grumbled as she put the dust rag she was holding onto the kitchen counter.

“Obnoxiously in love,” Mia laughed. Kyra rolled her eyes, huffing in her teenagery-way. “They’re cute. So many of my friends’ parents are divorced and bitter; Mom and Dad are awesome.”

“Whatever,” Kyra snarled.

“You better be on your best behavior, Kyra,” Bella warned. “Your charming display right now is not boding well for you. Pardon your dad and me for loving each other. We shouldn’t have to defend our feelings to our seventeen year old daughter.”
Kyra was getting ready to mouth off to Bella when Mia grabbed her sister’s arm. “Come on, K. We need to change for the party. Plus, I need your help in curling my hair. I can never get the back just right. Please, K?”

“Fine,” Kyra said as she followed Mia up to their rooms. My mom pushed Bella and I out of the kitchen as well to get ready, too.

Upstairs, in our bedroom, Bella grabbed her underwear, clutching it to her chest. “What can we do about Kyra, Edward?” she whimpered, staring at me. Her dark, chocolate brown eyes were filled with tears of frustration. I was right there with her.

“I don’t know, gorgeous,” I sighed, pulling my wife into my arms. She sniffled, burying her nose into my neck. I felt some tears fall onto my bare skin as I had already removed my shirt.

“I never had this teenage rebellion thing,” Bella muttered. “I don’t get it. I loved my mom, unconditionally. Even when I met my dad for the first time, I felt something. Not necessarily love but a respect and joy that I had finally met him. Also, I was always respectful to my elders. Never like this.”

“Me, too, baby,” I sighed. “We’ll figure this out together, Bella. We’ll get to the bottom of this and try to understand our principessa.”

She nodded and hugged me close. Carefully, I picked her up and carried her into the bathroom. We took a joint shower. However, there was no nookie in the shower since we weren’t as flexible or as young as we used to be. I did get a blow job. We also promised each other to have some naked fun time after the party.

Bella and I changed into our attire for the party. She wore a beige sweater dress with a pair of red heels and a set a ruby earrings that dangled from her ears. I was in a gray pin stripe suit with a white shirt and burgundy tie. We headed downstairs and noticed that guests had started to arrive. Matthew and his wife, Christina were chatting with Esme and Marcus. The boys, Edward and Embry, were already running around with Masen, heading to the basement to play on Xbox.

Charlie and Sue showed up next with Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas following close behind. “SGD!” Rose bellowed as she danced over to me, wrapping her arms around my neck. “How are you?”

“I’m good, Rose,” I chuckled, kissing her cheek. “How are you?”

“Excellent. I’m heading out to LA in a few weeks for another planning meeting for the latest movie based on one of my novels,” she smirked.

“What novel is this?” I asked.

“My latest trio of novels about witches, The Charmed Ones, Forever Charmed, and Charming Endings,” she replied. “If all bodes well, they’ll be premiering next summer. I’m so pumped.”

“Congrats,” I smiled, hugging her warmly. Turning to Tim, I held out a hand. “Hey, Tim.”

“What’s up, Edward?” Tim said, giving me a man-hug. “Place looks great.”

“Thanks. You did a wonderful job with the renovations. How is your business?”

“Booming! I’ve got nearly ten crews out on fifteen different jobs, not to mention the crews I’ve got working on the various foundation sites,” he said. “Speaking of which, I do need to set up a meeting with your wife about a couple of the sites, arranging for the openings and such.”
“I’m available whenever,” Bella called from the kitchen. “Call me next week and we’ll chat, Tim!”

“Bellini!” Rose yelled as she darted into the kitchen. “Thank GOD you’re cooking meat. If you made us eat some vegan crap because Alex and Justin want to eat like rabbits, I’d kick your ever-living ass.”

“Did she cook vegan food?” Tim asked, wrinkling his nose in disgust.

“She did but it’s just for Alex and Justin. We’re having prime rib,” I chuckled.

“Tofu is nasty ass shit,” Bella grumbled as she arranged some hors d’ouvres on a tray. She swiped Masen, pushing him out to the backyard to deliver the tray to tent. The other boys came to help. Bella handed them trays as well.

Rose squealed, taking my face and kissing my lips soundly. “I love you and I love your wife for being carnivores. Damn vegans. Cows and pigs were put on this earth for us to eat them, not stare at their magnificence. They’re not magnificent. They’re yummy.”

“Rose, stop manhandling my husband,” Bella barked, glaring at Rosalie. “You have your own hubby to molest.”

“I was just merely saying that I was happy that you are serving cows,” she said simply, ruffling my hair. Rose stood on her tiptoes, hissing my ear. “Give your woman some good hard fucking tonight, SGD. She’s too uptight.”

“When everyone leaves, Rose, Bella and I have a date with our bedroom,” I smirked.

“Good man,” she snickered. “I don’t want my agent to be a raging bitch on our business trip.”

“You’re leaving in three weeks, Rose,” I snorted.

“Excellent. Have lots of smexy times,” she said. With a squeal, she grabbed Tim’s arm and dragged him into the living room where the rest of the party was congregating until we headed outside.

“Uncle E? Where’s Owen?” Lucas, Rose’s son, asked. I still can’t believe the Rose is a mom. She never really changed after she had her babies. They’re a few months younger than Kyra and six months older than Owen.

“I think he’s in his room. Tell him that he and his sisters need to get down here, Lucas,” I said.

“Cool,” he said as he darted up the stairs.

“Edward, can you start moving everyone out into the tent?” my mom, Esme, asked. “Bella got a text that Justin is on his way with Alex and Demetri. They suspect something. Or at least, that’s what Justin said to Bella.”

“Kay,” I smiled, kissing her cheek. I strode into the living room and began guiding everyone toward the backyard where the lavish tent was set up for the anniversary party.

“Older!” Alice chirped. She danced over to me, hugging me closely. “The house looks good. But, you look stressed.” She stared at me, smushing my cheeks together. “Talk to me.”

“It’s nothing, Younger,” I said, barely able to get the words out because of her hands on my face.

“Bossy as ever, Ali,” I sighed. “But, fine. It’s been too long since I’ve lunch with my favorite sister.”

“You only sister,” she quipped, kissing my cheek. “We shared a womb, Edward. We’ve got a bond that most don’t have.”

“You’re right, Alice,” I said as I hugged her. “Now, get your scrawny ass outside before Alex and Demetri get here. We don’t want to ruin their surprise.”

“Okay, Older. Love you!” she squeaked as she danced out of the living room, dragging Jasper along with her. Gianna and Adam followed close behind. Once the room was empty, I turned off the lights. Scampering through the kitchen, I checked to see how the food was coming. The kitchen was gleaming and the food was now outside with the assistance of the catering company we hired. I flipped off the lights before walking out to the backyard, closing the screen door to the porch. Bella was texting on her phone.

“They’re almost here,” she said. “Justin said that they’re pulling into the subdivision now.”

“Oooh! I’m so excited,” Alice and Esme squealed, hugging each other.

“Now, I know where she gets the damn squeal,” Jasper said as he ran his fingers through his hair. “I’ve been married to her for how long?”

“Deal with it, Jasmine,” I snorted. He flipped me off, scowling slightly.

“They’re coming!” Mia said as she bounced on her toes. “I just saw lights pull into the driveway.”

“Whoopty-doo,” Kyra said flatly.

“Kyra!” Bella hissed. Our oldest child rolled her eyes and stomped over to the bar. *She better not even THINK of trying to get anything alcoholic. I’ll send her to a fucking nunnery.* Alice’s eyes captured mine and she knew what was giving me stress. She frowned in Kyra’s direction, giving me a sympathetic smile.

“They’re not even home,” Demetri’s voice grumbled from inside. “Why the hell did you drag us here, Justin?”

“Maybe Uncle Edward and Aunt Bella are running late,” Justin said. “They wanted to go out with us for your anniversary, Pops. It’s been fifteen years.”

“Of wedding bliss,” Alex cooed. A wet kiss was heard along with some very pornographic moaning.

“Ugh, Dad. Stop,” Justin snapped. “Seeing you two lick each other’s faces is NOT what I want to see right now.” The smile in his voice was unmistakable.

“Sorry,” they both grumbled.

“Come on, let’s head out back. It’s a nice night and I’ve been inside all day,” Justin said, turning out the outside light. Justin opened the screen door (hence our ability to hear his conversation with Demetri and Alex). With a flourish, the DJ began playing the song that they danced to for their first dance as husbands. Alex’s hands flew to his face as he stared at all of us, screaming “surprise!”

Demetri’s brown eyes were wide with shock. Justin stopped in front of them, holding his arms open, yelling that he loved his parents.

“Holy shit!” Alex screamed, jumping into Demetri’s arms.
“Love, you’re not as small as you used to be,” Demetri grumbled, putting Alex on the ground. “But, you’re right. Holy shit!”

“Congratulations,” Bella said as she wrapped her arms around Demetri’s body. He hugged my wife, kissing her cheek sweetly. Alex jumped into my arms. I barely held him up. He really wasn’t as small as he used to be.

“Straight boyfriend!” he smiled as he kissed my mouth. “You did all of this for us?”

“Of course, Alex,” I said as I hugged him, placing him on the ground. My back groaned as I bent over. “You’re my brother-in-law and you guys deserve it. Besides, you and Demetri helped me with my surprise trip for me and Bella for our fifteenth anniversary. It seemed fitting.”

For our fifteenth wedding anniversary, I took Bella to Europe for nearly two months. Demetri helped me plan the trip without Bella knowing on the days I was at Whitlock Technologies. Alex packed Bella’s bags. When I surprised her with the trip on Thanksgiving, she was flummoxed. We were leaving bright and early on Black Friday with no return date. The kids were with us for the two weeks they were off for school for Christmas. Demetri and Alex were staying with Marcus and Esme in Italy. They flew back with the kids, watching over them while we celebrated our anniversary. We went to London, Dublin, Paris, Nice, Barcelona, Madrid, Brussels, Salzburg, Berlin, Rome, Tuscany and Athens. However, after two months of constant traveling, Bella was anxious to get home to our children. She felt like a neglectful mother. We flew back to Chicago, laden with gifts and treasures from our European second honeymoon.

“Brother,” Demetri bellowed, hugging me tightly. “Thank you. You are an amazing man, Edward. I’m so blessed to call you my brother. I’ll never forget this. I love you.”

“I love you, too, Demetri,” I murmured, squeezing him tightly. “However, it wasn’t my idea. Justin was the one who approached us about the notion of having a surprise party for you two.”

“You both deserve it, Pops,” Justin said, giving Demetri a smile. “I love you both and Uncle Edward and Aunt Bella were willing to host it. Not to mention help with the money issue. Being a poor college student makes it difficult to pull off this kind of shindig.”

“I’m shocked that you were able to keep this a secret, Justin,” Demetri teased. Justin was a bit of a blabber mouth. He acquired that trait from Alex.

“Aunt Bella threatened force feeding me beef,” Justin cringed. “Come on!” He tugged on Demetri’s arm and dragged him away along with Alex.

Bella sidled up to me, twining her fingers with mine. “I’m glad we were able to do this,” she whispered, kissing my cheek.

“Come on, gorgeous. You can do better than that,” I teased, puckering my mouth.

“I don’t want to smear my lipstick,” she giggled, placing a chaste kiss on my mouth.

“Fuck the lipstick,” I growled, pressing my mouth to hers. She laughed, tangling her fingers in my hair. We were starting to get carried away when the snooty sound of Kyra fell over us. She scoffed, stomping back to Ava with a drink in her hand. “I’m going to check to see if Kyra’s drink.” Bella mashed her lips in a tight line. “Relax, gorgeous. I’ve got this.”

“If she’s drinking, I’m not…” she said, her face turning a bright red. “You deal with her. You are more even-keeled than me, angel. I’m going to get everyone to sit down so dinner can be served.”

We kissed one last time and separated. Kyra was hissing to Ava, obviously upset about something.
Ava was nodding sympathetically, rubbing Kyra’s arm.

“Kyra, a word?” I said brusquely.

“I’m talking to Ava,” she said snidely.

“It wasn’t a request,” I snapped. “Excuse me, Ava.”

“Sure, Uncle Edward,” she nodded, scampering away.

“Thanks, Dad,” she snarled. Kyra downed the rest of her drink, slamming it on the small table next to where she was standing. “I was having a conversation with my friend and you had to be a jerk about it.”

“If anyone is acting like a jerk, it’s you, Kyra,” I said as I picked up the glass, sniffing it. No booze.

“Jesus, Father, I never realized you didn’t trust me,” she growled. “I’m over this farce of a party. I’m going to my room.”

“Like hell you are, Kyra,” I said, barely able to contain my temper. “With me. Now.” My voice was calm and cool, but my ire was quite apparent. We walked into my office and I closed the door. Kyra was staring out the window. I crossed my arms over my chest, waiting for her turn around. I’d wait all night if I had to. When Kyra turned around, she saw my posture and my angry face. She shrank back. Very rarely did I get upset with my children but when I did, it wasn’t pretty.

“Daddy?” she whimpered.

“Don’t ‘daddy’ me,” I said quietly, narrowing my eyes at my daughter. “I don’t know what’s going on with you, but I’m so disappointed in your behavior and your attitude as of late, Kyra. Are we really that horrible? We love you unconditionally, provide you with a warm home, a quality education and would do absolutely anything for you. However, you repay us with snide remarks, condescending comments to your siblings and complete lack of respect for your mother and me. Your mother is tired of it and incredibly upset. I’m shocked at how you’ve behaved and a little ashamed at your rude behavior. We raised you better than this, Kyra. What do you want? Complete freedom?”

“That would be nice,” she grumbled.

“You’re seventeen, Kyra. You made mistakes and there need to be consequences for those choices you made,” I said as I sat down heavily on the couch. “I see the effort you’re making with Owen but your behavior toward us is…”

“I’m sorry, Daddy,” she whispered.

“If you were truly sorry, you’d stop acting like a brat,” I said, staring at my daughter.

“I’m not,” she argued, sitting down next to me.

“Yes. You are. You’re a senior in high school. You think you know everything but you don’t,” I sighed, running my hands through my graying hair. “I don’t know what to do with you, Kyra. The punishments aren’t working. You’re behavior isn’t improving. Perhaps, taking things away isn’t the answer.”

“What do you mean?”
“I mean that on Monday, you are going to find a job,” I said sternly. “You’ve had everything handed to you and now you have to realize that you have to earn it. With that money, you will be paying for your own clothes, cell phone and entertainment. In addition to having this job, you will maintain your GPA. You’ve been accepted to Northwestern but that’s contingent on keeping your grades up.”

“But…” she squeaked.

“No buts,” I said, arching a brow. “My decision is final.”

“I don’t have a car to take me to my ‘job,’” she pouted.

“Well, you can have the old Volvo but you will be responsible for paying for the car insurance and gas money,” I said. “Now, in regards to the party, you will go back out there and be the pleasant, sweet girl that I know you to be. Tomorrow, you will spend it cleaning up after the party. Sunday, if you want to start looking for a job, I’m more than willing to let you use the car.”

“What if I can’t find a job?” Kyra asked, her golden eyes filled with tears.

“You’ll find one,” I said, getting up from the couch. “You’ve got fifteen minutes in here before I come back to get you.” She wiped her face, nodding somberly. I left the room and walked back out to the backyard. I set an alarm on my cell phone before I began walking around, mingling with the guests. Kyra didn’t need me to come get her. Ten minutes after our discussion, she came back out and sat down next to Mia and Owen at the table for our family.

The rest of the evening was fun. We all shared anecdotes about Demetri and Alex. Everyone got a kick at how Alex adored his husband but I’m his ‘straight boyfriend.’ Demetri chimed in saying that he pretended to be Bella’s boyfriend while she was on her trip with Rose the summer we first met. More stories flew before Justin set up the projector for the tribute video for his parents.

When Demetri and Alex started getting overly amorous on the dance floor, the party ended and everyone left. Justin decided to stay with us since he knew his parents were going to be quite loud, obnoxious and horny once they got back home. We let Justin stay in the small apartment we had above our garage. We still kept an apartment just in case of another situation like what we had to deal with Emmett. With the reappearance of Jacob, the apartment may be needed if he doesn’t get a clue. Jacob, that is.

Before we went to bed, I told Bella about what I told Kyra. Bella agreed and said that she’d pull up some age-appropriate jobs for Kyra on the computer, possibly taking her to fill out applications tomorrow after the party had been cleaned up. Despite the promise of sexy times, we were too exhausted to do anything. We languidly made out until we decided to go to sleep. I curled around my wife, whispering my love for her against her curled hair.

xx STTD xx

I was sitting in the lobby of The Clubhouse, waiting for my sister. It was located at a local mall. Afterwards, we were going shopping for Christmas. Yes, it was October, but my sister was addicted to shopping, almost to the point of insanity.

“Older!” she called, bouncing into the restaurant. She wrapped her arms around my neck, kissing my cheek. “How goes the party cleanup?”

“It was nearly done when I left,” I said as I led her to the hostess station. “Owen dragged everyone up at the ass-crack of dawn, wanting to surprise Bella and me. When we woke up at around nine, the tent had been taken down and removed from our backyard, the dishes were put away and Owen was
“Owen is such a sweet boy. He reminds me so much of you at that age,” Alice said wistfully as we walked up the stairs to the dining room. “But, I know that Kyra is the reason behind the mass of gray hair on your head, Edward.”

I pulled out my sister’s chair and sat down next to her. I pinched my nose, sighing deeply. “You’re right, Ali. Kyra is pushing every single one of our buttons with her snotty attitude and rude behavior. Bella and I are done.”

“When did this start?” Alice asked.

“In September. Right before homecoming,” I answered. “She was getting a poor grade in chemistry and lied about needing the car. Bella had said no and Kyra wheedled me for the car, I said yes. Long story short, Kyra has turned into a watered-down, female version of Emmett.”

“What?!” Alice shrieked. The patrons in the dining room glared at us.

“Keep your voice down, Alice,” I hissed. “I’d like to get through lunch without getting kicked out.”

“Oops, sorry,” she muttered, shooting a sheepish look at everyone. The waiter came and took our orders before leaving us to continue our conversation. “What do you mean that she’s turning into a female version of Emmett?”

“She’s teasing Owen, being rude and disrespectful to Bella and me, and acting like a total brat,” I said, sipping my water. “Last night was the final straw. She made one too many underhanded comments. I pulled her into my office and told her that on Monday, she was getting a job and that she was now responsible for her own cell phone, clothes, and entertainment. Additionally, she’s getting my old Volvo, paying for the car insurance and gas.”

“She’s had everything handed to her and now, you’re making her see that she needs to work for what she wants,” Alice said, smiling widely. “Good job, Older.”

“Thanks. It should hopefully help with her bratty attitude,” I said. “But her disrespect toward Bella and me is…I don’t know what to do about it.”

“Every teenage girl goes through a rebellious phase,” Alice murmured, putting her hand over mine. “You didn’t. You were always sweet and respectful to Mom and Dad,” I retorted.

“No, I wasn’t,” she laughed. “In college, I was a raging bitch. You never saw it because you stayed at MIT, avoiding Emmett and Carlisle. But, I was hell on wheels. I’m surprised that Mom and I ever got along after the summer between my freshman and sophomore years. Every day, we fought. I was this close to flying out to Massachusetts to stay with you and Jasper.”

“What did you fight about?”

“Boys. Freedom. Money,” Alice sighed. “I wanted to go out as much as I could because I was in college. Dad wanted me to get a job. Mom was trying to control my every move. Ironically enough, it was Emmett that convinced the parentals to lay off and give me my freedom. We did have a ton of arguments leading up to that and it was not a pleasant summer, at all.”

“I get the rebellion thing, but were you ever blatantly disrespectful to Mom and Dad?” I pressed.

“During the fights, yes,” Alice cringed. “I snapped and bellowed at them because they were looking
out for my well-being. I was the youngest girl and I was being treated as such. I was done.”

I sat quietly, pursing my lips at what Alice just said. When did this period of rebellion end for Alice? Obviously, the relationship with Alice and my mom was strong now but how long was it strained?

“I can see you thinking, Edward,” she whispered. “You’re trying to figure out how long this nonsense with Kyra is going to take.”

“Whatsoever the case maybe, I just hope that it gets better soon,” I grumbled. The waiter arrived with our food, setting the plates in front of us. I wrinkled my nose at my bland grilled chicken and vegetable medley, penance for the rich food I ate yesterday. “Ugh, rabbit food.”

“Deal with it, Older,” Alice snickered as she dug into her salad. “Grilled chicken isn’t all that bad.”

“I miss eating food with flavor,” I pouted, poking at my rubbery chicken and sad vegetables in an uneven pile. I speared a green thing. “What the hell is this? It doesn’t even look like food!”

“It’s a wax bean, Edward. They’re good,” Alice chided.

I popped the ‘wax bean’ into my mouth, grimacing at the complete lack of anything associated with it. No flavor. No texture. No nothing. My eyes were frantically searching for the waiter, wanting to beg him for a hamburger with some greasy French fries.

“Don’t think about it, Edward,” Alice said sternly. “Bella will know. Do you want to spend a night sleeping on the couch?”

“No,” I frowned. “Fucking cholesterol. I work out every single day. For the most part, I eat right. Yet, my cholesterol sucks. It makes no sense.”

“I'm dealing with the same thing, Edward,” Alice sighed. “However, my doctor put me on pills. You can at least get away with modifying your diet. Come on, Older. Let’s eat and then go shopping for our families. I want to have my Christmas shopping done before Thanksgiving.”

“Why?”

“Because, I just do,” she snapped.

“Younger…” I frowned. “I shared my stress and drama. Now, it’s your turn.”

“Everything’s fine,” she sighed, sitting back against the chair. “I just have this feeling that something’s going to happen. You know?”

“What do you mean, Ali?”

“I've got this sense of foreboding,” she replied, wrinkling her nose. “I don’t know who it's going to affect, but…Let's not dwell on that.” She shook her head and plastered on a genuine smile. “Now, what are you going to get Bella for Christmas?”

“I have no clue. What are you getting Jasmine?”

“He needs a new watch,” Alice smirked. “Come on. Let’s finish our lunch and get Jasper his watch, plus something sparkly for your wife.” I rolled my eyes and gestured for the check. I paid for our lunch, boxing up the remaining of my rubber chicken and wax beans. We wandered around the outdoor mall, buying Jasper’s watch from Neiman Marcus. Bella’s present was bought from Tiffany’s and I managed to get some things for my children before Alice declared that we were done.
for the day. With a kiss to her cheek, I drove back to my home in Wheaton.

I parked my car in the garage, noticing that Bella’s car was gone. Carrying in the bags from the mall, I slipped inside of the house, dumping them into the closet in my office. “Dad?”

“Yeah,” I replied, turning to see Masen standing just outside of my office door. “Hey, Mase. How are you?”

“Good. Mom wanted me to tell you that she’s with Kyra, looking for jobs,” he said. “You’re in charge to make dinner.”

“Good thing we have leftovers from the party,” I quipped. Masen laughed, rolling his eyes. “How was Kyra with your mom?”

Masen wrinkled his nose. “Her usual charming self,” he said wryly. “What’s her deal, Dad? I mean, she’s okay with Mia but she’s turned into a bit of a bitch.”

“Language, Mase,” I chided.

“Sorry. But it’s the truth, Dad,” he said, crossing his arms over his chest.

I sighed. “We’re working on your sister. Something’s got to change. If not, the next few months in this house are going to be hellacious. Promise me, little man, that you will never, ever turn into that.”

“Never, Dad,” he said giving me a crooked grin. “You and Mom are awesome. Yeah, you’re strict, but you have our best interests at heart. You’d never treat us unfairly. I love you. We all do. Even Kyra, even though she doesn’t outwardly show it.”

“How did you get so smart?” I asked, laughing lightly.

“From Mom,” Masen snorted. It was true. Masen acquired my wife’s kind heart and warm soul. He had my vision. Poor kid. He had thick glasses but wore contact lenses. He also had my brains for science, math and music. “Also, I wanted to remind you about my upcoming choir concert. It’s in two weeks. I’d really like you and Mom to be there. I’ve got a solo. Well, a couple of solos: one vocal and the other on the guitar.”

“We’ll be there, Mase,” I promised.

“Cool!” he said. With a crooked smile, he bounded out of the office, bellowing to Mia. I used the opportunity to finish hiding the presents, locking Bella’s bracelet in the safe.

An hour later, Mia, Masen and Owen came downstairs, asking if they could watch a movie. I nodded and said I’d join them. We decided to ‘Geek’ out and watch all of the Lord of the Rings movies on blu-ray. It was going to take two days. Six movies that are all about three hours long? You do the math.

We were taking a dinner break in between the Lord of the Rings and The Two Towers when the door flew open and Kyra ran inside, sobbing. “I hate you all! You’re single-handedly ruining my life!”


“Kyra got a job,” Bella replied.

“Where?” Mia asked innocently.
“At fucking TACO BELL!” Kyra screamed from the upstairs. “I’m going to be handling dog food!”

“Kyra, Taco Bell isn’t that bad,” I replied. “Think of it this way, you can rise through the ranks and be a manager by the time you graduate.”

“I don’t want to rise through the ranks,” she wailed. “Mom, did you work when you were in high school?”

“I did,” she replied. “I worked at a diner.”

“Dad?” Kyra snarled.

“I made my money by fixing computers and writing stupid games for the Nintendo and Atari,” I answered.

“K, I give private lessons for piano and violin,” Owen chimed in. “Masen and Mia help out around the neighborhood with shoveling and doing yard work. You’re the only one who doesn’t work.”

“That’s because we’re millionaires and shouldn’t have to,” she spat, getting into Owen’s face.

And that was the crux of it. My oldest daughter was a spoiled brat. The problem is, how do we fix it?

A/N: Kyra’s acting like a brat. How many of you want to smack her? *Raises hand! ME! ME!* She reminds me so much of the kids I teach who feel entitled to everything, when they don’t. Anyhow, tips on how to handle a bratty teenage girl, please send ‘em my way. I’m not a parent (just a teacher). Up next will be Bella’s take on all of this. Plus, her expedition on finding Kyra a job.

There are some pictures of this chapter. Their outfits are posted on Polyvore (tufano79). You can check out my blog (link in my profile). Also, check out my Facebook group: Tufano79’s Fanfiction Appreciation. Good fics are discussed there along with teasers and such. Finally, find me on twitter: tufano79. Leave me some!
Job Hunts, Mongoloids and Volleyball

They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlocks), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

This chapter starts after Demetri and Alex’s anniversary. It’s Bella and Kyra’s trip to find her a job.

Chapter Three: Job Hunts, Mongoloids and Volleyball

BPOV

“Come on, Kyra,” I said. “You’ve got to pound the pavement.” I turned to Owen and let him know that Edward was in charge for making dinner. My sweet boy nodded.

“Ugh! This is so stupid,” she growled. “I mean, why do I need a job?”

“You’re going to spend the rest of your life working, Kyra,” I said as I followed her out to the car. She clambered into the Range Rover. Or The Beast, the third. It’s the third Range Rover we’ve had since we got married. The first one lasted until our tenth anniversary. The second Beast lasted only two years before it got totaled while Jasper was borrowing it to move into his home in Wheaton. Edward was pissed. He made Jasper buy us the third reincarnation of our Beast. Edward also insisted that I get every bell and whistle on the black SUV. Despite my trepidation, I did and we had a nearly $200,000 car.

“You don’t work,” she said as she buckled her seatbelt.

“Yes, I do. I am Aunt Rose’s agent along with the face for the Cullen Children’s Foundation. I work my ass off,” I said, starting the car. “So does your dad. I agree with his suggestion that you get a job. You’ll find something nice and have money for your phone, clothes and hanging out with your friends.”

“I can’t hang out with my friends,” she said bitterly. “I’m grounded, remember?”

“You may be grounded now, but I’m certain that your dad and I are willing to ease up on you once you show us some marked improvement.” I said as I drove to the large shopping district on the south side of Wheaton. We started in Town Square. “Where do you want to look?”


“Keep in mind that you are inexperienced. Some of those stores will only hire experienced sales associates,” I explained.
“How am I supposed to get experience if I don’t get hired?” Kyra asked, clearly frustrated by that.

“You start in a smaller store and work your way up,” I answered. “We’ll go to all of the different stores in here, including the restaurants. Some of these places may not even be hiring.” Kyra rolled her eyes and tossed her hair up into a ponytail. She looked lazy and sloppy, wearing just a pair of yoga pants and a fleece. Not exactly an outfit to get a job. We walked into Express first. Kyra looked around, wanting to try on the clothes and not work here.

“Hi!” chirped a pretty girl. “Can I help you find anything?”

I waited for Kyra to respond. She was looking at a shirt that was far too revealing and sexy for her body. I gently nudged her to break her reverie over the top. She shook it off and turned to the attractive blonde girl waiting for an answer. “I was wondering if you’re hiring?” she asked in a bored tone.

“Let me get my manager,” she said, eyeing Kyra with a look of disdain. She quickly hid it and walked to the register. I could see the blonde girl talking to an older, attractive woman. The girl was pointing to us and the manager sighed before walking over to where we were standing.

“Welcome to Express. I’m Monica, the manager of the store. Can I help you with anything?” she asked professionally.

“Are you hiring?” Kyra asked, playing with her fingernails. She wasn’t even looking at Monica.

“Not at this time,” Monica replied. “We normally hire season workers at the end of October but we need experienced sales associates. We don’t have the time to train new hires. Perhaps try at TJ Maxx to get some experience, hon.”

Kyra bristled at Monica’s condescending tone. “Fine,” she spat, turning on her heel and stomping out of the store.

“I’m sorry,” I sighed.

“First job?” Monica snickered. I nodded. “Good luck. The places around here aren’t really hiring and no offense to you; they wouldn’t touch her with a ten foot pole.”

“Attitude. I know,” I grumbled. “Do you have any suggestions? What places around here are hiring?”

“TJ Maxx is looking for associates at night. Taco Bell, IHOP…” Monica shrugged.

“Thanks,” I said as I followed Kyra out of the store. She was already waiting, her arms crossed over her chest. “I spoke with the manager. No one here is hiring.”

“What a load of crap,” Kyra snarled. “Why do I need a job? This is so stupid.”

“Deal with it, Kyra,” I said sternly, walking back to my car. She followed behind me, looking longingly at the stores. I got into my vehicle and my daughter followed closely behind. I took a few breaths before speaking again. “Your dad is brilliant in having you get a job. Everything has been handed to you and now you need to learn that you have to work your ass off to get what you want. The life we lead, the extravagant cars, nice house and designer clothing, it’s not because we sit around and do nothing all day. Your father and Uncle Jasper started Whitlock Technologies, barely scraping by. I worked as a book editor before I was Aunt Rose’s agent. It’s our jobs as parents to want to care for our children, but obviously our care for you has now turned into spoiling. You think everything should be handed to you on a platter. Life doesn’t work that way, Kyra Marie.”
I pulled the car into the parking lot of IHOP. “I said no food, Mom,” she said flatly.

“With it being so close to the holiday season, finding a job at a retail shop maybe challenging; they want people who know what they’re doing,” I explained, again. “Let’s try here. You can earn tips if you are extra helpful on top of your wages.”

“I’ll smell like eggs and syrup. It’ll never, ever wash out of my hair,” she whined. I shot her a look and she quickly shut up.

Fuck me, I’m ready to strangle my own child. This behavior is driving up the fucking WALL! “Look, Kyra. Your dad told you that you have to get a job. The time where we give you everything is now over,” I said tersely. Walking up to the restaurant, I asked for the manager. Kyra was standing behind me, her arms crossed over her chest. After a brief conversation, the only shift that they had an opening in was while she was in school. That wouldn’t do so we left. We went to all of the restaurants around Town Square and didn’t get any bites. I also took her to Ulta, a makeup store, Old Navy, and TJ Maxx. The shifts they were looking for were during the day. As a last resort, we went to the fast food restaurants and found out that Taco Bell was hiring. The shift was four until ten. It was late, but it fit with Kyra’s schedule. Plus, the manager was flexible with having high schoolers working for him. Much to Kyra’s chagrin, she was hired on the spot by Lou, the manager, and her first training day was on Tuesday.

Kyra put on a good show for Lou, being courteous but behind her golden eyes, I could see her ire. She hated the fact that she was going to work in Taco Bell. Lou gave her a schedule for two weeks, which consisted of three weekdays and one weekend day per week. If she worked out during this ‘probationary’ period, he’d add her to schedule permanently. We left Taco Bell. Kyra got into the backseat of the car, putting in her ear buds, effectively cutting off any communication with me.

With a disgruntled sigh, I drove us back home. Secretly, I was happy to go home since today was not pleasant in the slightest. The drive was quiet, save for the blaring music of Kyra’s cell phone being blasted in her ears. She was seething in the backseat. I could feel her anger rolling off her in waves. Once I parked the SUV in the garage, Kyra jumped out of the backseat and stomped into the house. I was nearly to the door when it slammed in my face. Aw, hell no! With a snarl, I opened it, listening to Kyra’s vitriol.

“…You’re single-handedly ruining my life!” she screamed. She sobbed hysterically, running up the stairs.

I walked inside and caught Edward’s eyes. My eyes were wide with shock. “What happened?” he asked.

“Kyra got a job,” I answered.

“Where?” Mia asked innocently.

“At fucking TACO BELL!” Kyra screamed from the upstairs. “I’m going to be handling dog food!”

“Kyra, Taco Bell isn’t that bad,” Edward replied. “Think of it this way, you can rise through the ranks and be a manager by the time you graduate.”

“I don’t want to rise through the ranks,” she wailed. “Mom, did you work when you were in high school?”

“I did,” I said. “I worked at a diner.”

“Dad?” Kyra snarled, leaning over the banister of the stairs.
“I made my money by fixing computers and writing stupid games for the Nintendo and Atari,” he answered.

“K, I give private lessons for piano and violin,” Owen chimed in. “Masen and Mia help out around the neighborhood with shoveling and doing yard work. You’re the only one who doesn’t work.”

“That’s because we’re millionaires and shouldn’t have to,” she spat, getting into Owen’s face.

“Owen, Mia, Masen... upstairs,” Edward said curtly.

“Are we in trouble, Daddy?” Mia asked.

“No. Kyra is,” Edward sighed, rubbing his hand over his face. “We’ll continue our movie marathon later. I’ll come up and get you guys when we’re done.”

Owen, Mia and Masen went upstairs while I pointed to the couch in the family room. Kyra huffed, stomping to the leather sofa. Edward was standing in the middle of the family room, pinching the bridge of his nose. I walked over to him, gingerly reaching to touch his hand. His fingers twined with mine. With a brief kiss, he turned to our oldest daughter. “I’m going to say this once, Kyra,” he said curtly. “You are not a millionaire. The money that our family has is your mother’s and mine. The money you have is what’s in your savings account and the checking account that you will start once you begin working. We worked for the money that we use to provide a home, vehicles and food. We work extremely hard.”

“You never go to the office,” she grumbled, shooting Edward a defiant glare.

“You know the big office I have on the second floor? It’s fully equipped with everything I need to complete my job for Whitlock here at the house. That’s beside the point,” Edward roared. “The point is that what you think you’re entitled to, is not handed to you. We’ve all had to do menial, horrid jobs. Even your siblings know the value of hard work. Mia has more money in her savings account than you do. She’s mowed more lawns in the neighborhood than anyone I’ve ever seen.”

Kyra opened her mouth. Afterward, she shut it quickly. She just fell back against the couch, crossing her legs and bouncing it angrily. “It’s time to grow up, Kyra,” I said quietly. “Next year, you’re going off to college.”

“Will I have to pay for that, too?” she snapped.

“We’re still going to pay for your education,” Edward said, his anger barely contained. “Your job is going to pay for your extra things. Your mother and I will still provide for you but the entertainment and extraneous stuff is now your responsibility.”

“Seriously, do you hate me?” Kyra whimpered.

“We don’t hate you, Kyra,” I explained. “Your father and I love you very much. As of late, your behavior has pushed us to the limit and we don’t like you very much. Now, you’ve got some thinking to do and I know about the lab report you have to write up for chemistry. Mr. Brown sent me an email, saying you asked for an extension.”

“I don’t get it,” she replied. “Balancing equations confuses me and yeah.”

“I’ll try and explain it, Kyra. You need to do the work,” Edward said, standing up. “Let’s go up to your room and we’ll work on your lab report.” Kyra stared at him, gawking at his willingness to help. “I want to make sure you’re successful in school. I know that chemistry is your weakest subject. I may not be a genius but I can help you with some basic concepts. I’ll help you with the
“Kay,” she whispered, brushing her hair away from her face.

“Load it up on your computer and I’ll meet you upstairs. If you could let your siblings know that it’s safe to come downstairs, that would be great,” Edward said quietly. Kyra eyed her father skeptically before leaving the family room. I could hear her yelling that movie night was back on. Her door slammed shut, shaking the ceiling fan above us. “Fuck…”

“I know,” I said, leaning my head on Edward’s shoulder. “She was horrid today. I’m surprised she was hired by Taco Bell. However, Lou, the manager, seemed to be a hard-ass. Not in the fact that he would hurt Kyra, but perhaps show her the ways of the world. You know?”

“I hope so. Something has got to give,” Edward snarled. “I’ve got such a fucking headache from dealing with all of this drama. When does Kyra start?”

“Tuesday,” I answered.

“I’ll transfer the car into her name and add her name to the insurance. I’ll cover the first six months but after that, she’s on her own,” Edward replied, kissing my lips softly. “Please, tonight? I need to make love to you. I desperately want you, baby. Something positive, you know?”

“I’m with you, angel,” I replied, running my hand through his thick hair. “Tonight, after the kids are asleep, I’m all yours.”

“Good,” he growled playfully, nipping at my neck. He got up and ran up the stairs as the rest of our children came down. With Owen, Mia and Masen, I watched The Two Towers. Toward the end of the movie, Edward came downstairs. He flopped down next to me, pulling me to his side. I curled up next to him, kissing his neck. Much to our surprise, Kyra came down as well. She sat down on the loveseat with Owen. He ruffled her hair, earning a smack from Kyra but she giggled, putting her head on his lap.

The movie ended at eleven. The kids cleaned up the mess and went upstairs. Kyra stopped in front of both of us, wringing her hands nervously. “Thank you for the help with my project, Dad,” she said, shooting him a nervous look.

“You’re welcome,” he said, giving her a crooked smile. “Do you understand it a little better?”

“Yeah. Why can’t you teach my chemistry class?” she laughed.

“Because I’m not a teacher or a chemist,” he snorted. “Make sure you turn in your report to Mr. Brown first thing, okay?”

“I will, Dad,” she said before turning to me. “Mom, I’m sorry I was such a bitch today while you were dragging me all over trying to find me a job. I know that I’ve been awful and you’re right about everything. I’ll try to be better. Thank you for taking time out of your day to help me, even though I was so horrible.”

I regarded her for a few moments before responding. Was this apology genuine? Was she manipulating us? Only time will tell. “You’re welcome for helping you with the job. I know it’s not what you wanted but Lou seems like a nice guy who will teach you a lot.”

“Lou?” she asked, furrowing her brows.

“Your boss,” I answered.
“Oh.” She nibbled her lip and twirled her long brown hair. Yes, when she was a baby, her hair was more bronze like her dad’s. As she got older, her hair got darker and was more brown than bronze. In the sunlight, it shone with red highlights but the base tone was a warm auburn-brown. “Well, I’m going to bed. I’m tired since Owen had us up at seven to clean up the backyard. I’ll see you tomorrow.” She walks until she gets to the kitchen, turning around slightly. “I love you both.” Before we could respond, she darts up the stairs and her door clicks shut.

“Holy crap. Was our daughter actually somewhat civil with us?” Edward squeaked, looking back toward the kitchen.

“She was,” I laughed. “She said she loved us. I think hell froze over.”

“I should have recorded it for prosperity,” Edward snorted. “It may be months before we see her act somewhat normal with us. Let’s go upstairs, gorgeous. I think the planets are aligned or something. Kyra acted like a human and our children are in bed like the angels they are. I need some smexy times with alluring, exquisite and fuckhot wife.”

“Horny, Edward?” I giggled.

“For you? Always,” he replied. He stood up, scooping me over his shoulder. I squealed as he carried me to our bedroom and we made some earth-shattering magic in our bed. I so love my horny, sexy, and amazing husband.

xx STTD xx

The next day, Edward and I are surprised by our kids making us breakfast in bed. Thank goodness we remembered to get dressed after our romp between the sheets. Okay, three romps. Much to our shock, it was Kyra’s idea to make us breakfast. I’m still leery of her motives. Based off Edward’s behavior while we ate our lumpy pancakes and soggy eggs, he felt the same way. Either that or he’s having indigestion because of eating regular eggs, not egg whites.

The rest of the day was relatively quiet. The kids worked on homework. Justin came over before he went back to school, thanking us for hosting the party. Edward spoke quietly with him and Justin ducked his head, promising to call Edward with more information. I began cooking dinner, arching a brow at my hubby. “What were you and Justin talking about?” I asked.

“A girl. He told me that he’s going to ask out his lab partner from biology,” Edward replied, nibbling on an apple. “He asked me for some advice on Friday since Alex and Demetri’s relationship is, well, unconventional. He’s struggling with his sexuality and wanted to talk to a heterosexual male.”

“You may be hetero but you are so metrosexual,” I giggled, ruffling his perfectly coiffed hair.

“You love it,” he said, narrowing his eyes. “I’m hot and you know it.”

“You are hot. Plus, you’re mine,” I said, leaning across the counter, pressing a soft kiss on his lips. “Love you, angel.”

“Hmmmm, love you more, gorgeous,” he murmured against my mouth. We break apart when Masen wanders into the kitchen to grab a snack. I blush and go back to chopping the vegetables. Edward finishes his apple. Masen gives us a smirk, clearly indicating that he knew that we were canoodling. My blush deepened and Edward held out his fist. Masen laughed, pounding his dad’s knuckles and left the kitchen.

Dinner was a quiet affair, more eating than talking. Apparently my casserole that I made was really good. Mia and Masen do the dishes while I put the food away. Owen was outside, washing the cars.
with Edward and Kyra before it got too dark. Edward wanted to make sure that Kyra knew how to handle our old Volvo. She’s had her license for a year but was not the safest driver. She had several speeding tickets and even one fender bender. Her car insurance was quite expensive.

Owen poked his head inside and told me that he was going for a ride with Edward and Kyra. They were taking the Volvo for a drive. I nodded and said that I loved him. Owen walked over to me, hugging me closely and kissing my cheek. My oldest boy was so much like my husband, it was scary. The only difference between Owen and Edward is the height. Edward is roughly 6’3” while Owen is 5’10”. With another hug, Owen bound out of the kitchen and I could hear the car start in the driveway.

I poured myself a glass of wine, turning on the television. I flipped through the stations before finding a movie. About halfway through the movie, my cell phone rang. I picked it up, checking to see if it was Jacob, my unknown caller. Well, known caller now since Edward did his detective work. But, it wasn’t. Thankfully.

“Hi, Tim,” I said. “What’s up?”

“Are you available this week?” he asked. “We need to go over some foundation stuff.”

“I’m pretty flexible. The only day that I have something scheduled is Wednesday. I’ve got a doctor’s appointment, but other than that, I’m free.”

“Monday and Tuesday, I’m on site for a couple of homes I’m working on,” he said as he flipped through his planner. “Wednesday and Thursday, I’m in the office in Naperville. Friday, I’m off but flying to a foundation site in Seattle.”

“What time is your flight on Friday?”

“Early,” he grumbled. “It leaves at eight. I have to be at O’Hare by six, which means I have to leave here by five. Up at four…ugh!”

“Sorry,” I snickered.

“No big deal. At least I’m using a limo this time. I can sleep on the ride up there. Plus, I get back very late on Tuesday. I’ll sleep on the way home, too,” he chuckled. “Want to shoot for Thursday since Wednesday’s out because of your doctor’s appointment?”

“Awesome. Where do you want to meet? I can come to the office,” I suggested.

“Heavens, no. I love my office and my office staff, but for lunch, I get the hell out of dodge,” he laughed.

“Where?” I asked but my phone beeped, indicating I had another call. “Tim, hold on. Someone’s beeping in. It’s probably Edward or something. You think where you want to go.”

“Kay,” he answered.

I flipped over to the other line. “Hello, Edward,” I said airily.

“Not Edward,” came the gruff voice of my ex.

“Jacob, JESUS! You’ve been told not to call me. Are you really that dumb?” I snarled.

“I’m not dumb, Bella,” he snarled. “You are by letting me go. You should have been with me. Not
with the geek! I need you, baby! You’re my girl. I need you so badly."

“Too bad, Jacob,” I said, my eyes filling with tears. “Twenty years ago, you hurt me and I vowed to never, ever be with a guy who could hurt me. If it weren’t for Edward, you would have done something to me that…I cringe at the thought, Jacob. Leave me alone. If you call me again, I’m contacting the police because of the harassment.”

“Whatever, Bella. You’re not getting rid of me. When you least expect it, I’ll find you and I’ll take back what’s mine,” he growled, his voice filled with implications. He hung up the phone and I dropped my cell onto the floor. I didn’t realize it but tears were falling down my face. It wasn’t until the house phone was ringing that I neglected to pick up the phone with Tim.

“MOM! Uncle Tim’s on the phone!” Mia screamed.

I scrambled and dropped the cordless several times before I could press the button to talk to Tim. “Sorry,” I said, my voice wavering.

“Bells, are you okay?” Tim asked. “You sound upset. Did Edward and you have a fight?”

“No…Jacob…he called…threatened me,” I cried.


“No. He’s driving with Kyra and Owen,” I answered, my tears becoming more hysterical.

“I’m going to call him with my cell, Bella. Take deep breaths,” Tim soothed over the phone. I tried but it wasn’t working. I could hear Tim talking to Edward and his worried tone. A few moments later, Tim came back. “Edward’s on his way. Everything’s going to be alright.”

“Why now? Why is Jacob doing this now?” I whimpered.

“I don’t know, Bella. I didn’t really talk to Jacob,” he replied. “From what Rose told me, he’s a piece of work. A total ass.”

“He is. He hurt me, Tim. When Edward and I first met, he grabbed my arms and left bruises,” I blubbered, curling up on the couch. “His eyes were crazed and…and…”

“BELLA!” Edward called.

“Edward’s here,” I said.

“Okay. Everything will be alright. I love you, sweets,” Tim said soothingly.

“Thanks for your help, Tim. Love you, too,” I said as I hung up the phone. Edward found me in the family room, running to me and gathering me in his strong, safe arms. Once I was engulfed by his scent and his protection, the dam broke and I started sobbing. Kyra and Owen were shocked as I fell apart in my husband’s arms.

“What’s wrong, Daddy?” Kyra asked, her voice shaking.

I shook my head violently. I didn’t want them to know. Not yet.

“Let me talk with your mom and we’ll tell you later,” Edward said as he held me even tighter, squishing my body to his.

“I’m sorry, Mom,” Owen said in his deep voice, etched with concern. I pressed my nose into
Edward’s chest, trying to quell my sobs. Unsuccessfully, I might add. Edward’s voice rumbles against my ear and I could see the kids leave the family room.

“Talk to me, gorgeous,” Edward crooned, running his fingers up and down my back. I couldn’t talk. I was too busy sobbing like a banshee. He moaned, pulling me into his lap, cradling me like a child.

“Tim told me that Jacob called you.” Unable to speak, I nodded, grasping blindly at Edward’s fleece.

“Shit!”

“He…he th-th-threatened m-m-me,” I whined.

“Oh, that mongoloid is fucking dead,” Edward growled. “I’m hiring back some protection for you, Bella. This is beyond some crush gone wrong. Jacob is delusional.” I felt Edward’s soft lips press to my forehead. “I’m going to make sure you’re safe, beautiful girl. Jacob won’t hurt you. I promise.”

We stay curled up on the couch until Kyra came down to make her lunch. She gave me a sympathetic look. I’d always been a hard ass. I wasn’t one to cry a lot after I had children. Now, this situation with Jacob is scaring me. It’s like the Emmett situation but focused on me.

Would Jacob actually hurt me?

Would he hurt my family? My children?

I would die if anything happened to my children or my husband.

Silently, I vowed to myself that I would sacrifice myself for them. With a shaky sigh, I burrowed closer to Edward’s chest, relishing in his protection, love, and security. He murmurs over and over that he loves me and that he’d keep me safe. Eventually, I calm down, still held in his arms.

xx STTD xx

Monday and Tuesday were spent at the house. Edward was in contact with a security firm to arrange for a body guard for me. I told him it wasn’t necessary. He reminded me how I was a nervous, sobbing mess on Sunday evening. I acquiesce to the body guard, but only when I’m traveling. Not pleased, he accepted the compromise and made arrangements for someone to travel with me to LA with Rose in two weeks.

Tuesday, Kyra started her job and she bitched slightly when she left. I stayed up for her. She came home around 10:30, tired and wearing a Taco Bell uniform. I asked her first day was. She wrinkled her nose, explaining that she spent the night watching safety videos in the back office and filling out paperwork. She’s scheduled to work on Thursday and Friday where she’ll learn how to make the food.

Wednesday, I went to the doctor. I so don’t love my yearly visit to my gynecologist. Blah. I have my pap smear and my breasts fondled. Before I left, I got my depo shot and schedule my appointment for next year, pending any anomalies on my tests.

I was driving back home when my cell phone rang. Hesitantly, I checked the screen. Thankfully, it was Edward. Not Jacob. “Hello?”

“Clean bill of health, gorgeous?” he asked.

“That’s what the doctor says,” I replied. “How’s work?”

“Good. I had a meeting with some interested buyers for our newest radar gun. You can clock speeders without having to be in a stationary position. It was your dad’s idea but he didn’t have a
way to make it work. Jasper and I attacked it. We now have a moving radar gun. Anyhow, the Chicago PD is ordering our first batch,” he said proudly.

“That’s awesome, angel,” I smiled. “You are so brilliant.”

“It was Charlie’s idea, though. He’s the one who wanted it to work. In fact, his name is listed first on the patent,” Edward chuckled. “Anyhow, I wanted to let you know that I checked your cell phone and the phone call from Sunday.”

“Oh,” I muttered. “Jacob?”

“Right. He’s using a disposal phone. What’s troubling me is that the cell towers he was using is in Denver. He’s traveling, Bella,” Edward said curtly. “My guess is that he’s traveling closer to you.”

“Maybe he moved to Denver,” I suggested.

“I had Charlie run a background check on Jacob. He still has a permanent address in Flagstaff. Jacob is also divorced with two children that he doesn’t have custody of, nor visitation rights. According to the records that I found, it was a nasty divorce. Domestic violence against his ex-wife and children. However, the ex refused to press charges, demanding a divorce instead. He’s dangerous, Bella.”

I was stopped at a stoplight. Pinching my nose, I sighed. “Edward, can we talk about this when you get home?” I pleaded. “I just had my vag violated and my breasts pawed by my doctor. I have to do some work when I get home for this meeting with Tim tomorrow and I don’t want to be a nervous wreck.”

A few moments of silence greeted me until someone behind me honked. I waved at them pulling away from the stoplight. “We’ll talk when I get home,” Edward said wearily. “I love you, Bella.”

“Love you, more,” I whispered. The phone clicked off and I tossed it into the cup holder. A half hour later, I pull up to the house and parked inside of the garage. I looked around the garage before closing it, heading inside. I sit down in the office, feeling like I’m being watched. I close the curtains as the computer is loading up. I pop in my ear buds, losing myself in the music as I work on the email that Tim sent me regarding the foundation locations. He needed to know what we needed to order for the buildings, contacting the cities they were located in and get appropriate permits to build and remodel.

As I was working, I got a text from Kyra. She said that she was staying after school to work with her French teacher on her report on Les Miserables that she had to write in French. Owen was waiting with her and getting a ride from Kyra. Looking at the time, I sent off what Tim needed via email and verified our lunch at Tango at one for tomorrow. I put my coat back on and drove to Mia and Masen’s school, Monroe Middle School. Mia’s volleyball team was competing in the district tournament today. They were up for first place.

I parked in the rear of the school, walking into the school. I saw that Alice’s car was there. Gianna was a manager for the volleyball team. I walked inside of the school and into the gym. Alice was seated closest to the door, playing with her phone. I hug her and we watch the very close volleyball game. They were up against Franklin Middle School. Mia is on the court and she is amazing. She’s already had a pretty healthy growth spurt and is one of the tallest girls on the court. I can hear her brother cheering from the stands.

With a flourish, my girl spikes the ball at the end of the second game, winning the game-winning point. Mia squealed and was hugged by her teammates. Then, she’s hefted onto their shoulders. I’m screaming so proudly for my daughter. Alice is doing the same, bouncing excitedly. The girls
congratulate the Franklin team before they go into the locker room. Mia saw before she went inside, giving me a warm hug. She’s sweaty and smelly, but having a hug from my girl makes me smile.

“Thanks for coming, Momma,” she whispered against my neck.

“I wouldn’t have missed it, baby girl,” I said, tugging on her long brown hair. “Go change and I’ll take you and Masen out for ice cream.”

“Sweet!” she squealed, running back into the locker room.

Masen sauntered down to where I was seated, kissing my cheek. “She did good, didn’t she?” he asked, quirking a brow.

“Yeah, she did,” I smiled. “I’m taking you and your sister out for ice cream.”

“Oberweis?” he asked, wiggling his fingers.

“Whatever your heart desires,” I answered. “I’m going to call Kyra and let them know if they want to join us. Your dad, too. Grab your stuff.” He nodded, bounding up the bleachers to grab his massive book bag. I sent a text to Kyra and Owen.

Going for ice cream to celebrate Mia’s win in the district tournament. Oberweiss if you want to join us – Mom

Awesome! We’ll meet you there! Tell Mia congrats from her good looking older brother – Owen

Masen might fight you on that – Mom

Pfft, whatever momma! See you at Oberweis! Love you! – Owen

I dialed Edward’s cell phone, only to be greeted by his voicemail. I let him know that I was taking the kids for ice cream and if he wanted to join us, to call me. Mia was changed back into her school clothes, holding her backpack and a small duffel filled with her volleyball uniform. I kissed her forehead as she hugged me. She wasn’t as sweaty and the scent of her Bath and Body Works body spray filled my nose.

Alice and Gianna were coming with us and we drove to the ice cream shop. Mia and Masen were chatting quietly in the back seat. As I pulled into the parking lot of the ice cream shop, my phone beeps with a text.

I’m just leaving work, gorgeous. I’ll have to pass on ice cream. Besides, my doctor says it’s bad for my cholesterol. :P. I’ll see you when I get home. Love you. Tell my baby girl that I’m so proud of her – E

Will do, angel. We’ll miss you. Love you more – B

Inside of the Oberweis, Kyra and Owen were waiting. We all got in line, ordering ice cream. Mia got a large sundae since she was the reason for this impromptu ice cream outing. We settled in a booth, eating our ice cream and talking about our days. Alice asked Kyra about her new job. Surprisingly enough, she was polite in her response.

We finished our ice cream, getting back in our respective cars. Mia and Owen switched cars. Mia wanted to ride with Kyra and Owen honestly feared for his life while riding with his sister. After a short drive, I pulled into the garage with Kyra parking off to the side of the driveway. Edward’s car is already parked inside the garage. However, he stepped out of the house, holding a bouquet of
flowers and a very patriotic bear. “Baby girl,” he called to Mia.

She saw him and ran into his arms. “Daddy!” she smiled.

“Your mom told me about your game,” he said against her hair. “I’m so sorry that I couldn’t be there, sweetie.”

“It’s okay, Daddy,” she replied.

“I got you some flowers and a bear. I know it doesn’t make up for me not being there, but the next time, I promise,” he said fervently. Edward always tried to come to as many of our children’s outings as possible. He’d only missed a handful in the lives of our kids. Each one was due to a valid reason: working or dealing with something with the foundation. Today happened to be work related. He had to be at the office for the meeting with the radar guns. He was the one with the rapport with the police commissioner. Charlie got along with him fine, but he wasn’t a schmoozer like Edward.

“Kay, Daddy. I’m trying out for basketball. The coach said I have a good chance of making it since I’m so tall for my age,” she said, kissing Edward’s cheek. He handed her the flowers and bear. She hugged the gifts to her body, thanking him again before running inside to put the flowers into some water.

Since we ate ice cream so late, dinner was sandwiches and leftovers. Mia showered and went to bed early. Owen was practicing on the guitar he had gotten for his birthday. Masen was noodling on the piano while Kyra was reading in the family room while Edward and I were watching television. At nine, Kyra kissed us both and went upstairs to shower.

“Finally,” he sighed. “I’ve wanted to talk to you about the mongoloid and what I’ve arranged.”

“Let me guess, around the clock protection?” I asked.

“Yeah,” he said. “The earliest I can get someone to start is next week. Ironically enough, it’s Ricky’s son, Steve. He’ll be with you whenever you leave the house.”

“Isn’t that a bit much?” I asked.

“No. You want to know why? Because you’re my life. I love my children. I love my job. However, I exist for you. I have never loved someone as much as I love you, Bella. You’re everything to me. If anything happened to you because of Jacob, I don’t know what I’d do. Besides, I told Charlie about Jacob and he was the one who called the security company. He didn’t want anything to happen to his little girl,” Edward murmured, kissing my hair. “You know how you were with Emmett?”

“Yeah,” I answered.

“That’s how I am with you. Except you can’t fight him off like I could with my brother,” Edward muttered. “You could but based off the photo I saw of Jacob, he’s huge. He’d hurt you, badly. I can’t have that. Our children need their mother. I need my wife. We’d be lost without you.” He gently guided my face up to his and his golden eyes were shimmering with tears. “Jacob is unstable and obviously delusional in the fact that he can still get you. Please, gorgeous?”

Seeing the fear in his eyes. Remembering the anguish when he was attacked by Emmett. My own fears from the phone call on Sunday. I’d be foolish to not accept the extra protection. “Okay, angel. I’m sorry about being stubborn.”

He leaned down and kissed me. “Thank you,” he murmured against my lips. He held me closely, whispering his love for me and appreciation for my agreement to allow for extra protection. I just
prayed that I’d never have to use it.

A/N: So, first things first. Thank you to evilnat for creating an amazing banner for me for Surviving the Teenage Dream. It’s amazing. You can find it on my blog under the Surviving the Teenage Dream tab. There are two: one is of the whole family and the other is just the kids. I’m amazed at how awesome it turned out. Thank you, Nat! I love it and I appreciate you for creating it for me. Big squishy hugs!

Secondly, I do not have an ‘update schedule’ for this or any of my other stories. Reason being is that I write when I can and where I can. My life is hectic, crazy and busy. I’ll try to update this every couple of weeks, but no promises.

Finally, pictures from this chapter are on my blog (link in my profile). You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation or on twitter: tufano79. We talk about fics, share tidbits about our lives and gush over the hotness that is Robert Pattinson. Feel free to join the party.

Up next will be another Bella chapter. We’ll get through the lunch with Tim (some possible drama while out with Tim); the introduction of Steve, Ricky’s son (Ricky is one of the body guards from The Geek’s Guide to Parenthood); and the first couple of days in LA with Rose for the meeting for her books to be made into a movie. We also may see some lemony goodness, too. Skype sex anyone? LOL!

Leave me some!
Lunch, Security Guards and the City of Angels

They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlocks), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Up next will be another Bella chapter. We’ll get through the lunch with Tim (some possible drama while out with Tim); the introduction of Steve, Ricky’s son (Ricky is one of the body guards from The Geek’s Guide to Parenthood); and the first couple of days in LA with Rose for the meeting for her books to be made into a movie. We also may see some lemony goodness, too. Skype sex anyone? LOL!

Chapter Four: Lunch, Security Guards and the City of Angels

BPOV

“Edward, you don’t have to go with me to lunch with Tim,” I chided. My neurotic husband was dancing nervously, wringing his hands while I got dressed for my lunch meeting for some foundation business. “You’re supposed to meet with Jasper and Demetri for your quarterly report for the third quarter. Go to work, angel.”

“But, Bella,” Edward whined. “There’s a psycho mongoloid on the loose and he could really hurt you.”

“I’m going to be with Tim who is just as big as you, if not bigger,” I mocked back. “Besides, couldn’t you just track him using his cell phone at the office?”

“Only if the cell phone’s on,” Edward grumbled. “It’s been off since he called. Or he got a new one. My guess is the latter. Fucking Jacob.”

I teetered to him in my heels, smushing his cheeks together. “Edward, I will be fine,” I said. He looked silly with his face all scrunched up by my hands. I giggled.

“Fissh’t thunny, Thedda,” he said against my hands.

“I’m sorry, what was that? I don’t speak mush-mouth,” I snorted, releasing his face.

“He took my hands, giving me a stern look. It was his ‘disapproving-dad’ stare. “I said that it wasn’t funny. This is serious! Have you seen a picture of your ex-boyfriend? He’s a crazed, steroid-filled, emotionless monster with muscles on top of muscles and some fucking ugly facial hair. He could squash you like a bug, gorgeous. His hand could wrap around your teeny waist and he’d split you in two.”

“First off, my waist ain’t teeny. Having four children prevents my waist from ever being teeny,” I
said, arching my brow at him. “Secondly, I’ll carry my handy-dandy can of Mace, my baton and rape whistle. Finally, need I remind you that, um, I’m going to be with Tim! Tall guy, has muscles of his own and is a few years younger than you Cullen.”

“You wound me, Bella,” he pouted. “I work out every day. Yes, my body isn’t as fit as it was but I can still kick some ass. Just ask Jasper or Demetri.”

“Angel, you and I both know that you are the hottest guy who is almost fifty, ever,” I said, tangling my fingers into his thick, bronze/gray hair.

“Must you remind me that I’m getting close to the half-century mark,” Edward growled. “I don’t feel old. Yes, I may have gray-ish hair, but I’m not old.”

“Sure, you geezer,” I snickered.

“Ugh! You suck, Bella,” he snarled, giving me a playful scowl. With a heavy sigh, he took my face in his large hands. “Please, please, please make sure that your cell phone is on at all times and don’t go anywhere without Tim. I can’t wait until you have someone with you permanently.”

“When does my new bodyguard start again?”

“We meet with him on Sunday to go over protocols and he’ll start officially on Monday,” Edward answered.

“Please tell me that he’s not going to hang out while I’m here by myself,” I grumbled. “I’d feel like I have to entertain the poor guy.”

“Sorry, baby,” he frowned. “Steve is moving into the apartment above the garage, like Johnny, Ricky and Matthew. We’ve got a new tenant.”

“Oh, goody,” I said blandly. I pinched my bridge of my nose, a habit I picked up from my husband. “I thought we were past all of this bullshit. Emmett’s in jail, awaiting his lethal injection. Why now? Why is Jacob choosing NOW to come back to make our lives hell?”

“I don’t know, gorgeous,” Edward said as he held me close to his still strong and muscular body. I snuggled against him, inhaling his fresh and soothing scent, gripping his dress shirt. “Are you sure that you don’t want me to come?”

“I’m positive,” I sighed, kissing his angular jaw. “I’ll leave my cell phone on and make sure that I have Tim with me at all times.”

Edward pursed his lips, seemingly unsatisfied with my response but he gave a wary nod. “Call me once you get to Tim’s office, after you get to restaurant, when you leave the restaurant and finally, when you get home,” he said, panic rising in his voice.

“Okay, Edward,” I said, trying to stay calm. His anxiety was causing my own to escalate. But, I didn’t want him to see me all upset, so I kept it together. He crushed me to his chest, pressing his cheek to my head. I eventually pulled back to finish getting ready. Edward sat in the room, watching as I put finishing touches to my outfit, ending with my wedding rings and necklace. We walked downstairs and I got ready to leave. However, the phone was ringing. I bristled.

“It’s Mia and Masen’s school,” Edward said, looking at the caller ID. “Hello?...Masen’s sick? Alright, I’ll be right there.” He hung up and gave me a sigh. “Masen’s got the flu. He projectile vomited all over his science table and his lab partner.”
“Oh, NO!” I snickered.

“Poor kid,” Edward frowned. “Anyhow, I’m going to pick him up and take him to the doctor.” His nose was wrinkled, obviously not enthused about picking up our vomiting youngest son. Edward could never, ever, **ever** handle puke. He’d be puking right along with the kids which made for a bigger mess for me to clean up.

“How, Edward. Take my car. I don’t want you to stress over Masen throwing up all over your car.”

“Oh, thank you,” he said as he swiped my keys from my hands. He peppered my face with kisses.

“You go pick up Pukey McPukerson and I’m going to my meeting. I don’t think he’ll need to go to the doctor unless it spans for longer than a day,” I said. “We’ve got some Gatorade in the basement fridge and crackers in the pantry. Set him up in the family room with a garbage can.”


“He’s your son…our baby,” I snickered. “Just pray that he doesn’t puke all over you.”

“God damn it,” Edward muttered. I pulled on his hand, pushing him into my car. “Don’t forget to call.”

“I won’t. I love you and I’ll see you when I get home,” I whispered, kissing him quickly. He clambered into the car, backing out of the garage. With a sullen wave, he drove away from the house. I got into Edward’s car, heading in the opposite direction toward my meeting with Tim.

A half hour later, I parked in the small office where Tim’s business was located. It was a posh storefront with a gallery of all of his work, corporate, educational and residential. In the forefront were all of the original Cullen Children’s Foundation from Chicago, Joliet and Schaumburg. Inside of the room, I sent Edward a quick text saying I was at Tim’s. He responded and said that Masen wasn’t the only kid he had to take home. Gianna was also sick and the office couldn’t get a hold of Alice or Jasper. So, Gianna and Masen were currently on our family room couches, moaning as their bellies were revolting.

_Poor babies…_

“Bella!” called Tim. He jogged out of the back office, hugging me tightly. “How are you doing?”

“I’m fine but my youngest apparently has the stomach flu,” I snorted. Tim backed up comically, inspecting me for any vomit. “Relax. My poor son threw up all over the desk at school and his poor lab partner.”

“Oh, damn,” he laughed. “Poor guy.”

“He’s not the only one. Gianna is also being taken home by Edward,” I snickered. “He’s in agony.”

“I don’t blame him. I can handle being peed on and the shits, but puke…nasty!” he shuddered. “Now, let me just grab my book and we’ll go to lunch. Italian okay?” I nodded and he darted back into his office, picking up his portfolio. We walked to Rosebud and were led immediately into a private dining room. We ordered some food and our meeting started.

Tim went into detail for three of the new foundation locations, updates on the buildings, permits and funding for the renovations. The newest locations included Lincoln, Nebraska; Tacoma, Washington and Santa Fe, New Mexico. We were also in negotiations for four other locations in Duluth, Minnesota; Portland, Maine; Jacksonville, Florida and Charleston, South Carolina.
“…we need to finalize our decisions for Tacoma location first since their opening is less than two months,” Tim rambled as he pulled out a few samples for carpeting, wall colors and…Bella? You okay? You’re spacing out.”

“Huh?” I said, shaking my head slightly. My brain was half-listening to what Tim had to say. I was more focused on my sick child at home and the crazed ex who wouldn’t leave me alone. “I’m sorry, Tim. What you were saying?”

“Are you sure you’re alright? I haven’t seen you this distracted since the drama with Emmett and Edward,” Tim said as he put his hand on my forearm.

“I’m fine. I’m worried about Mase,” I said, waving my hand dismissively. “I’ll focus, I promise.”

“This is more than just Masen being sick, Bella. We’ve been friends for how long? I know your ‘tells.’ You’re upset and stressed about something,” he said sternly, staring at me.

“I’m upset about Masen…and…well, um, Jacob,” I said, wrinkling my nose.

“Jacob? The asshat Jacob?” Tim growled. “What’s he got to do with anything?”

“He’s been calling and harassing me,” I whispered, idly playing with my napkin. “Edward’s freaking out, of course and well, honestly, so am I.”

“Are you going to get protection?” Tim asked, rubbing my shoulder.

“We have a new bodyguard starting on Monday. It’s Ricky’s son, Steve,” I snorted humorlessly.

“Keeping it in the family, huh?” Tim pressed, his eyes crinkling. I blushed and nodded. Tim sighed, squeezing my hand. “I remember him when Rose and I started our allusive affair. He always watched you, possessively.”

“What?”

“I mean, Edward’s possessive of you but it’s stemmed from love and protection. Jacob’s possessive nature was more the need to conquer you,” Tim said, leaning back in his seat. “I could see that in the few times I was out with you and him.”

“Edward’s convinced he’s going to hurt me, irrevocably,” I said.

“I don’t doubt it,” Tim answered. “Normally, I’m one to think that Edward is slightly neurotic and over-protective but I agree with the bodyguard, especially with Jacob. There’s something not right with that guy.”

I pouted, twisting my wedding set on my hand. Perhaps I was being to blasé over this whole thing. If Tim is freaking out, then, I had every right to be scared or terrified. Besides, would Jacob go so far as to hurt my family? I hope not. My children are my world and if anything happened to them…Tears were running down my cheeks. Tim gathered me in his arms and hugged me tightly. Silently, I fell apart as I realized the severity of the situation.

While I was being comforted by my best friend’s husband, my cell phone chimed from my purse. I picked it up, checking to see who had texted me. Secretly, I was hoping it was Edward, telling me that he needed me. As much as I wanted to have this meeting with Tim, the stressor of Jacob was now weighing heavily on my mind. However, the number showed up as ‘unknown.’ It was tempting to just delete the message without reading it. I couldn’t though.
I dropped my phone as if it was hot to the touch. Flinging myself away from the table, I frantically looked around the restaurant.

“Bella? What is it?” Tim asked, shocked at my change in demeanor. I stabbed at the phone which he picked up. “‘Tsk, tsk, Mrs. Cullen. Cheating on your hubby? I’m watching you.’” He glared at the phone. “He’s close, Bella. He can see you.”

Tears fell down my face, unabated. “I want to go home,” I blubbered, feeling lost and out of control. “I want Edward.”

“Okay, sweetie,” Tim said as he put his arm around me. “I’m driving you, though. You’re too upset to drive and I do not want to leave you alone.” In a flurry, Tim got our food to go and paid the bill. Together, we walked back to Edward’s car. Tim took the keys and helped me into the passenger seat. Stoically, I sat quietly as Tim sent a message to his assistant that he was leaving for the day. I don’t remember the drive home. Tim was yammering on about something, but I couldn’t tell you what.

Pulling up to our home, Tim had to drag me out of the car and into the house. I was shuddering uncontrollably when I walked inside, falling to my knees. “Edward! I need you!” Tim shouted.

I heard the sounds of Edward running to the garage entrance with the shuffle of Masen and Gianna behind him. “Bella?” he wailed, falling to his knees and taking my face in his hands. The dam broke and I launched myself at him. Edward caught me, cradling me in his arms. “Tim, tell me what happened. Everything.”

“It’s better you just see,” Tim snarled, giving Edward my phone. I could feel my husband stiffen, growling lowly.

“Next to the desk, there’s a phone number,” Edward said authoritatively. “Dial it and bring me the cordless. Masen, I know you feel like crap, but I need you to call the police on your cell phone, asking for an officer to come here.”

“Sure, Dad,” Masen said, his voice filled with worry. “Is everything okay?”

“No,” I sniffled, burying my face in Edward’s shirt. His arms tightened around me.

“Gianna, can you get some comfy clothes for Aunt Bella? There are yoga pants in the dresser, middle drawer on the right side. Also, swipe a hoodie from the closet.”

“The MIT hoodie,” I croaked out, wanting to feel Edward’s strong arms around me, even if he wasn’t touching me. His hoodie would work in a pinch…

“Okay, Aunt Bella,” Gianna replied, her voice sounding raspy and tired.

Edward stood up, causing me to freak out slightly. With a strength that he hadn’t possessed in awhile, Edward swept me in his arms, carrying me to the office where Tim was talking on the phone. Edward sat down, with me on his lap, gesturing for the phone. I was curled up against Edward as he spoke quickly and quietly on the phone, arranging for Steve to come tonight to begin his round-the-clock security. Edward also arranged for another two guards for the kids. Ricky was ready to come out of retirement, hearing the desperation in Edward’s voice.

Masen let in the police while Gianna brought me down some comfortable clothes. I told the officers about the harassment, showing them the text message and relaying all that Jacob said to me in our conversations. There wasn’t much that could be done but we did alert the police. They had Jacob’s name and photograph along with my complaint. After the police left, I changed into my comfy
clothes, curling up with Masen and Gianna, who were very clingy due to their illness and my breakdown. I knew I was going to get the stomach flu, but I needed my son and right now, my niece, to keep me together while Edward and Tim finalized arrangements for security for me and the kids.

Edward sent Tim to pick up Owen and Mia from school. Kyra was working. We were hoping that Steve would be settled in with us so Edward could pick up Kyra from Taco Bell after she was done with her shift.

“Mom?” Masen croaked, clearing his throat. “What’s going on? You seem so scared. I heard part of what was happening, but…”

“Someone that I dated in the past is trying to hurt me,” I said, wrapping my arm around Masen’s sweaty, heavy body. He really was feeling icky because he was never this cuddly, even as a little boy. He was always a stand-offish child. The only time he was a cuddle monster was when he was sick. It was like he was trying to get back into the womb. I pressed a kiss to his hair, resting my cheek on his unruly brown locks. “Anyway, this man, Jacob, we dated before I met your dad and we broke up.”

“Obviously,” Gianna snickered, sounding like Alice. “If you were still together, you wouldn’t be with Uncle Edward.”

“Right,” I laughed lightly, holding her close, too. “When we broke up, Jacob was okay with it. He pushed me for something that I wasn’t ready for in the relationship and when I decided to end it, initially, he was hurt but not psycho.”

“Did something happen?” Masen asked, his hands clenching in anger.

“Unfortunately, yes. I lived in Phoenix when your dad and I first met. We were out at a club with Aunt Rose and a, um,” How do I describe Rose’s relationships? Crap… “a friend of hers. I ran into Jacob outside of the bathroom. He had seen your father and me dancing. Jacob was furious and he put his hands on me, bruising my arms and rattling me to the core. Your dad stopped him, punching Jacob in the jaw. I didn’t see Jacob again until right before I moved out to Chicago, a few months later. He was okay and he wished me luck along with an apology for how he behaved at the bar, claiming he was drunk.”

“Just because he was drunk doesn’t mean you touch and hurt someone,” Masen snarled, ready to attack. “What an asshole!”

“Language,” I chastised. “Just because you’re upset and sick, doesn’t mean that I can’t wash your mouth out with soap, my dear child.”

“Please don’t,” Masen whimpered. “Puking up food is one thing but soap? I don’t even want to imagine. Have pity on your sick, emaciated son.”

I chuckled, tightening my hold on him. “You are not emaciated, Masen. You just have the flu. However, you’re staying home from school until your fever breaks and you can eat some toast without throwing it back up.”

“Kay, Momma,” Masen mumbled sleepily, putting his head on my lap. He fell asleep quickly with Gianna close behind.

Edward was running around in the apartment above the garage before he came down with his Bluetooth clipped to his ear. “Thank you, Ricky. I’ve arranged for a limo for Steve and they’ll be waiting at Midway upon his arrival. He’s got his own place and storage for his weaponry…Me, too.
We’ll get together at some point…I will. Thanks again.” He hung up the phone, tossing the Bluetooth onto the table, flopping down in the recliner. “Steve will be here in three hours. Ricky is shipping his weapons and I’ve pulled the old gun storage locker out of the basement.”

“I thought the earliest he could get here was Sunday,” I whispered.

“He was on vacation but when Ricky called him with the latest development, Steve made arrangements to come straight here. He was in Costa Rica on some sort of mission or something. He’s got nothing appropriate for the weather.”

“I’ll go shopping for him,” I said.

“No, with him. You are not going to be alone until this whole situation with Jacob is settled,” Edward said, his voice taking on a deep, resonant tenor.

The door of the garage opened and the sounds of Tim, Mia and Owen filled the house. Edward hopped up, hissing for everyone to be quiet since Gianna and Masen were napping comfortably against my body. Edward dragged them both into the living room, explaining what happened during my lunch with Tim. Tim chimed in with some extra information. Owen was ready to kill Jacob for making his mother cry. Mia was worried and scared but Edward explained that we were going to have extra protection until this was all resolved.

Tim left shortly after that with Alice and Gianna. He had to catch a train to the city since he left his car in Naperville. Alice dropped him off at the train station on her way home. Masen and Mia went upstairs. Mia worked on homework while Masen spent most of the evening hovering over the toilet. Owen was nervously following me around while I made our dinner, freaked out that something could happen to me.

Dinner was quiet. No one really ate anything. Mia was a little green, obviously getting what Masen was afflicted with upstairs. I honestly wasn’t feeling all that good either, idly pushing around my leftovers from lunch. However, my uneasy stomach was due to the events of the traumatic day.

Around nine in the evening, there was a knock at the door. Edward bristled and he walked to see who it was. Opening the door, Edward was greeted by a young man who looked like a younger and much more muscular version of Ricky. “Hello, I’m Steve. I’m looking for Mr. and Mrs. Edward Cullen?”

“Yes, I’m Edward. Come in, Steve,” Edward said. They shook hands and walked into family room. Owen eyed the newcomer warily. “Can I take your bag?”

“I’m fine, Mr. Cullen,” Steve said formerly.

“Please, call me Edward,” my husband said with a friendly smile. “This is my son, Owen and my wife, Bella.”

“Nice to meet you all,” Steve said with a nod of his head. “My dad briefed me on the situation and I hope I can help out.”

“Just by being here, you’re already helping,” Edward sighed. “Are you hungry?”

“A bit. I had some foul airport food,” Steve replied, wrinkling his nose. Edward quickly made him some food and we sat down in the kitchen.

“So, why don’t you tell us about yourself, Steve? I’d like to know a bit more about the man who is going to take care of my family when I can’t,” Edward said.
“Of course, Mr. Cullen,” Steve said, swallowing a bite of food. Edward arched a brow. “Mr. Edward?”

Edward heaved a sigh. “That’s what your dad called us when he worked for our family fifteen years ago.”

“I just want to be respectful, sir,” Steve said quietly.

“Perhaps some of your manners can rub off on our daughter,” I snorted. “Edward, can you pick her up? She gets off in a half hour.”

“I’ll leave in ten minutes,” Edward said, checking his watch. He looked at the tall man, eating meatloaf and mashed potatoes at our kitchen island. His hair was light brown with a pair of shrewd and cunning blue eyes. He had a goatee and a sharp jaw line. The clothes he wore were indicative of where he was vacationing: a pair of cargo shorts, a long-sleeved t-shirt and a fleece jacket. Steve was also in killer shape. The definition of his body was clear as day underneath his t-shirt and his legs were muscular. “So?” my husband pressed. “Tell us something about yourself.”

“Sure, Mr. Edward,” Steve said, pushing his plate away. “I’m twenty-five. I enlisted in the army, only to be turned away due to a heart defect that I was unaware that I had. So, I went to school for law enforcement after I had a pace-maker placed in my chest to regulate my heart rate. I was hired by the police force in my hometown but I didn’t like it so I joined my dad’s security company while I worked on getting my law degree. I hated the classes so, I focused mainly on the security company and have been there ever since.”

“This heart thing?” Edward asked. “It’s under control?” Edward’s eyes were wary and he looked like he was ready to pummel Ricky for sending us Steve with a bum heart.

“Yes, sir,” Steve said as he lowered his v-neck t-shirt, displaying a small scar. “I’ve got a pace-maker and it keeps my heart pumping normally. The wiring is just faulty and it needs a jolt every so often. My mom has the same thing but not as severe. She just had a pace-maker placed a year ago. I assure you, though, I’m perfectly healthy. I take care of my body and will do everything in my power to protect you and your family, Mr. Edward. I can see your fears in your eyes and I hate that.”

“I like him, Edward,” I said. “I like you, Steve. You’ve won me over.”

“I’m glad, Miss Bella,” he smiled.

“Have you ever killed anyone?” asked Owen, who was lurking in the corner.

“No yet, Mr. Owen,” Steve said with a frown. “And I hope I don’t have to.”

“I hope so, too,” I muttered, patting Steve’s arm. “Now, Edward you need to get Kyra and I’ll show Steve to his new place to get settled in. I’m assuming you’re pretty tired, right?”

“Yes, Miss Bella,” Steve replied with an appreciative smile. “I had a late night last night with my buddies and had rolled in to our hostel around six in the morning. My dad called me at noon but I had spent most of the morning tossing and turning due to my friends using the bathroom like a rotating door.”

“Not you?” Edward asked, still riding the hard line for Steve.

“No, sir. I never cared much for alcohol,” Steve replied, wrinkling his nose. “I’d rather watch my friends turn into bumbling idiots while I walk way, smelling like a proverbial rose.”
“Okay,” Edward said, giving a definitive nod. “I’m going to get Kyra. We’ll keep the kids home tomorrow and explain to them the situation and the reason for extra protection.”

“Do I have to stay?” Owen asked. “I’ve got a test in Political Science and my teacher is a jerk who doesn’t like to give make-ups. I already met Steve.”

“When’s your test?” I questioned.

“Fourth period,” Owen answered.

“Fine. You can go,” Edward replied. “But, I’ll drive you to school and pick you up afterward. No one is to be on their own.”

“Even Kyra?” Owen asked, his brows shooting his hairline.

“Even Kyra. We’ll work around her work schedule,” Edward sighed, picking up his car keys. “I’ll be back in a little bit. Welcome to the family, Steve and I hope that this isn’t something too permanent for you.”

“Thank you, Mr. Edward,” Steve answered, nodding his head in appreciation.

“Want to come with me, Owen?” Edward asked our oldest son. Owen nodded and they left the house.

I swiped a pair of keys from the junk drawer, turning to Steve. “These are for you. It’s the house key and the key to your apartment above the garage, where you’ll be staying. I’m certain Edward will go over the nuances of the place in regards to the security features but I can show you everything else.”

Steve nodded and he picked up his carry-on bag. We walked to the garage entrance, climbing the stairs to the small one bedroom apartment above our garage. I unlocked the door, handing them to Steve. I flipped on the lights, displaying the relatively masculine and clean family room of the apartment. “We have a separate phone line for this apartment,” I said as I handed him the cordless phone. “Don’t worry about any of your bills. We’ll take care of it all. The only thing we won’t do is your laundry.”

Steve snorted, giving me a wry smile. “Nor would I expect you to, Miss Bella.”

“Speaking of laundry,” I said, indicating to his shorts. “We’ll need to get you some more appropriate attire for the weather.”

“I can have my parents send me clothes,” Steve said.

“Nonsense. You may be protecting our family, but you cut your vacation short and I want to help you out. If my children aren’t puking their brains out, we’ll go shopping to get you some clothes for colder weather. If not, Edward probably has some things that could work in a pinch until we can go shopping,” I said, walking him to the kitchenette inside the apartment. “Um, I usually kick dinner and such, but if you want some alone time, we have a fully functioning kitchen here.”

“I’m not much of a cook. I mean, I still live with my parents and my mom is the best cook in the world,” Steve snorted.

“Well, I may give her a run for her money,” I teased. “If you want, I can also show you how to cook. I taught all of my kids plus Edward’s best friend, Jasper and no one has died of food poisoning.”

“I may take you up on that,” Steve snickered. “I’m twenty-five and when I’m not on jobs, I live my
“Folks. I need to grow up, you know?”

“Hell, it’s nice to be doted on by your parents,” I said, thinking fondly of my own mom. “Though, my mother couldn’t cook to save her life. Dinner was always a science experiment. A favorite for her was deep-fried bananas with a side of tartar sauce.”

“Ew, really?” Steve squeaked.

“I had to learn how to cook so I wouldn’t starve,” I snorted. Turning, I led Steve to his bedroom. “If you don’t like the décor, we can change it up for you.”

“No, it’s fine,” Steve said politely. “I like the color blue. It’s very calming.”

“Bathroom’s just through the door and across the hall is security central,” I giggled. “That’s Edward’s domain.”

Steve brushed past me and into the security room. He quickly appraised the bank of monitors, whistling lowly. “This is a lot of technology.”

“My husband is quite the tech geek,” I said dryly, arching a brow at Steve. He replied with his own smirk. “Anyhow, I’ll let you be. If you need anything, the home phone is programmed into the cordless.”

“Thank you, Miss Bella,” Steve said. “I just want you to know that I will do everything to keep you and your family safe.”

I nodded, patting Steve on his shoulder before turning to go. I dragged my body back into the main house, turning off lights and locking up the doors. I dragged my tired body up to my bedroom, making a detoured stop in Mia and Masen’s rooms. They both were running fevers with garbage cans next to their beds. I called into school, saying they were sick and would be out for the rest of the week. I also called in Kyra, too.

I finally went into the bathroom, stripping out of my clothes and into the shower, allowing myself to crumble completely. The stress of the day had caught up to me. I was on the floor, sobbing brokenly and clutching my stomach in fear of what Jacob was capable of, how close he was, what his intentions were.

I hadn’t even noticed that Edward had come home, slipping into the shower with me. His strong arms were pulling me into his lap, holding me as I fell apart. The water had begun to run cold and I felt Edward pick me up. He wrapped me in a fluffy towel, setting me on the vanity. He wrapped a towel around his slender waist before he began gently rubbing me dry. I looked up at him and saw tears streaming down his face. Tentatively, I cupped his cheek. He stopped his methodical drying, looking down at me. “I can’t lose you, Bella,” he whispered brokenly. He crushed me to his chest, holding me so tightly that it hurt but I relished it, wanted it. “Jacob won’t touch you, baby. I promise you.”

“I know,” I said against his wet, warm chest. I wished I believed him. However, I had a nagging feeling in the back of my head that just wouldn’t go away. Even with the addition of Steve and the other security guards that we were hiring, I still felt exposed. Why couldn’t Jacob just have left me alone? Left my family alone?

One thing I was sure of as I tried to crawl inside of my husband’s body was that I hated, no, abhorred Jacob Black.
“I still can’t believe that the mutt is stalking you,” Rose said from her seat in first class of the non-stop flight to LA. “But at least you got some delicious man candy to guard your body.”

“Rose! Stop it,” I hissed. “Technically, I could be his mother.”

“So? Your body guard can guard my body any day,” Rose said, shooting a look behind us and smirking at the man who was in charge of my protection. He was reading a book and listening to his iPod, wearing a smart dark gray suit.

“You’re married, Rosalie Hale,” I snorted, elbowing her in the ribs.

“Whatever, Bellini,” she said, waving her hand. “Tim knows I love him and that I wouldn’t do that to him. However, it doesn’t mean that I stop looking.”

I rolled my eyes, picking up my copy of the script that the movie production company sent over a week ago. Rose and I were going through the script with a fine-tooth comb to make revisions for the first movie of the trilogy of her *Charmed* series called *The Charmed Ones*. We were nearly done with the revision and were meeting with the production company about finalizing our decision for a director, casting decisions and setting up a production start date. We were going to be in LA for four days.

It had been two and half weeks since I got that text from Jacob. Things at the house became kind of hairy for the first few days he was there with the entire house coming down with the stomach flu thanks to Typhoid Masen and Mia. Once we all recovered from the flu, Edward finally met with the rest of the security crew who would assist in watching our family. Casey was assigned to Mia and Masen. Oliver was assigned to Kyra and Owen. We also had a swing member named Henry who filled in whenever anyone needed a day off. Oliver, Casey and Henry were all local, staying in their respective homes. Steve was the only member who lived with us. However, every so often, we’d open up the guest bedroom for a security member who had to stay overnight due to a late assignment.

Edward had been amazing each night as I fell apart; upset at the lack of control I didn’t have in my life. He held me, telling me he loved me and that no one would hurt me. I started having nightmares starring Jacob and he methodically hurt my family, starting with my children and ending with me. Each night, the nightmare was the same. Each night, I woke up in a cold sweat, panting heavily that the nightmares would come to fruition.

I prayed that didn’t. I wouldn’t survive it.

“Bellini, snap out of it,” Rose chided, tugging on my ponytail. I blinked away a few tears, looking at my best friend. “Hey, it’s going to be okay. I’ve got a stiletto with Jacob’s name on it.” She put her arm around me, kissing my head.

“I’m just afraid,” I whispered, wiping my face. “I thought we were past all of this bullshit, you know? I mean, Emmett is due to be executed just after the first of the year. That’s one chapter of our life that will be closed. Our family is healthy, happy and thriving. Then, Jacob gets this bug up his ass to try and find me, turning into psycho stalker-man.”

“How long are you going to have Steve?” Rose asked.

“Until Jacob does something stupid enough to get caught or…I don’t know,” I answered honestly. “I like Steve but I hate the fact that I have a 5’10” shadow following me everywhere.”

“At least he’s a handsome shadow,” Rose quipped. I lightly smacked her arm, turning my attention
back to the script. The rest of the flight was a non-event. We landed and were ushered into a limo that was going to drive us to our hotel. The company was paying for us to stay in the swanky Chateau Marmont. Rose got a premier suite while Steve and I had smaller suites just down the hall.

Our only item on the agenda today was having dinner with the studio execs at Spago in Beverly Hills. Rose told Steve and I to take a nap and dress it up a lot for the meeting. I groaned, knowing full well that I’d have to wear heels and some sexy dress. Blah.

We checked into the hotel and had nearly four hours before the limo came back for the meeting. Steve rolled my luggage and did an inspection of the room I was staying in. He was in the room adjacent to mine. We could easily travel between the two rooms through the door the connected them. However, unless I needed to do so, I’d be on my own.

“Your room is all clear, Miss Bella,” Steve said as he helped me inside. “If you need anything, just bang on the adjoining door to my room and I’ll be here in a heartbeat.”

“Thank you, Steve,” I said, smiling at him wearily. “I’m going to lie down before our dinner. I suggest you do the same. It was an early morning.”

“Indeed it was. What time do you need to be up?”

“I can set my alarm,” I answered. Steve nodded and ducked out of my room. I double locked the door, pulling the chain before I stripped out of my clothes, down to my underwear. I picked up my phone, dialing Edward as I crawled between the crisp white sheets.

“You’re there,” Edward breathed.

“I’m here. Tucked in my bed, wishing you were with me, curled around my body,” I said sadly.

“If I could, I would be there, gorgeous,” he whined. “But, we’re launching a new version of the tablet on Friday and I need to be there for the unveiling. Steve’s with you.”

“Steve doesn’t give me orgasms,” I quipped.

“He better not. I’d fire his ass and we’d have major issues,” Edward growled.

“Edward, you know I’d never cheat on you. You’re my soul mate,” I said simply. “The mere thought of another man touching me sickens me.”

“Bella,” he whispered over the phone. “I’m sorry.”

“Why are you apologizing?” I asked, burrowing further into the pillows. “Anyhow, I wanted to let you know that I’m here and safe.”

“Any plans for tonight?”

“Meeting with studio bigwigs at Spago at seven,” I answered. “I have time to take a nap; hopefully not have a nightmare and then get ready.”

“They’re getting worse, aren’t they?” Edward asked.

“I’ll be fine,” I sighed, rubbing my face. “The true nightmare is Jacob. Once he’s caught or whatever, I’ll breathe much easier. You know?”

“Yeah, I do know,” Edward said, his voice full of understanding. “Speaking of which, I got another letter from Emmett today.”
“And?”

“He’s begging I see him before his execution,” Edward snarled. “I don’t know if I want to go. I mean, I’ve said my piece…”

“Maybe he wants to say his,” I suggested. “Atone for his sins.” Edward huffed over the phone. “Just consider it. Contact the prison board and make arrangements. You can always NOT go but at least you’ll have the opportunity to listen to Emmett.”

“Perhaps,” he said petulantly. “I miss you, Bella.”

“I miss you, too,” I whispered. I desperately wanted my husband. I felt vulnerable without him. Steve’s presence helped but he wasn’t my Edward. Tears began streaming down my cheeks as I clutched the phone to my ear.

“Don’t cry, Bella,” Edward soothed. “I hate it when you cry.”

“I’m so scared, Edward,” I choked out, curling up in a tiny ball. “I don’t know how you handled the bullshit with Emmett without losing it. My emotions are all over the place.”

“Trust me when I say that I lost it. You just never saw it,” he muttered. “Jasper did. So did Demetri but I had to keep it together for you and Kyra. Bella, I know you’re scared. You are the strongest woman I know and Jacob will not hurt you. Steve and the rest of the security team vow that.”

“Be that as it may, my mind thinks otherwise,” I sniffled, my tears still falling down my face. “The nightmares and lack of sleep…” As I said that, my eye began to droop. “I’m so tired all of the time because I can’t sleep.”


“Me, too,” I whimpered.

“Try and sleep, my gorgeous girl. I’ll stay on the phone until you nod off,” he whispered. “Nothing will happen to you.”

“Promise?”

“I promise,” he answered. His deep voice began humming and my body just gave up. Within moments of his singing, I was down for the count.

When I woke up, my cell phone was on the nightstand and an envelope placed on the pillow next to me. My heart began stammering. However, on the envelope, I instantly recognized Steve’s barely legible scrawl. I tried to calm myself but my heart was still slamming against my chest. With a shaky hand, I picked up the envelope, opening it up.

*Miss Bella, this is from Mr. Edward. He wanted me to check on you and give you this. Also, I know you’re scared. I heard you crying from my room. Jacob will not hurt you. I promise you that. I take my job very seriously and have never failed in a mission. Besides, my dad would kick my ass if something happened to you or Mr. Edward. He thinks of you as family. So do I.*

*You’re safe.*

*Steve*

I opened up the card from my husband and saw a long, sweeping love letter from my husband.
Okay, dirty letter from my husband, describing in detail all of the thing he wanted to do to me once I came back from the business trip. He also included instructions for a day at a spa for some complete relaxation and a card saying that I had something special waiting for me at Harry Winston. I had an appointment for Saturday at two. I pursed my lips, mentally admonishing my husband for spending the money unnecessarily. Whatever was at Harry Winston won’t make me feel safe. Though, I did feel slightly spoiled.

My cell phone beeped on the nightstand. It was Rose, telling me to get my ass in gear. I heaved my body out of the bed and to the shower. I quickly washed my body. I changed into some more risqué lingerie before I curled my hair and applied my makeup. I finished putting on my makeup and went to slip on my dress. It was a cream dress with a black design. I kept my jewelry simple with just my wedding band, heart necklace and a pair of diamond studs that Alice got me for my fortieth birthday.

I knocked on Steve’s door and he opened it up, giving me a sheepish grin. I breezed into his room, plopping down on one of the couches. “Seeing that note on my bed gave me a heart attack, Steve,” I said.

“Sorry, Miss Bella. Mr. Edward called me and said that you were snoring and wasting your cell phone battery,” he chuckled. “I just hung up the phone and deposited the note. I didn’t mean to scare you. I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay,” I sighed. “You clean up good.”

“Thanks,” he replied, brushing down his lapel of his black suit. “You and Miss Alice really decked me out in some really nice clothes. I don’t even think I could imagine trying to pay you back.”

“It’s part of your salary, Steve. No payment necessary. Besides, Alice needs a new person to shop for,” I snorted. “Well, besides her children, her husband, me, Edward and our children. She tried to dress Rose, Tim and their children but Rose gave her the Hale Look of Ice. Alice stopped after that with Rose.”

Steve shook his head and clipped his gun to his belt. “Is Miss Rosalie coming to us or are we meeting in the lobby?”


“Does the studio know that you are bringing extra protection?” Steve asked.

“Yes. You’ll have to sign a non-disclosure agreement, promising you won’t share any secrets about the film and blah, blah, blah…we all will.”

“Oh, okay.” Steve offered a hand, helping me off the couch and we went down to the main lobby where Rose was chatting with one of the studio executives.

“Bella!” she squealed. “This is Roger, one of the producers of the film. Roger, this is my best friend and agent, Isabella Cullen and her bodyguard, Steve Burgess.”

“Nice to meet you, Bella,” Roger said, shaking my hand. He turned to Steve, smiling at him genuinely. “Have either of you been to LA before?”

“I have,” I answered, fondly remembering the last time I was in LA. Edward surprised me when I discovered I was pregnant again with Owen. “It’s been awhile, though.”

Roger nodded and led us out to a sleek white stretch limo. Conversation on the way to the restaurant was polite, asking about our families and lives in Chicago. We also learned about Roger, who was a
native resident of Los Angeles, living with his long-time girlfriend, Frankie. She was going to be one of the costume designers for the film.

At the restaurant, we were seated in an open dining room on the patio. We were introduced to another producer, Gerald and the writer of the screenplay, Missy. I was ready to have some words with Missy since she butchered the screenplay but that would wait until tomorrow, Thursday. In addition to Roger, Gerald, and Missy, two of the hopefuls for the director job were at the dinner, David and Michael, along with the head of the studio, a shrewd woman named Louise.

Dinner ended after a few hours of good food, a lot of alcohol and conversation about our upcoming meetings. The studio execs wanted to go out but all of us were still on Chicago time. It was eleven in LA but our bodies felt like it was one in the morning. We declined the invite out and went back to the hotel.

The next morning was spent in meetings with potential directors and distributors for the film. With Rose, we decided on David as the director. However, we needed to do some major revisions on the script. After lunch, I pulled out my heavily marked and abused version of the script. Missy looked absolutely livid with me at the changes I had done to her ‘masterpiece.’ I stood my ground and explained that the soul of the book was taken with the script. Missy looked absolutely livid with me at the changes I had done to her ‘masterpiece.’ I stood my ground and explained that the soul of the book was taken with the script. Rose was shocked at how fervently I spoke about the changes I’d proposed but she was also smug about it, too. Roger and Gerald loved my changes and wanted to list me as one of the writers of the screenplay. I was hesitant but Rose answered for me. “Give Bella top billing for the screenplay. She fucking salvaged it.”

Missy quit after that.

And Missy’s name was not going to be tied to the film at all since we now decided to scrap her script and start from scratch. It meant pushing the filming back a few months while I re-worked the script but we were hopeful that by Halloween of the following year, we’d have the first film of *The Charmed Ones* in the movie theaters. At the end of the afternoon, I had a strong outline of the script and would begin writing it tomorrow before my appointment at the spa. My goal was to have at least a rough draft of the script before we left for Chicago on Sunday.

Rose was going out with executives tonight while I stayed back in the hotel room, working on the script. I didn’t really want to go out, especially with a psycho ex-boyfriend following me. Besides, I was exhausted from all of the yammering during the meetings today. My head honestly hurt and all I wanted to do was drink a few glasses of wine, work on the script and possibly Skype with my amazing husband.

Steve and I ordered room service, chatting about the meetings before I kicked him out to do my work. Despite our age difference, Steve had an old soul and was proving to be a pretty solid friend. Plus, he rivaled Edward in the protectiveness category. When Missy was calling me every foul name in the book, Steve got in her face demanding that she calmed down. She slapped him but he coolly walked over to me, standing in front of me, guarding me from her ire.

After Steve left, I pulled out my laptop and loaded up the outline for the new script for *The Charmed Ones*. I also loaded up Skype, waiting for my hubby to ping me. I’d take a break once he called me. I worked for nearly two hours when I heard the ping on the computer. I saved my work, opening up Skype. “Baby,” I breathed, seeing the handsome face of my husband on the screen.

“Oh, gorgeous,” he smiled. “How were the meetings?”

“Long, tedious, monotonous,” I grumbled. “But, I’ve been asked to rewrite the script since that screenplay writer butchered it. I was working on it before you called.”
“That’s amazing, my love,” Edward replied, pride coloring his tone. “My wife, a Hollywood screenplay writer.”

“Eh, anything had to be an improvement from the drivel Missy wrote,” I snorted. “How are you doing? The kids?”

“I’m fine. Mia is working on her cheer routine for her try-out. Masen is practicing the piano and butchering some piece by Debussy, I think. Owen is sleeping, dealing with a nasty-ass migraine and Kyra is in the shower since she just got back from work,” Edward answered. “They’re all happy, healthy and protected. Oliver is staying in the apartment overnight while Steve is with you.”

“And you, angel?” I asked. “How are you?”

“Lonely, horny, and hungry,” he snorted.

“Interesting combination,” I giggled. “Hungry?”

“I cooked dinner for the kids but got wrapped up in something for launch tomorrow that when I went to eat my meal, the food was gone. Our sons, also known as the bottomless pits, inhaled the entire pound and half of spaghetti and pasta sauce leaving none for their dear old dad,” he frowned. “So, I ate a yogurt cup and some granola because I was being a lazy ass.”

“So, the hungry thing is all on our children and your lazy ass,” I laughed. He rolled his eyes and settled back on our bed. He was delightfully shirtless, wearing a pair of sleep pants that displayed the perfect ‘v’ pointing down to my favorite part of his body besides his warm eyes and loving heart. I moaned quietly, watching his body shift on the bed.

“You okay over there, gorgeous?” he quipped.

“I’m feeling lonely and horny, too,” I breathed wantonly. I was wearing a black silken robe and a blue camisole and thong underneath that left little to the imagination. I loosened the robe, displaying my lingerie underneath.

“Holy hell,” Edward croaked, staring at my body. “Don’t move. I’m going to lock the door because if we’re doing what I think we’re doing, I do not want to be interrupted.” He hopped out of the bed. The computer moved and I heard a quiet crash. Edward cursed but he returned quickly, rubbing his side.

“You okay?”

“I’m fine. I tripped over the bedding and ran into the dresser. I’ll have a lovely bruise on my ribs, but it’ll be worth it if we get to have some hot Skype sex,” he purred, sitting on the bed. “But, be ready when you get home for the real thing, baby. This is a sad approximation of what will be done to you on Sunday night.”

“I look forward to it, Mr. Cullen,” I smirked. “Now, what shall we start with?”

“I don’t know,” he chuckled darkly. “Personally, I think you’re wearing too many clothes.”

“What? You can totally see my nipples through this shirt and these aren’t panties, they’re dental floss,” I replied, moving the computer back to display my barely there thong.

“Fuck,” Edward croaked out.

“Little hard to do that over Skype, angel,” I said as I sat back on the pillows, spreading my legs apart
so Edward could get a nice view of my pussy. I idly ran my fingers on the insides of my thighs.
“Besides, you’re covered up, too.”

“Problem solved,” he barked out, pulling down his pants to reveal his rock hard cock. With a wink, he made his arousal twitch. I giggled moving my one hand to my breasts, toying with my peaked nipples. My other hand was moving closer to my core. “Bella, I need to see you.”

“Top or bottom?” I asked. I knew I’d be naked before the end of our tryst on the computer, but he had to choose what he wanted to see first: my breasts or my pussy.

“Bella,” he whined.

“Choose, Edward or I will stay clothed and you see nothing,” I chuckled, twisting my nipple.

“Bottom,” he pleaded. “I can see how turned on you are through your panties and I want to see how wet you are.” I bit my lip, closing my legs to pull off my panties. I tossed them on the edge of bed before I spread my legs again. “God, I wish I was there, Bella.”

“Hmmm, me too,” I cooed. “You’re so much better at making me come with your fingers and tongue than I am. Unfortunately, I left my vibrator at home.” I snaked my hand between my legs, running my fingers along my folds. Edward’s eyes were trained on my hand. “Tell me what you want me to do, Edward.”

“Touch your body, Bella. I want to see how wet you are. Show me your finger after you caress your pretty little clit,” he growled, wrapping his hand around his cock. I blushed, circling my fingers over the bundle of nerves. I moaned when I pulled my hand away, desperately wanting to continue that feeling but Edward wanted to see my wetness. I was drenched. “Fuck, baby. What I wouldn’t give to bury my face between your thighs and lick you until you scream?”

“I fucking love your tongue,” I snarled as I moved my hand back to my pussy, circling the nub quickly. “I love when your tongue pushes inside of my body, caressing the inside of my pussy.”

“Yessssss,” he hissed as he pumped his hand on his cock. “You taste so fucking good, Bella. I never imagined tasting something so succulent. So sweet and perfect, baby. It’s even sweeter when you come all over my face, Bella.” He grunted, bucking his hips. His hand was twisting over his arousal. “Put your fingers in your mouth, Bella. Tell me how you taste. Is it sweet?”

“Hmmmmm,” I purred, removing my hand from my slick folds. I slid my fingers between my lips, staring at my sexy husband. “So sweet, Edward. I can see why you like licking my pussy, baby. Though, you do taste better.” He growled lowly. His animalistic sound caused the wetness between my legs to increase.

“Baby, can I see all of you?” Edward begged. “I love seeing your pussy but your whole body is so beautiful.”

I nodded, tossing my camisole off my body, revealing my naked body. “I’m naked and open for you, Edward. Tell me. What do you want me to do?” I said in a slightly husky tone.

“Slip your fingers inside your pretty pink pussy, gorgeous,” Edward choked out as his pumps became jerkier. “Curl them and make yourself come.”

“I’ll try,” I cooed, moving my hand back to my core. My eyes rolled back in my head as my fingertips grazed over my clit before I dipped my fingers inside of my entrance. “Fuck!” Edward growled lowly as I languidly thrust my fingers in and out of my drenched folds. “Edward, talk to me. Tell me what you’d be doing to me if we were making love.”
“Oh, baby, I’d slide between your thighs and inside of your tight body,” he crooned. “Your silken walls would be hugging my cock, quivering with anticipation. Fuck, Bella, you feel so amazing when we make love.” I moaned as I rocked against my own hand, desperately wishing it was Edward inside of me. “That’s it, baby. Fuck your fingers.”

“Come with me, Edward,” I pleaded, staring at my husband’s handsome face. “Please, baby.”

“Oh, my Bella,” he moaned. “I’m right there with you. I wish I was inside of you, feeling you squeeze me and hold me close. I love you so much, baby. So much.”

“Edward!” I shrieked, my orgasm building at my own hand with the help of my husband’s voice. “Oh, Edward! I’m…”

“Me, too, gorgeous,” he panted as his hands moved over his own twitching arousal.

Together, we came, chanting each other’s names as our bodies reacted to our self love. After a few moments of gathering my senses, I sat back up, pulling a t-shirt I had placed on the bed over my body. Edward had walked back, wiping off his stomach of his release. “You so planned that,” he chuckled.

“Why else would I be wearing barely there underwear?” I snickered. “I hate butt floss but I know it turns you on.”

“No, seeing you come turns me on,” he said. “That helped with the horniness. I’m still lonely and now even hungrier. I see a midnight snack in my future.”

“Make sure it’s healthy,” I said, pulling my hair into a ponytail.

“Yes, dear,” he snorted. “God, you’re in LA and you’re still nagging me.”

“I am but you love me;” I said.

“I do, Bella. More than you ever will know,” he said, brushing his finger on the computer screen, presumably to caress my face. “As you love me, right?”

“Edward, the love I have for you consumes my whole heart,” I said, hugging the pillow to my body. “I mean, I love our children but what I feel for you is…more.”

He smiled crookedly, looking younger than his nearly forty-eight years. His face was still fairly youthful with minimal wrinkles. The only ones you could see were around his eyes and his mouth from his constant smiling. His hair was mostly bronze with a touch of gray at the temples and littered throughout his entire mop of hair. He was still in impeccable shape just not as toned as he was when he was younger. However, behind his golden eyes was fear. I could see his blinding fear that something was going to happen to me or to our kids because of Jacob. I hated that. I hated that my one and only ex was causing this much pain for me, my family and my husband.

It further solidified my abhorrence of Jacob Black.

He just needed to go away.

A/N: What a beast…ten thousand words. There’s no way I could ever write drabble. I’m such a wordy girl. *Snorts.* Anyhow, we are getting into the thick of things with our favorite mongoloid, Jacob. He’s closer than you think. But, the family is well protected. We’ve met Steve Burgess, Ricky’s son, who is in charge of Bella’s protection and his two associates, Oliver and Casey (pictures are on my blog). We also got to LA and got some Skype sex (LOL).
Up next, we’re going to finish the trip to LA. There’s a surprise in there for our favorite nerdy family but you’ll have to wait until the chapter to find out what that is.

Check out my blog (link in profile) for pictures and such from this chapter. Also, find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation or on Twitter: tufano79. Leave me some!
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Anyhow, we are getting into the thick of things with our favorite mongoloid, Jacob. He’s closer than you think. But, the family is well protected. We’ve met Steve Burgess, Ricky’s son, who is in charge of Bella’s protection and his two associates, Oliver and Casey (pictures are on my blog). We also got to LA and got some Skype sex (LOL). Up next, we’re going to finish the trip to LA. There’s a surprise in there for our favorite nerdy family. This chapter is where we get to see the surprise. YAY!

Chapter Five: Disneyland

EPOV

“Dad, you realize you’re…a bit more excited about this than we are,” Kyra deadpanned. “You’re like a big kid. It’s Disneyland. No big deal.”

“Well, my darling daughter, I never went to Disneyland as a kid. Disneyworld, yes. Disneyland, no,” I said as I finished folding my clothes, stuffing them into the suitcase that I was sharing with Masen and Owen. “Besides, why are you complaining? I’m pulling you out of school to go to California. You should be thrilled.” The launch of the new tablet went off without a hitch and I decided to treat me and my family to a mini-vacay.

But, I am very, very excited.

“Don’t get me wrong, Dad. I’m totally pumped, but confused as to why,” Kyra said as she played with her long braid that was hanging over her shoulder. “Are you that horny for mom that you just couldn’t wait the three days until she came back?”

“Kyra Marie Cullen,” I snarled. “That is not an appropriate discussion for this setting.”

“Come on, Dad. I know you and mom have sex. Hello? You have four kids!” Kyra snickered.

I scrubbed my face, trying to calm down. I shot Kyra a look, who gave me her version of a crooked smirk. Yes, I missed Bella. My daughter was on the mark in the regard. In more ways than two…Skype sex = HOT and horny hubby. But that was not the reason for our departure to Los Angeles. I didn’t want to be away from her while Jacob was floating around unhindered. Yes, I trusted Steve…

Who am I kidding? I don’t trust Steve. Not yet. He has yet to prove his trustworthiness.

So, shortly after the hot Skype internet sex I had with my wife on Thursday, I called up my pilot.
Yes, I had a pilot. Whitlock Technologies has three private jets. I asked him to prepare a flight plan for Saturday to Monday, going to LA. Currently, we were leaving to go the private airstrip in an hour. Owen, Masen and I were essentially packed. Mia and Kyra were lollygagging. Well, rather, Kyra was questioning my motives for this impromptu family vacation, claiming that sex was my motivator.

*That’s part of it, daughter of mine. A small part, but a part nonetheless.*

The main reason for the trip was my anxiety over Jacob’s obsession with my wife.

In California, I arranged for us to be staying at the Grand Californian. Plus, I had tickets for Sunday and Monday for the parks. Our return flight wasn’t until late afternoon. We could go to the parks in the morning. Additionally, our kids were old enough that they could go on their own, as long as they had a security guard with them while I spent some time with my wife. Hopefully in bed. Naked.

*Dear God. Kyra is right. My seventeen year old has caught on to my tells. Shit.*

“You’re blushing, Pop,” Kyra laughed. “Sex is sooooooooo the reason for this trip.”

“You go finish packing.” I chided, pointing to the door. “Casey is coming with Oliver in forty-five minutes. The plane is due to take off in two hours. Time is of the essence, Kyra. Get your sister to get a move on.”

“Sure, Daddy,” she winked, dancing out of my room. “We won’t be late so you can get your swerve on.”

“KYRA!” I barked. She just laughed. Rolling my eyes, I zipped up the suitcase and lugged it downstairs. Owen and Masen were already in the kitchen with their backpacks. Owen was reading his homework that he was missing on Monday while Masen was playing on his PSP player. I kissed my boy’s heads before I checked my carryon bag. I had my computer, tickets and various books to read.

As I was waiting for Kyra and Mia, I called Henry to verify that he would watch the house while we were out of town. He said that he’d make regular rounds and patrols until our return late Monday night. Still not a hundred percent trusting of Henry, I called Matthew and asked him to do the same.

*I’m getting a complex. Why don’t I trust our new security team?* Matthew chuckled and promised to ensure the safety of my house.

By the time Oliver and Casey arrived, the girls were downstairs with their shared suitcase. Oliver carried the bags out to the car and we piled into the massive SUV. Once in the car, we drove the short distance to the private airstrip where Whitlock’s jets were housed. We were taking *CullWhit One* to LA. At the airfield, Oliver parked the car and we got onto the plane. The jets were small but quite luxurious. We paid good money for them, utilizing them for our business travels for the company and for the foundation. *Foundation 2010* was the jet assigned for The Cullen Children’s Foundation business. Whenever Bella, me or anyone else had to address an issue for a foundation location or take a trip, we’d use that plane.

*Jeeves, the pilot...yes, his name is really Jeeves...greeted me with a smile. We got on board. The kids all spread out around the plane. Masen and Owen were in the back, huddled around their gaming systems. Kyra was curled up on the couch and Mia was sitting next to me.*

*Mia hated flying.*

*Hell, who was I kidding? So did I. Such is life, though.*
We were all settled into our spots when the flight attendant began moving through the cabin. She told us about the safety features of the plane before she wandered to the rear of the plane to prepare our in-flight meal before Jeeves took off. The plane began taxiing down the runway. Mia put her head on my shoulder and grabbed my hand. “It’s okay, Mia,” I whispered against her hair.

“Does it get any easier, Daddy? Flying?” she whimpered.

“We’re safe, sweet girl. Jeeves is the best pilot,” I soothed as the plane began its takeoff. Mia laced her fingers with mine and snuggled against me. Her vice-like grip loosened slightly when we reached our cruising altitude. However, she stayed suctioned to my body as she read her novel for language arts. I popped in a set of ear buds, reading some science-fiction/fantasy novel akin to *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

Two hours into the flight, the flight attendant came around with food for us all. It was just snacks and such. Mia just nibbled at her meal while the rest of us inhaled our food. After our snack was cleared, Owen crashed while Masen came to sit next to his sister on the other side of her. Kyra wandered back up to the front, sitting on the couch in the front of the plane. We stayed like that until the plane began its descent into a private airfield just outside of LA. Mia was holding my hand and Masen’s bicep. Masen was grimacing as his sister’s fingers dug into his skin.

“Mia, sweetheart, lay up on your brother. I’m certain he would like to keep his arm,” I teased.

“Sorry, Mase,” Mia frowned, rubbing Masen’s arm. Masen just smiled crookedly at his sister, communicating with her as only a twin can. I sighed, remembering the closeness I had with my sister prior to my relationship with Bella. We were as close, if not closer than Mia and Masen.

Alice had been my best friend all throughout my life. She was my protector and my confidante. She was the one who helped me survive elementary school with all of the physical bullying. She encouraged me in middle school when the tormenting turned more psychological. Now, don’t get me wrong, I still got stuffed into lockers and got my ass beat in middle school, but it was more cutting at my minute sense of confidence and self-worth. Finally, she was just there for me in high school, college and beyond. She was an amazing sister. She still is an amazing sister. I love her tremendously and always will.

Our relationship has changed, though. Once I met and fell in love with Bella, my sister was no longer the most important person in my life. I know that Alice was sad when I became involved with my beautiful wife, but she was so happy that I found someone who loved me for me. In all of my geeky, nerdy glory.

I was no longer the skinny, nervous and dorky boy from my childhood. My body physically changed. I was tall with more muscles than scrawny nothingness. My glasses that I wore most of my life are gone thanks to Lasik. I ran a multi-billion dollar corporation with my best friend and started a successful non-for-profit with the foundation. I was proud of my achievements but I still had my insecurities. Those insecurities stemmed from self-esteem issues. *Being cut down from your classmates, older brother and sperm donor, definitely is not good for the confidence. Years of therapy help, but…* I’m better than I was, but I’m still not as assured as Alice, Jasper or even Bella. I second guess myself all of the time. I’m even doing it now.

*Will Bella like her surprise?*

*Will she be mad that I pulled the kids out of school? It’s just one day. They’ll be back on Tuesday. Wednesday at the latest.*

“Daddy?” Kyra asked, breaking me out of my reverie.
“Huh?”

“You were spacing out,” Owen supplied for his sister. “Everything okay?”

“Fine,” I replied, giving them both a warm smile.

“Good,” Kyra smirked. “Seeing you walk around with a chubby is not what I want to see as we leave the plane. I’d be scarred for life. Jeeves said that we’ve just landed there’s a car waiting for us.”

“KYRA!” all of the kids yelled, plus me. She gave me a sweet smile, shrugging her shoulder.

We deplaned and I pulled my oldest daughter aside. Arching a brow, “Kyra, the sexual comments need to stop. What your mother and I do in the privacy of our own bedroom is between us. Besides, I was not thinking about that. I was remembering my relationship with Aunt Alice after I saw Mia and Masen comfort each other on the plane. It’s a twin connection and I miss it.”

“Oh,” Kyra blushed, looking down at the tarmac. “Sorry, Daddy.”

“Thank you for apologizing. My concern, however, is about these comments your making,” I said sternly. “I’m glad our relationship is improving but I’m not your ‘buddy.’ I’m still your dad and I don’t know about you, but the fact you know what a ‘chubby’ is kind of freaks me out.” This coming from a man who hadn’t masturbated until he was thirty. My kids probably know more about sex than I do!

“Dad, Mom did have the talk with me. I know about sex,” Kyra explained. “I’ve been on birth control since I was a freshman.”

“Trust me, I know,” I said flatly.

“It’s so my periods are regulated. They’re all sorts of wonky. You can relax, though. I’m still your little girl. Pure as the driven snow. I kind of have to have a boyfriend in order to lose my virginity. My punishment has put a damper on my social life. No boyfriends,” Kyra said, arching a brow.

Good. I don’t want to pull out the gun. “You’re getting there, Kyra and I’m secretly thrilled that you don’t have a boyfriend,” I sighed. Kyra growled. “You’ll understand when you’re a parent. Now, we’ve got to check into the hotel and I need to surprise your mom at Harry Winston.”

“She’s gonna shit a brick,” Kyra giggled.

“She is…and watch your language,” I retorted guiding my daughter to the waiting limousine.

The ride to the Grand Californian was long since traffic was a bitch. I barely had enough time to check us in and deposit my kids before I darted out the door, going back to the limo driver who was driving me to Beverly Hills. Shortly before two, I walked into the store. An attractive woman approached me. “Good afternoon,” she said, eyeing me up, licking her lips and not-so-subtly adjusting her breasts. Her uneven breasts. “Do you have an appointment?”

“My wife does,” I explained, shooting her an icy glare. “Isabella Cullen. The appointment is at two.”

The woman took out her tablet, an earlier incarnation of the tablet that I just re-released yesterday, and consulted with the calendar. “Oh, yes! I see her name. She should be here shortly. Can I get you something to drink, Mr. Cullen?”

“Some water would be great,” I said curtly, narrowing my eyes at the woman. She shrank back
before scurrying away. I wandered around the store, staring at the glittering gems in the cases. As I was waiting for the woman, my phone vibrated from my pocket. I took it out and saw a text from Steve. He knew of my intention to shock and surprise my wife.

*We’re around the corner. Miss Bella needs this. Needs you. She barely slept last night – Steve*

*Thanks, Steve. I appreciate you telling me – Edward*

*No problem – Steve*

I pocketed my cell phone, turning around and running directly into the sales associate. She spilled an entire glass of water down my shirt. “I’m so sorry, Mr. Cullen,” she whimpered.

I arched a brow, wrinkling my nose. “Not a problem,” I said blandly.

“Alyssa! You’re done!” came a loud voice. “Go in the back and gather your belongings!”

“But? It was a mistake,” Alyssa whimpered. “Please, Mr. Rediker.”

“It’s not a big deal, sir,” I said, turning to the short man with a shiny bald head. “I wasn’t paying attention.”

Mr. Rediker pursed his lips. “You got lucky, Alyssa. However, I’ll be handling this sale. Shoo!” He waved her off and she ran toward the back of the store. “I’m so sorry about that, Mr. Cullen. Alyssa is one of our newer associates. She’s like a bull in a china shop but knows her gemstones. I’m Phinneas Rediker, manager of the store.”

“Edward Cullen,” I replied, shaking his hand.

“Would you like a new shirt since Alyssa doused you?” Phinneas asked.

“Not enough time. My wife, who doesn’t know I’m here, is just around the corner,” I said, giving the door a sly grin.

“A surprise?” Phinneas grinned. “Oh, I love this. Here, go into this room. I’ll greet Mrs. Cullen and when I go to get the item you have chosen for her, you can present it to her!”

“I like the way you think, Phinn,” I smirked.

“Call me Phinn,” he replied, pushing me toward a private room that had a small window that I could see out into the store. Phinn smoothed out his suit coat when the door opened. Steve walked in first, followed by Bella. Her hair was pulled up into a ponytail. She looked tired and drawn. The circles under her eyes were dark and her beautiful face was morphed into a frown. “Welcome to Harry Winston of Beverly Hills. My name is Phinn. Do you have an appointment?”

“Yes,” Bella said tiredly. “Two o’clock. My husband set it up. The last name is Cullen.”

Phinn gave me a fleeting glance before checking his tablet. “Yes! Mrs. Cullen, welcome! Your husband has chosen some very lovely pieces for you.”

“Pieces?” Bella asked, her eyes narrowing.

“So you can have a choice, Mrs. Cullen,” he smiled. “While I have no doubt that Mr. Cullen has exquisite taste in jewelry, he’d probably want to make sure that you had a say in the decision about your present.”
“Oh,” Bella murmured.

“Now, come this way, Mrs. Cullen. We’ll set you up in one of our private showing rooms. Would you like anything?” Phinn asked.

“Coffee, please,” she replied wearily. Phinn nodded and guided her to the showing room across the store from where I was sitting. Phinn ducked in the back, presumably to get my wife’s coffee. Steve saw me in the other room, giving me a slight head nod. I smiled at him and watched as he stood protectively outside of the room where my wife was seated. Phinn came back out with a tray with coffee, creamer and sugar. He left the tray inside of the room and he walked across the store to me.

“You ready, Mr. Cullen?” Phinn asked.

“Anything to make her smile,” I replied.

“She does look sad. Why?” Phinn questioned, his thick brows furrowing behind his glasses.

“Long story,” I grumbled. Phinn nodded and walked to a small case, taking out the three items I had pre-selected for my wife: two pairs of earrings and a ring. I know that Bella was going to choose one of the pairs of earrings. The ring, though, was different and so pretty. Hell, I may just buy it to give to her for our anniversary. Phinn arranged the jewelry on a slick black tray covered with black velvet.

“Here you go, Mr. Cullen. I’ll be right behind you,” Phinn smiled.

I carried the tray across the store, slipping into the private room. “Thank you for the coffee,” Bella said. “It’s the best I’ve had all week.” She turned to look at Phinn but when she saw me, her brown eyes widened in surprise. “Edward?”

“Hi, gorgeous,” I said, giving her a crooked grin.

“What are you doing here?” she asked. “I thought you were in Chicago. The launch…”

“Happened without a hitch,” I said as I put the tray on the table, sitting down next to her. “Besides, I wanted to be with you.”

“The kids…our protection…” she stammered.

“The kids are here, safely ensconced in the Grand Californian near Disneyland with Casey and Oliver,” I explained.

“Disneyland?”

“Well, I figured if we’re here as a family, we’re going to have some family fun,” I smirked. “We have tickets to Disneyland and California Adventure for tomorrow and Monday.”

“The kids and school,” she chided.

“It’s one day, Bella,” I retorted. “Besides, all of our kiddos are brilliant and won’t be too far behind by missing one day.” Bella’s lips were smashed together, obviously pissed off at my decision. “Relax, love. We both need to step away from the drama of Jacob and well, this is the best opportunity to do so. We’re over three thousand miles away from Chicago. Jacob doesn’t know we’re here. We can have fun and enjoy the sun.”

“This wasn’t planned?” Bella asked, arching a brow.
“Total spur of the moment decision. Well, not really spur of the moment. It’s been cooking since Thursday,” I winked. Bella blushed, smacking my shoulder. Then, she leaned over and kissed my lips sweetly. “Hmmmm, another one.” She eagerly acquiesced, sweeping her tongue inside of my mouth before she pulled back. “Are you mad?”

“No,” she answered. “I’m actually really happy you’re here. I couldn’t sleep last night. The nightmares were awful.”

“Gorgeous,” I pouted, pulling her into my lap. “You could have called me.”

“I know,” she sighed, tucking her head under my chin. I held her as she nestled against me.

“Now, as much as I love holding you, you are here for a surprise,” I said. I looked back at Phinn who was dancing by the door. “I’ll let the expert take over.”

“Thank you, Mr. Cullen,” Phinn said as he sat down across from us. “I’m sorry that you’re having a tough time, Mrs. Cullen. Perhaps some bling will make you feel better?”

“Just having my husband here is all I need,” she said, kissing my jaw. “But, let’s see what he’s chosen for me.”

“Excellent!” Phinn said, clapping his hands. He began prattling about the three pieces on the tray. As I predicted, Bella loved a pair of earrings from the Belle collection. So, I nodded to Phinn to wrap them up. Also, I gave him a clue that I wanted the ring, too. He grinned widely, taking the tray with him to wrap up my purchases. He already had my credit number on file from when I reserved the selections for my wife.

As we waited for Phinn, Bella and I spoke quietly about her meetings with the movie executives. She also told me about the new script that she was writing. She showed me a few pages on her phone that were saved to her SkyDrive. I had read Rose’s novels and was astounded by her attention to detail. Bella captured that in her writing for the script.

Phinn came back with a black bag with black tissue paper sticking out of the top. He handed me a folder. I checked the prices and verified all of the information before I signed my name. Once I did that, Phinn handed me the bag. “I hope you enjoy your pieces, Mrs. Cullen. Your husband as an eye for beautiful things. The treasures he just bought for you will just enhance your beauty. I wish you both the best of luck and if you ever need anything else, I’ve included my card in the bag.”

“Thank you, Phinn,” I said. He nodded and led us to the door, Steve on our heels. The limo that had driven me was still parked outside. I helped Bella into the car. “We need to get your stuff from Chateau Marmont.”

“Who says I’m staying with you?” Bella asked cheekily. I growled. “Kidding, Edward. Just kidding. Let me just text Rose and tell her that we’re checking out.” She took out her cell phone and tapped out a brief message. Rose’s reaction was instant. Bella snorted when she showed me the response.

_I knew SGD couldn’t stay away! Have fun, Bellini. Have some awesome, monkey-lovin! – Ro_

I swiped the phone from Bella. _This is SGD. Bella will be walking funny upon her return to Chicago – SGD_

I turned off her phone, shoving it into my pocket. “What did you say, Edward?”

“Nothing,” I smirked. Steve snickered from his spot at the far end of the limo.
“Sure, Edward. And I’m a natural blonde,” Bella deadpanned, putting her head on my shoulder. “I’m so glad you’re here. I missed you. God, I needed you.”

“I’m here, gorgeous,” I said quietly, pressing a kiss to her hair. She melted against me, nodding off for the short ride to the hotel. A half hour later, we arrived at Chateau Marmont. Steve was trying to convince me to stay in the limo with Bella while he packed up their belongings. My stubborn wife wouldn’t hear of it and she dragged her exhausted body away from mine. Twenty minutes later, we had checked out of the hotel and back in the limo.

The ride to the new hotel was pretty quiet. Bella had crashed again and was drooling on my lap. I idly played with her hair while we inched through the traffic in LA. I thought Chicago traffic was bad. That’s NOTHING compared to this shit. What should have taken roughly a half hour ended up being nearly an hour and a half. I was uncomfortable because I had to pee. Bella was leaning direction on my legs with her arms around my waist, pinching my bladder.

We finally arrived at the hotel. I gave Steve his key to his room that he was sharing with the other bodyguards. I wanted to let Bella sleep, but I couldn’t carry her like I used to. This getting old business sucks. Balancing Bella’s bags, we went up to our suite. It was three bedrooms. The girls shared a room, as did the boys. Bella and I had our own room, thankfully. The bodyguards were staying in a smaller suite across the hall, with access to our rooms with a spare set of keys.

Inside the suite, Mia and Owen were watching television. Masen was taking a nap and Kyra was working on some homework. Oliver and Casey were playing cards at the table in the kitchenette.

“Mom!” Mia squealed, bounding over to Bella. “I missed you!”

“I missed you, too,” Bella replied, hugging Mia tightly. One by one, each of our children ambled over to my wife, hugging and kissing her. Kyra’s smirk was too much. I gave her a glare, a silent warning to keep her mouth shut. After our greetings and reunions, we all decided to lay down for a nap. Masen was grumbling that he was disturbed, stomping back to his room. We set the alarms and made the executive decision to go to Naples Ristorante E Pizzeria.

Bella fell back asleep quickly but was plagued by nightmares. She clung to me in our bedroom, crying silently. I was a mess. I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t know how to help my wife. I just soothed her as best I could while she fell apart in my arms during our nap. Well, her nap. I sure as hell didn’t sleep.

It was a short walk from the hotel to the restaurant. Casey, Oliver and Steve were invited to the restaurant, but decided to hang outside. They got something to eat while we slept, rotating in and out of the room during the nap. We were seated relatively quickly due to the size of our party: six people. I ordered a bottle of wine for me and Bella while the kids got authentic cherry cokes. Over our meal of pizza for the kids and some pasta for Bella and me, we talked about all that Bella missed while she was gone. Mia made the cheerleading squad. Kyra was getting all A’s (as of this most recent grading period). Owen auditioned for all-state and got called back to the district festival. Masen was the only one who didn’t have big news. He was just coasting by, preparing for his audition for the musical after winter break.

I told Bella about the launch of the newest tablet and she was overjoyed at the press it was getting. Not to sound cocky, but Whitlock Technologies was more recognized than Apple at this point. At least in a professional standpoint. Apple was still kicking our asses in the music players, but we were doing awesome with the tablets, law enforcement technology and now, medical advancements with my version of the ‘tricorder.’ I was amazed at the accuracy of my invention. It was now at the point where I could start doing trials with it, gathering information from doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners about the quality of the product.
Bella shared her news about becoming the screenplay writer for Rose’s film. Kyra was the most shocked. Rose was Kyra’s idol. In a way, Rose and Kyra were kindred spirits. I saw a lot of my quasi-sister-in-law in my daughter. However, it was the most obnoxious part. *Loud mouth. Attitude. Snarky retorts. Bitchy.* Ugh, I’m such a horrible father. I just called my daughter bitchy. Anyhoo… Kyra never really registered that Bella was Rose’s agent or that she was Rose’s best friend. Knowing that my wife was now writing the screenplay for *The Charmed Ones*, Kyra was having some slight hero-worship of Bella.

We finished our dessert and left the restaurant, walking back to the hotel. Owen was walking backwards as he was excitedly planning our day. “I’m so pumped about this,” he chattered. “The park opens at ten, but I know Dad got the early admission. We get in an hour earlier! We should be up by no later than seven, breakfast at eight and in line by eight-thirty.”

“Owen, it’s vacation. Relax,” Kyra snickered, grabbing at his shirt. Owen scowled playfully at his sister. Kyra rolled her eyes as she pushed past him.

“Since we only have tomorrow and Monday to go to the parks, we’ll be up early, Owen,” Bella said diplomatically. “I’ve only ever been to Disneyland when I was a little girl. I don’t remember much.”

“Thanks, Mom,” Owen said as he pulled out a book, yammering about all of the places he wanted to inside of the park. His enthusiasm was endearing. Mia and Masen were with him, just as excited. Kyra was wandering ahead of us, talking quietly to Steve. My eyes narrowed at the two of them. She’s just a baby…and it’s illegal, Burgess.

“Stop growling, Edward. They’re just talking,” Bella chided.

“Our relationship started off as just talking,” I admonished. “Look at us now. We’ve been married for nearly nineteen years with four children.”

“Talking, Edward. Besides, we could have it worse. One of the moms from the volleyball team was telling me about her oldest daughter and her love affair with a goth boy who has black lips and wears big baggy pants, smelling like pot all of the time. Steve is clean-cut, respectful…”

“And eight years older,” I hissed.

“And how much older than me are you?” Bella challenged.

“Five years,” I grumbled.

“You have no reason to complain. You were graduating from high school when I was in seventh grade,” Bella smirked. “You were probably taking apart your first computer when I was born. Shut it.”

“When we got together, neither one of us was under the age of consent,” I said, pointing to Kyra and Steve. She was putting her hand on his bicep. “Shit! She’s flirting. Our daughter wants to jump his bones.”

“Edward, calm down. They’re talking,” Bella soothed. “What will cause you to relax?”

“For Steve to stay away from my baby girl,” I spat. Bella smacked my stomach. “Oh, don’t do that, Bella. I ate too much pasta. I’m gonna puke.”
“So, I’m guessing sex won’t calm you down?” Bella asked, giving me a saucy grin. “I don’t want you to throw up on me.”

“Give me an hour.”

The next morning started way too early. Owen was pounding on everyone’s door, including the bodyguards’, at seven. Bella and I groaned, having fallen asleep a few hours previous. We spent most of the night reconnecting as husband and wife, soothing Bella’s frazzled nerves and fucking my brains out, seemingly to cause me to forget the flirtation that was happening between my oldest girl and Bella’s bodyguard.

It didn’t work. Steve better keep his paws to himself.

Not. Legal.

She’s seventeen.

“Come on, old man,” Bella said as she dragged her still naked body from bed. I watched her, staring at her beauty. “Stop ogling and get your pale, scrawny ass out of bed, Edward.” She sauntered into the bathroom, with me following. We took a shower together. We dressed casually and comfortably. Bella was in a pair of jeans and t-shirt while I wore a pair of shorts and a long-sleeved Henley.

In the suite, Owen was handing out pieces of paper. It was our itinerary, geared to everyone’s likes and dislikes. Masen and Owen were spending the day together with Casey. Mia was with Kyra. Oliver was their bodyguard. Bella and I were free to do what we wanted. Steve was assigned to us.

“Separating everyone, Owen?” Bella asked, arching a brow.

“Mom, honestly, do you see me and Masen hanging out at the girly castle?” Owen chided.

“Not really,” Bella giggled. “This proposed itinerary seems pretty detailed. When did you sleep?”

“I didn’t,” Owen blushed, pushing up his glasses.

“He really didn’t, Mom,” Masen snickered. “He was on his tablet all night, planning out the perfect trip for each of us.”

“You’ve been hanging out with Aunt Alice too much, Owen,” I snorted. “She would do the same exact thing when we were kids.” Owen blushed, hiding behind his hand. I hugged him to my side. “Thank you for doing this, Owen. It looks great.”

“You’re welcome, Dad,” Owen replied giving me a shy grin.

“Can I make one small amendment?” Bella asked.

“Sure, Mom,” Owen said as he took out a pen from his pocket.
“Let’s have everyone meet for lunch at one. You didn’t account for hungry bellies,” Bella chuckled.

“I knew I forgot something,” Owen grumbled, staring at his paper. “Do you all want sit-down, full service? Or counter service?”

“Have pity on your old parents,” I said. “Sit-down service.”

“Oooookay,” Owen said grudgingly. “Let’s go to Carnation Café. It sounds pretty good.” He wrote down lunch with family on his paper, glaring at the rest of us to do the same. Bella swiped a pen from the counter and jotted down the time and location. Kyra held out her hand toward Owen, who pressed it into her waiting palm. She wrote down the information and folded the paper, placing it into her pocket of her shorts. Her very short and tight red shorts.

“Now, we’re running late for breakfast. They have a delicious breakfast buffet here in the hotel.” Owen shoved up his glasses, walking purposefully toward the door.

We all followed dutifully to the buffet. I paid for our massive party of nine people. Oliver, Casey and Steve were trying to finagle paying for their own meals. I gave them a stare, indicating that I was cover the cost of the trip. It was my pathetic, horny ass that caused use to be here in the first place. I sure as hell wasn’t going to make them pay their own way. Yes, it was expensive as fuck, but it’s not like I don’t have the money.

Not to sound conceited, but I have more money than I know what to do with…I can only donate so much. Why not spend it on my family and bodyguards.

Breakfast was delicious and filling. I distributed the tickets to the parks. I had paid the extra cost to have open tickets to either park: Disneyland or California Adventure. The girls were going to go to Disneyland with Oliver. Masen and Owen were heading into California Adventure with Casey. Bella and I decided to go to Disneyland in case there was an issue with the girls. Kyra wasn’t very street smart. Mia was a little bit better, but panicked when she was told that they were on their own with Oliver.

The boys went into California Adventure, using the Grand Californian’s entrance to the park. Bella and I, along with the girls and our two bodyguards, clambered onto the monorail. It was a short ride to Disneyland. After we entered the park, Oliver, Kyra and Mia went toward the castle while Steve, Bella and I wandered around Main Street. I had no real desire to be at the park. In a perfect world, Bella and I would be in our room, making love all day long. But alas, we’re here. In the happiest place on earth.

Or is that Disney World?

Despite my hesitation on being in the amusement park, Bella and I had a good time. We rode a few rides, having a fun time in the tea cups and Space Mountain. Bella wanted to smack me though after Space Mountain. She hated roller coasters. Put a roller coaster in the dark and that was just hell for her.

When we got off Space Mountain, it was nearly one. We walked toward the Carnation Café. Steve was walking behind us at a leisurely pace. He was always there but never made his presence overbearing. He was like a shadow but not. That makes no sense, Cullen. Arriving at the restaurant, we saw that the boys were already there. Owen was grinning like a buffoon
while Masen looked bedraggled and tired.

“Are you having fun, boys?” Bella asked them.

“This is sooooo cool, Mom!” Owen gushed. “We rode the roller coaster five times!”

“We only got off when I threatened to puke on my brother,” Masen grumbled. “I was screaming a sissy girl on the ‘Californian Screamin’ roller coaster.”

“You were,” Owen snorted. “I promise that we won’t go crazy with the rides after lunch.”

“We’re going to the Animation Academy,” Masen explained. “I’m excited about that. I think it’s cool to see the artists at work considering I can’t draw to save my life.”

“Me neither,” Bella said as she put her arm around Masen’s shoulders. He was already a few inches taller than my wife. Based off the size of his feet and his most recent growth spurt, Masen was gunning to be my height or even taller. “Though your dad is worse.”

“It’s true,” I chuckled. “All of the artistic ability is with Alice. She’s the only one who can draw out of everyone in our family.”

“What about you guys?” Owen asked, sitting down by the entrance of the restaurant, looking out the window for Kyra, Mia and Oliver. My son was on a tight timeline and tardiness was not something he was going to stand for.

“It was nice to just wander around the park, enjoying the warm weather,” I said. “It’s so much nicer here than it is back home.”

“I checked on my phone, Dad. It’s snowing!” Masen said, holding up his cell phone. “Gianna sent me this text while we were in line for the roller coaster.”

“Ugh,” I groaned. “That’s going to be a bitch to shovel.”

“Henry said that he did it for you, Mr. Edward,” Steve said.

“Oh,” I replied, my brows shooting to my hairline. “Thanks.”

“Henry explained that if your driveway wasn’t shoveled, it would be a clear indication that no one was home. Jacob might take that opportunity to, um, snoop,” Steve explained. Casey nodded, his eyes wide and full of understanding.

“Where are they?” Owen growled. “Mom said one. It’s a quarter after!”

“Relax, Owen. The girls will get here,” Bella soothed. “If you’re so worried, send Kyra or Mia a text to find out where they’re at.”

“Kay,” Owen said, taking out his phone and tapping out a quick text.

Ten minutes later, Kyra, Mia and Oliver arrived. Owen shot his sister the death glare, which she pointedly ignored. Over our lunch, the girls told us about their time in Disneyland. Kyra explained that they were getting onto the ride at Space Mountain when Owen texted. Kyra and Mia loved it. Bella blanched next to me. I leaned over, kissing her temple and vowing that
we wouldn’t be going on it again.

Lunch took about an hour. The kids decided to join forces and go to California Adventure for the afternoon. Mia said that she missed her brother and Masen wanted to strangle Owen in his control-freak, anal-retentiveness. Because they made the decision to move parks, meant that Bella and I would go, too.

That afternoon flew by and before we knew it, we were back in the hotel with slightly sunburnt faces and smiles. It was a fun day. Tiring, but fun. Back in the hotel room, we ordered some room service and ate as a family. After dinner, the kids looked at Bella and me expectantly. Kyra stepped forward, biting her lip. “Look we know that we came out here to be here with Mom but we also think that it’s important you two have some time to yourselves. Tonight, we made reservations for a local winery for you to have a tasting. Steve made the arrangements.”

Bella and I shot a look at Steve. He blushed. “Miss Kyra approached me last night. She wanted to do something special for you two. I called while you were in line for the tea cups. Your reservation is at nine.”

“So, you better change,” Kyra smirked.

Bella stood up and hugged Kyra. “Thank you, principessa,” she whispered against my oldest daughter’s hair.

“You’re welcome, Momma,” Kyra replied back, hugging Bella tightly. “You guys really deserve it. You have to deal with our drama and now this Jacob guy? You and Daddy should be allowed to have some alone-time.” Bella kissed Kyra’s cheek before she turned to our other children. Kyra walked over to me, snuggling against my chest. “Love you, Daddy. Have fun with Mom.”

“I will, principessa,” I said, kissing her forehead. “This really means a lot to your mom and me.”

“Have fun and don’t get too drunk,” Kyra giggled. Her golden eyes caught mine and they were filled with mischief.

“Don’t even say it, Kyra Marie,” I chided. She barked out a laugh before zipping her lips. Bella grabbed my hand after I hugged the rest of my children, dragging me into the bedroom. We changed into something a little more appropriate to wear to a wine tasting. Bella was dressed in a beautiful white dress with a floral pattern on it. She pinned her hair up, curling a few strands elegantly.

“Can I wear my new earrings?” Bella asked.

“Of course, gorgeous,” I said, going to the bag and pulled out the box with Bella’s new earrings. I opened up the box, smiling wistfully at the sparkling diamonds nestled on the black velvet. “Here you go.”

“Thank you,” she said as she took the box from my hand. “I’m still in shock at how beautiful these are.”
“They’re okay. You outshine them by far,” I said, wrapping my arms around Bella’s slender waist. Yes, her waist is still tiny despite her pregnancies. Is she as toned when she was younger? No. But I love her curves.

“God, you are such a cheeseball,” she snickered, putting the earrings in. “But, I love you for it.”

“I love you, too, Mrs. Cullen,” I said, kissing her neck.

“Dad! Mom! The limo’s here for your date!” Mia yelled through the door.

“You better finish getting ready,” Bella said, pushing me out of the bathroom. I snickered and went to put on my dress shirt and tie. I sprayed some cologne one before grabbing my wallet, cell phone and room keys. Bella had finished changing and she was wearing a pair of red peep toe pumps. Her pedicure was apparent and her legs went on for days.

Dear God. How am I going to not molest her in the limo?

Though, limo sex is pretty hot.

Damn it. Steve. He’ll be with us. I’m guessing he won’t want to see Bella and I do the horizontal mambo.


“Why are you scowling?” Bella asked as she picked up her purse, tossing her phone and wallet inside.

“A serious lack of privacy,” I pouted.

“We’re taking a limo,” she said, arching a brow.

“With our bodyguard,” I huffed.

“Crap,” Bella growled. “Fucking Jacob. Damn him to the deepest pits of hell. Motherfucker. Can’t Steve sit in front with the driver? I can see how much you’re turned on.”

“Ugh!” I hissed, adjusting my boner so it was better hidden. “Come on, gorgeous.” Bella was biting her lips, twisting her purse straps. I could see the tears building in her eyes. “Hey, why the tears?”

“Something so mundane as going out on a date shouldn’t include an entourage,” she said, wrapping her arms around my waist.

“I know,” I said, leaning my cheek against her soft hair. A soft knock on the door broke us apart. “Let’s have fun, enjoying our adult alone-time. Then, when we get back, I’ll make love to my beautiful wife. Steve can’t come in here.”

“If he did, I’d be worried,” Bella deadpanned.

xx STTD xx
“Guys! Come on! We’ve got to go. The plane is due to take off in two hours!” I shouted. The suite was a flurry of activity, none of which was actually getting ready to leave. It was like herding fucking cats. Bella and I were the only ones who were ready to leave since we stayed back at the suite while the kids spent the morning and early part of the afternoon at Disneyland.

“Mom! Help me pack all of the souvenirs. I don’t want to smash my Mickey ears!” Owen wailed.

“Oh, lord,” Bella grumbled. “Owen has regressed to being five.”

“Who would have thought?” I shrugged as I did my final check with Jeeves.

“MOM! PLEASE?!” Owen screamed.

“I’m coming,” Bella said. “Don’t get your cargo pants in a twist, Owen.”

Kyra and Mia came out of their room, shaking their heads. Mia’s ears were on her head, slightly lopsided. Kyra was holding her set of ears. Owen had insisted that we all get a pair, taking a picture in front of the castle. Unfortunately, the sun had set and we didn’t have the good camera. We all got onto the balcony of the suite, taking a picture this morning in front of the California Adventure sign with Oliver snapping the shot with the tiny point and shoot camera.

“What time are we getting into airport?” Mia asked.

“About nine-thirty,” I replied.

“Do we have to go to school tomorrow?” Kyra whined.

“Yes,” I answered. “You got a free day today. So, back to the grind tomorrow. Plus, don’t you have work?”

“Ugh, don’t remind me,” Kyra snarled. “I spent most of my savings on this trip. I need to pick up extra shifts if I want to go to the Christmas formal. That’s if I’m off restriction.”

“You’ve definitely improved your behavior,” I said. “Let me discuss it with your mom and we’ll let you know.”

“Okay,” Kyra said. “Come on, Mia. Let’s check downstairs in the gift shop if they have any good magazines. I need some reading material for the flight home. I finished my homework last night.”

“I thought you were broke,” Mia replied, giving Kyra a smirk.

“That’s why you, my dear little sister, are going to lend me five bucks,” Kyra laughed, dragging her glowering sister out of the room. “We’ll be back in ten, Daddy!”

“Hold on,” I said, reaching into my pocket. I took out fifty bucks, handing it to Kyra. “Don’t spend your money unnecessarily. Or your sister’s money.”

“Thanks, Daddy,” they both chirped, skipping out of the room, Casey following them.
“You’re really good with them, Mr. Edward,” Oliver said. “I only hope my daughters are as well-behaved as your girls.”

“You have daughters?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said, giving me a half-hearted smile. “They’re four and are staying with their mother.”

“Twins?”

“Identical,” Oliver replied, pulling out his cell phone and showing the pictures of his girls. “The one on the right is Vanessa and the one on the left is Veronica, or Ronnie.”

“They’re adorable,” I said. “They have your smile.” I handed him back his phone, giving Oliver a curious look. “If you have children, why did you take this assignment?”

“My ex-wife has custody of my babies and won’t let me see them without… it was a nasty divorce,” Oliver explained sadly. “She was cheating on me but fabricated some cock and bull story about how I abused her, breaking her spirit. It was a load of crap but I didn’t have the money to hire an attorney to fight it. I only have supervised visits every two weeks. I’m saving up the cash to take her to court and gain full custody of the girls. It’s my ex who was the abuser. Not me.”

I blinked at Oliver. He seemed like such an even-keeled guy. “I’m sorry, Oliver. If there is anything I can do to help, I’m willing,” I explained.

“You’re already helping. You didn’t jump to conclusions that I was the bad guy,” Oliver said. “Most people would see me and assume that I’m this nasty guy because of the muscles and my job. I’m not. I don’t condone violence. But, I’m former army and I know how to fight. That certainly doesn’t mean that I like to do it. Right now, you and Miss Bella along with your family are my priority. Your contract will help me tremendously in getting my girls back. Permanently.”

“Does your wife hurt your children?” Bella asked, her eyes narrowed.

“I’ve never seen bruises on them but they are very skittish,” Oliver said, cringing slightly.

Bella shot me a look. In her deep brown eyes, I saw her plea. Help. Him. I nodded minutely, earning a grateful smile from my beautiful wife. Oliver sighed heavily, dropping his bags next to ours by the door. “Oliver, if you want, I have friends in high places. We can arrange for a private investigator to tail your wife… erm, ex-wife. My cousin, Kate, is a phenomenal attorney and will probably work with you to start the process of gaining custody of your babies.”

“It’s not necessary,” Oliver said quietly.

“It is,” I pressed. “I can see how much it pains you to be away from your girls. Let me help you? Let us help you?”

Oliver looked at me. His dark skin was covered in perspiration and his eyes were filled with tears. “You’d do that for me?”
“Of course, Oliver,” I said, putting my hand on his shoulder. “Will you let me call my cousin and hire a private investigator?”

“Yes,” he said, pulling me into a bone-crushing hug.


*GAH!*

“Thank you, Mr. Edward,” he mumbled against my shoulder.

“You’re welcome,” I squeaked out. Oliver released me, giving me a sheepish and apologetic look. Oliver picked up the bags and darted out of the suite. Bella bellowed for the boys to hurry up, which they did and we all went down to the lobby. Kyra and Mia had found several magazines and a few books for themselves in the gift shop. I checked us out and we clambered into the limo provided by the hotel. It was a tight fit for the nine of us. I prayed it would be a short drive, but the traffic wasn’t agreeing with me. An hour and a half later, we pulled up to the airstrip. The plane was ready to go. Jeeves and a new flight attendant were waiting for us.

Steve, Oliver and Casey loaded up the luggage into the cargo hold. The kids got on board while I spoke quietly to Jeeves about the length of the flight. He explained that he’d have to make some detours due to a snow storm hovering over the Midwest. He prayed that he would be able to land the plane. I shot a look at Mia, who was standing near the doorway. Her eyes were wide and her skin was pale.

*I know, sweet girl. Daddy’s got you.*

We were all buckled and settled into our seats. Jeeves began his pre-flight tests as we taxied down to the end of the runway. Mia was pressed against me, gripping my hand tightly. I held my youngest daughter as we took off, our time in California now over.

Five hours later, Jeeves was preparing to land just outside of Chicago. The tiny plane was bucking and jumping. We all were very green as Jeeves made his final approach. His voice crackled through the cabin. “I’m not going to lie but this going to be rough. I promise to get you all home safely.” The jet moved jerkily.

“Fuck,” Casey mumbled under his breath.

*I agree, buddy.*

Jeeves managed to land the plane. Though, I think he was stark-raving mad for attempting to land in the weather that we were currently experiencing. It was snowing heavily and the runway was slick. *CullWhit One* was parked in the hangar and we deplaned. Jeeves gave me a contrite look as I glowered at him. Mia was so scared that I had physically carry my girl off the plane. Oliver eventually took her from my arms, placing her into Bella’s car.

“Dad, do we have to go to school tomorrow?” Kyra whined.

As I was getting ready to reply, my cell phone rang from my pocket. It was the school district. “Apparently not,” I snickered. “Snow day tomorrow.”
“Sweeeeeeet!” Kyra squealed, skipping to the car.

Not sweet. I want to go back to California.

A/N: Kind of struggled. I’ve never been to Disneyland (or California for that matter). I did a lot of reading but it’s never the same as being there. Anyhow, I hoped you liked it. It was pure fluff and fun. It also set up some more of the story with Oliver, Steve and the rest of our geeky family. (Wasn’t Owen adorbs in this chappie? He’s like the male version of Alice, only nerdier.)

Pic teasers are on my blog (link in my profile.) Additionally, find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation or on twitter: tufano79.

Up next will be Thanksgiving to Christmas. We’re also going to hear from Emmett, too. He’s due to be executed right after the first of the year and well, Edward wants some closure (next chapter will be an EPOV). Also, who would be interested in hearing from Kyra or Owen? Leave me a review with your opinion on that.
Burnt Birds and Broken Bones

They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Up next will be Thanksgiving to Christmas-ish. We’re also going to hear from Emmett, too. He’s due to be executed right after the first of the year and well, Edward wants some closure (next chapter will be an EPOV). Also, who would be interested in hearing from Kyra or Owen? Leave me a review with your opinion on that.

Chapter Six: Burnt Birds and Broken Bones

EPOV

“Dad, is it wrong that I’m afraid to go to Aunt Alice’s for Thanksgiving?” Masen asked as he shoveled the snow off our driveway. We were battling the second major snowstorm of the season. Bah! It’s only NOVEMBER! Craptastic.

I snorted. “Why?”

“Have you had her cooking? My shoes taste better,” Masen deadpanned.

“Yes, I’ve had her cooking. Aunt Alice is not the best cook but your mom and Nana will be there to help her out, I think. Thanksgiving dinner will be edible. I promise you, bud.”

Masen sighed heavily. “Thank GOD. I don’t think my stomach could handle raw turkey. Yours either, old man.”

I nodded and pointed to the shovel he had in his hand. It was a few days from Thanksgiving and it had snowed again. I was so over winter and it hadn’t even officially started yet. We were working on clearing the driveway. My other children were otherwise occupied. Owen was staying after school to get some extra help for the district festival which was taking place the following weekend. He was up for concert master of the district orchestra. He wanted as much help as he could get before the competition. Kyra was at work. Mia was at cheerleading practice. Bella was out with Steve, waiting to pick up our children while I worked from home. Casey was in the apartment, going over some security protocols. Masen came home on the bus and we had been tackling the driveway ever since. Well, mainly Masen. My back was hurting.

Getting old sucks, my friends.

“Your Aunt Alice may be a bad cook but that’s because she doesn’t know how to do it. We’ve tried to teach her. But, she doesn’t want to learn. Uncle Jasper handles all of the cooking for their household. Not that he’s much better,” I said as I put my shovel back into the garage. “Now,
Grandma Renee is a bad cook because she puts random ingredients together. It’s nasty, I tell you. I always fake having food poisoning or the stomach flu to avoid eating at her place in Phoenix.” I shuddered at our last visit to Renee’s. Nothing…absolutely NOTHING was edible. Bella dragged all of us out to some barbeque place to feed our hungry bellies.

“Mom mentioned something that Grandma Renee made her eat deep fried bananas with tartar sauce?” Masen blanched. “That’s disgusting.”

“Imagine eating that on a daily basis,” I chuckled.

“No wonder Mom is so skinny. I’d rather starve than eat that crap,” he shuddered. Biting his lip, he turned to me. “Do you want to make dinner for the family? Do something nice for them? Make something edible?”

I smiled at my youngest child. He was such a generous boy. Ruffling his hair, I nodded. “I think your mom would love the night off,” I said. “Let’s raid the fridge and see what we can whip up.”

“Awesome,” he said as he bounded up the stairs into the mud room. We stripped out of our winter coats and went into the kitchen. We found the makings for chicken enchiladas. Masen began cutting and I worked on making the sauce. Masen had finished cutting the veggies and chicken when we began assembling the meal, putting it into the oven. Owen had texted while we were preparing dinner and said that they were on the way home. Masen started working on the Mexicali rice while I made some black beans.

The house phone was ringing. I couldn’t answer it since I was watching the beans. Masen picked it up. “Hello? Cullen residence,” he said quietly. “Um, hold on, okay?” He muted the phone. “It’s the Illinois Department of Corrections. They have a prisoner who wants to speak to you, Dad.”

_Do I ignore it or actually respond to my brother?_

“Watch the beans, Mase. I’ll take the call in the office, okay?”

Masen nodded, handing me the wireless phone and I went into the office. Unmuting the phone call, I answered tersely. “This is Edward Cullen.”

“Sorry to disturb you, Mr. Cullen. Emmett Cullen wishes to speak with you. Do you accept the phone call?” the man on the phone asked.


“If you don’t want to speak with him, Mr. Cullen, you don’t have to,” the man explained. “You can decline the call and Emmett will be informed that you do not want contact with him.”

“No, I need to get this over with,” I sighed. “Put him through.”

“Hold please.” The operator clicked over and I heard him speak to my brother. “You have twenty minutes, Mr. Cullen. You will be reminded when you have five minutes and again when you have one minute remaining. If there is anything that is deemed unsuitable in your conversation, the phone call will be terminated with no warning and you will lose your privileges. Any questions?”

“No, sir,” Emmett said solemnly.

“Very well. Your twenty minutes starts now,” the operator explained, clicking off the line.

“Hello?” Emmett asked quietly.
“What do you want, Emmett?” I said coldly. Yes, I was acting like a douche, but I didn’t care. This guy, my brother, had pled guilty to several murders among other things. He was going to be executed in January. I didn’t have time nor the feeling to be polite.

“Thank you for taking my call, Edward,” Emmett muttered. “I wasn’t sure if you would. All of my letters have gone unanswered or returned.”


“No, Edward. I just want to talk. My execution date is set and I’m trying to atone for all of my sins,” he said somberly. “I know I was a fuck up. I know I ruined your life, but I need to say this. But not over the phone, Edward. Can I meet with you?”

“I don’t know, Emmett. Meeting with you is not really high on my list of priorities.”

“Come January 16th, I won’t be on this earth to make it right. Please, please meet with me?” he begged. His voice cracked and it sounded like he was crying.

Aw, shit…

“Let me check my schedule. I’m not making any promises, Emmett,” I said sternly. “Things are busy at work and we’ve got a ton of stuff with the family and upcoming holidays.”

“Thank you, Edward,” he breathed. “It means so much to me that you’re even willing to try.”

“Willing to try but you’ll have to see, Emmett,” I retorted. “Look, I’m about to put dinner on the table. I need to go.”

“How will I know if you’re coming?” he asked, his voice timid and unsure.

“You won’t. Be patient and if I come, I come. If not, then you’ll have to deal with that,” I shrugged. “Good night.” I hung up the phone, slumping onto the couch in the office. “Fuck, fuck, fuckity fuck, fuck!” My hands tugged on my hair, pulling painfully at the strands.

“Language,” Bella chided as she leaned casually on the door frame.

“Sorry, gorgeous,” I frowned. “I just got off the phone with my wonderful older brother.”

“Emmett? What did he want?” she asked, her brows shooting to her hairline.

“He wants to meet with me,” I scowled. I heaved a sigh, leaning forward on the couch and twisting my wedding ring nervously. “I don’t know, Bella.”

“It’s up to you, Edward. Whatever you decide, I support you,” she said, sitting on my lap. She tuck her head under chin, pressing soft kisses to my neck. I wrapped my arms around her tiny body and relished her comfort and warmth. “Now, I smell chicken enchiladas. Whose idea was that to cook?”

“Masen wanted to cook dinner for the family. I think he’s panicking about Thanksgiving and Ali’s lack of cooking skills,” I snickered, nuzzling her soft hair. “His fear is that we’re going to be eating raw turkey on Thanksgiving.”

“That’s my fear, too,” Bella cringed. “Watch, we get salmonella or E-Coli from Alice’s attempt at making Thanksgiving meal. I’ll call the doctor’s office early.”
“I thought you were going to help?” I squeaked. *My sister is cooking. Younger is going to kill us all with her lack of cooking expertise. Shit.*

“Alice is insistent that she does this on her own,” Bella replied, giving me a sheepish grin. I blinked at my wife in disbelief. Bella took my hands, trying to soothe me. “She was adamant on trying. I think Alice is feeling guilty about never helping out for holidays.”

“There’s a reason for that, Bella. That’s because she has zero cooking skills, gorgeous. I mean, I’d rather eat some of that vegan shit that Alex and Demetri try to pass as food. Yummo,” I said dryly.

“That says a lot, Edward,” Bella giggled, poking my stomach.

“Please tell me that you’re going to have…” I just knew that Alice’s meal would be awful. I’m praying, *praying* that my wife has some sort of backup plan. She probably does because she’s awesome like that.

“I already have a small turkey and all of the fixin’s in the freezer,” she giggled. “If Alice ruins Thanksgiving, you’ll still get your tryptophan fix.”

“That’s great but I’m talking about your stuffing and sweet potato casserole,” I pouted. “Not to mention the biscuits, salad, cornbread, and your homemade cranberry sauce with orange juice and Grand Marnier. So fucking good, Bella. OH! Let’s not forget my mom’s pumpkin slices, pecan pie and…”

“Okay, Edward,” she laughed. “I get it. I’ll definitely talk to Alice and ask to see if she needs help. Though, she’s gonna say no.”

“She better not say no. I need my food!” I pouted. “The one day I’m going to cheat on my no flavor diet.”

“Sure, you do. Edward you’re wasting away like a starving kid from Ethiopia,” Bella deadpanned. “PLUS, I’ve been making food that’s flavorful and good for you, Mr. High-Cholesterol.” My pout deepened. She just laughed, kissing my lip that was jut out. “You’re too cute, Edward. I love you, angel.”

“Love you, too,” I sighed, returning her soft kiss.

“Mom! Dad! Dinner’s almost ready!” Masen yelled.

“I’ll call Alice after dinner, okay?” Bella said, twining her fingers through my hair. She kissed me sweetly before she got up, dragging me with her. “And don’t stress out over Emmett, Edward. He’s made his bed…”

“I know, I know,” I replied.

**xx STTD xx**

“Guys, we’ve got to go! We need to be at Aunt Alice’s in a half hour!” Bella yelled. With a huff, she added under her breath, “I need to try and salvage our meal.”

“How bad, gorgeous?” I asked.

“She didn’t defrost the turkey,” Bella said, wrinkling her nose. “Esme had the forethought to pick up an additional turkey. It’s currently in the oven but unfortunately, we won’t be eating for a few hours. Possibly closer to seven?”
“We were supposed to eat at three,” I frowned.

“Why do we need to go now, then?” Kyra asked, walking into the kitchen.

“Because Aunt Alice can’t cook,” Bella replied. “You know that. So, Nana and I are going to help. You’re also going to help, my dear.”

“If it comes to making mediocre Mexican food, I’m all good. Cooking an oversized chicken? Not so much, Mom,” Kyra smirked.

“No Mexican food but you can help with the mashed potatoes and the stuffing,” Bella said, smoothing Kyra’s hair. “You look really nice, sweetie.”

“Thanks, Mom,” Kyra replied, hugging Bella. “I used part of my paycheck to get this dress for Thanksgiving. It was on sale. Though, I should change my shoes if I’m going to help with the cooking, right?”

“Probably,” Bella replied. “Those booties you got at the beginning of the school year will be perfect.”

“Kay. I’ll rally the troops,” Kyra smiled. She started to walk toward the stairs.

“Kyra,” I began, shooting a look at my wife. She gave me a smile, nodding slightly. “We’ve really noticed a difference in you. Things have definitely improved with your behavior. As far as your restriction is concerned, you are free as a bird.” Her golden eyes sparkled excitedly. “However, if we see the same bratty behavior from before, then you will be back on restriction faster than a blink of an eye.”

“Got it, Dad,” she answered, kissing my cheek. She hugged Bella tightly before she bounced away, yelling for her siblings.

Steve and Oliver walked in, talking to each other quietly. Casey was home with his family while Steve and Oliver protected us from Jacob over the Thanksgiving holiday. Jacob had been quiet since we’d hired the security team. He must have realized that we weren’t going to take his bullshit laying down.

“Mr. Edward,” Steve called, a frown ghosting over his features. “We have to discuss something with you and Miss Bella before we go over to Miss Alice’s.”

“Everything alright?” Bella asked, twining her fingers with mine.

“Not really, Miss Bella,” Oliver answered. “Yesterday while the kids were doing their various activities and you were running errands, we think that there was a security breach near the rear of the property.”

“Security breach? Is Jacob on our property?” Bella asked, her face becoming flushed.

“No, Miss Bella,” Steve said. “However, there were some indications that someone tried to break through the fence near the southeast corner of the backyard.” He handed me a picture, showing some pried loose boards, cigarette butts and clear shoe imprints. “As a result of this development, Oliver is going to stay here at the house in case Jacob decides to try and break in while you’re over at Miss Alice’s.”

“What else do you suggest?” I asked.
“You’ve already got a state of the art security system and us,” Oliver said. “There’s not much more you can do until Jacob actual trespasses on the property. Then, you can call the cops.”

Bella was trembling beside me. I pulled her to my side. “It’s okay, gorgeous,” I cooed against her curled hair.

She pulled back and glared at me angrily. “It’s NOT okay, Edward. Jacob is…is fucking with our lives. What right does he have to do this to us?! I mean, we can’t leave the house without a protective detail. We even have to have a protective detail on our home! It’s not safe anywhere and I’m sick of it.” She turned on a heel, stomping out of the kitchen. I could hear her climb the stairs, slamming the bedroom door shut.

“Shit,” Steve muttered under his breath. “I never thought…I’m so sorry, Mr. Edward.”

“You were just doing your job,” I said, running my hand through my hair. “Your timing leaves much to be desired but we needed to know.”

“Should I go talk to Miss Bella?” Steve asked uncertainly.

“No. I’ll do it. If you could warm up the SUV, that would be great, Steve,” I said, squeezing his muscular shoulder. As I walked up the steps of the house, I was nearly barreled over by my four children. I barked for them to get ready to go and load up in the SUV. I walked to my bedroom that I shared with my wife. The door was closed and Bella’s sniffles filled the hallway.

Jacob made my girl cry. Bitch is going down…

I knocked on the door before slipping inside. “Gorgeous?” I called out.

“I just want to be alone, Edward,” she sniffled from her spot near the window.

“Too bad,” I said as I closed the door. “We need to talk, Bella, because we need to combat this head on.”

“Why?” she asked, her voice sounding dead.

I frowned. Reaching into my pocket, I dug out my phone. I sent Steve a text, explaining that I wanted him to take the kids to Alice’s house and that we’d be there as soon as we were able. His response was immediate and I heard the garage door close.

“Wait! The meal!” Bella shouted, stumbling toward the door. She tripped over the area rug in our bedroom and started falling toward the floor. I ran toward her, catching my wife before she face planted on the ground in our bedroom. She started hyperventilating, sobbing uncontrollably. I swept her in my arms, cradling her against my chest. “Why?! Why?!” she screamed. “WHY NOW? It’s been twenty fucking years! Why does he choose now?”

“I don’t know, gorgeous,” I said, my heart breaking at the anguish in her tone. “Maybe it’s a game to him? Some kind of conquest to prove to himself that he can get you back? Maybe he believes you still love him but he’s delusional?”

“It’s not like he’s seen me,” Bella sobbed brokenly, clutching at my shirt. “We haven’t gone to Phoenix for a few years…”

“Perhaps he saw one of the advertisements for the Foundation. We are national with our ad campaign and our faces are pretty recognizable. I’m not sure.”
“Well, then, I’m not going to make any more press conferences or allow our pictures to be used in the campaigns anymore. It’s not worth the trouble,” Bella retorted, cradling her right wrist.

“What’s wrong with your wrist, Bella?” I asked.

“Nothing,” she responded, holding it close to her chest and fresh tears falling down her beautiful face.

“Isabella Cullen,” I growled, gently prying her hand into mine. It was already swollen. “Baby, this isn’t good. Your wrist could be broken.”

“I caught it when I fell, just before you stopped me,” she cried, nuzzling my chest. With a grimace, Bella tried to move it in a circle. She hissed as it cracked. “OW! Mother fucker!”

“Come on, love,” I said, as I scooped her up. “I’m taking you to the hospital. We’ll talk there.”

“But, dinner,” she scowled.

“Will be there when we’re done. Your health is paramount as is this conversation, Bella,” I said sternly, giving her my Dad-glare. She huffed and scrambled out of my arms. “Why? I wanted to hold you.”

“I can walk,” she said, her voice pointed and sharp.

“Are you mad at me?” I asked as I wrapped my arm around her waist. She shrugged out of my hold and walked to the door. “Bella? Why won’t you let me touch you?”

“I’m not at you, per se. I’m mad at the situation,” she said curtly. “Just give me some space, okay?”

Her tone hurt me. I get that she was pissed off. Hell, there were times when I was dealing with the Emmett thing so many years ago, I wanted to tell everyone to go fuck themselves, but I didn’t. I just smiled and nodded.

Space. Give her space…great. I just want to comfort her. Damn. It.

We walked down to the kitchen, the tension thick around us. Oliver was using his laptop to check our security cameras surrounding our property. “Oliver, I’m taking Bella to the hospital. She fell upstairs and I think she may have sprained or broken her wrist.”

“Do you need me to come with you?” he asked.

“No,” Bella said sharply. “We’ll be fine.”

“Okay, Miss Bella,” he said quietly, chided by her tone. “Will you be joining everyone at Miss Alice’s afterward?”

“Depends on how long it takes for us to finish up at the hospital,” I answered. “I’ll call Steve and my sister to let them know.”

“Are you sure that you don’t want me to come with you?” he asked, arching a brow.

“We’ll. Be. Fine,” Bella snapped, grabbing her coat and stomping into the garage. The door slammed, causing the walls to shake slightly.

“Shit,” Oliver muttered. “Is she mad at us?”
“She’s mad at everyone,” I sighed, sliding my own coat over my shoulders. “The unknown reason why her ex decided to be stalk her now is weighing on her. We’re going to talk at the hospital.”

“I feel for you, Mr. Edward. Miss Bella…um…I’ll shut up. I like my job,” he rambled, turning back to the computer.

“Smart man,” I snorted. “I’ll keep you appraised. I’ll ask Steve to bring you leftovers, if there are any.” I picked up the keys to my Volvo and went outside. Bella was already inside of the car with tears flowing down her cheeks freely. She was cradling her arm against her chest. With a sigh, I got into the car and backed out of the driveway. As I did so, I looked around for any indication of being followed. Thankfully, saw none.

Fifteen minutes later, I parked the car at Central Dupage Hospital. Bella let me help her out of the car but distanced herself from me as we walked to the entrance to the emergency room. There was no wait inside and we were led to a treatment room right away. There was some paperwork that she needed to fill out but she scowled. “What’s wrong, gorgeous?”

“I can’t write,” she said quietly. “It’s my right hand.”

I took the paperwork from her and filled out the necessary information. Once I was done, I handed the pen back to her to sign, which looked more like a scribble than her usually frilly scrawl. A nurse came in and asked what was wrong, triaging the situation. With a brusque nod, she said a doctor would be in shortly and left us to wait.

“I’m scared, Edward,” Bella said quietly, nervously twisting her wedding band on her left hand. “This unknown of Jacob is freaking me out. I don’t understand…”

“I don’t either, Bella,” I said, covering her left hand with mine. She was so cold. “Can I hold, Bella? You’re shivering.”

She looked at me, biting her lips nervously. “You’re not mad at me?”

“God, baby. Never,” I said as I helped her off the examination table and into my lap. Enfolding her in my arms, I cradled her against my body, trying to warm her up. “I know what it’s like to feel scared and out of control. This situation with Jacob is so out of the blue and confusing, I don’t blame you for feeling the way that you do.”

“Regardless, it doesn’t excuse my behavior,” she said bitterly. “I’ve been horrible to our security guys, cranky with the kids and I’ve treated you like shit. I’m a horrible person, Edward.”

I tightened my hold on her, kissing her soft hair. “You’re not horrible, Bella. Just stop that. Look, your attitude has been a bit much, but it’s understandable. It can’t stay that way, though. You have to realize that the security guys and all of this is to ensure your safety.” She nodded and moved closer to me. My beautiful wife was still shivering uncontrollably and crying. It killed me to see my soul mate be so frightened. I was irate at Jacob for causing her to fall apart. Why couldn’t he well-enough alone?

No, he had toterrorize our family because he got some random bug up his ass to torment my wife.

“Mrs. Cullen?” called a young female doctor.

“Yes,” Bella croaked, looking at the physician standing before us. She looked as young as Kyra. I arched a dubious brow. This kid is going to treat my wife? Really?

“I’m Dr. Torres and I’ll be your physician today. In your paperwork, it said that you took a fall?” she
asked, giving Bella a concerned look.

“Yeah. I tripped over a rug in my bedroom, trying to rush to cook Thanksgiving dinner and I fell, catching myself on my wrist. My husband caught me before I could do any further damage but I still did something to my wrist,” Bella replied.

Dr. Torres shot me a suspicious look. “Can I examine Mrs. Cullen, sir?” she asked tersely.

Bella looked at the doctor. “Look, I fell. Don’t be thinking my husband hurting me. I’m not a victim of domestic abuse. He wouldn’t hurt a fly. Get it out of your head or I want another physician. You hear me?” Bella growled.

“I’m sorry,” she said quietly. “I never meant to insinuate…”

“Look, it’s Thanksgiving and I want to spend it with my family, not explain my relationship to a doctor who looks as old as my seventeen year old daughter,” Bella snapped. “Shall we finish this and move on with our lives?”

“Of course,” Dr. Torres said, her face flushing in embarrassment. “I apologize. To both of you.” The rest of the examination was spent in an uncomfortable silence, save for a few questions about Bella’s fall. Dr. Torres felt that Bella had broken her wrist but was possibly a hairline fracture. We needed to get x-rays to make sure. When she left with an orderly, I sent a text to Alice, Steve and Kyra, explaining where we were and what we were doing.

Steve was pissed that we didn’t have protection with us. *What am I? Chopped liver?*

Alice was griping that dinner was not turning out as planned and that she needed Bella to finish the meal. *Tough titties, Younger. She ain’t doing much if her wrist is, indeed, broken.*

Kyra was the only one who was concerned, relaying her sympathy from her siblings and my mom. *This is my sweet girl that I remember…the one who would climb into my lap as a little girl, begging for story time from Daddy.*

I closed my eyes remembering a sweet moment that I had with principessa. I had brought her to work with me when she was four and completely adorable. I was working in my office, typing on the computer with my angel on my lap. She was playing with her doll as I held her to my chest. Her sweet voice broke me away from whatever I was addressing on the computer.

“Daddy, you’re my hero,” she said softly with a slight lisp. “You big and strong and you make Mommy and Wan smile. I love you lots.” She cuddled against me, putting her head on my shoulder.

Tears sprang in my eyes as I looked down at the cherubic angel in my lap. A perfect child made from the love of both Bella and me. Whatever I was working on the computer was not important. My first born was. “Daddy loves you, too,” I choked out, holding her tightly. “My principessa.”

“I am a princess,” she giggled, kissing my cheek sloppily.

“Well, princess, you and Daddy are going to have a date,” I declared, saving my work. “We’re going to have lunch and then you get to pick out something very special at this store just for princesses like you.”

“Really?” she squealed, standing on my lap and stepping right on my junk.

*Ouch.*
I left the office and took her to American Girl Place, eating in the very girly dining room with her new ‘Kyra’ doll, made just for her. I was the only man there but I wanted to spoil my baby girl since she made my heart melt. Since that day, her doll sat on her bed and it was well-loved. The reddish hair was tangled and the specially made golden eyes were dull, but she loved it all the same.

“The doctor will be back to go over your x-rays, Mrs. Cullen,” said the orderly who pushed her in the wheelchair to the radiology suite. I got up and helped her back onto the bed. With a nod, the orderly left.

“How was it?” I asked.

“It hurt,” she frowned. “Did you call Alice?”

“I sent her a text. Same with Steve and Kyra, too. Out of the three of them only one actually expressed worry and concern for you,” I said dryly. “Guess who?”

“Alice?” Bella replied, wrapping the icepack the orderly left for us around her right wrist.

“Try again.”

“Steve?”

“Third time’s a charm,” I chuckled.

“Kyra was actually concerned?” Bella asked, arching a brow. “What about the other two?”

“Alice is stressing about the meal, convinced that you’d be able to fix it. Fat chance since you’ve probably got a broken arm,” I said. “Steve is pissed at us since we don’t have protection. What am I?”

“Edward, our protection force is easily fifteen to twenty years younger than you and in much better shape,” Bella said, poking my stomach. It was still flat. *No beer belly for me*. Was it as toned when I was younger? No. But, you could still see the outline of my six pack, thank you very much.

“Not helping my fragile ego, Isabella,” I snarled playfully, folding my arms over my chest. “How dare you insinuate that I’m out of shape! I still run five miles each morning and eat that bland, nasty shit that you try to pass as food since my cholesterol is too high. I love you, but you can’t even help egg white omelets, or dry chicken breasts. I’d rather take the meds and be able to eat all of the greasy cheeseburgers I want, damn it.”

“Talk to your doctor,” she shrugged. “Will you remember to take your meds?”

“I take my vitamins every morning. I can easily add a cholesterol pill,” I said, arching my brow.

“Mrs. Cullen?” Dr. Torres called nervously.

“Yes,” my wife answered icily. Apparently, she hadn’t forgiven the doctor for her faux-pas about domestic abuse. “Do you have my results?”

“I do,” she said as she put up the x-rays. “You do have a hairline fracture. Right here.” She pointed to a tiny fissure in the bone. “It’s not too bad. You can get away with just wearing a brace, not a full cast. BUT, you have to take it easy for six weeks. What do you for a living?”

“I’m a writer and I do a lot of philanthropic work,” Bella explained. “Will I be able to type?”

“With your left hand,” Dr. Torres replied, wrinkling her nose. Bella’s jaw dropped and she looked
nervous. “Let me get that brace for you, Mrs. Cullen.” She turned on her heel, darting out of the treatment room.

“Six weeks?! I have to finish the script. I’ve got about until January first to get it done,” Bella wailed.


“But…but…I use the time on the computer to be truly creative,” she whimpered.

“What do you have left to do?” I asked.

“The ending needs to be tweaked and I need to edit it,” Bella said. “I could always ask Rosalie.”

“Am I not good enough for you?”

“Baby, you’re great. Fantastic but you didn’t write the book,” she replied. I pouted dramatically. Bella giggled, running her left hand through my hair. “If it means so much to you, you can help me. What about the company and the foundation?”

“We have no openings for the foundation until after the first of the year. I’ll just need to go into the office a few times to go over some financial things and meet with Jasper, Charlie, Matthew and Demetri about our plan for next year. I’ll be able to help you easily, gorgeous. I’ll always be there for you and the kids first. You know that, right?”

“I do,” she smiled, kissing my lips. “I am sorry for being such a bitch before, Edward. You didn’t deserve it. Neither did Steve or Oliver. The whole thing is a clusterfuck and I lashed out at the wrong people. The person responsible is Jacob. But, the biggest question is why in the hell is choosing now to stalk me. Or whatever he’s doing. Really? It’s been twenty years, Edward. The last time I saw him was right before I moved out to Chicago. There was no animosity. Just…I don’t know, resignation?”

“Do you want me to do some digging?” I asked. “Get some more information about Jacob?”

“Yeah,” Bella said, biting her lip. “How will you do that?”

“Charlie still has some friends in the police department and we can definitely get Ricky involved, too. He offered,” I said, giving her a timid smile.

“Do it,” she said quietly, putting her head on my shoulder. “There has to be something that triggered Jacob’s sudden infatuation with me.”

“It’s done,” I replied, kissing her hair. I’d make that phone call tomorrow. It was Thanksgiving. Time should be spent with their families, not hunting down information about insane ex-boyfriends. Well, I guess I could talk to Charlie. He was with his wife, Sue, at Alice’s home, probably getting food poisoning.

“Here’s your brace, Mrs. Cullen. You have to wear it at all times except when you shower,” Dr. Torres explained, putting it on Bella’s wrist. “I’ve also prescribed a pain killer, Tylenol-3, for any residual pain. I would follow up with an orthopedic doctor within the next week. I’ve provided you with a list of some excellent physicians in the area, if you don’t have an orthopedic physician.”

“We’ve got four children, all of them clumsy in their own right. We’ve got one,” I snickered. “Actually the first man on your list is our doctor.”

“Excellent, Dr. Sendt is an excellent choice,” Dr. Torres smiled.
“How long do I need to wear this thing?” Bella asked, wrinkling her nose in distaste.

“Six weeks. Your doctor might adjust that if he wants you to have physical therapy or if surgery is needed,” Dr. Torres responded.

“Surgery?!” Bella and I blurted.

“There’s a possibility,” Dr. Torres said. “Highly doubtful but the possibility is still there. Here are your aftercare instructions and discharge papers. You should still be able to enjoy Thanksgiving.”

Dr. Torres handed me the paperwork after she signed it with a flourish. “Again, I’m sorry about the confusion from before. Have a good day.”

An orderly came in shortly after Dr. Torres left, beckoning my wife to sit down. With a scowl, she sat on it and went to the exit of the ER. I went and got the car while the orderly waited with Bella. I pulled up the car and assisted my wife into the front seat. Pulling away, we drove toward Alice’s house.

Thanksgiving was mediocre, at best. The turkey was dry, the gravy was lumpy, and EVERYONE was cranky, especially Bella. Her wrist hurt and she really couldn’t eat with her right hand. I had to cut up her food and yeah, she hated that. She drew the line at me feeding her. She struggled eating with her left hand, getting a fair amount of nibbles on the floor.

Suffice it to say, this Thanksgiving was not too high on the list of the ‘best Thanksgivings’ ever. More like on the bottom of the list.

To make things even more troublesome, Kyra and Steve were talking quietly during dessert and it looked far too intimate.

Do I need to have a conversation with Steve? She’s still in high school. It’s not even legal. My daughter is seventeen.

Bella must have noticed me glaring at Kyra and Steve. She pinched my arm with her left hand, hissing at me to knock it off.

I’m still going to talk to him…She’s my baby girl and I don’t want to have him arrested.

xx STTD xx

The weeks following Thanksgiving were a flurry of activity. Owen had his district festival and was chosen to be the concert master for the district orchestra, plus he was chosen as the concert master for the All-State Honors orchestra as well. We had to make a trip down to Peoria the last weekend in January for the All-State festival for all of the music teachers.

Bella had gone to see Dr. Sendt and he concurred with Dr. Torres with the brace. No surgery was needed. She was crotchety because she couldn’t work and needed help doing the simplest things, like washing her hair, brushing her teeth and even going to the bathroom. I helped Bella as much as she would let me. She drew the line at the bathroom. I did help her finish up the script for the movie. She was currently working on edits with Rose.

Kyra worked like a maniac, saving up money for her dress for the winter formal. One of her friends, Thomas, asked her and they were going with a big group of friends. I still think that there’s something going between Steve and Kyra. Bella won’t let me talk to Steve. I need to trust my daughter and Steve.

Not likely…
Even Owen was going to the winter formal with a girl from another school who he had met at the district festival. She played the viola.

Mia and Masen were busy with their activities. Mia cheered at each of the boys’ basketball games for her school. I went to a few games to watch my girl. The games themselves were pretty sad. Even I could play better than the boys on the court and I suck at basketball. Yes, I was tall but my coordination was seriously lacking. Running is more my sport. Table tennis. Golf. Online computer games. Yeah, I like that. Online computer games…I have to log in soon. I may be losing my advantage.

I’m such a nerd.

Forty-nine and still playing online computer games, competing against punk-ass kids that easily the same age as my children.

Alice and Jasper decided that after the Thanksgiving debacle that they were going to completely re-do their kitchen. It didn’t flow right and that’s why the dinner was so lackluster. No, it’s because you can’t cook, Younger. There was a reason why I always cooked when we lived together, sister mine. If I didn’t, I’d be a skinny nerd.

The last thing in our flurry of shit going on was Emmett. I contacted the prison he was in and asked about possibly meeting with him. The warden said that I could meet with him the week before Christmas. I tentatively set up the date and now, I was waffling back and forth about going to see Emmett.

I was sitting in my office at Whitlock Technologies. I was working on a software update for the tablet when someone knocked on my door. Eric must be at lunch. “Come in,” I called.

Charlie poked his head inside of the office and gave me a smile. “Hey, Edward,” he said gruffly. “You got a minute?”

“Always for you, Charlie,” I said, saving my work. “What’s up?”

Charlie walked in and handed me a file. “A friend of mine in the police department just sent that over to me. It’s information about that man who’s obsessed with my daughter.”

I opened it up and saw the same information that had been shared with me previously. He was divorced and had a permanent restraining order against him from his ex-wife and children. He had several priors for domestic abuse and domestic violence but his wife didn’t press charges, in exchange for a divorce and Jacob signing over his parental rights. He agreed.

“I’ve seen this before,” I explained, flipping through the file.

“You only saw the most recent occurrence of this behavior,” Charlie said. “Here.” He flipped a few pages to an older police report. This one was much more gruesome. “It was sealed because the victim was underage.”

“What?” I hissed.

“He was twenty-seven, about a year after Bella left to move here. He met up with this girl at a coffee shop. She said that she was nineteen but was really sixteen,” Charlie explained. “She was a runaway, trying to get away from her parents. She latched onto Jacob and they fell into a very unhealthy relationship.”

“What was the damage to this girl?” I asked, staring at the bruised face of the girl. “She barely looks
human. Why wasn’t he put into jail?”

“Technicality,” Charlie said grimly, his mustache twitching angrily. “Some evidence was not properly tagged or something and he was released due to a mistrial. That girl killed herself two days after that.”

“Fuck,” I spat. “Was she…raped?”

“In her examination, there was evidence of long-term abuse,” Charlie blanched. “He was brutal with her. And this was a result of her saying no. Whatever Jacob wanted, he took and took violently.”

“So, Jacob is a fucking scary guy who can cause a lot of damage to my wife, your daughter,” I whispered brokenly. “My biggest question is why now?”

“Last page, Edward,” Charlie said with a grim look on his face.

I flipped to last page in the file. On the papers was information about a baby boy who was put up for adoption by Jacob’s ex-wife. She was pregnant when he attacked her and she gave birth to a baby boy. Jacob had found out just prior the phone calls started. Coincidentally, it aligned with the national campaign we launched for the foundation. Seeing the pictures of my wife with me and our ‘fake children’ (we’d never put our real children on the advertisements for the foundation) triggered Jacob’s infatuation.

“She gave up her son for adoption. A son that Jacob didn’t know about?” I asked.

“His only boy,” Charlie said as he sat down. “That was the straw that broke the camel’s back, Edward. He’s determined to get that back and he wants it from Bella. The only woman who got away from him before he became violent.”

“He was violent with her, Charlie. When we first met, he put his hands around her arms, leaving bruises,” I spat. “He was drunk and I managed to punch his lights out. Granted, it was nothing compared to this.” I gestured to the pictures of his ex-wife and dead sixteen year old girl who had fallen into his clutches. “What should we do? Should I tell Bella?”

“I think you should,” Charlie said, running his hair through his graying hair. “I’ve also sent this information to Steve, Casey and Oliver. They are going protect your family until Jacob is caught. Personally, I think you need protection, too. Yes, Bella is the focus of his infatuation, but you’re in his way. He could try and get you. You know?”

“Charlie, I’m fine,” I said, arching a brow over my reading glasses.

“Edward, this man is dangerous. He can easily kill my daughter. He can easily kill you. Get the protection. I don’t want my daughter to be a widow at forty-four,” he said sternly. “Your kids need their dad.”

“Fine, when I go out, I’ll arrange for protection,” I sighed, rubbing my face.

“Did you drive or take the train?”

“Train,” I answered.

“Well, I’ll drive you back. Call up to my office when you’re ready to go,” Charlie said as he adjusted his suit coat. Underneath, I saw his old shoulder harness and gun. “I’m prepared to protect you now. Do you still have your weapon from the Emmett ordeal?”
“Charlie, this is…”

“Fucking necessary,” he hissed. “My family is in danger and I refuse to let this assface hurt you, my daughter or my grandchildren. Got it?”

“Yes, sir,” I said, slightly afraid at Charlie’s stern voice. Detective Swan came out in full force.

“I’ll be in my office,” he said curtly, turning on his heel and leaving me in silence. I blinked a few times, staring at the door he just left. Then, I looked down at the file. Charlie was not overreacting. His fear was real. He saw this all of the time when he was cop. This was bad.

Really bad.

Extremely bad.

Like, I wanted to take my family and run bad.

Crap.

A/N: I had every intention to get to Christmas and include the Emmett meeting in this chapter but it just didn’t seem to gel. So, that will come up later. Up next will be a chapter in Kyra’s point of view (it’ll start with Thanksgiving and go to the winter formal). What is cooking between her and Steve? After that chapter, we’re going to go hear from Bella as Edward tells her about Jacob’s impetus for his stalking, plus leading up to Edward’s meeting with Emmett in prison.

I do have some pictures for this chapter on my blog (link in my profile). You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation or on twitter: tufano79. I do apologize for the sporadic updating schedule. RL is crazy. This coming week is tech week for the spring musical (I’m the director) and I’m not getting home until nine, ten, eleven at night. The last thing I want to do is write. I just want to sleep. It’s a hot commodity and I’m not getting nearly enough of it. I promise, promise, that I will improve my updating schedule after this week. I’ll be able to get home at a decent hour and actually write for more than an hour or so.

Leave me some…
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Up next will be a chapter in Kyra’s point of view (it’ll start with Thanksgiving and go to the winter formal). What is cooking between her and Steve? After that chapter, we’re going to go hear from Bella as Edward tells her about Jacob’s impetus for his stalking, plus leading up to Edward’s meeting with Emmett in prison.

Chapter Seven: Firsts

KyraPOV

“Okay guys, I just got a text from your dad. I’m driving you to Miss Alice’s house,” Steve explained. He looked stressed out as he read the text on his cell phone. “Everyone buckled?”

“Yeah,” Mia chirped from the backseat. “Is everything okay?”

“Everything’s fine,” Steve responded, giving a forced smile to my sister. I poked Steve in the arm, arching a brow at him. He shook his head minutely. Huffing out a breath, I settled back into my seat as he backed out the garage.

“I wonder why Daddy asked you to drive us, Steve?” Mia pondered, twisting her long brown hair in her fingers. She had a bit of a crush on Steve. Hell, so did I. He was hella hot.

“Your mom and dad needed to discuss some things about a security breach,” Steve said, shifting in the seat.

“Security breach?” I asked. “Are we not safe?”

“No, you’re fine,” he replied, giving me a reassuring smile. “There’s just evidence of someone trying to break through the fence in the back of the yard.”

“Do you think it’s that guy who’s stalking Mom?” Owen questioned, pushing his glasses up his nose. “Jerry?”

“Jacob,” I muttered. “I wouldn’t be surprised. That guy has got a hard-on for mom something fierce.”


“Hate to break it to you, kids. Our parents have sex,” I giggled. “We’re living, breathing proof that they’ve done the deed at least three times.”
“Three? Why not four?” Masen asked, scratching his head.

“Mase, we’re twins,” Mia said, bopping his head. “Duh.”

“God, I feel dumb,” Masen blushed. “And squicked out. Our parents have sex? Yuck!”

“You’ll want to have sex, too,” I smirked, looking at my baby brother. “It’s only natural.”

“Yeah, many, many years down the road,” Masen deadpanned.

“Amen to that,” Owen muttered under his breath.

“Enough of the sex talk,” Steve squeaked out. “Yes, they are your parents but they’re my boss. So, let’s talk about more age appropriate things like puppy dogs, bunnies or the Blackhawks.”


“Well, talk about something else besides your parents’ sex life,” Steve snorted. “Please, for my sanity.”

“Just for you, Steve,” I said. “We’ll talk about puppies.”

“Good,” he said, running his hand through his short hair. He flipped on the radio and the rest of the short drive to Aunt Alice’s and Uncle Jasper’s was spent listening to the station that was already playing Christmas music. It’s bad enough listening to Felix Navidad at Toxic Hell, ern, Taco Bell. Now this? Ugh!

Thankfully, we didn’t have to talk about puppies. It would rehash the long-seated argument that we needed a pet. Owen and Mia want a kitten. Masen and I want a dog. Unfortunately, allergies mean no animals for any of us. Schmeh.

After a short drive, we arrived at Aunt Alice’s and Uncle Jasper’s mansion, parking in the driveway. I could already tell that Nana and Papa were there along with Grandpa Charlie. Their Lexus along Grandpa Charlie’s Ford were parked in the driveway with Adam’s Mini. I prayed that Aunt Ro and Ava were coming. They were always my grip to sanity. Don’t get me wrong, I love my family. I love them very much, but they were a bit, um, excited. Over the top. Insane. In a fun way…but dealing with them on holidays required a lot of bonding with my cousin and a few sips of Aunt Ro’s wine.

My parents would kill me if they knew I’d had alcohol. I never got drunk. Buzzed? Yes. Drunk, no. I’m not stupid and my parents would take away my new-found freedom. But some wine won’t kill anybody.

“K,” Owen called to me as we walked into the house. “What do you think is going on? With this Jacob dude?”

“I don’t know, Wan,” I said, looping my arm through his. “It’s some scary shit. Random, too. Why would this guy all of sudden want to be with Mom after twenty some odd years?”

“Do you think he’ll get her?” Owen asked, his hazel eyes searching mine.

I pursed my lips thoughtfully. “He’ll have to come through our security force, us and Dad. Shit, Dad would kick this guy’s ever-loving ass. The need to protect is ingrained so deeply in him. Plus, his love for our mom is all-encompassing,” I said wistfully.
“It is. I so want that,” Owen snorted. “I want that a lot. The love our parents have is what most people dream of. Most of my friends have divorced parents with step-parents. They don’t know what it is to have what we have, K. We’re so lucky.”

“You’ll get it. We’ll get it,” I said as I tugged him inside. “Perhaps with that girl you met at the district festival?”

“Nah,” Owen shrugged. “She’s cute but not my type.”

“Why did you ask her to the dance?” I asked.

“I have to undo some of the damage you and your cronies caused,” Owen said, glaring at me through his glasses. Shame filled my heart. My former friends spread the nasty rumor that Owen was gay and that he had a threesome with the bassoon player and tuba player in one of the practice rooms. I knew it wasn’t true, but I didn’t stop Mackenzie from spreading the rumor.

Hell, I helped spread the rumor.

During the September of my discontent, Owen had told me that he was deeply hurt by this and I felt so guilty over it. I still do. After that situation, I began distancing myself from my friends. I knew it was social suicide, but honestly I was never going to see these bitchy girls after this year anyway. I was going away to college and starting fresh in a few short months. Their friendship was fleeting.

The relationship with my brother is forever. He’ll always be there in my life: when I have a bad breakup, when our parents *gasp* die, when I get married; he gets married…the list goes on.

I was so stupid to choose my friends over him. “I’m sorry, Wan,” I frowned, using his childhood nickname.

“I know, K,” he sighed, pulling me to his side. We hug until the sound of Aunt Alice swearing breaks us apart.

“Kyra! I need your help, sweetie!” called Nana. Adam was rushing out of the kitchen. His eyes were wide with shock and his nose was wrinkled in disgust.

“Is it bad, Adam?” I squeaked.

“Be afraid. Be very afraid,” he said, putting his hand on my shoulder. “My mom forgot to defrost the turkey.”

“Jesus, I’m clueless when it comes to cooking and even I know that,” Owen snorted.

“It’s a wonder that we were able to survive in the first place. My dad can run the grill and that’s about it. My mom is stellar at calling delivery. Anyhow, I’ve been kicked out of the kitchen. I make Mom nervous. You want to go up and play Call of Duty?” Adam asked.

“Is Lucas coming?” Owen replied, arching a brow over his thick frames.

“They’re ten minutes away,” Adam answered, taking my brother by the arm. “We have enough time for some Mountain Dew and munchies before Lucas gets here.”

“Sweet!”

I watched them as they jogged up the stairs. Secretly, I wish I could join them. I really didn’t want to go into the kitchen. I feared what was in there. I was a decent cook. Thankfully, I got that from my
mom. Dad was a good cook, too. Mom was ever-so-slightly better. Since Mom and Dad were out of commission due to whatever caused their delay, I was going to have to step in. *Great.* “Kyra!”

“Sheit,” I grumbled, pulling my hair back into a low ponytail and walking into the kitchen. Honestly, it was a disaster area. It made the kitchen at Taco Bella look pristine (which is saying something, folks). “Um, wow…”

“Where’s your mom?” Aunt Alice asked, her hazel eyes panicked.

“She and Dad are still at the house,” I answered, walking to the island. “Some drama on the Jacob front.”

“No! Bella needs to be here!” Alice wailed. “Mom! How am I going to do this? I mean, really? My kitchen is a disaster, the food I bought isn’t right and I’m afraid we won’t have enough.”

“Alice, breathe,” Nana said, rubbing Aunt Alice’s back. “You’re scaring Kyra.”

*Yes, Kyra is terrified. Stop scaring your niece.*

“Just a smidge,” I said, holding up my fingers a few millimeters apart. “Aunt Alice, we’ll make it work. Let me see what we’ve got.” Nana smiled at me and she calmly explained what was going on. I dug around in the fridge, finding some good eats and options to make side dishes or enhance the turkey. Working with Nana, we managed to create some decent sides. We had to send Uncle Jasper and Papa out to get dessert, but dinner was salvaged. Sort of.

As I was working on making some sautéed asparagus, I received a text from Dad.

*We’re at the hospital. Mom may have broken her hand. Waiting for her to come back from x-ray. An hour or two? Love you! – Dad*

*Oh no! What happened? Is she okay? We’re all thinking about her. Love you, too, Daddy. – Kyra*

*Thank you, principessa. You’re the only who actually cares about your mom. Aunt Ali is having a snit fit over dinner and Steve is stressing over our lack of protection – Dad*

*What are you? Chopped liver? Mom’s safe with you, Daddy – Kyra*

*That’s what I said! We’ll be there soon, baby girl – Dad*

I slipped my phone in my pocket. Aunt Alice is glaring at her cell phone, ready to chuck it out the window. Steve stomped into the kitchen his lips pursed and muttering under his breath. Seriously, people, am I the only one gives a rat’s ass about my parents? About my mom?

Okay, Steve has a legit excuse to be pissed. Yes, my dad is bad ass (he may be old, but damn, he’s in shape and strong), but I’ve googled this Jacob dude. He’s a huge guy. He can squash my dad like a freaking bug. *Can you say steroids? I wonder if his nads are miniscule? You like that use of an ACT word? Kyra Cullen is a fucking genius, folks! You heard it here first!* Anyhow, back to Steve and my dad…Steve should have a little more faith in my father.

I know I do. I feel very safe with my dad. Steve and his crew are great but, the house seems a bit, um, cramped with all of them there. Suffice it to say, I’ll be happy when this whole debacle is over. So will my mom. -

Shortly before dinner, my parents managed to make it to Aunt Alice’s and Uncle Jasper’s. My mom looked like she was crying and my dad appeared haggard. His graying hair was flopping onto his
forehead and his normally jovial face was pulled into a frown. Both of the expressions in their eyes was haunted and scared. That terrified me. My siblings also noticed the expressions on our parents’ faces. Their mood was somber and pensive.

See, Dad? That ACT prep class has increased my vocabulary skills. Exponentially. *Wink, wink*

God, I can be such an idiot at times.

The meal was not so hot either. The turkey was bland and dry. The gravy, that Nana tried to salvage, was lumpy and too salty. The only saving grace of dinner were the sides. My ranch mashed potatoes and sautéed asparagus with butter and pine nuts were favorites among everyone at the table.

My dad had to cut up my mom’s food. I could tell that she was in immense pain and was not thrilled about being here. She cradled her hand against her chest, tears threatening to spill over onto her face. There wasn’t her usual spark behind her eyes. Just vacant. My mom just looked tired, defeated and older than her forty-four years.

On a daily basis, both of my parents looked great, honestly. Well, in general. Right now, they aren’t at their best but still…they were pulled together. Anyhow, my dad is tall and strong. His eyes are like mine: golden brown. I always loved my dad’s eyes. So pretty. He hates them, partially due to his vision that he had corrected when I was a baby and the rest due to his childhood bullies. His brownish/bronzeish hair is graying at the sides and smattered through the rest of his head. Unlike most of my friends’ parents, my dad has all of his hair and it’s always stylishly coiffed. He’s funny, kind, totally in love with my mom and very strict with me and my brothers and sister. I don’t care for the strictness, but I know that he does that because he loves me and wants the best for me and my siblings.

I think every girl has a hero-crush on her dad. I’m the same. My dad is my hero and I love him. I feel like such a fool for acting like how I did a few months ago. I’m grateful that my dad and mom have forgiven me for my bitchy behavior. If only I could forgive myself.

My mom is strong in a different way. She may be tiny (I dwarf by a few inches) but she’s fierce. She doesn’t stand for any shit and will not hesitate to put you in your place. She’s also the calm voice of reason. My dad is also pretty even-keeled but does have a temper. My mom is also the glue that holds our family together. I want to be like her when I grow up…smart, pretty, witty, ambitious, and happy.

Well, she’s not happy now. She’s pretty upset thanks to Jacob.

After a sedate dinner, we drive back to our house. Steve drove us while my dad followed in his car. At home, my mom took some medication for her wrist and went up to bed. Dad helped her as the drugs made her slightly loopy. Oliver and Steve sat down in the family room, talking quietly. I was sipping some pop in the kitchen, trying find something to fill my stomach since dinner was so bad.

“Kyra, can you get everyone in the family room?” my dad asked, his golden eyes somber.

“Sure, Dad,” I said. “Are you going to tell us what happened earlier?”

“Yes, sweetie,” he sighed, wrapping his arms around me. I snuggled in his embrace, relishing in his strength. He kissed my hair. I squeezed his waist before scampering up to get Mia and Masen. Owen was already in the family room, chatting with Oliver and Steven. Mia and Masen went downstairs. I checked on my mom. She was in my dad’s hoodie, cradling her arm against her chest. She was snoring lightly but her sleep was not restful. Her brow was furrowed and she looked so sad. I kissed her forehead before going back downstairs to talk with my dad, siblings and security team.
“Did you check on Mom?” Masen asked.

“Yeah. She’s sleeping,” I answered, sitting next to Mia. She cuddled next to me. “What’s going on, Dad? We have an idea but we’re not entirely sure.”

“Do you want to tell it or me?” Dad asked, his brows pulled together. He rubbed his forehead, seemingly in frustration.

“I can tell it, Mr. Edward,” Steve said quietly, rubbing my dad’s shoulder. Dad nodded and sat back, pinching the bridge of his nose. Steve ran his hand through his hair. “Yesterday, there was a breach in the fence.”

“We know this,” Owen said. “You told us that on the car ride to Aunt Alice’s.”

“Right, well, there’s more. There was evidence that whoever was there was standing there for a while. Several cigarette butts and a fair amount of foot traffic,” Steve said. “Jacob is escalating. He’s watching the house, looking for a way in. Supposedly.”

“Will he hurt us?” Mia asked.

“I don’t know, Miss Mia,” Oliver answered. “Until he’s caught, someone is always going to be with you.”

“Which brings us to the next item,” Steve said. “We were discussing and we think that it’s necessary to have additional protection here at the house.”

“Whatever you need,” Dad said, his lips pursed. “Oliver, you can stay in the guest room until we can arrange for another bedroom in the apartment.”

“Mr. Edward, it’s not necessary to add another room up there,” Oliver said quickly.

“You should have a respite from our family. Time off,” Dad said, his ears turning red.

“My time off will come when Jacob is caught,” Oliver responded.

“Mine too,” Steve replied, his eyes flashing fiercely. “You and your family are my only priority.” Steve shot a look at me. His cheeks reddened before he dropped his gaze to his hands. He swallowed a few times before turning to me and my siblings. “Can we share with them some more detailed information about Jacob?”

“How detailed?” Dad asked.

“A brief overview of what Charlie sent us from his preliminary research,” Oliver said, taking out a folder from behind his seat. “Nothing graphic. I promise.”

My dad groaned but nodded. Oliver handed each of us a sheet. On the top was a recent mug shot of Jacob Black. Underneath was information about what he had done to his ex-wife. It wasn’t too detailed but I could tell that this guy was a sick fuck. Now, he wanted my mom.

“I think he’s going to try and get to one of us to get to Mom,” Owen said as he read the information.

“Not if we have anything to say about it,” Steve said. “In school, you guys are protected.”

“How are we protected?” Owen asked.

“I’ve notified the administration about the situation,” Dad said. “They have a picture of Jacob on file
“However, getting to school and to your other activities will be a challenge. No more taking the bus or driving on your own. One of us will always take you. Additionally, for any after school activity, there will be protection. My dad is sending two more additional guys,” Steve explained.

“What about my job?” I asked. “I work with the public. He could…” I pointed to Jacob’s menacing picture.

“Miss Kyra, you may have to resign,” Steve frowned.

“Daddy?” I asked, my eyes filling with tears. “What about…?”

“Kyra, your safety is paramount,” he said, grasping my hand. “All of your safety is paramount. Principessa, I know that you’re proud of your job.”

“I’m not proud of my job. I’m happy that I’m making my own money but how am I going to do everything you want me to do? The ultimatum from the fall?” I questioned, nibbling on my fingernail.

“You can help your mom around the house and assist me when I work from home. We’ll provide you with an hourly wage, equivalent to what you get from Taco Bell,” my dad said after he thought for a few moments. “To make it legit, I’ll add you to the payroll of Whitlock so you can get the work experience on your resume.”

“Dad, that’s nepotism,” I deadpanned.

“I won’t be your boss,” he countered. “Uncle Demetri will be signing your paycheck. He’s the CFO. Also, good word.” My dad gave me a crooked grin, indicating he was pleased with my knowledge of the English language. “Nepotism?”

“It was one of the vocab words from my ACT prep class,” I snickered. “I’ll call my boss tomorrow.”

“Type out a resignation letter,” Dad says. “State that you have a family situation that is the cause for your departure from your job.”

“Effective immediately,” Steve added.

“Okay,” I nodded.

“As for the rest of you, we’ll make decisions about extra activities as the need arises,” Oliver said. “I know that there is a dance for Kyra and Owen.”

“I didn’t get to go to homecoming,” I pouted.

“Me neither,” Owen grumbled. “And I have a date.”

“So do I,” I replied.

“Well, you’ll have to make arrangements with your dates to accommodate for someone to be with you,” Steve said professionally. “You’ll go to this dance in a limo with one of us driving it and another inside of the dance. We’ll figure the rest out as we get closer. Okay?”


“I’m certain that you all are tired,” Oliver said with a frown “I can only imagine what you’re all
feeling right now.”

“I’m pissed,” I spat. “Sorry, Dad. I know my language sucks, but it’s the truth. Why is this jerk after Mom now?”

“Yeah,” Mia and Masen snarled.

“We don’t know. I’m going to have Grandpa Charlie use his resources in the Chicago police force to get that answer,” Dad explained. “There’s more to Jacob than what’s on that paper. He’s messed up, guys. Very dangerous and obviously brutal. If you see him, call the police. You hear me?”

“Yes,” we all answered.

“Now, I don’t know about you guys, but I’m starving,” he quipped. “Who wants pizza?”

We all perk up and together, we make five homemade pizzas, devouring them eagerly to fill our empty bellies. Then, after our meal of pizza, we had some hazelnut gelato before going up to our respective rooms. I typed up my resignation later before climbing into bed.

xx STTD xx

The next morning, I dropped of my resignation letter to Lou. He was sad to see me go but was very understanding about my situation. Steve was with me, hovering near the door. My boss explained that my last paycheck would be sent to me at my home address.

We drove back to the house and I went to help set up the holiday decorations. Dad, Oliver, Masen and Owen had pulled out the ton of boxes while Mia and Mom were working on the lights. Well, Mom was trying to help with the lights but since her arm was not working properly, it wasn’t happening. Working as a family, we got our Christmas decorations up on the inside. Steve and Oliver decided to tackle the lights on the outside, wiring some extra security cameras along the way. We finished shortly before dinner, collapsing on the living room sofa.

The rest of the weekend was pretty quiet. Mom was struggling with her hand. Dad was hovering over Mom. It snowed again and we were all stuck inside. Our time in the house didn’t help the overall tense feeling. We were all at each other’s throats. I was definitely looking forward to going back to school on Monday.

But we didn’t go back to school on Monday.

We had a snow day.

It’s November and we’ve already had three snow days. This winter sucks and it’s not even winter yet. Crap on a stick.

Thankfully on Tuesday, school is able to resume and I sit in the car with Owen, Oliver and my dad. My dad was meeting with the principal to discuss the situation in more detail. Once we got to school, Owen and I went into the building and went to our lockers. My dad and Oliver went into the main office, sitting down in the waiting area.

“I can’t wait until this is all behind us, K,” Owen said as he shoved up his glasses.

“Me, too, Wan,” I muttered. We shrugged and went our separate directions. I made sure I had my homework in my bag before heading to my first period class, AP Chemistry with Mr. Brown. I hated that class but I refused to take physics. That required way too much math. Biology was out since I hated blood. It left me with AP Chemistry. I’m still struggling with the concepts, but my lab partner,
Thomas, who also happens to be my date for the winter formal, is helping me tremendously.

I plopped down next to Thomas, who was finishing up his homework that Mr. Brown assigned. “Hey,” I smiled. “How was your Thanksgiving?”

“Ugh,” he groaned. “I had to go to my grandmother’s place in Nebraska. You want to know what’s in Nebraska?”

“What?”

“Snow and not much else,” he grumbled. “We were grateful that we had a snow day yesterday since our flight was canceled and we didn’t get in to Chicago until late, late last night.”

“How late?”

“We got to bed around three,” he answered. His blue eyes were red rimmed and his face was littered with teenage boy stubble. His brown hair flopped over his face sloppily and he just looked exhausted.

“Why are you here?” I asked, arching a brow. “I’m certain you could have stayed home and caught up on sleep.”

“I have three tests,” he responded. His nose was wrinkled with distaste. “What teacher would give a test after a long weekend?”

“A masochist?” I giggled.

“Nope. They get off on receiving pain. Sadist sounds more appropriate. They get their jollies off by inflicting pain. Tests equal pain,” Thomas deadpanned, winking at me.

The bell rang and Mr. Brown walked in. He looked grumpy. “Clear your desks, ladies and gentlemen. We’re taking a quiz today on the properties of the heavy metals,” he said, handing out a multipage packet to each lab table.

“Fucking sadist,” Thomas hissed as he pushed his homework into the folder. “Maybe I’ll go home sick.”

“Take me with you,” I snickered. Thomas smiled, elbowing my side. He murmured something but I didn’t understand it as Mr. Brown handed us our quizzes.

It was hard. I know I failed it. And the pattern continued in all of my classes. Six out of the seven classes, I’d had pop quizzes. The only class I felt comfortable with the quiz was my Spanish class. My last class of the day was PE. It was one of two classes that I shared with my former friends. For the most part, they ignored me. Mackenzie, though, always glared daggers at me. Together, we were really the force to be reckoned with.

She was the beauty and ironically enough, I was the brain. She was the face of our outfit and I was the mastermind. No one was safe from our ridicule. Mackenzie was cruel and I helped spread her vitriol. Ever since I decided that she wasn’t worth my time, I was the target for her ire. However, I knew all of her darkest secrets. Mackenzie was not the sharpest tool in the shed and she spilled all of her insecurities to me one day. She knows this and she knows that if she does cross me that I will not hesitate to spread her secrets to the school.

Yes, it’s vindictive but I will not be made to look like a fool. I’d already spread a pretty significant warning to Mackenzie when she started teasing me. I posted a picture of a giraffe on my Facebook
wall, tagging Mackenzie on it. She’s got an overwhelming fear of the animal. Almost to the point of hysteria.

Mackenzie defriended me but got the message. She still glared at me whenever we were in the same class but she never made any comments to me or about me. Today, though, she was whispering to some juniors and my old group of friends. Thomas, who also shared this class with me, was leaning against the bleachers. I was pulling my hair into a ponytail, watching Mackenzie with rapt attention.

“She’s up to something,” Thomas said as he yawned.

“I know,” I huffed.

“What did you do that she hates you so much now? You used to be, like, besties,” Thomas snickered.

“We were but she made some comments about my brother and my behavior caused a rift with my family that I decided to stop hanging out with her,” I shrugged. “She’s a bitch, Thomas. She feeds on the weak.”

“And you’re not weak,” Thomas said, his blue eyes dancing.

“Fuck no,” I said, giving him a smirk. “She gives me shit and I give it right back.”

“That’s my girl,” Thomas said as he wrapped his arm around my shoulders. My belly warmed as he referred to me as ‘his girl.’ Thomas was a newer student, moving into the district last year. We became fast friends but there was always a blurring of the lines between friendship and something else. “Hey, I’m curious, Kyra. I know that we’re going to the dance together but I was curious if you wanted to go out, like on a date, before the dance? Movies or something?” He blushed and looked down at me. “I wanted to ask you during chem, but Brown and his quiz from hell put the kibosh on that.”

“I’d like that. But, you have to be aware of a situation, Thomas. My mom is dealing with a stalker and well, all of us are under constant protection,” I frowned.

“Are you okay?” Thomas asked.

“I’m fine but if we go out, if you are still interested, will include a chaperone,” I spat. “The guys are pretty cool but not exactly all that good for a romantic date.”

“Kyra, I’m sorry that your family is dealing with that,” Thomas said quietly. “I can’t imagine.”

“Neither can I,” I snorted humorlessly.

“Well, regardless of our ‘chaperone,’ I still would like to take you out,” he said shyly, his pale skin blushing a warm pink.

“I’d like to go out,” I replied. “When?”

“Friday?” Thomas asked. “We could go to dinner and movie?”

“Let me check with my wardens and then I’ll let you know?”

“Perfect.”

xx STTD xx
My parents begrudgingly allowed me to go out with Thomas. Technically, it was my first date. I’d been out with boys but it was usually with a group. I’d never had a boyfriend, never been kissed… really pure as the driven snow. However, the caveat with my date was that Steve had to be my chaperone. I trusted him and was okay with that but not pleased that he was going to drive us for the date.

The good thing was that it gave my mom something to focus on besides her stalker and her hand. After school on Thursday, we went shopping for a new outfit for me to wear on my date. Thomas said that we were going out to dinner and then a movie. It was supposed to snow again so he said for me to dress warmly. Mom, Casey and I drove to a nearby mall and went into one of the high-end stores to find my date outfit.

We gathered a ton of clothes for me to try on with Casey standing off to the side. He looked very uncomfortable in the juniors section of the store, shifting uncomfortably.

“I feel bad for Casey,” I snickered. “He’s so antsy.”

“He does look uneasy but I think it’s due to the fact that we are out and about and not at home,” Mom said somewhat bitterly. “I’m not going to stop living my life because a crazy man decides he wants me back.”

“I don’t blame you, Mom,” I said, hugging her. “I think all of us are in agreement that we hope that Jacob gets caught. And caught soon.”

“Preaching to the choir,” she said, smiling at me softly. “Come on, baby. Let’s get you all dolled up for your first date.”

“God, you sounded like Aunt Alice,” I giggled.

“It’s not every day that my baby girl has her first date,” Mom chided gently. “I truly wish, though, that it could be…” She trailed off and her face dropped into a frown.

“Mom, it’s okay. Not everyone gets a chauffeur on their first date. Thomas is excited that we’re going to be using Dad’s Aston Martin,” I said. Hell, so was I. That car sits in the garage, covered in its tarp more than it spends on the road. Granted, it’s because my dad’s anal about his beloved vehicle but a car like that is designed to be driven.

“I’m surprised he agreed to it,” Mom laughed. “There’s snow on the ground. It’s only driven on bright, sunny, warm days. If it’s supposed to rain, the car stays in…the same for sleet and snow. I think he feels guilty about forcing a ‘chaperone’ on your date but he’s secretly skipping for joy since he can’t be there to hover.”

“And embarrass me,” I said, giving her a rueful smile.

“Your father would never embarrass you…intentionally,” Mom smiled. “He only wants what’s best for you, sweetie. Your dad loves you so much. Since you were our first, Kyra, you will always hold a treasured part in our hearts.” She gently ran her hand through my hair, giving me a warm smile.

Tears pricked my eyes. I knew my parents loved me. They wouldn’t care so much if they didn’t. I put down the clothes I was holding and did something that NO teenager would ever do in public. I hugged my mom. I hugged her and thanked her for being awesome. I hugged her and told her that I loved her. She responded with a shocked gasp, returning my embrace.

The rest of the time, Mom and I talked about school, Thomas and planning Christmas/my parents’ anniversary. It was an unwritten rule that Christmas Eve was usually at our house because of their
anniversary. Christmas Day was at Nana’s or Aunt Alice’s. We went with our grandparents or aunt so Mom and Dad could have some naked fun time. Shudder. Don’t want to imagine my parents doing the horizontal mambo…

Crap, too late.

We eventually made it home around nine and I went up to bed, thanking Mom for my first date outfit. I found my dad in his office, working on something for the Foundation. I hugged him, too. He smiled at me crookedly, saying that he loved me. I ruffled his disheveled hair, earning a groan and an eye roll as I skipped out of the room.

I showered and did my hair for tomorrow, curling it in big loopy curls. I worked on some of my homework before crawling into bed and crashing. The next day was cold and snowy. Everyone in school wanted to be out playing in the snow but no dice. Before I left school with Owen, Thomas verified that he was coming over to my place at six. I nodded eagerly (but not too eagerly).

Once I got home, Mia helped me touch my curls for my date and chattered about lucky I was. I was looking forward to the night out with Thomas and enjoying some freedom. Yes, Steve was going to be there, but out of all of the security guys, he was the least security-guy-looking. He was more like a good-looking guy next door. Who can kill a man with a single gunshot or kung-fu someone’s ass.

I finished getting ready and went downstairs. Everybody was sitting the family room. My dad was glowering at the door and when I came down, he was glowering at me. Mom elbowed him, hissing something in his ear. He looked sheepishly at her. She glared at him, arching her brow. He sighed and softened his glare, giving me a tentative smile. I sat down next to Owen and nervously waited for Thomas. Butterflies were attacking my belly. Anxiously, I twisted the turquoise ring on my pointer finger.

“It’ll be okay, K,” Owen said quietly, stilling my hands with his. “Do you think Thomas is going to stand you up?”

“I don’t know,” I muttered. I began fussing with my scarf and shifting on the couch.

“Do I need to sit on you, Kyra?” Owen snorted.

“Shut up, Wan,” I said, giving him a look of mock indignation. He grinned at me before turning back to the television that was on lowly. I watched it also, but not really seeing or paying attention to what was on the screen. My daze was broken when the doorbell rang. I nearly fell off the couch, squeaking quietly. Owen was snickering next to me. I steadied myself, smacking his arm lightly before walking to open the door. Oliver nodded from his spot in the living room, staring at the tiny closed-circuit TV on the wall. I flipped my hair over my shoulders and opened the door, showing an anxious Thomas standing on my doorstep. He was gripping some yellow flowers in his hand. They were quaking. “Hi, Thomas,” I breathed.

“Thank you,” I said, taking the flowers from his hand. I inhaled deeply, smelling the fragrant blooms. “Come in, Thomas.” He nodded and stepped into the foyer of my house. My parents were standing inside, their hands twined together. “These are my parents, Edward and Bella Cullen,” I said, indicating to my family.

“Nice to meet you, Mr. and Mrs. Cullen,” Thomas replied, holding out his hand to my dad. He stared at Thomas’ hand dubiously before gripping it, probably checking to see if it was a strong grip. God, Dad.
“You, too, Thomas,” Mom said, giving him a warm smile. “Where are you going?”

“We’re going out to dinner at Stir Crazy and then a movie at the Regal Thirty,” Thomas answered.

“What movie?” Dad asked, eyeing Thomas.

“Whatever Kyra wants to see, Mr. Cullen,” Thomas answered, gulping nervously.

“Dad, stop intimidating him,” I chided. My dad blushed and mumbled an apology. Mom took my flowers and kissed my cheek. My dad hugged me, reminding me that I was still his baby girl. I blushed and turned to my date. “You ready, Thomas?”

“Yeah,” he said, giving me a relieved grin. He took my hand and we followed Steve out to the car. We got into the backseat and talked quietly as Steve drove toward the restaurant. Our fingers were linked together as we chatted about the school day, the drama of the senior class and solidifying plans for the winter formal which was happening in two weeks on Saturday. When I had agreed to go with Thomas, it was as a group. We weren’t going to be going as a couple but based off his interactions with me tonight, it seemed like we might be going as a couple. Internally, I squealed excitedly at the prospect of going to the dance with my boyfriend.

Too quickly, Steve parked the car and said that he’d be sitting at the bar while we ate our dinner. Thomas nodded and we went inside, being sat almost immediately. We ordered our meals and I found out a little more about Thomas. His dad worked in the city as a software developer. The company he had worked for previously had gone belly-up and he was hired by a gaming company to refine several games on the market. Thomas’ mom was a nurse who worked at Central Dupage Hospital in the Critical Care Unit. Thomas also had an older sister who was a junior in college at University of Nebraska, close to his grandmother’s home.

I told him about my family and he listened with rapt attention. He knew my family was somewhat famous for its philanthropic foundation and the ownership of Whitlock Technologies. However, he didn’t care about all of that. He liked me for me.

After dinner, we walked to the movie theater with Steve following us in the car. The movie theater was in the same parking lot as the restaurant; just a short walk. It was snowing lightly, being captured in my hair and on Thomas’ eyelashes. It was romantic and very pretty. As we walked onto the sidewalk, I stumbled.

Unfortunately, I inherited my mom’s clumsiness. Thomas wrapped his arms around me, stopping me from landing face first into a nearby snow bank. He carefully righted me, staring into my eyes. Something twinkled in his ice-blue eyes as he stared at me. Slowly, his hand cupped my cheek and he leaned down toward my mouth. My hands moved up his arms so I could thread my fingers into his soft brown hair. Carefully, he angled his face and deepened the kiss. His tongue slid between my lips, dancing languidly with mine.

My first kiss.

His other arm banded around my waist and his hand moved to cup my neck. My hands moved up his arms so I could thread my fingers into his soft brown hair. Carefully, he angled his face and deepened the kiss. His tongue slid between my lips, dancing languidly with mine.

Unfortunately, our kiss was cut short by some rude people who bumped into Thomas. He glared at the retreating forms of the boys who bumped him, still holding me to his body. “Sorry about that, Kyra,” he said, looking down at me. “I wanted to kiss you for a while…and it was ruined by those morons.”
I covered his mouth with my hand. “It was perfect,” I whispered.

“It was,” he grinned, pressing another soft kiss to my mouth. “Now, I can’t imagine not kissing you.”

“You can do it anytime you want, Thomas,” I said, my face beaming brightly.

“Really? Like you’re my girl?” he asked giddily. I nodded. He kissed me again and lifted me slightly. His smile was evident as he peppered my face with kisses. Again, we were broken apart by the gruff sound of Steve standing behind us. Thomas blushed, threading his fingers with mine while I gave Steve a pointed look. He just arched a brow and followed me and Thomas to get our tickets. We ended up seeing some mindless comedy, making out in the back of the theater. I know that Steve was a bit frustrated with me but I could care less. I was on my first real date, getting my first kiss with my first boyfriend.

After the movie, Steve drove us back to my house. Thomas had his arms wrapped around me and I was snuggled up to him. We refrained from making like horny teenagers for the duration of the drive but I can tell that Thomas wanted to; he kept staring at my mouth. Back at the house, Steve got out of the car, shooting a biting glare at Thomas. My boyfriend took my hand and guided me to his red Honda Accord. “I had a wonderful night, Kyra,” he murmured, tucking a hair behind my ear.

“Me, too,” I whispered.

“Can I call you this weekend? Maybe go ice skating or something?”

“That sounds nice,” I blushed. “Perhaps you can come over and we can watch a movie here at the house?” He smirked, nodding happily. He leaned down, brushing his lips against mine. I moaned involuntarily, loving the warm feeling of his soft mouth against me. It didn’t last long. Thomas pulled back and hugged me before he clambered into his car. I walked up to the doorway, watching as he backed out the drive. He waved as he pulled away from the house and I returned in kind. With a radiant grin, I skipped inside.

Both of my parents were standing in the foyer. My mom looked a little watery, smiling happily. My dad looked like he was about to have a brain aneurysm. Yes, Daddy…your little girl has had her first kiss. HA!

I kissed their cheeks before going up to my room and getting ready for bed. I fell asleep with dreams of Thomas, making out and possibly even doing more. Though, I won’t do that. I don’t want to be a teen mom. Maybe later…after college?

xx STTD xx

The next two weeks flew by. Thomas and I were an official couple. The it couple, it would seem. My social suicide was forgotten when Thomas laced his fingers with mine and we walked to Chemistry together. Thomas was an attentive boyfriend without being too clingy. I loved the time I spent with him and I know he enjoyed spending time with me. Classes were boring, but Thomas made them palatable. (Yet another ACT word.)

Before I knew it, I was getting ready for the winter formal. Thomas and I were going with some of our combined friends and Owen along with his date, Tasha.

Mom had taken me to get my hair, makeup and nails done. Once that was finished, I was putting on my dress upon my return and smiled at the fun, red fabric that fell around my body. My dress was a deep cabernet color that was strapless and totally flirty. My accessories included a pair of earrings my parents gave me for my sweet sixteen that were my birthstone of a ruby and some faux rubies as a necklace and a ring. On my feet, I wore a pair of pewter stiletto sandals.
Everyone arrived at my house at five-thirty. My parents and the parents of my friends snapped pictures in front of the Christmas tree in various poses. A few of the favorite poses were the ones where we were ‘pretending’ to pin on the boutonnieres on the guy’s jackets and putting on our corsages. My corsage was beautiful with red roses, greenery and little silver, glittery balls. Before we left, my dad pulled Thomas aside. I cringed at what he could possibly want to say to my boyfriend.

*Please don’t scare him off, Daddy. I’ll may have to pummel you with my stiletto.*

However, when Thomas walked back over to me, he wrapped his arm around my waist and kissed my temple. “Everything alright?” I asked.

“Never better,” he chuckled. “You look so beautiful, Kyra. I have the most gorgeous date to this shindig.”

“Shindig?” I teased.

“Shut it,” he snickered, pressing a chaste kiss to my lips.

We all got into the limo that was owned by Whitlock Technologies. Oliver was driving tonight. Steve and Casey were acting as ‘chaperones’ at the dance and were already there. Henry, the swing security guard, was staying back at the house to protect my parents and siblings. The drive was fun. We decided to go to some fancy tapas restaurant called Tango in Naperville before going to the dance. We shared good food, virgin sangria and a lot of laughs.

We settled the bill and got back into the limo. Inside, Oliver blasted some pop music and we sang along with it. Owen was the most reserved but even my geeky brother got into the silliness in the backseat of the car.

A half hour later, Oliver pulled up to the high school. We got out and went inside the gym, with tickets in hand. The theme for the winter formal was ‘Let it Snow, Let it Snow, Let it Snow.’ *Appropriate, kids. We already had three snow days. We want more? Blah...no.*

The DJ was playing pumping music and everyone was on the darkened cafeteria floor. All around the cafeteria were snowflake or snow decorations. The room was bathed in a cool, blue glow from the blue lights that were uplit along the walls.

Thomas chuckled quietly. “It’s like Frosty threw up in here, K,” he snickered.

“I know. We have enough of this outside,” I deadpanned. “We don’t need it in here.”

“The nice thing about this is that we don’t have to shovel it,” Owen retorted, pushing up his glasses. “Tasha, do you want to dance?”

“Sure,” she replied quietly. My brother gallantly offered his elbow and they scampered to the middle of the dance floor, where he met up with some of his orchestra friends. Thomas held me against his lean body as we watched our classmates dance poorly in front of us. We were making comments about their form when Mackenzie and her date walked in. He looked much older than us and honestly, it creeped me out.

“I’m surprised she came,” Thomas sneered. “She’s been such a bitch to me lately and complaining about everything.”

“How old do you think her date is?” I asked.

“I dunno. Twenty? Twenty-one?” Thomas replied, arching a brow. “He’s definitely not in high
Mackenzie flounced around, dragging her date behind her like a dutiful puppy. She was almost to Thomas and me when a slow song came on. Thomas pulled me onto the dance floor, wrapping his arms around me. He kissed me sweetly as we swayed back and forth to the slow waltz that was being played through the speakers. Mackenzie and Creeperman were dancing next to us. Mackenzie was glaring at me as I lay my head on Thomas’ shoulder. Her date had his hands on her ass, groping her inappropriately. Mackenzie welcomed it and even flaunted it to the people around her. However, she was still glaring at me disdainfully.

One of the teachers came up to Mackenzie and asked that she and her date refrain from such lewd behavior. She smiled sweetly and apologized. Her date just shrugged, still while having his hand on her ass. Thomas led us away from the drama and we sat down for a few minutes. A few of my friends from the pom squad insisted I do the senior dance with them, which I begrudgingly did. I had to quit the team due to my grades and permanent punishment. However, I used to be one of the captains and choreographed the dance. The music started and we began moving as best as we could in our dresses and corsages. It was a lot of fun to be out there with them. I missed it but I knew that not being on the team was for the best. My grades were better and my relationship with my family improved.

The crowd applauded and I went back to Thomas. He hugged me, kissing my forehead. “I’m going to go to the bathroom and get something to drink. Do you want anything?” I asked, panting slightly. God, I’m out of shape.

“I’m good, pretty girl,” he replied, kissing my lips. I pulled away and went to the bathroom to put on some fresh lip gloss and check my hair. Inside of the bathroom, Mackenzie slammed the door shut.

“You’re such a slut, Cullen,” she spat. “Throwing yourself at Thomas like that? Jesus!”

“Like I’m one to talk,” I retorted, glaring at my former best friend. “How old is your date? Thirty?”

“Fucking bitch,” Mackenzie snarled.

“That would be you, Mackenzie. Do I need to remind you about all of the dirty little secrets I know? I bet your date and your friends would just love to hear about that little problem you had disposed of at the beginning of junior year. I wonder if Phillip ever even knew that he was going to be…”


“Be a daddy,” I finished, glaring at her. “If anyone is a slut in this room, it’s you. I don’t even know why I was friends with you. My life is so much better without you in it, Mackenzie. Don’t come crawling to me for money the next time you get knocked up. I’m not paying for another abortion. Or rather, my daddy isn’t paying for another abortion.”

“I hate you, Cullen,” Mackenzie cried.

“I’m out of shape.”

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“Fucking bitch,” Mackenzie snarled.

“That would be you, Mackenzie. Do I need to remind you about all of the dirty little secrets I know? I bet your date and your friends would just love to hear about that little problem you had disposed of at the beginning of junior year. I wonder if Phillip ever even knew that he was going to be…”


“Be a daddy,” I finished, glaring at her. “If anyone is a slut in this room, it’s you. I don’t even know why I was friends with you. My life is so much better without you in it, Mackenzie. Don’t come crawling to me for money the next time you get knocked up. I’m not paying for another abortion. Or rather, my daddy isn’t paying for another abortion.”

“I hate you, Cullen,” Mackenzie cried.
standing right outside, looking at me with concern.

“Everything okay, Kyra?” asked Steve. “You’ve got scratches on your neck.”

“I’m fine,” I said. “Just a run-in with a former friend.” I pulled out the pins from my hair, shaking it over my shoulders. “Are the scratches still noticeable?”

“No,” Steve replied, pursing his lips. I smirked and continued my walk back to the café. Thomas ran up to me, hugging me to his chest. Owen was frowning at my scratches but I wore them with pride. Mackenzie, the bitch from hell, will not bring me down. I refuse it.

“Kyra, I think it be prudent that we leave,” Owen muttered. “Mackenzie is out of the bathroom and she’s on the warpath. I don’t want you to get in trouble.”

“She won’t say anything,” I said confidently. “I’ve got some pretty hefty blackmail fodder.”

“Care to share with the class?” Thomas asked, his blue eyes twinkling.

“Nope. It’s something that I swore I’d take to the grave but if she crosses me again, I will not hesitate to share it.” I said darkly. “But, I do think we need to go. I’m tired and I want to get out of this dress.”

We gathered everyone in our group, leaving the dance. Mackenzie caught my eye one last time as I passed her. Coldly, I glared at her. She cowered back, hiding behind her much older date. I smirked at her fear but inwardly, I was fearful of getting in trouble for threatening her and for dangling her secret in front of her. Mackenzie confessed that to me in confidence…should I use it to ‘buy’ her silence? Or should I talk to a teacher about her teasing and threats to me?

I honestly didn’t know what to do…and it terrified me. Who could I talk to about this? My parents? No. Dad would flip out about the whole abortion thing. It’s a bit of a sensitive topic in our house since Aunt Alice could never have children naturally. She sees abortion as murder. As a result, so does my dad. It’s the only conservative view he takes in his life. Mom? Same boat as my dad. She supported him on the whole abortion thing, though she’s pro-choice. It’s a woman’s choice to make but she would never make it.

The last person I considered was Steve. I made the decision to talk to Steve in the morning, ask his opinion about the whole Mackenzie situation. He’d give me good advice or at least steer me in the right direction, right?

I certainly hope so.

A/N: What did you think of Kyra’s POV? Was it everything you ever dreamed of for being inserted into the mind of a seventeen year old girl? Anyhow, this was a challenge for me. I’m twice Kyra’s age and I do not remember much about high school (though I did have AP Chemistry during first period with Mr. Brown. The man was evil, I tell you…and he couldn’t pronounce shit. Fluorescent was ferlescent…My name (Josephine) was Jopesine. It was fabulous.)

Anyhoozle, pictures from this chapter are on my blog (link is in my profile). You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation or on Twitter: tufano79. Up next will be back to Edward and his meeting with his asstard brother, Christmas, their anniversary and some smexy times (to make up for the lack of them…) Leave me some lovin! Hugs!
They survived falling in love and having four (count 'em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They're still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let's not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock's), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he's not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Up next will be back to Edward and his meeting with his asstard brother, Christmas, their anniversary and some smexy times (to make up for the lack of them…)

Chapter Eight: Pontiac Prison Blues

EPOV

"Edward, for love of God, sit down," Bella giggled. "Kyra will be home after the dance."

"She's at said dance with her boyfriend, Bella," I grumbled. "They could be off in a corner somewhere, copulating and we'll become grandparents."

"Oh, for fuck's sake," Bella snarked, arching a brow at me. "They are not copulating. Thomas is a sweet boy. He wouldn't be doing that in public."

"That's what my mother said about me and look at us now," I deadpanned. "We're still like bunnies…"

"Huge difference, Edward. We are married for nearly twenty years. Kyra and Thomas have been dating for less than twenty days. Do you want a blow job to calm you down?" Bella asked, giving me a smirk over her book. I shot my wife a look. "Just asking…"

The door opened and the sounds of Kyra, Thomas, Owen and Tasha filled the foyer. I hopped up and nearly sprinted to check on them. Was my baby girl pregnant?

Bella came up behind me and smacked my arm. I tried to look sheepish but yeah didn't happen. There was something amiss with Kyra. Her hair was down and she was trying to hide her neck.

If that boy gave her a fucking hickey, I'll chop off his tongue, followed by his balls.

"Mom, can we watch a movie downstairs? The dance was kind of lame," Kyra explained.

"Sure, sweetie. But keep in mind of your guests' curfew," Bella reminded. Kyra nodded and asked if Tasha wanted to borrow something to get out of her dress. Thomas and Owen went downstairs, removing their ties as they left. I was about to follow them but Bella stopped me. "I don't think so, Edward Anthony."

"I want to watch the movie, too," I smirked.

"Edward, think about it. What girl or boy wants their decrepit father hanging out with them?" Bella
asked, poking my shoulder.

"I'm not decrepit," I pouted.

"Whatever, not the point. You're not going down there. I'm a hundred percent certain that nothing will happen because Owen will be down there, too. Isn't it a double standard that you aren't stressed about Owen? Hmmm?" Bella admonished. I hemmed and hawed. She was right…Damn it. "You are going to stay up here and not invade on your children's personal time. You hear me?"

"Yes, Bella," I muttered, pouting sullenly. She pulled me back into the family room, resuming our television show from the DVR. Kyra and Tasha came down wearing some jeans and sweaters, raiding the kitchen for munchies. Bella poked me and physically turned my head to the television. I scowled at her but decided to go with it. She cuddled up next to me, watching our own movie.

Around one, Tasha's parents came to pick her up. Owen nervously kissed her cheek and they made tentative plans to get together over Christmas break. Thomas left shortly after Tasha. He lovingly kissed my baby girl, caressing her cheeks before leaving in his Honda Accord. Kyra floated past Bella and me, seemingly over the moon for Thomas. However, I did notice that she was wearing a turtleneck. Seriously, if that boy gave my principessa a hickey…

"You've left hickeys on me, angel," Bella chided, elbowing me in the ribs. I really need to keep my inner musings to myself.

"Rite or not, I still don't like it," I grumbled. My wife, the sexy beast she is, tugged on my hand. Her lips took purchase on my neck and she gently sucked and nibbled. Her fingers on her left hand danced over my sweater, moving closer to the waistband of my jeans. Lowly, she moaned against my skin as he hand came in contact with my belly. "Fuck."

"Language," she giggled. "Shall I mark you? Hmmm?"

I looked at my wife. She was smiling smugly as her hand moved into my pants. The monster between my legs woke up and I definitely wanted to be marked. "Only if I get to return the favor, gorgeous." She giggled and danced away, running up the stairs. I locked the front door, turned off the lights and followed her.

I came to the conclusion that my wife, whom I love more than life itself, is part vampire. I have my own share of hickeys all over my body. All covered by my clothing, thank you very much.

xx STTD xx

The rest of the weekend passed by quietly. Mia and Masen were invited to a birthday party of a classmate. Oliver drove them and stayed outside of their home, to keep track of my youngest babies. Owen and Kyra slept in until nearly two in the afternoon. Bella and I were working on wrapping Christmas presents, planning for Christmas Eve/our anniversary.

In light of the craziness going on with Jacob, Bella and I were going to keep our anniversary low-key. The plan was after our family left on Christmas Eve, early, we'd share a romantic dinner and exchange gifts. *Not to mention body fluids.* God, I just made love to my wife last night and I need more. I'm such a horndog.

*At least you can get it up, Cullen. Multiple times in one evening of passion. No need for Viagra for you, bucko.*

However, the week leading up to our anniversary was going to be madness. Bella and Rose were finishing up the edits for the movie, *The Charmed Ones* and the possibility may arise for them to
need to fly out to California. That's still up in the air. Kyra and Owen have finals this week, finishing up the semester. Mia has some big cheer competition at some local high school and Masen has auditions for the spring musical at his school. I have to go into the office to go over end of the year reports with Jasper, Demetri and Charlie.

And let's not forget my appointment to meet with my brother on December 20th.

Not looking forward to that.


Why in the hell did agree to that?

Because I'm a fucking pushover.

I could always ditch him.

But I'd feel guilty.

Fuck me.

The early part of the week was busy but not filled with stress. Bella did have to fly out to California to discuss the script with the production team. Rose went with her. There were some changes they wanted to make and Bella wanted to make sure that the changes were appropriate, meeting with her stringent standards. Rose was just going as backup. It was a two day trip. Bella was leaving early on Tuesday with Steve and was going to be back by Thursday, the day before I was to meet with Emmett. Ugh.

Did I mention that I didn't want to meet with him? Because I really, really don't.

And I have to get over this.

Moving on…

On Thursday, I went into the office. Henry drove me into the city while Casey and Oliver watched over the kids at school. I needed to meet with Jasper, Demetri and Charlie to go over the end of the year reports. We also needed to sign off on the tax paperwork that Demetri had drawn up. Also, as a nice little Christmas bonus, we were informing our workers that the office was going to be closed December 21st until January 2nd. A lot of our workers take time off to be with their families and honestly, not a lot of work gets done. We toyed with the idea last year but never made it happen. This year, Jasper and I made the decision to make it into a reality.

I arrived in my office and logged into my computer. While I waited for the other guys, I checked my email and addressed some pressing matters regarding the launch of some new accessories for the tablet. I also received an order from the Seattle Police Department for thirty mobile radar detectors. I contacted Charlie, informing him of the order and telling the chief that the order would be started after the first of the year.

Eric called me as I was finishing up the email. Jasper was heading to the large conference room. I locked my computer, grabbed my own tablet and walked to the conference room. Charlie was already there, scribbling something down on a piece of paper. Out of everyone on the board of Whitlock Technologies, Charlie was the most resistant to using technology on a daily basis. I would be lost if I didn't have my tablet. Jasper had his mini tablet attached to his palm and he his Bluetooth phone in his ear. Demetri carried his laptop, claiming his fingers were too big to use the tablet as a computer. Charlie had his cell phone and a folder with paper.
"I just sent you an email," I told Charlie.

"Huh?" he responded, looking up at me. "Right. Thanks."

"You okay, Charlie?" I asked, sitting next to my father-in-law. "You seem distracted."

"Just trying to figure out Jacob's MO," Charlie said as he pushed the pad of paper to me. Charlie, on a good day, had chicken scratch handwriting. What was in front of me was illegible.

"Charlie, I can't read this," I snickered, pushing it back to him.

"If it's not typed, you can't read it?" he teased. I rolled my eyes. "Okay, let me translate. Jacob meets Bella while she's in college. They date and break up because she wouldn't give him more. They meet up a few years later and begin dating again. Jacob is patient but again, they break up because she wasn't ready to take the next step in the relationship. She meets you online and you become friends. You fly out to meet Bella and sparks fly, right?"

"I knew I loved her the moment I saw her," I answered. I gently rubbed the key pendant under my shirt. Blinking, I turned to Charlie. "We had a connection from the very beginning. It only intensified when we met for the first time."

"You go to this club in Phoenix, yeah?"

"Some salsa club, I think. Karabbas or something like that. It's not around anymore, but I'll always remember that night because Jacob arrived at the club and hurt Bella," I growled.

"So, Jacob hurt Bella and he got a taste of violence. When did you first meet Bella?"

"Memorial day weekend in 2011," I replied.

Charlie flipped a few pages and scanned some dates. "Jacob was cited for disorderly conduct, disturbing the peace and misdemeanor assault that summer. In October is when he met the sixteen year old girl, right after you launched the first Foundation press campaign. By Memorial Day of the following year, she's dead and he's out on a technicality." Charlie explained that with each public press paperwork Bella's face was put on, Jacob got angrier and angrier, taking his rage out on unsuspecting women. Each blip on his rap sheet coordinated with our lives. He never, ever, let her go.

"What does all of this mean, Charlie?" I asked.

"This means that Jacob will stop at nothing to get Bella back in his life. This type of behavior is usually deadly," Charlie muttered miserably.

"What do you mean, 'deadly'?"

"Someone in these types of stalking cases usually ends up dead. Most of the times, it's both parties: stalker and the person getting stalked. 'If I can't have them, no one can' type of mentality."

My vision clouded and my heart stammered against my chest. No. Not her.

"Edward, son, you have to breathe," Charlie said.

"What's wrong, Charlie?" Jasper asked.

"I told him about my suppositions pertaining to Jacob," Charlie answered.
"Oh, fuck," Jasper squeaked. He crouched in front of me. "Edward, man…dude, listen to my voice."

"He's…he's…he's…" I panted, my eyes wide with fright.

"Get him on the floor, Jasper. He's going to pass out," Demetri said behind me. I faintly remembered being moved, laid on the floor with my feet on the chair. "Come on, brother, calm down."

"Someone get Bella on the phone!" Jasper barked.

My hands were clenched and I needed my wife. I needed to hear her sweet voice. I needed to feel her warm body.

"No answer on her cell phone," Charlie griped.

"Oh, GOD," I sobbed, curling up on the ground.

Demetri lay down next to me, running his fingers through my hair. "She could be in the air, Edward. She's fine. Steve's with her. He's paid to protect her." His words were meant to calm me but did anything but…I needed my wife.

"Was she flying commercial?" Charlie asked.

"No. She took one of the Whitlock planes," Jasper sang gleefully. He dialed the satellite phone. "Captain Maroni, this is Jasper Whitlock. Can you please patch me through to Mrs. Cullen?" Silence... "Thank you. Bella, are you there? Listen, I need you to talk to Edward. Charlie kind of freaked him out...I'll probably freak you out, too but I need Edward back. He's having some sort of panic attack."

Jasper handed Demetri the phone. My brother cradled it against my ear. "Edward?" came the distant voice of my Bella. "Baby, what's wrong?"

"Are you okay?" I sniffled, clutching the phone to my ear.

"I'm fine, angel. We're on the way back. We should be landing in about two hours."

"I needed to hear your voice," I choked out. "Bella, this thing with Jacob…it's worse than we thought."

"We'll talk more about it when I get home, Edward. I missed you and I love you, so much, angel," she cooed.

"I love you, too," I whimpered, sitting up. Tears fell from my eyes. Hastily, I wiped them away. "I'm meeting you at the airport, gorgeous. I have to see you, okay?"

"Okay, baby. Can you put me on with Jasper?"

"Sure," I nodded, handing him the phone. Demetri handed me a bottle of water before wrapping his arm around my shoulders. I leaned heavily against him, trying to get my rapidly beating heart to calm down.

Charlie looked sad and worried as he sat in his chair, staring down at me. "I'm sorry for freaking you out, Edward," Charlie grimaced. "I wouldn't have said anything at work if I had known…"

"I didn't even know that I was going to react this way, Charlie," I snorted humorlessly. I looked up at him. "What can we do?"
"What you've been doing," Charlie explained. "The protection is what's best. Honestly, since we
know whose stalking Bella, that's a step in the right direction. Most of the time, stalkers are not
discovered until after something happened. I worked this one case of a girl who was being stalked
but she didn't know who it was. For a year and a half, she was sent notes, love letters, pictures, each
getting more and more gruesome by her stalker. Unfortunately, it was when we were called into a
homicide/suicide investigation that we found out who the stalker was."

"Who was it, Charlie?" Demetri asked.

"It was a girl who used to work with the victim. The girl was passed over for a promotion but our vic
received it. Long story short, the victim was shot to death, in the office, by her stalker. On the
stalker's body was a note, explaining her reasons for doing what she did. In our investigation, this girl
was not even on our radar. We were looking at ex-boyfriends, friends, the guy across the street. Not
once did we consider her…and as a result, the victim died," Charlie muttered, still blaming himself.

"Yeah, not helping," I grumbled.

"Sorry," Charlie replied, smiling sheepishly.

"Edward, I don't want to sound like a douche, but we've got things to address," Jasper frowned. "I
know you're worried about Bella, but this needs to get done before we shut down for the holidays."
He held up the end of the year reports and tax returns.

Grumbling, I got back into my chair. The meeting was succinct but somber. I signed what I needed
to sign, trusting the rest of our administrative team would ensure that it's correct. After that was done,
told Henry that we needed to go to the private airstrip where the Whitlock planes were housed. He
bitched and moaned, saying he was going to miss dinner with his family.

"I'm sorry that my need for security inconveniences you," I snapped. "Car keys."

"What?" he asked.

"Give me the fucking car keys," I growled. "You're fired. Take the train back to Wheaton find
yourself another job, something nine to five."

"Mr. Cullen…I'm…" he stuttered.

"Save it. I heard you bitching about missing dinner with your family. I've got a psychotic madman on
the loose who wants my wife as his own and will stop at nothing to make it happen. It seems harsh,
but I need men who are going to be ready to do their job, whenever and wherever," I hissed,
narrowing my eyes at Henry. I punched the floor for the lobby and the floor for the basement.
"You'll get your last check mailed to you."

We rode down in the elevator in silence. Henry obviously flummoxed by my harsh behavior. Hell, I
was flummoxed by it. I was not a douche. Okay, I was a douche…to Emmett. But, this was
different. Henry expected this to be a fluff job for the rich and not-so-famous but it wasn't. There was
a real, authentic dangerous threat out there for my family.

"Is there nothing I can do, Mr. Cullen?" Henry asked when we reached the lobby.

"No. I'm sorry," I replied coldly.

"You need to have protection, too," Henry fidgeted.

"I'm capable of taking care of myself. Besides, once I get to the airport, my wife's security guard will
be there," I snarled. Henry slunk away, dejected that he was fired. I angrily pushed the close-door button and finished my ride down to the basement. After I got into my car and out onto the highway, I called Oliver and informed him of Henry's termination. Oliver reamed into me about my hasty decision.

I stood by it. I had my gun in my glove compartment along with the registration to carry it. The drive to the airport was easy. I got there about fifteen minutes before Bella's flight was to arrive. As I was waiting, Ricky, Steve's father called me. He informed me that Henry contacted him about his dismissal. I didn't deny it and I explained my reasons behind it. Ricky understood and asked if I wanted someone else. After thinking about it, I decided against it. Oliver and Steve were living with us full-time. Casey stayed with his family but understood the parameters of the job. Ricky explained that he'd have someone on standby if I choose to change my mind.

Doubtful.

I finished my phone call and saw the plane pull into the hangar. I hopped out of the car, pacing nervously and trying, desperately, to keep warm. Once the plane stopped, the hatch opened and the flight attendant walked out first. Steve followed and then my Bella.

"Bella," I called. She looked up at me and gave me a smile. I took off into a sprint, stumbling on a few slick spots. By the time she was off the plane, I had her safely ensconced in my arms. "Oh, Bella. You're home."

"I'm here, angel," she cooed, wrapping her arms around me.

"No warm welcome for me, SGD?" Rose quipped as she smirked at me.

"Hi, Rose," I deadpanned, crushing Bella to my chest. If I could, I'd envelope her in my body and never let her go.

"Leave him alone, Rosalie," Bella admonished from my embrace. "You know what we're dealing with…"

"I know," Rose frowned. "Sorry for teasing, Edward."

"It's okay," I answered, burying my nose in Bella's long, chestnut locks. "Fuck, baby, I missed you. I'm sorry about…"

"Edward, relax. I know the feeling," she replied, kissing my neck. "A little too well."

"Okay, lovebirds. As much as I'm enjoying this heartfelt reunion, it's colder than a witch's tit and I'm hungry."

"Who's driving you home, Rose?" I asked, arching a brow.

"Why, you, of course," she snorted. "Tim is stuck at a construction site and my children, while I love them, cannot drive well on the highways. My hair would be white if Ava or Lucas picked me up."

"You don't mind, do you?" Bella asked, her eyes filled with trepidation.

"Steve, you drive," I said, tossing him the car keys. "Rose, in the front and Bella, you're with me."

"Where's Henry?" Steve asked, confusion coloring his features.

"I fired him," I answered tersely. Guiding Bella to the car, we got into the backseat. I held her so
close to me. Well as close as our heavy winter coats and clothing would allow. I know I was being overly clingy, but after hearing those connections with Jacob's rap sheet and our lives, it was too much.

After we dropped off Rose, Steve drove us back to our home in Wheaton. I felt foolish, sitting in the back with Bella but I couldn't let go of her. "Baby, I need to breathe," she giggled against my chest. "Don't suffocate me."

"Sorry," I pouted. "I just…"

"I know," she replied, cuddling up against me. Our fingers threaded together. "Why did you fire Henry?"

"His priorities weren't straight. He was complaining about missing dinner because I had to pick you up," I hissed angrily.

"Edward, that was a bit harsh," Bella chastised. "How would you feel…?"

"It wasn't harsh, Bella. After hearing what I heard and seeing the proof in the dates, writing and facts, you would have reacted the same way," I barked. "Jacob has been hurting people ever since you broke up. Each time a new ad for the Foundation came out, his behavior escalated. He never got over you, Bella. He's out for blood. Your dad said that stalkers like him are deadly."

"Does Mr. Charlie have proof?" Steve asked from the front seat.

"Yeah. He showed it to me at the office. He'll need to translate since it's in Charlie-ese," I said flatly. "But, looking at Jacob's arrest file and our lives, side-by-side, the proof is in black and white."

"You need someone to be with you, Mr. Edward," Steve explained. "If Jacob is as dangerous…"

"I'm fine. Focus the protection on my wife and children. I do not want another asshole like Henry," I bit out.

"Edward, at least think about it. Please?" Bella asked, cupping my face with her warm hands.

"Fine. I'll think about it. But no promises," I said, quirking a brow at my wife.

"Well, at least take someone with you tomorrow," Bella said sternly.

"What's tomorrow?" I asked.

"Your meeting with Emmett," Bella reminded me.

"Ugh! That's so not happening. Not now. I need to be with you," I said as I searched for my phone. "I've been traumatized enough to last a lifetime. Today alone! Nope, I'm not going to visit Emmett. That's a whole other level of trauma that I don't need."

"No, Edward. You need to do this. Even if it's to tell Emmett to fuck off, you have to talk to him," Bella encouraged. "I know that he was awful towards you but, give him a chance to try and atone for his sins. Look at Tim…he was one of my tormentors and now he's a good friend."

"I'll go with you, Mr. Edward," Steve said.

"No excuses. You're going," Bella smirked, kissing my neck. Her lips found my ear, licking on the lobe. "I can't believe I'm resorting to promises of sex…Anywhere, anytime, anyplace. You, me, your cock, fucking your wife." Her breath was hot against my skin as she whispered her promise.
"Sweet baby Jesus," I moaned. "Can I cash that in now?"

"No, Edward…you have to come through on your promise," she smirked, biting down on my ear. "Then, I'll come through with mine."

"You don't play fair," I pouted.

"Never said I did," Bella smirked, crawling into my lap. Steve was snickering in the driver's seat while I wore a permanent scowl on my face.

Looks like I'm going to Pontiac Correctional Center tomorrow. How long is that drive?

xx STTD xx

The next day, Steve and I woke up early. My scheduled visitation was at ten and the drive to Pontiac was roughly two hours. I was dressed comfortably in a pair of jeans and a sweater. At the suggestion of Oliver, I removed all of my jewelry except my wedding band. That sucker ain't coming off until I'm…oh, wait, never.

"You're awfully antsy, Mr. Edward," Steve said as we passed through Joliet. "Do you need a potty break?"

"Shut it. I just don't want to go," I grumped. "How much longer?"

"Forty-five minutes," he replied, giving me a sympathetic grin. "Have you thought more about getting someone to stay with you when you leave the house? Another bodyguard?"

"Nope. I don't want one," I said coldly. "Henry rubbed me the wrong way and it'll be a long time before I want someone with me. I get that he needed to be with his family, but he wasn't there when I saw the correlations between Jacob and our lives. Yes, it was harsh. But, I'm perfectly capable of taking care of myself."

"With all due respect, sir, I think you need someone," Steve said plainly. "My father contacted Johnny and he's willing to come back to Chicago since you've worked with him before. All I have to do is make the call."

"Where will he stay? What about his family?" I asked snidely. God, I sound like teenager. "Johnny is divorced and needs to get out of his hometown. Ricky mentioned something about Johnny used to be involved with your assistant, Eric? Maybe it's a way for him to rekindle the fire," Steve snickered.

"I'll make arrangements for Johnny," I sighed resignedly.

"Excellent decision, sir," Steve smirked. He had on a smug grin and I wanted to punch it right off of his face. I sulked the rest of the way to the Pontiac Correctional Facility. When we arrived at the correctional facility, Steve and I walked inside. The officer explained expectations for the meeting. Steve was going to wait in the reception area while I went inside. Before I was ushered into the small room, I was strip searched.

Talk about embarrassing. Maneuvering my balls to ensure I didn't have a shiv stuffed in my boxer shorts.

Once I was thoroughly demeaned, I was led to a private room and sat down on an uncomfortable table, idly twisting my wedding band. A series of buzzing sounds alerted me to someone coming.
Two officers were walking a gray-haired, hunched over man with an additional two officers behind him. The door opened and the officers jerked the man inside. He looked up at me. His hazel eyes were dull, tired and broken. His face was covered with a bushy gray beard. His once tall stature was bent over. He also walked with a limp. "Okay, Cullen. You've got an hour. Keep your hands and feet to yourself or you'll spend your last few weeks on earth in solitary."

"Yes, sir," Emmett said quietly, sitting down on the table. His cuffed hands were tethered to a latch on the table.

"If there's anything, Mr. Cullen, just hit the panic button. It's located on your right side," one of the officers said to me.

"Thanks," I answered and watched them leave, giving Emmett parting scowls. Emmett sat at the table, not making eye contact with me. He shifted nervously and it looked like he was crying. We sat there for a few minutes before I cleared my throat, hoping it would get him to talk. I certainly didn't have anything to say.

"You look good, Edward," he said, wiping his face.

"Wish I could say the same," I replied coldly.

"How is everything?" he asked, looking up at me. This man wasn't my brother, my tormentor. This man was broken and shamed.

"Good. Whitlock is making billions; I'm still married to my dream girl and I've got four beautiful children," I answered.

"Four? Wow," he breathed. "How old are they?"

"Kyra is seventeen, Owen just turned sixteen and the twins, Mia and Masen are thirteen," I replied.

"Teenagers. I can't believe my little brother is a father to four teenagers," he muttered his breath.

"Emmett, we may be related but I'm not your brother," I snapped. "My brothers are Demetri Volturi, Alec Volturi and Jasper Whitlock. Not. You."

"You're right," Emmett sniffled. "Look, I won't keep you long. I know that you don't want to be here. I just wanted to let you know a few things before I'm executed. First off, I want to apologize for how I acted when we were growing up. You were my brother and instead of protecting you like I should have, I made your life worse. That didn't stop as we got older, either. I preyed on your weakness and made your adult life hell as well. I'm sorry for doing that to you. You're an amazing man and deserved happiness. I'm so happy that you found it with your wife, Bella."

"Is that all?"

"No," Emmett sighed. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a picture. It was from one of the early Foundation openings. Bella and I were standing, arms around each other, looking very much in love. "This foundation you created is amazing. One of the nice guards actually went to the location in Joliet. He told me how you came every so often and taught him how to play the piano. His own father was a douche but you, in some small way, stepped in and made him feel good. He asked if I had some hand in it but I didn't. Obviously. However, he said that you were an amazing influence on his life. When I heard that, I was so proud of you, Edward. You made a difference and I wish I could have helped you. Not driven by this need to be better than you. Fuck, if we had worked together…" He sniffled, putting the picture back in his pocket.
I waited for him to finish. Nothing he was saying was getting to me. I know he was trying to atone for his sins, but it was too little too late.

"One more thing," Emmett said. "One more thing and then you can go. I realize that this is nearly fifty years too late, but I love you, Edward. I only wish I could have been the man that you became."

"You finished?" I asked.

"Yeah," he muttered, toying with the chains locking him to the table.

"Your words, while beautiful, mean nothing to me. You were an amazing attorney and you knew how to spin your words to make the jury believe you. I don't know if what you said to me is the truth or an example of your elocution. If they were authentic, then I could possibly forgive you. If they were fake, then, I don't know. The sad thing is that I am not sure of what your intentions are."

"Edward, this is me trying to be genuine," he said, running his hands through his hair.

"I appreciate what you tried to do, but like you said, it was nearly fifty years too late. I do not know if you're lying, telling the truth, or putting on a hell of an act. I'll pray for you, Emmett. I hope you find peace." I buzzed the panic button. A guard arrived and opened the door. Without looking back, I left my 'brother' sobbing in the room. After turning over my visitor's badge, I walked out to where Steve was waiting for me.

"I called Johnny," he said.

"Steve, I don't want to talk about that. I'm tired, emotionally drained. Can we just go home?" I asked wearily.

"Of course," he frowned. The drive back to Wheaton was a solemn one. I was replaying the conversation that my brother had with me. He seemed genuine but I couldn't tell if he meant it or not. That bothered me more than anything. The fact that I couldn't believe what my brother, my flesh and blood, had said irked me to no end. I'd have to think about this for a while before I could accept his apology or just let him die without my forgiveness.

But, his time on earth was dwindling.

I had until January 16th to either accept my brother's apology or…

I don't know what to do.

"You look troubled, Mr. Edward," Steve said quietly, breaking the silence in the car.

"That's because I am, Steve," I responded. "I don't know how to interpret this visit with my brother."

"Maybe I can help," he suggested, shrugging slightly. "I know I'm young but getting another perspective may be what you need." All throughout the car ride home, I told Steve all about my relationship with my brother, ending with the meeting that happened not more than an hour ago. He blew out a low whistle. "I can see why you're struggling, Mr. Edward."

"I'm between a rock and a hard place. Yes, I gave him the kiss off in the prison, but will I regret it later when he dies at the hands of the state?"

"I think that right now, you're too emotional 'raw' to think clearly. You still have time to think about your decision. Just because you told him to fuck off," he said. "Sorry but it's what you did, sir."
"Don't apologize. I did tell him to fuck off," I snorted.

"Anyhow, just because you told him to fuck off doesn't mean that you can't go back at a later date to accept his apology or stick with your decision, you know?" Steve said, shooting me a look. "Also, talk to Miss Bella about this. She was with you when all of this happened, right?"

"The big stuff, yeah."

"She can help you more than anyone. I think that Miss Kyra and Thomas are going out tonight with Mr. Owen and Tasha. Oliver will be with them. Mia and Masen are spending the night with Miss Alice and Mr. Jasper. Miss Gianna is having a slumber party with some friends."

"A coed slumber party?" I asked.

"Six people total...three boys and three girls," Steve snickered. "Relax, Mr. Edward. Nothing will be happening like that. Just some fun and relaxation." He laughed, patting my knee. "You and Miss Bella will have the house to yourselves. Use the time wisely."

I quirked a brow at him. He just grinned at me, speeding along I-55 toward I-355 to drive us home. I thought about what Steve said about my brother. Despite his youth, he really was wise beyond his years. I would talk to Bella about Emmett's words and my concern about believing them.

Back at home, all of the kids were getting ready for their various pursuits on their first evening of winter break. Kyra was curling her hair and stressing about the double date that she was going on with Thomas and her brother. Owen was frantically searching for a Christmas present for Tasha since they decided to become an official item. Mia and Masen were packing overnight bags for the slumber party. I still wasn't thrilled about the idea of a coed sleepover but as long as Bella supported it, so did I.

Begrudgingly.

By five, all of our children were gone, doing their own things. Steve was in the apartment, giving Bella and me some privacy. She wandered into the kitchen where I was tinkering on my tablet. Her arms wrapped around my waist, pressing her cheek between my shoulder blades. "How are you?"

"Confused," I answered, turning around and holding her to my body. "Emotionally wrecked. Pissed off."

"In a way, I'm glad everyone is gone," Bella muttered against my chest. "I love my babies but it's so hard being strong for them when all you want to do is scream."

"Tell me about it," I sighed, kissing her hair. "Is that why you agreed to the coed sleepover?"

"Yep. Normally, I'd laugh in Alice's face but we needed time to talk, Edward," she whispered. "With what Charlie told me on the phone while you were gone, your breakdown yesterday, meeting with Emmett today and everything that's been piling up, we need time for us. We need to devise a plan of attack."

"I agree," I murmured, inhaling her warm, sweet scent. "Want me to make dinner?"

"Actually, I was thinking about ordering a large, greasy pizza with all of the trimmings," she giggled. "Pizza? Really?" I asked, eager to eat food with flavor and not cardboard.

"I think after the past few days, you're entitled to some good grease," Bella smiled, picking up the
landline and dialing our favorite pizza joint. An hour later, we were in front of the fireplace, eating our pizza and drinking some red wine.

"Best. Idea. Ever," I said as I played with Bella's hair. She was laying with her head in my lap. "Thank you, gorgeous."

"You're welcome," she murmured, taking my hand and kissing my palm. "Are you okay? I mean, really okay?"

"I'm terrified about this thing with Jacob. I'm befuddled about Emmett. I'm feeling guilty about everything else," I said. I leaned down on my side, still keeping Bella's head in my lap.

"Now, the thing with Jacob, I get that. I'm scared, too," she cringed. She looked up at me. "Charlie showed me all of the connections. What if...?"

"No, what ifs. We're together. Forever. Jacob, the mongoloid, is not going to ruin our happily ever after," I said. "There's a reason why we have all of this protection, Bella."

"I know, but something in my gut tells me that all of this will mean nothing in the long run," she said shakily.

"Over my rotting corpse," I growled. "Jacob will not get to you. He can't." My hand clenched and I wanted to find Jacob, the asshat, dogman and beat him to a bloody pulp.

"Breathe, baby," Bella chided as she pushed me onto my back. She straddled my waist, putting a pillow under my head. "He's not going to get me."

"We don't know that and I hate that we don't," I frowned, lacing my fingers with hers.

"I know, Edward," she muttered, kissing both of my hands. "Let's move onto something that we can possibly solve tonight because the Jacob issue isn't going away until he's arrested, killed or God forbid something happens." She leaned down, her hair flowing all around us. "I love you, angel."

"I love you more, gorgeous," I whispered. She leaned down and kissed my lips softly. All too quickly, she sat back up. "Come back."

"I will. After we discuss Emmett," she smirked. "What did he say?"

"What didn't he say," I grumbled. "He said a lot of pretty things to try and make amends, but I don't know if the words he said were genuine or bull shit."

"Edward, let's be honest. The man is going to die in less than a month. Why would he be disingenuous now? He's looking death in the face and he's terrified," Bella said sagely.

"Bella, he said that he loved me and that he was proud of me. Those were words that I'd never, ever expect my brother to ever say to me. Why now? Why after a lifetime of torment would he choose now to say that he finally loved me and that he was proud of me? I don't believe it," I said incredulously.

"I can't answer that. Only Emmett can. Maybe he always loved you but squashed it. Perhaps his love and respect for you came after he was convicted and he realized that everything you have is what he'll never acquire. I don't know, Edward. Those are questions for Emmett. But, I think that if you don't accept his love and his apology that you'll hate yourself for not forgiving him. Edward, you are the best man I've ever known. Your heart is so big and loving, always growing to accommodate more. It's not your style to let this dangle." She leaned forward and cupped my slightly scruffy cheek.
"I think you need to talk to him again." Her thumb caressed the apple of my cheek. Her lips were barely touching mine.

"I think I need to forget all of this drama," I breathed, pulling her lower lip between mine. "Let me love you, Bella."

"Here? In the family room?"

"No one's home. Steve's hiding in the apartment," I murmured, slipping my hand under her sweater. "Please, Bella. I need you. I needed you last night. I need you now. I need you forever. Please?"

She moaned, covering her mouth with mine. Her tongue slid between my lips and tangled with mine. My hands moved up and down the smooth skin of her back. She thrust her hands into my hair, tugging on the strands with her fingers. With each pass of my hands, her sweater inched up. I pushed it over her breasts, cupping her perfect mounds with my hands. She rocked against my growing arousal. "Fuck, Edward," she panted.

"Yes, let's fuck Edward," I growled against her mouth.

She pulled back and removed her sweater, revealing her sexy black bra. "I don't want to fuck Edward. I want to love Edward," she said as she ran her finger over my lips. "We need this, Edward. Granted, the locale leaves me a bit panicky but I have to have you."

I rolled us so I was hovering over my beautiful wife. Her hair was splayed on the beige carpeting. "I love you, Bella," I whispered.

“So, love me,” she smiled, pulling me down to her writhing body. Our lips colliding against each other as her legs wrapped around my hips. My hands were moving eagerly over her porcelain skin. Tenderly, I reached her breast, pinching her erect nipple with my fingers. My lips moved down her neck as I pulled down the cup of her bra. I moved down her body, leaving a trail of open mouthed kisses along her skin. My lips wrapped around her nipple, suckling and nipping at her dusty rose flesh. Her back arched, pressing her breast further into my mouth. My other hand was massaging her other breast. Bella reached behind her and unclasped her bra. I pulled it away, kissing to her other breast. "Edward, off. Shirt off, now."

I sat up, removing my sweater and moving back to cover her half naked body with mine. "So beautiful," I murmured against her lips. "You will always be beautiful to me, Bella. I love you so much."

"I love you, too," she whispered, caressing my back.

"I'm going to love you forever. I'm going to make love to you, Mrs. Cullen," I said as I kissed down her neck, to her breasts. With a low hum, I took her nipple back in my mouth as my hand reached for the button of her jeans. Deftly, I unbuttoned them and slipped my hand inside. I reached the hem of her panties, teasing her lightly with the pads of my fingers. I released her breast with a pop and tugged down her jeans. I handed her a pillow and resumed my teasing.

"God, you're driving me insane," she whimpered.

I smiled, nipping at her ribcage. Tenderly, I ran my hands down the length of her torso, barely making any contact with her skin. She moaned, arching into my touch. I kissed down her belly and nuzzled just above her pussy. She was so wet, soaking through her panties. Slowly, I pulled down her panties and spread her legs. I licked my lips, eager to dig into my girl. I wanted this more than the damn pizza.
"Edward," she begged.

"What, gorgeous?" I asked.

"Please…lick me. Lick my pussy," she pleaded, bucking her hips up at me.

"Since you asked so nicely," I smiled. Turning my gaze back to her glistening folds, I ran my tongue along her slit. Her responding moan was loud, sexy and turned me the fuck on. Her arousal coated my tongue and tasted better than the sweetest ambrosia. My eyes were fixated on her writhing, wriggling form as I assaulted her clit with my lips, kissing her sex like I'd kiss her mouth. Her fingers were pulling and tugging on my hair, keeping my face between her sexy legs. I'd happily stay there for the rest of my days, feasting on my wife. She tasted so damn good, sweet, earthy and pure Bella.

I kissed up her body and stared at her. My hand was massaging her clit. "Do you know how good you taste, Bella?"

"I do," she purred, pulling me down to kiss me hard on the lips. She eagerly lapped up her essence on my mouth as I slid two fingers into her tight, needy pussy. "I want your cock, Edward."

"I want to taste you as you come on my lips, Bella," I growled back. "You'll get my cock." With another hard kiss to her mouth, I shimmied down to between her legs. My tongue flicked her clit as my fingers curled up inside of her pussy. Her responding groans were loud and her hips moved with my fingers.

"Fuck," she spat as she bucked up against my hand. "I need more, Edward."

"Hmmm," I responded as I removed my fingers from her pussy. They were soaked with her arousal. Easily, I slid my middle finger into her ass and moved my tongue to her pussy. My other hand was circling over her clit. Her arousal was pouring out of her body as she moaned and pleaded for more. I added another finger to her ass and she let out a yelp of pleasure. I could feel her muscles quiver around my tongue. I did my own share of moaning as I felt her get closer and closer to exploding on my tongue.

"Edward," she breathed. "I'm…so…damn…gonna…EDWARD!" She screamed and threw her head back as her release coated my face. Her body was twitching as I eased my fingers into her pussy, feeling her pulsing walls around them. I kept my hands on her pussy until she returned to earth, panting heavily. Her pale skin was covered in a light sheen of sweat, glistening in the flickering light of our fireplace. Her hands languidly glided up and down her belly. "It never gets old with you, SGD."

"Nor with you, my beautiful wife," I smirked as I lay on my side next to her.

"Hmmm, you need to get naked so I can make love to you," she purred as she reached for my belt. "I want to feel your rock hard cock in my body, Edward. I want you to make me come with your cock." Her hand slipped inside my jeans and she caressed my arousal. "So ready for me."

"I was ready as soon as I felt your skin, baby." I snickered, pushing my jeans and boxer shorts down my legs. I kicked them off and Bella pushed me onto my back.

"I want to feel all of you, everywhere," she purred as she straddled my legs. She lined up erection with her still dripping folds and she slowly sunk down on me. "God, so good."

"Not good, amazing," I panted as I cupped her breasts with my hands. "Phenomenal. Earth-shattering."
"I will never tire of feeling you like this, Edward," she breathed as she put her hands over mine that were covering her bouncing breasts. "I love the way you fill me up. Baby, I, um…fuck." She leaned back and slithered her body over me. Her body undulated so sexily. Half of her face was lit by the fireplace. The love twinkling in her eyes was a sight to see. She grabbed one of my hands, sliding my fingers in her mouth. "Hmmmm, so good."

"Jesus, Bella," I panted as I watched her suck my finger that was buried in her pussy.

"Harder, Edward," she demanded, staring at me. "I want to feel you so deep inside of me, baby."

I thrust deeper and harder inside of my wife. Her body quaked over me. "So fucking tight and shit, you're so wet, Bella."

"Only for you, Edward," she murmured, leaning forward, kissing my mouth. "Only you will make me feel this way."

Our kisses became frantic as I pounded into her. Bella met me, thrust for thrust, taking me as deep as she could. If I had planned this better, I would have made sure that we had some lube so we could truly be intimate. Making love that way was something that we only did when we really wanted to connect. However, the animalistic way we were making love was pretty damn close. "Bella, I'm…FUCK!...I'm so…close…come again," I begged.

"Hmmmm, yes," she whimpered. "Tell when, Edward. Tell me when to come."

"Fuck! Come. Come now, Bella," I roared as my orgasm washed over me, spilling inside of my wife. She yelled, digging her nails into my sweaty skin. I kept thrusting in and out of her until my body slipped from hers. She moved her body slightly and our combined releases oozed out of her pussy and onto my belly. She hummed happily and cuddled against my chest, idly tracing her fingers over my tattoo on my side. "I needed that."

"Me too," she said, kissing my chest. "I love our children but they do put a damper on where and when we can make love. When was the last time we did something like this?"

"Last anniversary?" I replied, cupping her ass.

"Too long," she giggled, inhaling my neck. "Hmmmm, you smell good. Like your cologne, sweat and sex. It's a heady fragrance, Edward."

I nuzzled her hair. "You smell like strawberries, cream, pizza and me. That's a wonderful combo," I snorted. I kissed gently behind her ear. "I really do love you, Bella. I can't imagine my life without you. You're my best friend, my wife, my lover…everything important in my life comes back to you, gorgeous."

She let out a quiet sob, wrapping her arms around my neck. "You're everything to me, too, Edward. It pains to me to think that something is going to happen…"

"I vow to you that it won't," I said quietly, holding her to my body. We stayed that way until she started shivering. I chuckled. "As much as I love having you naked in my arms, we probably should get dressed. We don't want our children to walk in our naked asses."

"It could work to our advantage. Prevent the kids from having sex," she giggled.

"Bella, as tempting as that sounds, I do not want my baby girl or oldest boy seeing my package. Nor do I want Thomas or Tasha seeing your goodies, either," I deadpanned.
"Fine," she pouted. She got up, swiping her clothes. With a wink, she sauntered through the house. "We probably should shower. Race you?" She giggled and ran away. Growling, I followed her, picking her up along the way. Even for just this moment, our lives seemed normal. Happy. Loving. Complete.

It was all I could ask for. And I'd fight to keep that way until my dying breath.

Jacob nor my brother were going to take it from me.

A/N: A bit of drama…Sorry about that. While there is going to be humor in this final chapter of SGD and Nerdella, there will also be some slight angst. I'll post warnings in the beginning author's notes. Anyhow, not a lot of pictures with this one. Just a picture of Pontiac Correctional Facility…You can find those pictures on my blog (link in my profile). Also, find me on Facebook: Tufano79's Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation or on Twitter: tufano79.

Oh, also, I know that Illinois, as of 2012 or something, no longer has the death penalty. (I found this out when I was researching which facility to house Emmett in), this is a work of fiction. In my fictional, SGD-world, Illinois still has the death penalty. So, yeah.

Just saying…

Up next will be Christmas, anniversary (I promise this time), New Year's Eve and some girly bonding time with Alice, Rosalie, Kyra, Ava and Esme. Leave me some lovin!
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Up next will be Christmas, anniversary (I promise this time and you can probably go without saying that there will be lemons XD), New Year’s Eve and some girly bonding time with Alice, Rosalie, Kyra, Ava and Esme.

Chapter Nine: A Christmas Anniversary to Remember

BPOV

“Can’t we just finish wrapping the Foundation presents with gift bags?” Owen grumbled. “I’ve got so many paper cuts.”

“We don’t have any more bags, Owen,” Masen replied, trying to make a too small piece of wrapping paper fit on a present. “Plus, we’re running out of paper, too. When will Kyra, Mia and Dad be back with more paper?”

“Your dad just texted me and they’re on the way back from Target,” I said, putting a bow on a girl’s present. “We have to finish these for the party at the Foundation in Schaumburg tomorrow. We’ve got roughly fifty presents to go.” My boys groaned. “Oh, hush. The kids at the Foundation don’t have all you have, buckos.”

“We know,” Masen said as he managed to make his present work, putting a frilly bow on top. “It’s just the process of wrapping them. Now we know why Dad always puts your presents into gift bags.”

“Dad’s a smart man, Mase,” Owen snickered.

“Mensa material,” Masen smirked.

“You two should follow his lead. It’ll get both of you good girls,” I said. “Your father got me with his sweet, geeky ways.”

“Dad is not a geek,” Owen scoffed.

“Owen, he does have his geeky moments but it’s what makes Dad, Dad,” Masen smiled, grabbing a smaller gift and tackling it with the wrapping paper in front of him. “We all have our geeky moments, right Mom?”

“You’re right, Mase,” I said, kissing his chocolate curls. “I live for my romance novels and get lost in reading. Your father is all about computers and technology. Not to mention music, too. Though,
that’s a geeky element for me as well.”

“Wait a minute. You and music?” Owen asked, his brows shooting to his hairline.

“Yeah. I can play the piano and sing. I’ve dabbled with a guitar but not too much,” I said, looking at Owen. “Didn’t you know that?”

“No!” they both laughed.

“I’m assuming you want to hear proof?”

“Yes,” they smirked, dragging me away from the table and into the music room. I sat down at the piano and began playing ‘Breath of Heaven,’ by Amy Grant. I was not as talented as Edward but I was proud of what I was able to do. Now, we are not overly religiously people but the music and melody of the song was beautiful. My boys were enraptured with my singing and I struggled to get to the end of the song. I faltered and Edward’s hands took over, giving such a beautiful smile as I finished singing the song with his accompanying me.

“Wow, Mom,” Masen smiled. “You’re, like, really good.”

I blushed and gave my youngest son a timid smile. “Thank you, Masen. I minored in music in college but never really did much with it. It’s more for fun and relaxation.” Edward’s lips found my ear and he murmured his love for me. I snuggled against his body.

“Do you know that song, Daddy? With the cold? It’s a duet?” Mia asked, bouncing on her toes. Kyra rolled her eyes but grinned at her sister’s enthusiasm.

“When did you guys get back?” I asked.

“Right after you started playing,” Edward answered, kissing my cheek, his lips lingering on my skin. He inhaled deeply and low, rumbling growl emanated from him. I elbowed him, giving him a sexy smirk. He palmed my ass. My husband is frisky today. Damn.

“Mom, you’re really good,” Owen said, his eyes dreamy and his smile genuine.


“Yes ma’am,” he smiled and began moving his hand easily over the keyboard, playing some smooth jazzy chords. I swayed on the piano bench as Edward accompanied us. The kids sat down and we had our Norman Rockwell moment. It was sweet, amazing and so romantic.

I really can't stay - But baby it's cold outside
I've got to go away - But baby it's cold outside
This evening has been - Been hoping that you'd drop in
So very nice - I'll hold your hands, they're just like ice
My mother will start to worry - Beautiful, what's your hurry?
My father will be pacing the floor - Listen to the fireplace roar
So really I'd better scurry - Beautiful, please don't hurry
Well maybe just a half a drink more - Put some records on while I pour

The neighbors might think - Baby, it's bad out there
Say, what's in this drink? - No cabs to be had out there
I wish I knew how - Your eyes are like starlight
To break the spell - I'll take your hat, your hair looks swell  
I ought to say no, no, no, sir - Mind if I move in closer?  
At least I'm gonna say that I tried - What's the sense in hurting my pride?  
I really can't stay - Baby don't hold out  
Oh, but it's cold outside

I simply must go - But, baby, it's cold outside.  
The answer is no - But, baby, it's cold outside.  
This welcome has been - How lucky that you dropped in.  
So nice and warm - Look out the window at that storm.  
My sister will be suspicious - Gosh, your lips look delicious.  
My brother will be there at the door - Waves upon a tropical storm.  
My maiden aunt's mind is vicious - Oh, your lips are delicious.  
Maybe just a cigarette more - Never such a blizzard before.

I've got to go home - But, baby, you'll freeze out there  
Say, lend me your coat - It's up to your knees out there  
You've really been grand - I'm thrilled when you touch my hand  
But don't you see - How can you do this thing to me?  
There's bound to be talk tomorrow - Think of my life long sorrow  
At least there will be plenty implied - If you caught pneumonia and died  
I really can't stay - Get over that hold out  
Ohhh, baby it's cold outside

“All together now,” Kyra giggled. She waved her arms and our children let out a collective ‘awwww.’

“You asked,” Edward snickered, kissing my hair. “As fun as this was, we’ve got a ton of presents to wrap for the Schaumburg Foundation Christmas party tomorrow. Can you guys handle that while I help your mom in the kitchen?”

Our children nodded and went back to the kitchen table while Edward and I stayed on the piano bench. “That was fun,” I smiled, looking at my sexy but dorky hubby. His hair was artfully disheveled and his eyes were sparkling happily. “How was Target?”

“Interesting. We bought the last of the remaining Christmas paper. It was cheap and kind of cool looking. I figured we’d need it for next year since we’ve kind of adopted this ‘tour’ of Foundation Christmas parties the past few years,” he smiled, leaning forward to press a slightly chilled kiss to my lips. “Hmmm, you’re warm. Another one.”

“You’re cold,” I giggled, threading my fingers into his hair. “Did you press your nose against the car window or something?”

“Nope. Just cold,” he said, kissing down to my earlobe. “I love you so much, Bella.”

“I love you, too,” I breathed. His hands began wandering and I quickly hopped up. “Behave, Edward Anthony Masen Cullen. Our children are in the kitchen and I know that you are horny.”

“I’m a guy. I’m always horny,” he smirked adorably.

“Edward,” I sighed. “Come on, let’s go bake some cookies for this shindig. How many do we need to bring?”
"As many as you are willing bake," he replied, hopping up from the piano bench. "What do you have the ingredients for?"

"I think we have the ingredients for spice cookies, butter cookies, and Oreo balls. But, we'll make the kids put those together. Crushed Oreos and cream cheese, makes a mess of my hands and we have to get my ring cleaned." I made a face and he smiled, kissing my temple. We walked to the kitchen and began working to pull out the ingredients for the cookies. By the time the kids were done with the gifts, Edward and I had finished assembling the butter cookies. I had one cookie sheet in the oven and three more on standby.

The kids worked on making the Oreo balls, though Owen and Masen ate half of the one package of cookies. We had to send Johnny, who was reading a book in the guest room, to get more packages. By dinner time, we had eaten more cookies than anyone should care to admit and done in the kitchen. The cookies were boxed in several Tupperware containers, stacked in the laundry room for the party tomorrow. The gifts were loaded into the car already and all we needed to do was go to the Foundation in Schaumburg for some holiday fun.

For dinner, we decided to take a ride to a small diner in Winfield. I honestly didn’t feel like cooking and I wanted to make sure that the kids ate something somewhat healthy since they gorged themselves on Christmas cookies. Plus, I was trying, unsuccessfully, to keep my husband honest with his diet, too. However, he had had it with the ‘rabbit food.’ He met with his physician and had a repeat blood test for his cholesterol. His diet had helped tremendously but the no-flavor diet was not his cup of tea. He was put on a low dose cholesterol medication and he was able to eat more ‘normal’ food. Or as he would say, “Shit with flavor. White food is crap.”

I didn’t blame him, really. Cooking the white food was crap, too. You can doctor poached chicken as much as you can, but it’s still poached chicken. Ever since he was put on the cholesterol medication, our meals were much more civilized and Edward didn’t want to throw his poached chicken at my head.

xx STTD xx

The next day was a flurry of activity. We were all going to the Schaumburg Cullen Foundation building. And when I say we, I mean the entire Cullen family. Even our adoptive family, as well. We had our family of six, plus two bodyguards, Steve and Johnny. We had Alice, Jasper, Gianna and Adam meeting us at the building. Marcus and Esme were already at the building, putting up decorations with Alex, Demetri and Justin. Finally, Rose, Tim, Ava and Lucas were going to come later in the afternoon. Can you say mass chaos? Trying to organize all of these people, coordinate with the volunteers in charge of the party and not go batshit crazy? I think I gained a few more gray hairs on my head.

"Mom, can I borrow that red agate necklace?" Kyra asked. She was dressed in a green sweater and a black, knee-length skirt with black tights and a pair of black booties. “I’ve got some earrings but the necklace would be really pretty.”

"Sure, baby. It’s in my jewelry box," I said as I put in my Belle earrings that Edward got me just because in California. However, they were my favorite earrings to wear because they were small enough to wear everyday but fancy enough to wear with a dress, like I was wearing for this party. It was a red, crepe dress with pleats and a slight a-line skirt. It fit my body, skimming over my saucy lingerie underneath. I knew I probably wasn’t going to get any but I still liked to look sexy for my husband.

"Have you heard anything more about that guy, Mom?" Kyra asked, clipping the necklace around her neck.
“Nope,” I said, smoothing on some lotion. “I seriously hope he fell off the face of the planet.”

“Do you think he’ll be at the party today?” Kyra pressed, leaning against the dresser.

“I doubt it,” I replied. “There may be fallout afterward. The press is going to be there. Make sure you that you don’t get your picture taken, Kyra. I don’t want Jacob to know what you look like. Let your brothers and sister know to avoid the cameras. I don’t want him to hurt you or your siblings. You hear me?”

“I hear you,” she said.

“Good,” I sighed, spraying on my perfume. “Nothing can happen to you guys. I don’t know…”

“Mom, we’re closely protected. Nothing will happen,” she whispered, hugging my neck. I sighed, nodding slowly. “When we get back, Thomas invited me to go to this pre-Christmas party at his parents’ house. With everything that’s happened, I forgot to ask. Can I go?”

“Yeah, you can go, but one of the bodyguards will need to drop you off and pick you up. It’s not that I don’t trust Thomas. I don’t trust Jacob,” I frowned. Kyra nodded and kissed my cheek, leaving my bedroom. Edward came out of the shower, wearing nothing but a towel. Rolling my eyes, I closed the door. “Do you forget that we have four teenagers in our house? Four. They do not want to see your ass.”

“I don’t want them to see my ass, but it was hot in there, gorgeous,” he pouted.

“Jackass,” I snickered. “What are you wearing?”

“Right now? I’m working a white Nautica terry cloth bath sheet with my Tiffany key pendant and platinum wedding band,” he quipped, cocking his hip and looking like what he believed to be a super model. I raised a brow, smiling amusedly. “Okay, okay…I’m wearing my black suit with a tie to coordinate with your dress, my sexy wife,” he said, kissing my neck.

“Ooooh, I love you in a suit,” I purred, giving him a seductive smile.

“Behave, Mrs. Cullen,” Edward snorted. “We have to be up in Schaumburg in an hour and a half. I’m still wearing a towel, not to mention an erection. I don’t want my kids seeing the monster, if you know what I mean.”

“Later?” I asked, biting my lip.

“You and me, we have a date with each other on Christmas Eve. The only thing we need is a handful of candles, you, me, a blindfold, some whipped cream and a bottle of lube. Until then, we’re on lovemaking lockdown. But, come Christmas day, you’ll be so thoroughly blissed out from all of the loving I’m going to give you; that you’ll feel it for days. Weeks even. Who do you belong to, Bella?”

“I’m yours,” I said, sliding my hands up Edward’s muscular torso. “Who do you belong to, Edward?”

“I’m unequivocally yours, gorgeous,” he crooned, pressing his lips to mine in a hungry kiss. My hands shot up to his hair and I moaned. I was pressed against the wall and Edward slid his thigh between my legs. His mouth languidly teased mine as his hands roamed freely over my body. “God, you’re so sexy, Bella. I can’t wait until tomorrow night. There will be no flat surface that we’ll have left unchristened.”
“Mom! Can I borrow your black, flat boots?” Mia called through the door.

“Shit,” I spat. “Just give us a second, Mia.” Hearing my youngest daughter’s voice was like a bucket of ice-cold water. Edward sighed, slinking into the closet to put on his suit. I was just trying to catch my breath from that kiss. Blowing out a harsh breath, I picked up the boots that my daughter wanted and opened the door. “Here, sweetie. You can keep them.”

“Thanks, Mom,” she replied, hugging me. She skipped back to her room, her long brown hair swaying down the middle of her back. She truly was my mini-me, with Edward’s smarts and his nose, really. All of my kids were a perfect blend of Edward and me. Kyra had Edward’s coloring, especially his eyes, but my hair with a touch of red mixed in. She was a few inches taller than me but had a body similar to Alice’s. Kyra was smart but she had to work at it, like me. She loved reading, English and foreign languages. She hated all things mathematical and science-related.

Owen was Edward, plain and simple. My oldest son was tall and lanky, built a lot like Edward. Owen was just a few centimeters shorter that my husband but I could see Edward in Owen. They had the same nose, same jaw, same eye shape, but Owen’s eyes were hazel, almost brown. Where Kyra was smart, Owen was brilliant. He was a sophomore taking senior-level classes. We’d already spoken with administration and arranged for some sort of accommodations for his junior and senior year. He’d be at a local college for math, science and English, but at the high school in the afternoon for music, PE and any other elective he decided to take.

Mia, as I said before, was my mini-me. She was petite like me with long brown hair. Her eyes were wide and brown with pale skin and that tell-tale blush. Unlike me, she’s athletic and coordinated. So is Kyra, to an extent. If it’s choreographed, Kyra is quite graceful. However, walking was always a challenge for Kyra. Just like me. Mia was bright, focused and an absolute genius in art. She actually painted some of the artwork in our family room. It was abstract, colorful and just plain beautiful.

Masen was the youngest of my brood. He was a sweet boy with a big heart. He actually took in a dog when he was in third grade, unbeknownst to us, and gave himself fleas because of the dog. He loved Wrigley with everything that he was. He still loves Wrigley, but we lost the dog a little over a year ago. Out of my four children, Masen was probably the least smart. He tried the hardest out of all them, but his grades were due in part to his constant studying and working on homework. Like Edward, he was as blind as a bat but wore contact lenses. He wanted to use his baby blues to his full advantage. His hair was short, dark and curly. Edward told me that he looked like Emmett as a child, but with a warm, loving heart. Masen was talented musically, but his talent was with his singing and piano playing.

“Gorgeous,” Edward said, getting my attention. “You’re spacing out, baby.”

“Sorry, just thinking,” I replied, looking at my sexy hubby. He wore a tailored black suit with a red tie that matched my dress.

“About what?” he asked, tracing a single finger down my face.

“Our children. How lucky we are,” I said, snuggling into his arms. “How much I love you.”

“We’ve got a wonderful life, Bella,’ he whispered, cupping my cheek. “Yes, we’ve had our drama. Honestly, more than our fair share, but I wouldn’t trade any of it for what I had before I met you. I love you, Bella. That will never change.”

“As I love you,” I smiled, kissing his lips sweetly.

“We’ve got to get going, gorgeous,” he said, leaning his forehead against mine. I nodded and hugged
him tightly before turning to go down the stairs. “Bella, aren’t you forgetting something?”

“What?” I asked.

“Shoes, baby,” he snickered. I looked down and saw my bare feet with my fresh pedicure with little Christmas trees on my big toes. He walked into the bedroom, picking up the deep maroon pumps I chose for the dress and handed them to me.

“I hate wearing heels,” I grumbled, taking the shoes from him.

“You could wear flats,” he suggested.

“And look like a midget compared to you? No, thanks. Gigantor,” I giggled, slipping my heels on.

“I’m not the only thing that’s big,” he said, waggling his brows goofily. I smacked his belly and walked downstairs. The kids had loaded up the Range Rover with the cookies and checked that all of the presents were inside. Johnny was driving Edward, me, Mia and Owen. Steve was taking Edward’s Volvo and driving Kyra and Masen since we couldn’t fit all in one car.

A forty-five minute drive later, we arrived at the building for the Schaumburg location of the Cullen Children’s Foundation. The sign was decorated with twinkling lights and snowflakes. With the help of Demetri, Alex and Marcus, Esme’s husband, the cookies and presents were brought inside. Justin helped me out of the car since Edward got pulled aside by some reporters. Carefully, on the arm of my nephew, I teetered into the building. “Thank you, Justin. Your dads have taught you well,” I giggled.

“It was Demetri who always said that you should help a woman in need. Seeing those heels, you definitely qualified,” Justin smirked. He kissed my cheek. “How are you doing, Aunt Bella?”

“I’m hating these shoes that I’m wearing,” I scowled, glowering at my too-high heels. “But, I’m good otherwise. How about you?”

“I’m really good. I want to introduce you to someone special,” he said, his eyes alight with happiness I’d never seen. Inside, there was a tall, statuesque woman with sleek black hair and light caramel colored skin. Her eyes were the brightest blue I’d ever seen and she was absolutely gorgeous. “Aunt Bella, this is my girlfriend, Meghan. Megs, this is my Aunt Bella.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you,” she said in a warm, slightly raspy voice. “I’ve heard nothing but amazing things about you and your family.” She held out her hand and I shook her hand.

“Welcome to the craziness,” I snickered, hugging her politely. “Justin must really like you if he’s subjecting you to this.”

“Originally, he decided he didn’t want me here since it was everyone in his family, but after some convincing, I told him that I wanted to meet his amazing family and that nothing can scare me away,” she said, giving Justin a wink. “I’ve met Alex.”

“He’s a force of nature,” I smiled.

“A hurricane force of nature,” my husband chuckled. “Justin, thank you for helping my beautiful wife out of the car. You look good, son.” He kissed Justin’s cheek.

“Uncle Edward, this is my girlfriend, Meghan,” Justin blushed.

“Nice to meet you, Meghan. I’m Justin’s Uncle Edward, resident nerd extraordinaire,” Edward
“You may be a nerd but you’re my idol,” Meghan said, shaking my husband’s hand eagerly. “I’m a business major and I’ve done research of Whitlock Technologies and its amazing business plan and record number of patents owned by one single company.”

“That is true,” Edward said, a pink flush covering his cheeks.

“Mегs, relax. You’re making my uncle uncomfortable,” Justin said, twining his fingers with hers.

“Sorry, Mr. Cullen,” Meghan said, looking down at her shoes.

“What do you want to do with your business degree, Meghan?” Edward asked.

“I’m only a sophomore, like Justin. I haven’t thought that far ahead,” she responded quietly.

“Well, if you need to do an internship, give me a call,” Edward smiled, giving Meghan a card he kept in his wallet. She beamed, nodding excitedly. Justin looked over-the-moon thrilled that Edward had accepted his girlfriend so easily. “Now, if you’ll excuse us. We have to drop off our coats and get ready to party with the best of them.”

Edward guided us away from Justin and Meghan. We took off our coats and dropped them in the administrator’s office and walked toward the open gym where there was a massive Christmas tree and holiday decorations adorning every surface that wouldn’t move. There was a podium located in the center of the room with a microphone. Edward grumbled that he had to make a speech but the squeals of happy children, their parents and our family were worth it.

“You ready for this, Edward?” I asked, squeezing his fingers.

“No. I hate talking in public,” he grumped. “But it’s a part of the territory.” He looked around the room and so many kids were here. They needed this Foundation. The classes, free counseling, art therapy and music programs were invaluable for these children and their families. “Stand next to me, Bella.”

“Okay, baby,” I said as I twined my fingers with his. Together, we walked to the podium and the crowd automatically quieted down. I stood next to Edward, but away from the podium.

“Good afternoon, everyone,” Edward said smoothly. “And happy holidays. First off, thank you to the volunteers who worked tirelessly to pull together this wonderful holiday gathering for the children and families here in the Schaumburg area. I’ve never seen a tree this big.” People laughed and Edward relaxed, slightly. “Now, you know my philosophy about the Cullen Children’s Foundation. It’s plastered everywhere. This place is a safe haven for children and their families. It’s a place where kids can explore their interests without being ridiculed by their peers. It’s a place for families to meet and discuss problems and issues pertinent to their children. This place is and always will be my dream for kids.

“Anyhow, today is a time for fun, food and presents. There is enough food to feed a small army thanks to the talented cooks and bakers, which include my beautiful wife, Bella and my wonderful mother, Esme Volturi.”

“What about us? We helped,” Kyra snickered.

“Okay, my children helped, too. The Oreo balls, they were made by them,” Edward smiled crookedly. “We have enough presents for each child here. The presents with the pink or red bows are for the girls. The presents with blue or green bows are for the boys. On the tag, there is an age-
range for each present, as well. Take one present at first. If there are any left over, we’ll open it up for ‘seconds.’ Thank you for spending part of your holidays here at the Foundation and we truly appreciate you and wish you and your families a safe and happy holiday. Thank you.”

The crowd applauded, congratulating Edward. He blushed, ducking his head shyly as a small jazz band that was put together from the kids in the Foundation began playing some jazzy carols. Edward took my hand, lacing our fingers together and we wandered among the families. A lot of the parents wanted their picture taken with the famous Edward and Bella Cullen. We happily obliged but after an hour of pictures, my face hurt from smiling so much and I had a permanent floating dot in my vision from the flashes.

Roaming around the room was our friend and resident photographer, Victoria. Her red hair was now artificially colored with some artistic highlights. Her face was framed with some funky glasses but she still wore all black and a knowing smirk. She was taking photos for the Foundation’s website along with photos for the Schaumburg building itself. She sauntered over to us, giving us a hug. “Great speech, Edward,” she said.

“Thanks, Victoria. How are the photos coming?” he asked.

“Some really cute photos. Oh my God, there were these twins that were so adorable when they opened up a pair of matching American Girl dolls,” she said, flipping through her screen on her massive camera. “Cute, yeah?”

“Oh, those curls,” I crooned.

“I know. Perfect ringlets,” she chuckled. “Anyhow, I was wondering if I could get a picture of you and all of the guests in front of the Christmas tree with your family.”

“Will it be published?” Edward asked.

“I’d like to put it on the website,” she replied.

“We’d prefer to not have our children in it, then,” I said. Victoria arched a brow. “We’re dealing with a situation, really. Just prior to meeting Edward when we started dating, I was dating this guy, Jacob. Now, he’s kind of gone off the deep end.”

“You’re so glossing over it,” Edward sighed. “He’s obsessed with my wife. With each new set of publicity photos that we put out for the Foundation, Jacob has attacked, maimed or fucked up some girl. I do not want my children to be on the internet or the news or anywhere that Jacob can see their faces. He could use them to get to my wife. Or he could hurt them. I can’t have that, Vic.”

“Okay, I get it,” she said. “Can I take the pictures with the kids and not publish it until after the situation with this Jacob guy has blown over?”

“That seems fair,” Edward conceded. He bit his lip and looked at me. “Are you doing anything on Christmas, Vic?”

“Nah. My boyfriend is in Australia shooting some movie and I don’t want to drive to Minnesota to visit my parents,” she shrugged. “Why?”

“Perhaps you can come to our house for Christmas and maybe, just maybe take a new family photo?” Edward pleaded, smiling adorably.

“Do I have to bring presents?” Victoria asked, arching a brow.
“God, no,” I said. “We only exchange presents with the kids. The adults…we drink. Heavily.”

“Ooooh, I think I may want to become a permanent fixture at the Cullen Family Christmas,” Victoria quipped. “Where?”

“It’s at my parents’ place in Naperville,” Edward said. He whipped out his phone and sent Victoria a text. “I just texted you the address. All you need to bring is yourself, your fancy camera and a smile.”

“I’ll one up ya. I’ll bring a bottle of single malt scotch, eighteen years old,” she smiled. “It’s as old as your oldest kid.”

“Done!” Edward beamed. “I’ll round up the troops and we’ll take the picture for the Foundation. You can send it to the administrator, stating the can frame it and post it here at the building, but due some legal mumbo jumbo, can’t post it on their website just yet.”

“Got it. I’ll be clear when I send it off to them,” Victoria nodded. “I’m going to set up. If you could get the shorter ones in the front, taller people in the back and you two, along with your family in the middle.”

Edward gathered everyone at the Christmas tree. It was nearly two hundred people. Edward and I were in the middle with Kyra and Masen on Edward’s right and Owen and Mia on my left. The rest of the crew, including Rose, Tim, Ava and Lucas filled in all around us. The photos were done after fifteen minutes, including some goofy silly ones where we made funny faces. The party began fizzling out after the photo. All of the presents were claimed. The cookies were gone and we all were ready to head back to our home to get ready for Christmas Eve and our anniversary.

Though, personally, I was looking forward to the latter.

xx STTD xx

Christmas Eve was always held at our house after Owen’s birth. Part of it was due to Owen being sick that first Christmas he was born. The second part was that we knew we needed time for ourselves on our anniversary. Once the twins were five and old enough to spend the night with Nana and Papa, our anniversary love fest began.

Now, don’t get me wrong, I love my babies. I do. Truly, I do, but it was my love for Edward that made those babies. In order for us to maintain our love, we needed time for us. Early morning sex, rushed blowjobs, and clandestine car sex does not make a healthy sexual relationship. So, we had at least three times after the twins’ fifth birthday each year that we had the house to ourselves: Christmas Eve, Edward’s birthday and my birthday.

Christmas Eve usually happened in the afternoon so that the evening and night could be for Edward and me. After eating Marcus’ traditional fish salad and linguine and clam sauce, the kids opened one present each. The rest of the presents would be opened when we arrived on Christmas Day. After the presents were opened, the kids grabbed their bags and loaded up in Marcus’ SUV. With kisses and hugs, our children left with Esme and Marcus. Even the security detail was leaving for the evening. Steve bitched nonstop, but when his dad said that he was going to be in town with his mom, we all but encouraged him to spend time with his own family.

I turned to my husband once my in-laws had backed out of the driveway. His eyes were lust-filled, with a strong undercurrent of love and devotion. “We better get inside, Mrs. Cullen. I don’t want to ravish you on our front stoop.”

“It’s twenty degrees out,” I giggled, taking my husband’s proffered hand.
“I need you that badly,” he smirked, tugging me into the house. Twilight had descended and the house was empty. The Christmas tree lit up the music room and another in the family room. No kids. No security. Just me and Edward. He closed the door and caged me with his arms. “I love you, Mrs. Cullen.”

“I love you more, Mr. Cullen,” I whispered.

His slightly cold hand cupped my cheek and he stared into my eyes. Slowly, his thumb rubbed across my lips. I whimpered, putting my own hands on his ass. I pulled him closer to me. There was virtually no space between us. We were just staring into each other’s eyes, breathing each other’s breath and relishing the possibilities of our anniversary. “Kiss me, Edward,” I pleaded.

“Once I kiss you, I won’t be able to stop,” he murmured, dragging his fingers over my lips.

“I don’t want you to stop. I need you, angel,” I said, slipping my hands underneath his cashmere sweater. “I’m aching for you.”

He smiled softly before pressing his mouth against mine in the sweetest kiss. His hands moved down to my ass and he picked me up. My legs automatically latched around his waist as he carried us into the music room. The piano was closed and I found myself perched on top of the black lacquered instrument. “Hearing you play, Bella…God, it was so difficult to not take you on the piano, but the kids…”

“Would have been scarred for life,” I giggled, kissing down his neck.

“The kids aren’t here now and I can do what I imagined when I heard you sing,” he purred, slipping his now warm hands underneath my red sweater and pulling it over my head. “Take you on the piano.”

“Oh, yes,” I whimpered. He smiled, leaning forward and kissed me deeply. His mouth was caressing mine with a power and insistence that heady and needy. Gently, he pushed me back and ran his fingers up and down my heated skin. I was writhing with need, desperately wanting his hands on my flesh.

“So, beautiful, Bella,” he said as he traced his fingers along the swell of my breasts. I wore a red lacy push up bra and my boobs looked amazing. “But, I need more, baby.” His sure hands moved to button of my black dress pants. Expertly, he flicked them open and eased them over my hips, leaving me nearly naked on the piano. I was bared on his piano, wearing nothing but my red bra and matching red lacy thong panties. “Very nice, Mrs. Cullen. Did you buy this for me?”

“I picked it out with Rose in California,” I said.

“I love it,” he crooned, kissing torso. “It’s fucking sexy, Bella.” He left open-mouthed kisses all along my belly and just underneath my bra. He looked so good with his mouth on me. His pink lips were leaving a trail of heat and arousal. I wanted him. I wanted him inside of me.

He tugged on my arms and sat me up. Hungrily, he pressed his mouth to mine as his hands found the clasp of my bra. “I want to see my gorgeous wife,” he whispered against my mouth. He removed the bra from my body, tossing it onto the ground. His hands found my breasts, cupping them roughly. His mouth moved down my skin until he reached the pebbled peaks of my nipples. Using the tip of his tongue, he toyed with my nipples, sucking and biting them. I whimpered, arching my back to push more of my tit into his mouth. I skimpy panties were downright drenched with my arousal as Edward teased my breasts.
Tenderly, he guided me back to the piano, handing me a pillow to lay on. I smiled at his thoughtfulness. We weren’t as young and as, um, resilient as we used to be. Hell, I was shocked that he picked me up at the door.

Edward’s mouth was back on my skin and he was kissing my torso. His hands were gliding over my skin. I arched my back wanting more. He smiled up at me and nipped at the sensitive flesh just above my panties. His hands were massaging my thighs, but not removing my panties. I really wanted those panties gone. You know? I wanted to feel him. I wanted his tongue in my pussy. “Stop teasing me so,” I breathed, looking down at him.

“It’s not teasing when you plan to follow through,” he said as he moved his hands closer to the waistband of the panties. He spread my legs and nuzzled my folds through the soaked lacy fabric. “So wet, Bella. Who makes you this wet?” He swiped his tongue along my slit that was covered by the panties. I could feel it and my hips bucked at the feeling.

“You do,” I whimpered. “Fuck, Edward, I need you!”

“What do you want, my needy girl?” he growled, nibbling on the crotch of the panties, but not moving them so I could feel his tongue on my aching core.


“Since you asked so nicely,” he purred, pulling the panties aside and giving my pussy a teasing lick. I moaned, falling back onto the piano. “You’ll get my tongue and fingers down here but upstairs, I’m going to fuck you, Mrs. Cullen.”

“All of me?” I asked, arching my brow.

“Yes, baby,” he said as he tore the panties from my body. I gasped and watched as he eagerly began feasting between my legs. His eyes were staring at me as his tongue slid the entire length of my slit. My legs were thrown on either side of his head and splayed open as far as they would go. I was bared for him. His mouth was on my most intimate place, bringing me untold pleasure. His tongue was flicking my clit and he eased two fingers inside of my pussy. He curled his fingers up and I arched off the piano. He growled, removing his fingers and sliding one into my ass. His tongue moved from my clit and to my entrance. He kissed my sex like he kissed my mouth. His left hand was slowly pumping in and out of my ass while his right thumb was languidly circling my clit. “You taste amazing, Isabella. I love licking your pussy,” he growled.

“I love your tongue in me,” I panted, grinding my sex into his face. “I love tasting myself on your lips after you’ve licked my pussy, Edward. We taste amazing together.”

“That’s why I love doing this after we’ve made love,” he murmured, kissing my inner thigh. “I can taste your pussy and my arousal coming directly from the source. We do taste amazing together.”

“Make me come, Edward,” I begged. “Please, make me fucking come all over your face.”

“You don’t have to ask me twice,” he snarled, devouring the slick flesh between my legs. His tongue was everywhere. His fingers were everywhere. I was moaning loudly, undulating with the same rhythm of his tongue. He had removed his fingers from my ass and slid three inside of my pussy, curling them upward while he flicked my clit with his tongue. That combination always managed to get me off and get me off quickly. Not to mention, explosively. I’d seriously have an out-of-body experience whenever he did that. Edward clasped my hand with his as he kept his mouth on me. I was panting, writhing and begging for release on top of the piano. Based off of the feelings I was experiencing in my belly, in my pussy and my heart, my orgasm was going to be massive. When
Edward growled between my legs, that’s when I started to lose it. My pussy walls began clenching and my breath was coming out in harsh pants.

“Yes! Yes! Yes!” I chanted, having little control over my body. “More!” His hand moved faster and harder inside of me. My fingers twined into his thick hair as I jackknifed off the piano as my orgasm was washing over me with tides of extreme pleasure. Edward kept his mouth on me as screamed in ecstasy. Only when I collapsed on the piano, boneless and sated, did he remove his lips from my clît and slide his fingers out of my body. He kissed back up my torso, grinning boyishly before crashing his mouth against mine. I moaned lowly when I tasted my release on his tongue, relishing our combined flavors. His arms wrapped me up and he picked me up off the piano. I squeaked.

“We’re not done yet, Mrs. Cullen,” he said as he strode out of the music room. He carried me easily up the stairs and into our bedroom. The only light that was on was a small Christmas tree on our dresser. Edward placed me on our bedspread and he covered me with his body. Our mouths were still attached and I was lovingly tasting his skin. Once I felt the bedspread, I pulled up his sweater. He finished removing it and tossed it onto the floor, crawling up onto the bed with me. He fell into the cradle of my thighs; his arousal evident as it strained against the zipper of his corduroy pants. Feeling that, renewed my arousal and I clumsily fumbled with Edward’s belt. I pushed him onto his back and kissed down his muscular, tattooed chest. “Bella, I want to be inside of you when I come, baby.”

“Just let me have one taste,” I winked, unbuttoning his pants and easing them, along with his boxer briefs over his hips. His cock smacked his belly as I removed his clothes. I licked my lips as I stared at Edward’s leaking arousal. “One taste, Edward.” I slowly ran my tongue along the length of his enormous cock. Looking up at him, I swirled my tongue on the sensitive head and he moaned. “Bella, I need to be inside you. Please, let me make love to you,” he pleaded.

“No,” I said simply, crawling up his lithe body. “I want to make love to you.” His eyes twinkled and he smiled crookedly. That smile quickly disappeared and was replaced with a wanton moan as I slid down the length of his glorious cock. Our fingers twined together and I slowly and tauntingly began swiveling my hips. Feeling his body inside of me was nothing I’d ever imagined. When we made love the first time, I was blown away with that feeling of being home. Each time we made love, that feeling rekindled itself, a thousand-fold.

“My beautiful Bella,” Edward whispered in the darkness, watching me slowly ride him. “You are a vision of perfection, gorgeous. Everything about you is…I love you, so much.”

“I love you more,” I murmured, rotating my hips. He moaned and moved his hands to my breasts. His thumbs ran across my nipples as I took him deeply inside of my pussy. His eyes were trained on my breasts in his hands while his jaw was opened slightly. “Do you like touching me, Edward?”

“Your skin is like silk and feeling your body respond to me…it’s pure heaven, my Bella,” he said reverently, sitting up to take one of my breasts into his mouth. I groaned, tangling my hands into his hair. His arms banded around me, guiding my movements on his cock. His mouth was on my breast, nipping and suckling on my nipple. Feeling his mouth on me and his cock pulsing inside of my pussy, I was drenched, coating him easily with my arousal. The sound of our coupling was erotic and juicy. “I can feel your body hugging my cock, my sexy girl. You’re close.”

“Mnmhhmm,” I said, leaning forward to press my head against his. “With you. I want to come with you.”

He smiled wickedly, taking his middle finger and dragging it along my lips. I sucked it inside of my mouth, making it nice and wet. With a pop, his finger was released. As he kissed my lips hungrily,
his finger slid inside of my ass, causing my body to quake. “We’re not done tonight, my Bella,” he panted against my lips. “I do want to fuck you and I want to make love to your pretty little ass.”

“Yes,” I pleaded. “God, I want you inside of me forever.”

“Me, too, baby,” he grunted as his hips began thrusting, pushing him deeper and deeper inside of my pussy. “I want to feel your pussy come, baby. I’m fucking close, Mrs. Cullen. Please, please, please come with my dirty girl.”

“Fuck my ass harder with that finger, Edward,” I demanded, pulling on his hair with a sexy sneer. He growled and he added another finger inside of me. I moaned, feeling my arousal on his legs and between mine. I was losing control. Edward was falling with me, his mouth moving hungrily on my chest, sucking on my breasts and fucking my ass. “Oh, GOD! Edward, I’m gonna come.”

“I know, my gorgeous girl,” he snarled against my skin. “Cover me. Come all over my cock, baby. I want to feel you. Come, Bella. COME NOW!” I screamed, scratching my nails down his back as I slowly came back from the heavens which was my orgasm. I slumped against Edward who fell back onto the pillows. He slipped out of me and he idly scratched up and down my back. “It never gets old, baby.”

“Nope,” I giggled. “My love for you only grows, Edward.”

He smiled, kissing my forehead. “I’m so happy right now, gorgeous.”

“Me, too. Sweaty, but happy,” I snickered.

“I think a bath is in our future, my dirty girl,” he laughed. “Then, I have to give you your anniversary presents.”

“Bath then gifts,” I said, snuggling closer to his sweaty body.

“Bella, in order to get the bath going, you have to get up,” he said, smacking my ass slightly.

“In a minute,” I said, kissing his neck softly. “You’re comfy.”

“You’re hot,” he said, wrapping his arms around me. “And I’m not talking good looking. You’re like hot and making me even hotter.”

“Killjoy,” I growled, trying to get up but he held firm. “Jackass, you said you were hot.”

“Just because I said I was hot didn’t mean that I wanted you to move,” he said, caressing my cheek with his hand. “I’m so lucky, Bella. Happy anniversary, love. Eighteen years. Can you believe it?”

“I can. It’s easy when you’re in love with your best friend,” I said as I rolled off him. “Come on, baby. Let’s take a bath.” He took my hand and we went into the bathroom. Our bath was quiet and filled with secret giggles and murmurs of love. Edward truly was my best friend. He was the one person that I didn’t need to pretend with. He knew everything about me and I knew everything about him. The love had for my husband encompassed my whole being. I loved my children; I’d die for them, but Edward…he was my soul. He owned me. And these three nights, our anniversary and our birthdays that we had to ourselves, we rekindled that love.

We got dressed…well, kind of. I put on a blue baby-doll nightie that left little to the imagination and Edward put on a pair of sleep pants. We went downstairs where we both kept our anniversary presents. I’d completely geeked out on my hubby. With the pending patent acceptance for his
tricorder, I’d found a bunch of *Star Trek* memorabilia, including an original series tricorder. In his office, he had his *Star Trek* shrine and it would fit perfectly in it.

We ate a snack before going into the family room to open our presents for each other. I handed Edward the massive box filled with his anniversary present. “I hope you like it,” I blushed. “Well, not ‘it’ but yeah. Just open it.”

“Should I be worried?” he snickered, tearing into the large box. “It won’t give me fleas, will it?”

“No. God, I still can’t believe that. Four years later and our son brings home a flea-ridden dog. Only Masen,” I giggled.

“He loved that dog,” Edward said as he shook the top off the box. “When do you think he’ll be ready for another one?”

“Soon, is my guess,” I shrugged. “I was in his room, grabbing some whites to wash and his laptop was open to a local animal shelter, specifically large breed dogs. He wants something big.”

“Oh my,” Edward groaned. He peered into the box. “Damn, you wrapped all of them?”

“Keep you guessing, SGD,” I said, arching a brow. He rolled his eyes and plucked the smallest box off the top. He carefully unwrapped it, revealing a pair of *Star Trek* cuff links.

“Wow, these are cool,” he said, looking much younger than his forty-nine years. “I’m wearing them tomorrow for Christmas.”

“I’m glad you like them,” I beamed. “There’s a lot more.”

“You spoil me, gorgeous,” he said, giving me a wry grin, picking up the next box. “Awfully light, baby?” I bit back a laugh as he opened the slender box. He pulled out a pair of bright blue knee socks with the word ‘Geek’ written on the side in orange lettering. “Really?”

“At least I got it right,” I smirked.

“You did.” He took the socks and pulled them on his feet, posing like a very nerdy supermodel.

“I think you should wear those the next time we make love,” I teased.

“You make fun, but watch…they will be me on my body when I fuck you, Mrs. Cullen,” he grinned, sitting down gracefully on the couch. The next thing he opened up was the communicator. He gave me a sloppy kiss for that one, darting up to his office and putting it on his *Star Trek* shrine.

“Stay standing,” I said, handing him the next present. “You’ll be going back up to your office after you open this one.”

He arched a brow and ripped off the paper. His jaw came unhinged when he saw one of the original series tricorders. From the actual show, mind you. I had papers that showed its authenticity and even received an autographed copy of one of the scripts. It was included in the bundle that I bid on Ebay. “Is this…?”

“Yep,” I said smugly, giving him a wide smile. “The patent is going to come through for your tricorder, which looks a lot less like that and more like the communicator; so I thought it would be fitting to have the original for your shrine.”

“It’s not a shrine,” Edward said as he gazed at the piece of *Star Trek* history.
“It’s a shrine, Edward,” I deadpanned. “You have the same chair that Captain Picard sat in for your office chair and you’ve got a wall dedicated to your Star Trek memorabilia. It’s a shrine.”

“It’s not a shrine,” he smirked, giving me a narrowed look.

“Shrine, baby. Deny it all you want. If I take a picture of said shrine, posting it on Facebook, people would agree with me. But, I’m not,” I said. “Do you like it the tricorder?”

“This really cool,” he said, hugging it to his bare chest. “And the script? ‘Troubles with Tribbles?’ Classic Star Trek. You’re the best wife ever.”

“I’m your only wife ever,” I said, arching a brow.

“Technicalities,” he said, darting back upstairs. He took longer to come down but when he did he gave me a goofy grin. “Thank you, gorgeous.”

“You’ve got one more,” I smiled.

He peered into the box and lifted out the wrapped frame. This one took a lot of time and effort. With the help of the kids, Esme and Victoria, we created a collage of pictures spelling our last name. We used everything that was important to Edward, to me and to our family. Underneath the collage, we included a single photo of each of us and one of our family, minus him. When he picked up the long box, he knew it was fragile and obviously heavy. Gingerly, he unwrapped the present, revealing the five photos that were going underneath the collage. He smiled softly as he looked at the photographs of his four children and of me. Once he got to my photo, his face broke into a radiant grin as he caressed the cheek of my picture. Once he got to my photo, his face broke into a radiant grin as he caressed the cheek of my picture. The family photo, Edward gave a guffaw. It was a standard pose but we all were wearing shirts that had synonyms for the word ‘geek’ and wore glasses. The final photo was the collage and he beamed excitedly. “This…this is amazing, Bella,” he said, pulling the frame out of the box. “This is so going up in my office at work. Who took the pictures? When?”

“Victoria took the pictures and that shoot was when Kyra had her senior photos taken,” I explained. “After we took these, Victoria took her senior photos, one of which is sitting on your desk at work currently.”

He carefully put down the photos and crossed over to me. He sat down on the couch, pulling me over his lap. His warm, large hands cupped my face and he smiled at me with the sweetest of grins. Tenderly, he kissed my lips softly and hugged me to his body. “Thank you, Bella,” he whispered against my hair. “I love all of it. I love you. You truly spoil me.”

“Pot meet kettle,” I giggled, wrapping my arms around his neck.

He snickered, rubbing his hands along my back, lifting my blue baby doll nightie. “God, another thong? Bella, you are truly trying to kill me with sex,” he groaned. “Before I get too riled, I may as well give you your present, my gorgeous wife.” He moved me off his lap and handed me a gift bag. A large gift bag. “They’re not individual wrapped like yours, but there are five presents in the bag for you, Mrs. Cullen.”

I smiled eagerly, throwing the mounds of tissue paper out of the bag. The first thing I pulled out were a set of leather-bound, embossed journals. This was a given for us. Edward got me journals for every present since I write in them daily. The covers were a sable brown with my name, ‘Isabella,’ pressed into the leather with a frilly, girly script. “They’re beautiful, Edward. Where do you find these?”

“I got these at some paper store in Oak Brook Center. They were specially ordered and made for you, gorgeous,” he said, taking my journals and placing them on the cocktail table.
I kissed him before reaching into the bag again. The next thing I pulled out was a small plastic container. It was a set of magnetic words. “The Writer’s Remedy? So awesome! I could have used this with the rewrite for The Charmed Ones,” I giggled. As I was giggling, I reached into the bag and nearly fell off the couch when I grabbed a pair of the same socks I got Edward, but instead of the word ‘geek,’ they were emblazoned with the word ‘nerd.’ Plus, the socks were purple with bright pink writing. “Great minds, Mr. Cullen.”

I stuffed my feet in them and stuck my legs out straight, putting them on his lap. “I like yours better,” I snickered, wriggling my toes.

“The next time we make love, you better wear them,” he joked, tickling my toes. I squeaked, bringing my feet back to my body. I gave him a playful scowl. “You’ve got two more, baby. These are more…sentimental and, um, expensive.”

I reached into the bag and took out two leather boxes. One was small and looked familiar. It was the same box that my earrings that Edward bought for me at Harry Winston came in. Another box was long. “Edward…” I chided gently.

“Hush, I love you and I want to spoil you,” he said, pushing both boxes closer to me.

“Which one should I open first?” I asked.

“Um, that one,” he said, pointing to the longer box. I put the smaller box on the couch and opened the longer box. Nestled on top of the navy blue velvet was a bracelet that shimmered with cushion-cut diamonds surrounded by pave round stones, alternating with round diamonds surrounded by pave round stones, as well. It glittered magically from the twinkling lights of the Christmas tree.

“It’s beautiful,” I whispered, gently fingering the sparkling gems. “It’s too much, but absolutely gorgeous.”

“I’d like it if you’d wear it on New Year’s Eve at Tim and Rose’s party,” he blushed.

“I’d be honored, baby,” I said, kissing his lips. He smiled crookedly and put it on the table, handing me the smaller box. “Did you get this while we were in California?”

“Yeah. I really liked the meaning of it,” he said, pulling me into his lap. His warm hand found my bare ass and he massaged it gently as I opened the tiny box. I gasped, staring at the ring that I loved but didn’t want to say anything, fearful that Edward would buy it for me. However, he did, regardless. “It’s an infinity symbol.” He plucked it out of the jewelry box and slid it on my right hand. “It represents how long I’ll love you, Bella. Forever isn’t enough.”

I sniffled, staring at the gorgeous ring on my right hand. I got Edward toys and he buys me jewelry. With meaning! God, I suck.

“Don’t cry, gorgeous,” he said, guiding my face to stare at his. “I loved your gifts. They were adorable and cute and perfect.”

“Toys, Edward…” I grumped.

“Priceless collectibles,” he corrected, kissing my lips sweetly. His eyes were sparkling but soon they darkened. His mouth found mine again and it was something more. My fingers flew to his hair and he straddled my body over his legs. His hands were everywhere. No part of my exposed skin was untouched by his hands. “Bella, my Bella,” he chanted, kissing down my neck. “I love you so much, baby. I need you.”
“You have me,” I panted, rocking against his growing arousal.

“I want to show you how much I appreciate my priceless collectibles,” he said, nipping at my neck. He tugged on the straps of my nightie and it fell down my body, revealing my naked breasts. The nightie was tossed onto the ground and Edward eased his sleep pants over his hips. My husband was commando and his rock-hard cock slapped his stomach. I shimmied out of my panties and slid down his cock. I was already drenched and when I was this turned on, we didn’t need lube. I wanted my husband to fill me in every way. Languidly, I wriggled my hips and eased him out of me. He grasped his dick as I inched forward, spreading the globes of my ass. “Slowly, Bella.”

The head of his cock touched my puckered skin of my other entrance. I whimpered as I relaxed, allowing him to ease inside of my ass. “Edward,” I murmured as I took him as deep as I could. “My GOD, I love you.”

“As I love you, gorgeous,” he said as his hips began thrusting slowly in me. He controlled our movements, grunting lowly as he languorously filled me with his cock. My breasts bounced as he thrust. I grunted along with him, wanting more. “Play with your pussy, Bella. I want to see those fingers make yourself come as I fuck your ass.”

“Holy hell,” I moaned as I reached between us. My fingers were covered with my arousal, seeping down Edward’s legs. Edward’s forehead was pressed to mine, staring as my hand was circling my clit. Using his other hand that wasn’t bracing my back, he slid his fingers inside of me and I damn near exploded. His cock in my ass, his fingers in my pussy, his sweet breath caressing my lips and his carnal expression?

“You’re so wet, Bella. I’ve never felt you this wet,” he purred, kissing my mouth. “What makes you this wet, baby?”


“Like this?” he asked, thrusting up powerfully.

“Ungh! More!” I begged. “Make me come, Edward.”

His hips bucked against me, forcing him deeper inside of my body. His fingers were moving in conjunction with his thrusts and yeah, I was going to come. The coil in my belly was wound tightly, ready to spring. “Fuck, Bella. I’m so close. You better fucking come with me.”

“Yeah, baby,” I whimpered, rocking back against him. “Oh, GOD! Fuck! Edward!!! Please! Faster, baby!”

“Yes! Yes! Yes!” he grunted, pounding in me before letting out a guttural roar, filling me with his release. My pussy clamped down on his fingers and my release coated his belly, my fingers and unfortunately, our couch. Edward slumped back on the couch and I fell forward on him, completely boneless. His hands were gliding over my back. “We need to take another bath, gorgeous.”

“We need to clean the couch, angel,” I giggled. I heard him huff and he tightened his hold on me. “Thank you for my beautiful presents, Edward.”

“Thank you for my priceless collectibles,” he smirked, kissing my head. “And we wore our socks as we made love.”

“We did, baby,” I said, curling up on his chest. “You’re my geek.”

“You’re my nerd,” he sighed, pressing his cheek to my hair. “I love you, Bella. Happy eighteenth
anniversary.”

“I love you more, Edward.” We sat there for a few minutes before we got up to clean up our messes. Thankfully, our couch was leather and was easily cleaned up. Once the family was presentable (and sprayed with Febreeze…it smelled like sex), we went upstairs to our bedroom. In our bed, we made love slowly and reverently, reconnecting as husband and wife, murmuring our words of love and devotion.

Until Edward passed out mid-thrust.

Not that I blamed him. I was tired. Marathon sexing? Not in the cards for us anymore.

I joined him shortly afterward, kind of excited that Edward fell asleep while we were having sex. Sleep sounded much more appealing than sex. He sighed, wrapping his arms around me and I cuddled against him, sated, happy and exhausted.

xx STTD xx

We arrived at Marcus and Esme’s home shortly after two in the afternoon. The house was buzzing with conversations, laughter and holiday music. Edward carried the bin filled with the presents for our children. He looked dashing in is red sweater that Alice designed and a pair of gray corduroys. His hair was a disheveled mess, but he looked sexy as hell. I was wearing a pair of black pants and a green sweater. Alice had sent a text at six this morning saying that had to wear either green or red for the photos that Victoria was taking today.

That went over well. Edward was ready to throw his cell phone out the window and into a snow bank when the text came through. Then, when he didn’t respond, Alice started calling.

“Mary Alice Cullen Whitlock, if you value your shoe collection, don’t fucking call at six in the morning on Christmas,” Edward growled into the phone.

“I wanted to make sure you got the message,” she chirped loudly. I groaned.

“Seriously, I’m going to call your husband and have him throw out all your shoes. We were up late last night and you’re obnoxious phone calls…”

“Doing what, Older?” she quipped.

“I was fucking my wife,” he said, hanging up the phone, ripping off the battery and tossing it into the nightstand. “I love my sister. I won’t kill her today. I promise.” He planted his face right into the crook of my neck, dragging me closer to his hot body. His leg slide between mine and his hand found my breast. Then, my phone went off.

I swiped my phone. “Alice, really?” I snickered.

“I’m just making sure…” she giggled. “Wear green or red for the pictures today. Wait a minute… why is Jasper getting up and going to my closet? NO! NOT MY SHOES!”

Edward was taking his phone back apart and plucked mine from my hands. He did the same, pulling me to his body so we could go back to sleep. So, I wasn’t surprised when Alice stomped over to Edward and tugged on his ear. “EDWARD ANTHONY MASEN CULLEN!”

“Ooooh, you got all your names. You’re in trouble,” I giggled, dancing into the kitchen.

“Alice, it was six in the morning,” Edward hissed to his younger, twin sister. “The day after our
anniversary. Do I call you at the ass crack of dawn after you’ve had your way with Jasmine?”

“No,” she grumped. “I just wanted to make sure…”

“It could have waited,” Edward said. “Besides, he only took the shoes that weren’t worn in the past year. They’re being donated to Goodwill. You’ve got too many to begin with, Younger.”

I heard her huff. I knew this was far from over, but I didn’t want intrude. I walked into the kitchen and hugged Esme. “Merry Christmas,” I smiled, kissing her cheek.

“Merry Christmas, sweetheart,” she beamed. “Did you have a good anniversary?”

“Yeah, I did. Look what Edward got me,” I said, holding up my right hand to showcase my ring.

“Oh, it’s beautiful,” she cooed. “My son has beautiful taste in jewelry.”

“That he does,” I smirked. “Anything I can do?”

“Not a thing. Marcus and I decided to make it an easy Christmas and we ordered out. He’s picking up the family style meal from Maggiano’s with Demetri and Jasper. Alex is in the family room with the kids. Oh, and one of your security guards came today, too. He said he felt uncomfortable leaving you unattended for so long.”

“Which one?” I asked.

“The young one in charge. Steve,” Esme said.

“Ugh! He’s supposed to be with his family,” I grumbled, walking into the family room. All of the kids were doing various things, playing games on the television, reading or talking. Alex was chatting with Steve in the corner who was watching our children like a hawk. “STEVE!” I barked.

“Crap,” he whimpered.

“Get your skinny butt over here,” I said, crossing my arms over my chest.

“Save me, Mr. Alex,” he said, hiding behind my brother-in-law.

“Oh, no. I recognize that face and I know to run away,” he snickered, kissing my cheek as he darted into the kitchen.

“You’re supposed to be with your family,” I hissed. “We gave you time off!”

“I told them to go back home. We celebrated yesterday, exchanged gifts and yeah,” Steve said, shifting uncomfortably. “Look, I didn’t feel comfortable. Jacob may be quiet but he’s still out there, Miss Bella. Something can happen.”

“Steve, I truly appreciate your devotion to your job, but it’s just a job,” I said, rubbing his arm.

“It’s not just a job. It’s your life. If something happened to you…” he trailed off, staring at me. “Or your family, it’s on my head. I’ve grown to love your family. Everyone is amazing and I can’t let anything happen to you, to Mr. Edward or any of your children. I’m sorry about not taking time off but I just can’t let anything happen to you.”

He was yelling at the end of his tirade and he spun to leave. Kyra stared at me, shocked that Steve, quiet Steve, had ripped me a new one. Edward was glaring at the direction where Steve had stomped off, but I shook my head. Kyra got up, followed Steve and I went back into the kitchen to do
something to busy my hands.

By the time Demetri, Jasper and Marcus came with the food, Kyra and Steve still weren’t back from
talking. I knew he was upset. I could gather that she was upset with him for being pissed at me.
Victoria had also arrived with a bottle of scotch and her cameras, just as she promised. Esme called
everyone to the dinner table. Edward went in search of Kyra and Steve.

They came back in and sat down at opposite ends of the table. Kyra grasped my hand when she sat
next to me and I kissed her cheek. Marcus gave a blessing and we dug into the food that was
purchased for Christmas dinner. Well, kind of Christmas dinner. It was more like Christmas late
lunch. We needed time for our family photos afterward before we opened presents.

After our meal, Victoria gathered her supplies and began barking orders. For the entire family photo,
we were going to be going outside. There wasn’t any place in the house that was big enough for our
crazy brood of nearly nineteen people. Twenty-one if you counted Charlie and Sue, who were en
route. My mom was invited but was on a Caribbean cruise with Phil, celebrating our anniversary.

“Okay, kids. We’re going to do the outdoor shots quickly since it’s colder than a witch’s tit out
here,” Victoria giggled. “Steve, since you’re not in the photo, you get to be my assistant. Hold this
extra camera, will ya?”

Steve grabbed the camera from Victoria, still looking someone kicked his puppy. We all stood
together, smiling as she took photo after photo. She held her hand out and Steve put the camera into
her hand, taking the other one as she continued to shoot rapidly. “Alright, we’re going to do some
smaller family photos next. We can stay out here, go inside or I could set up a make-shift studio in
the garage.”

“Out here or inside. Not a studio,” Rose said, wrinkling her nose. “However, I’m going indoors to
defrost. I can’t feel my nose!” She scampered back into the house with everyone else following suit.

Victoria walked in and she pursed her lips. “Here’s my plan. Let’s see if you all like it. Edward and
Bella, I’d like to take your photos outside. We can have some real fun with them. Alice and Jasper,
in the living room next to the tree. Rose and Tim, in the living room in front of the fireplace. Alex
and Demetri, outdoors, too. Marcus and Esme, under the mistletoe.” She tapped her lips. “Oh, and
that includes children, too.”

“Can we take pictures in multiple locations?” Alice asked.

“Of course,” Victoria smiled. “However, we need to get the outdoor ones done quickly since we’re
going to lose the light in about an hour and half.”

The next hour was spent outdoors, snapping photo after photo. The boys ended up having a huge
snowball fight and Victoria laughed as she took the photos. Once the light had left, we went inside
and there were more photos taken indoors. Two hours after Victoria started her photo shoot, she was
done with nearly two thousand photos of our family. She said that she’d have proofs for us sent out
by no later than middle of January.

Just before we were about to open presents, I saw Kyra and Steve arguing in the living room. My
daughter growled and turned Steve around, shoving him toward me. “Apologize!” she hissed.

Steve stumbled toward me in the kitchen and he blushed. “Miss Bella? Can I talk to you?”

“Speak,” I said coldly.

“I wanted to apologize,” he said contritely. “I acted like an ass.”
“You did,” I retorted, arching a brow at him. “If one of my children spoke to me the way you did, they would have gotten a smack across the face. You may be younger than me. You may be my security, but I’m still older than you and your boss, ultimately.”

“I know, Miss Bella. I am so sorry. It’s just that,” he sighed, running his hand through his hair. “I’m worried. Jacob is too quiet. He’s got to be planning something. You know?”

“He probably is, but Steve, Jacob is not very smart,” I explained. “Your shoes have more intelligence. I get your need to protect me and my family, but you will respect us.”

“I know. I understand,” he nodded. “I am sorry for yelling and I promise, it won’t happen again.”

I gave him a tight smile, still not pleased with his tirade. He turned and slumped back to the family room where he sat down next to Kyra. She patted him on the back. Edward walked into the kitchen, wrapping his arms around me.“That took balls.”

“What? Yelling at me or apologizing?” I asked, relaxing into his embrace.

“Both,” he snickered, kissing my neck. “But, he’s right. Jacob can be dumber than a post but he’s still a threat. I didn’t like what Steve did or what he said, but I’m happy he’s here.”

“Me, too, but he’s getting awfully cozy with Kyra,” I said, narrowing my eyes at Steve.

“You noticed that, too?”

I nodded. “I don’t want it to become something, Edward. She’s only seventeen. He’s twenty-five,” I grumbled.

“We’ll keep an eye on it. For now, let’s enjoy Christmas,” Edward said, kissing my lips. “I love you, Mrs. Cullen.”

“And I love you, Mr. Cullen. Thank you for making our anniversary so special,” I said, cupping his cheek.

“Our marriage is special, baby. We get to spend our lives with each other,” he said, nuzzling my nose with his. “Come on. Let’s see if Santa brought us presents or coal.”

“He brought us coal,” I laughed, waving new ring in his face. He beamed, kissing it sweetly before tugging me back to our family.

A/N: Can you say BEASTLY chapter? Yep, I can. Longer than I anticipated and didn’t include everything I wanted to have. Oh well, as a result, you’ll get another Bella chapter next one around. So, lots of goodies happened with this one. Purely fluff and smutty goodness.

Now, a few announcements…if you noticed, there were a few mentions of Masen and a dog…are you curious? If you are, check out the link on my blog, ‘Fandom for Animals.’ I’ve donated a one-shot/outtake for the fundraiser. It’s about Masen and this dog, Wrigley. The link will be on my blog (and the link for that is on my profile). Please donate to this worthy cause…for the members of our family that can’t speak for themselves. Mmmkay?

Secondly, LOTS of pictures with this one. The pictures that are appropriate for viewing in public will be on my blog. (Again, link in profile). There are also a few recipes included in this one, on the blog…yep, do you see a pattern here? *Snickers* Finally, there are some saucy pictures that are NSFW and that are posted on my tumblr (link in profile and on blog post).
Finally, up next chapter will be New Year’s Eve and girly bonding time. Another chapter of pure fluffiness (maybe?) Leave me some lovin!
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Finally, up next chapter will be New Year’s Eve and girly bonding time. Another chapter of pure fluffiness (maybe?) Leave me some lovin!

Chapter Ten: Viva Lost Wages

BPOV

“Mom, can we stop at Victoria’s Secret? They have this adorable bag that I want to get,” Kyra gushed.

“Victoria’s Secret?” I grumbled, eyeing my oldest daughter. “You better not be buying lingerie for your boyfriend.”

“Ewwww!” Kyra squealed. “I’m so not ready for that. I like Thomas, but am I ready to have sex with him? God, no.”

That would make Edward happy. However, he’s about ready to have an aneurysm from the hushed conversations that Kyra and Steve have been having, plus accepting the fact that Kyra’s dating. We’d both talked to Steve and Kyra on separate occasions. They both assured us that nothing was going on, but they still had their whispered talks on a nightly basis. Something was up between the two of them and neither of them are budging on divulging their secrets. Sighing, I decided to let Kyra handle this in her own way. She was growing up. She would be eighteen in July and going away to college. We weren’t always going to hover over her. My baby girl was growing up. I needed to let her make her own decisions and learn from her own mistakes.

As much as I hate it. Crap.

Besides, I have three remaining children to dote on.

My minions, as it were.

Edward teases us, that we had children to do our bidding; spread good as opposed to evil. For the most part, our kids did do what we asked them to do and were so generous. Probably the most generous being Masen. He would give you the clothes off his back if you asked for them.

Ahhh, my little minions.

“Mom, you’re so spacing out,” Mia giggled, linking her arm with mine.
“Sorry, pretty girl,” I chuckled, kissing Mia’s head. “I’m just thinking about how lucky I am with you kids. You’re all so amazing!”

“We do kick ass,” Kyra snickered, taking my other arm.

“Language, Kyra,” I chided lightly. She shrugged, pulling us toward Victoria’s Secret. I had a list a mile long to get from Victoria’s Secret, but I refused to buy anything on said list with my children in tow. I do not need them seeing me buy crotchless panties for their father. They’d be scarred for life. Hell, I wear them and I’m scarred for life.

_Though, crotchless panties are convenient for a clandestine fuck. Yes, Edward and I are quite sneaky about our sex. When you’ve got four kids, you’ve got to be._

We were enjoying the after Christmas sales, spending money like we had too much of it. Well, we honestly did have too much money. That’s why we donate so much of our income to the Foundation and to other various charities. However, the kids received a lot of money for Christmas and desperately wanted to spend it. We were roaming around Oak Brook Center with Steve, searching for the best buys. Edward, Owen and Masen were back at the house, dismantling Christmas since they did not want to shop.

Inside of Victoria’s Secret, we split a part. Mia went to the lotions and body sprays, searching for some makeup. Kyra walked into the ‘Pink’ section, searching for this bag along with some panties. I rummaged through the sales tables, finding a few bra and panty sets that were suitable to purchase while I had my kids with me. As I held my future purchases, I checked on Kyra and Mia. They were in the ‘Pink’ section, glaring at Kyra’s friend Mackenzie.

“Take that back, bitch,” Kyra hissed, her face pink in anger and her hands clenched in fists in rigid claws.

“I guess you can’t keep your man satisfied,” Mackenzie said smugly, looking at her nails. She smiled and adjusted her too-big breasts. “Maybe you should lose the baby shit and find some real lingerie to entice Thomas. He really enjoyed moaning my name when I went down on him…And his cock? Perfection!”

“You’re such a slut, Mackenzie,” Kyra spat, her voice quivering. Tears were in her golden eyes.

“You’re such a slut, Mackenzie,” Kyra spat, her voice quivering. Tears were in her golden eyes.

“Kyro, what’s going on?” I asked, eyeing Mackenzie and giving her the Cullen Death Glare.

“Hey, Mrs. Cullen,” she said, sounding sweet and innocent. “Did you have a great Christmas?”

“Cut the crap, Mackenzie. Why is my daughter crying?” I growled, arching a brow at this two-faced little snot.

“Kyro’s not crying,” Mackenzie lied, her face impassive.

_Bullshit. _Kyro’s face was stained with tears and she sniffing quietly. Mia was holding her sister’s hand, glaring at Mackenzie angrily. “Answer the question, Mackenzie,” I said harshly.

“We were fighting over some boy,” she replied airily, waving her hand dismissively. “She thought that Thomas was her boyfriend, but he took me out yesterday.”

“He is my boyfriend,” Kyra snarled, stomping away and whipping out her cell phone.

“I suggest you leave, Mackenzie,” I said calmly, shooting daggers at this manipulative little brat.
“It’s a free country, Mrs. Cullen. I don’t have to go anywhere,” she retorted, crossing her arms across her chest. She challenged me openly and if she was my daughter, I would have smacked her silly. However, I didn’t want to get arrested, so I turned on my heel only after giving her another Cullen Death Glare. She had the moxy to glare back and brush past me, bumping my shoulder. *Don’t hit the snotty teenager. Don’t hit the snotty teenager. Don’t hit…fuck, I want to hit the snotty teenager.* Instead, I took the bag from Mia along with her purchases, carrying them to the register. I quickly paid for them, succumbing to some retail therapy before I went in search of my oldest daughter. She was outside, pacing and talking rapidly on the phone. Steve was hovering close by, pissed as hell at Mackenzie.

“Is she talking to Thomas?” I asked Steve.

“Yeah. Mackenzie was lying. Kyra got confirmation from Thomas that he didn’t go out with her. He hates her as much as Kyra,” Steve replied. “That girl…she’s bad news, Miss Bella.”

“You know something,” I said, arching a brow.

“I do, but it’s not my place to say anything,” he answered, looking at his boots. “If Kyra wants you to know, then she’ll tell you. Until then, I take this information to the grave.”

“I could force you,” I said flatly.

“I know you won’t. You value your children’s privacy. Just as they value yours…they don’t need to know that you defiled the piano,” he smirked.

*Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! We were alone! How in the hell did he know that?*

“Wha…?!” I squeaked.

“There’s a security camera just outside the front door and it caught glimpses of your time in the music room,” he chuckled. “The footage has been erased, but it’s been forever burned in my brain.”

I wrinkled my nose, feeling a bit violated at the fact that Steve had seen *that*. Steve frowned and apologized for invading my privacy, but said I was feeling was akin to what Kyra would feel if he told me her secret. He was right. So, I let it drop and checked on my *principessa*. She had hung up the phone, rocking on the bench where she was sitting, tears still streaming down her beautiful face.

“You okay, baby?” I asked, sitting next to her.

“Mackenzie lied,” she whispered. “She said that she…why? Why would she say that?”

“Because she’s jealous,” I replied. *She’s a vindictive, manipulative bitch who has zero feelings and if she wasn’t only a teenager, I’d kick her ass from here to Timbuktu.* I couldn’t really say that but thinking it made it soooooo much better. “She wants what you have and is obviously willing to go to extreme measures to make that happen, Kyra.”

“Can I kick her ass?” Mia snarled.

“No, Mia. As much as we all want to kick Mackenzie’s ass, I do not want to be hauled into jail for assault,” I deadpanned. “Thomas said he didn’t do that with her, right?”

“He hasn’t really seen her since the winter dance,” Kyra said, wiping her eyes. My daughter looked up just as Mackenzie left Victoria’s Secret with another girl. I shot her a hateful glance as she flipped off Kyra, earning a fresh round of tears. The two girls laughed like hyenas, walking toward Neiman Marcus.
“You know what would make us feel better?” I suggested, tucking one of Kyra’s curls behind her ear.

“What?” Mia asked, still pissed off.

“Cheesecake. Let’s gorge ourselves on cheesecake and all sorts of fattening foods at the Cheesecake Factory,” I smiled. Mia’s eyes lit up. She was always about food. The girl could eat like a horse and not gain an ounce. Kyra was the same way, but still watched what she ate. “Come on, there’s turtle cheesecake waiting for us.”

“No way. I want the Reese’s Peanut Butter Cheesecake,” Mia giggled.

“What about you, Steve? What’s your preference?” I asked as I helped Kyra to her feet.

“I’m a traditionalist. Original cheesecake with strawberry sauce,” he replied. Steve gave Kyra a soft smile. She returned it before cuddling into my arms. We walked to the restaurant and were seated right away. Before we ordered our cheesecake, we ordered an appetizer sampler and some non-alcoholic beverages. Though, a margarita sounded really good about now.

“Kyra, you never told us what your favorite cheesecake was,” Steve said as he nibbled on some nachos.

“Um, the Snickers bar one,” she replied quietly, pushing around her food. She only sipped her virgin piña colada, not really eating her appetizers. We had ordered mostly food that she liked, but she was still obviously upset about the situation with Mackenzie and her lies about screwing around with her boyfriend.

“Well, let’s focus our attention elsewhere. I got a text from Aunt Ali and she’s got a surprise for us ladies,” I smiled.

“What’s that?” Mia asked, inhaling a mozzarella stick in one bite. *Where does she put it?*

“Well, Aunt Ali felt bad for something that she did on Christmas Day to your father and me. So, she’s treating all of us to a spa weekend just after the New Year’s.”

“Where are we going?” asked Kyra.

“The Cosmopolitan in Las Vegas,” I smiled. “We leave on January 2nd and get in late on the 6th. And before you ask, you both have to go to school the next day.”

“We’re going to Vegas?” Mia squealed, seemingly unfazed by the comment about going to school. We were going to get back at midnight, roughly. We were going to be traveling commercial since Alice had arranged this little getaway.

“Yes. Oh and Alice arranged for a ticket for you, too, Steve. We’ve got an executive suite, similar to what we had in California. You’d have one room, the girls would share another room and I’d be in the third,” I said. “I’m sorry, but it’s going to be an estrogen filled weekend for you.”

“It’s no big deal, Miss Bella. You and your safety, plus the safety of your children, is paramount. I think I can endure a weekend in Vegas for that,” he snickered.

“Who is coming?” asked Kyra, finally eating some food.

“Well, the four of us,” I said, indicating to our table. “Nana, Aunt Alice and Gianna, Alex, Rose and Ava. We extended the invitation to Victoria, but she’s got a wedding that weekend and is unable to
“Why don’t we invite Gramma Renee?” Mia suggested. “She can stay with you.”

I smiled, picking up my phone. It had been since Kyra’s birthday that I’d seen my mom. We talked often, but due to her hectic travel schedule with Phil, we don’t get to see each other as often as I’d like. Maybe she would make this trip. If she could, it would be awesome if she were there. The phone rang and my mom picked up immediately. “Bellini!” she squealed.

“Hi, Mom,” I giggled. “How was your cruise?”

“A-MAZING!” she said. “I’ve got so many pictures and gifts for my grandbabies! I can give them to you when I see you in Vegas.”

“Huh?” I laughed.

“Alice called me while I was on my cruise. The captain handed me the satellite phone during dinner on Christmas, saying that it was of utmost importance,” she laughed. “She told me that all of the girls are getting together for a trip to Vegas and that I was coming. No questions asked. So, who am I to deny a free trip to Vegas? I’ve got my gambling money and my fanny pack ready to go.”

“Don’t wear the fanny pack. Those went by the way of the dinosaurs in 1990,” I deadpanned.

“Psh. I’m wearing my fanny pack. I’m planning on coming back richer than when I arrived and I need that to keep my moola safe,” she said.

“Well, be prepared for Alice to kick your ass. She’ll freak out when you show up with a fanny pack,” I snorted. “I’m so happy that you’re coming. I’m sorry that I didn’t ask you myself. Alice just told me yesterday.”

“She’s a sneaky one,” Renee laughed. “Alice said I’d be staying with you. You’ve got a king sized bed and we can have popcorn party like when you were a kid!”

“That sounds like fun, Mom,” I smiled. “We’ll see you in a couple of days.”

“Love you, Bellini!” she sang.

“Love you, too,” I replied, ending the call. “Apparently Aunt Ali beat me to the punch. Gramma Renee is already squared away to come. She’ll be staying with me!”

“YAY!” Mia said, clapping her hands happily.

We finished our appetizers and ordered our cheesecake. The slices were huge and we ended up taking home our dessert. Kyra was feeling slightly better, but the sparkle in her eyes was still missing. We drove home, tired from shopping and the drama that Mackenzie caused. Kyra was very quiet, staring off into space as Steve drove us back to the house. It wasn’t until we pulled up to the house and Thomas’ Honda Accord came into view that Kyra perked up. I smiled, happy that her boyfriend had known that she would have needed him.

Inside the house, we found all of the boys in the family room playing some prototype game that Edward created in his spare time. They were acting like morons, but having a good time. Once Owen was killed by Masen, they put down their controllers, laughing loudly. Thomas looked up, smiling softly and crossing toward Kyra. Her eyes are twinkling with unshed tears. Carefully, he enfolds Kyra into a tight, loving hug and whispered into her ear. Edward stomped over to me, ready to break them apart. I snaked my arm around his waist. “Let them be, Edward,” I whispered,
caressing his head and massaging his scalp.

“We’re too young to be grandparents,” he said, arching brow.

“We won’t, baby. She needs him right now,” I replied, kissing his mouth sweetly. They left and went downstairs into the basement. Kyra looked significantly happier, more at peace than before. I felt for my baby girl and wanted to get to the bottom of her beef with Mackenzie.

Hopefully she’d tell us soon. Whatever it was, it was big and causing distress to my daughter. I hated to see her cry.

xx STTD xx

New Year’s Eve was a fun and somewhat formal affair at Rose and Tim’s place. We were all decked out in formal attire, ringing in the New Year in Chicago. From their condo, we could see the fireworks over the lake. All of the kids tried champagne for the first time. The only one who enjoyed it was Kyra but we took her glass away before she could get buzzed.

New Year’s Day was spent at our house, watching the Rose Parade, eating chili and vegging out in front of the television. Jasper and Edward were permanent fixtures on the couch, watching college football. It was the laziest day between the both of them, since they were both college football fanatics. Since 364 days of the year, they both worked their asses off, we gave them their ‘Al Bundy’ day, complete with non-stop beer and their hands down their pants.

Early the next day was the morning of our departure to Las Vegas. Kyra had yet to talk to us regarding the run-in with Mackenzie. She was more at ease and happier knowing that Thomas had screwed around on her. When I had told Edward about that little tidbit, he was ready to chop off Thomas’ balls, but I smoothed that over. His showing up that night definitely earned Thomas brownie points.

Now, Edward is a bit stressed over our impending departure. He was excited about our trip, but it was an unknown and with Jacob still out there, he was a nervous wreck. Alice ensured out safety. Steve and one of her security guards, Preston, were coming and staying in the suite she had reserved for me and my girls. All was quiet on the Jacob front, but there was definitely an edge of terror in the house. The fact that he was still out there freaked the shit out of Edward and honestly, me.

“Bella, I’m still freaking out,” Edward whimpered as he sat on the bed while I finished packing. “I can come with you?”

“No, Edward. This is a girl’s trip,” I retorted. “Plus, we’ve got protection coming with us. We’ll be fine.”

“Okay,” he mumbled, twisting his wedding ring. “I’m going to miss you, gorgeous.”

“I’m going to miss you, too, angel,” I purred, walking over to him. I threaded my fingers into his thick hair, forcing his head to fall back and look me in the eyes. “Do you want something from Vegas?”

“Just your safe return,” he replied, reaching up to cup my cheek. I sighed, leaning against his hand. His fingers glided to my neck and pulled me to his lips, caressing mine with a feather-light touch. I snaked my hands up to wrap my arms around his neck, melting against his chest.

“MOM!! DO WE HAVE TO BRING DRESSY CLOTHES?” yelled Mia.

“Yes, pretty girl,” I sighed. “We’re going to see a couple of shows while we’re there.”
“What are you seeing?” Edward asked.

“Cirque du Soleil, some female impersonator review and some show from Broadway,” I replied. “We’re also shopping, doing the spa thing and if the weather cooperates, spending some time at the pool. I personally think it’s too cold, but Alex and Alice insist that the pools are heated.”

“Don’t forget gambling,” he snickered.

“Maybe,” I shrugged. “I’m not much of a gambler, but my mom? It’s an addiction for her.” My cell phone on the nightstand beeped and I saw a text from Alice.

Limo’s on its way. Should be there in a half hour. Are you done packing yet? LOL – Ali

“Your sister is too much,” I laughed, showing Edward her text.

“She is, but she’s got a good heart,” he replied, plucking the phone from my hand. “You pack. I’ll torture my younger sister.”

“You’re bad,” I smirked. “But, I love you so much.”

“I know you do,” he said, grinning evilly. He was tapping away on my phone, laughing manically. I just finished folding my clothes, tossing in my toiletries and my shoes. The last few things I tossed into my carryon were my cell phone charger, laptop and power cord, and my e-reader. Edward’s snickering caught my attention. “Are you still torturing Alice?”

“Oh, yes. She’s up in arms, thinking that you’ve taken one of the private jets from Whitlock to fly to Vegas,” he snorted. “She’s ready to kick your ever-loving ass.”

“Stop being a jerk, Edward. Tell her that we’re still here,” I chided, tossing a slipper at him. He scowled at me, tapping on my phone. “Is it done?”

“Yeah,” he grumbled, showing me the phone.

“Good. Now, make yourself useful and bring down our bags,” I smirked, tossing my carryon onto my suitcase. “Knowing my luck, I’d trip over my heels and fall down the stairs.”

“Yes, dear,” he replied, kissing my head. He pulled me to his body, nuzzling my neck. “Love you, gorgeous.”

“Love you more,” I whispered back, hugging my arms around his slender waist. “Everything will be fine, baby. I promise.”

“I know. I’m just anxious because you’re going to be across the country, without me,” he sighed, rocking us back and forth. “Call me as soon as you land, once you get to the hotel, whenever you change locations…”

“Breathe, Edward,” I said, taking his face in my hands. He huffed out a breath, narrowing his golden eyes. “We’ll be in constant contact. Steve and Preston, Alice’s bodyguard, will be with us at all times. Okay?”

He closed his eyes, leaning down to kiss me softly before crushing me to his chest. After a short amount of time, he pulled away and carried the bags down the stairs. He was panicking. In a small way, so was I. But, I refused to have Jacob dictate how I live my life. Grabbing my phone, purse and camera from the office, I wandered downstairs after I checked on the girls. They were in a tizzy trying to finish packing. Kyra was hogging the suitcase and Mia couldn’t fit all of her clothes in the
one bag they were sharing. I barked at them to get moving, pulling out some things from Kyra’s side of the bag, stating she didn’t need them. She huffed at me indignantly as Mia stuffed the suitcase with her clothes.

Edward and I kissed feverishly once the limo arrived, much to the dismay of my daughters. They were gagging as we peeled each other apart. *Whatever, kiddos. We love each other and will always be affectionate. Deal with it.*

Six hours later, some bickering and drama-filled flying, we arrived in Las Vegas (or as the flight attendant on the flight stated: Lost Wages). Alice had arranged for a limo bus to drive us to the hotel, Cosmopolitan. Standing in the lobby of the hotel was my mother. She was wearing a pair of jeans that were far too trendy for her sixty-five year old body, a sparkly jacket and around her waist was the dreaded fanny pack. Alice grabbed my arm. “What the fuck is your mom wearing?”

“Language, Alice,” I admonished.

“Screw that. A fanny pack? Please tell me she’s not wearing a fanny pack. I may have a heart attack,” she whimpered, clawing at my shoulder.

“No heart attacks, Alice,” I snickered, walking to my mom.

“Bellini!” she sang, hugging me close. “You look so beautiful. How’s my handsome son-in-law?”

“A nervous wreck,” I joked. “He was all for this trip, but today when we left, he was a bit clingy.”

“It was disgusting, Gramma,” Mia cringed. “They were *all over* each other.”

“His tongue was down her throat,” Kyra smirked. Renee gave me a hard look before hugging her granddaughters.

“They’ve always been like that, babies,” she said, kissing their cheeks. “It was worse when they were younger. This one time, I caught…”

“MOM!” I barked. She was going to tell them the story of how she caught us in her pool. It was after Owen’s birth and we were out visiting my mom and Phil. We had thought that they had gone to bed early after dealing with six month old Owen and a two year old Kyra. Edward and I had just gotten back from a date, wanting to reconnect. It had been a month since Rose and Tim’s wedding and we hadn’t had any time to make love due to his work schedule and dealing with two children under the age of two. So, we ended up making out on the back patio, stripping off our clothes and going skinny dipping. We weren’t quiet, apparently. Renee found us, mid-thrust, in the pool.

“Come on,” Esme said. “We need to check in. I don’t know about you guys, but I’m tired from traveling. I want to get a nap in before I head down to the blackjack table.”

“Ooooh! Esme, we’re going to have a great time,” Renee smiled, linking her arm with Esme. They giggled, teetering off to the front desk to check in. Rose, Alice and me, along with our children followed them. Alex was trying to go the casino, but Rose snagged him by his jeans and dragged him along with us. Once we were all squared away with the rooms, we went upstairs and settled into our suites. The suite that Alice procured for Kyra, Mia, Steve, Preston, my mom and me was lavish, over-the-top and expensive. The girls were in shock at the opulence of the room. Hell, so was I.

After I put my clothes away, I called Edward. He was still a nervous wreck, but happier now that we were in the hotel. I told him the plans for our time in Vegas. Tomorrow was going to be a day at the spa. Steve was going to hover with the kids while Preston was staying with the adults at the Sahri Spa in Cosmopolitan. That night, we were going to see Cirque du Soleil in Circus Circus. The next
day, we were going to walk along the strip and go shopping at the Forum Shops and inside the Venetian, perhaps having a gondola ride. Around eleven, is when the adults were going to the female impersonators show. The last full day in Vegas was going to be spent at the pool, since it was going to be warmest day out of the three. That night, we were going to see Wicked. Early that final day, we were going to fly back to Chicago.

“Bellini, let’s go down to floor and do some gambling,” Renee said, plopping down on the bed.

“I’m tired, Mom. Traveling has kicked my ass and I want to stay in the room tonight, order some room service and veg with my girls,” I replied, wrinkling my nose. “The past couple of months have not been easy.”

“What’s wrong, baby girl?” she asked, brushing my hair away from my face.

“Do you remember Jacob?” I asked.

“That boy you dated in college and again once you started working for the publishing company?” she asked. I nodded. “What about him?”

“He’s gone off the deep end and well, he’s sort of stalking me,” I mumbled, toying with a string on the bedspread. “That’s why we have two security guards staying in the third bedroom in the suite. Steve and Preston are for my protection.”

“Jacob is dumber than a post,” Renee waved off.

“He’s dumber than a post, but he’s fucking lethal, Mom. He’s attacked women ever since we broke up, causing one girl to commit suicide,” I sniffled. “Have you seen him in Phoenix?”

“A couple months ago, I ran into him at the grocery store. He was glaring at me, but didn’t say a word. I haven’t seen him since,” Renee replied arching a brow. “Should I be concerned?”

“No, I don’t think so. I’m his target,” I huffed, crossing my arms. “Keep your eyes peeled, though. He may use you to get back at me. I don’t know. Perhaps, we’ll get someone to at least stake out your house for your safety. I’ll ask Edward…”

“I’d rather not, Bella. Phil and I are taking a trip to Thailand in a couple of weeks for some couples retreat. We’ll be out of the country until June.”

“Well, in a way, that’s really good,” I mumbled, almost to myself. “From our research, Jacob doesn’t have a passport. He can’t get you in Thailand.”

“On a scale from one to ten, how bad is it? One being a fight on the school yard and ten being possible murder,” Renee questioned.

“About a twenty. He’s determined to make me his,” I shuddered. “Consequences be damned.”

“So that man candy in the suite, Steve and Preston…I get to see them while we’re here?” Renee quipped. “Nice!”

“Jesus, Mom!” I laughed. “You’re married.”

“So? Just because I’m married doesn’t mean that I can’t appreciate the male form. Your husband is still incredibly sexy for a man pushing fifty,” Renee smirked. “Did I tell you about the art class I took? We had models and fuck me, this one male model definitely LOVED the attention on his body. He was always hard.”
“Kill me now,” I groaned, falling back onto the bed.

“Well, if you’re not going to go down to the casino, perhaps I can convince Esme to join me. She looked excited as we passed it on our way up to the elevators. I’m sorry about Jacob and the turmoil he’s causing your family. Makes me want to kick his ass,” Renee spat. With a sigh, she kissed my cheek. “I love you, Bellini. Everything will work out.”

“I hope so. This is bullshit. Why now?” I grumbled.

“Like I said, Jacob is dumber than a post. He obviously didn’t realize what he lost until waaaaaaaaaaay later. I’m off to gamble. Don’t wait up for me,” Renee sang, hopping off the bed and dancing to the living area of the suite. I rolled my eyes and stripped out of my jeans and sweater. I put on a pair of yoga pants and a pilfered hoodie from my husband. My daughters were already flipping through channels in the living room, looking just as comfy as me. I plopped down next to them, holding the room service menu. We ordered our meals, fattening as they could be and completely turned into vegetables on the couch. It was nice to hang out with my girls and just be.

Around nine we went to bed, exhausted from the day of traveling. Our bodies felt like it was after eleven. I sent Edward a quick text before going to bed, knowing that he was probably already asleep. However, I was wrong. Edward called me back and we spent an hour on the phone, having phone sex. I fell asleep quickly after we ended our phone call. I slept so hard that I didn’t even know when my mom came into the room. I just saw her sprawled out on the bed when the alarm went off the next morning.

I had, like, a corner of the California king-sized bed…

Thanks, Mom.

I tried to wake her, but she slept like the dead. She groggily waved me off, claiming that she got back to the suite around five after she had lost the grand she had in her fanny pack. I rolled my eyes, tucking her in and left her to sleep off her gambling/drinking-induced stupor. I checked on my girls and saw that they were already up. We went down to the buffet, preparing to gorge ourselves on the deliciousness of breakfast. Alice, Gianna, Rose, Ava and Alex met up with us while we were in line. Esme had been like Renee and was up to the crack of dawn, gambling. We finished our breakfast and went to the spa. Once there, we separated. The girls were going to be with Steve, getting haircuts, massages and beauty treatments. While they were doing that, we were going to enjoy more extensive beauty treatments, waxing and a group mud bath. After that, we were meeting up with our children to get manicures and pedicure, followed by a session with a makeup artist for our evening out to see Cirque du Soleil.

We all got waxed first. I know that I needed my girly bits to relax before anything else could happen. Get the most painful thing done first, then the rest would be a cakewalk. We all met up in the mud bath, stripping down to nothing.

The spa was having a snit fit over Alex, but he was fighting it tooth and nail. “Please, it’s not like I’m interested in what they’ve got. I’m gay. You know, gay? I like men. I take it in the ass,” he said bluntly. We all groaned as the door opened and a triumphant Alex walked in, a swagger in his hips and a smug grin on his face.

“Wow, Alex. Blunt much?” Rose snickered, sipping her champagne.

“It’s the truth. I love you bitches, but your naughty bits do nothing to make me sexually aroused. Now, Demetri? Fuck yes. Edward? Total masturbation fodder,” Alex giggled, stripping down to a speedo. “And no, you girls are not seeing the twig and berries. That’s for my man only.” He slid into
the mud, sighing contentedly. “Why can’t the mud in Illinois smell this good?”

“Because, this isn’t really mud. It’s mana from heaven,” Alice sighed, leaning back against the edge of the bath. “It makes our skin look ravishing and healthy and younger. Much, much younger.”

“Please, Alice. You look fabulous. I would not even guess that you’re forty-nine,” Rose snorted.

“SHhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!” she hissed. “Don’t say that. I’m trying to stop the clock.”

“Alice, do you use Botox?” Alex teased.

“Maybe,” she grumbled. “I hate getting older. I really do. I mean, I can handle gray hair and taking meds for cholesterol. But, sagging boobs, jiggly ass and having to schedule my life around taking a shit? Fuck, this sucks.”

“Excuse me, but did you just say scheduling your life around taking a shit?” Rose snorted.

“Fuck off. I did,” she huffed. “Do you want to know what time I woke up? Four. So I could get my three dumps out of the way before we had our spa day.”

“And hearing me say that I take in the ass is too much,” Alex quipped. “Knowing that you had to get up before the sun came up to take a shit? That’s crossing a line, Mrs. Whitlock.” Alice scowled at him. “Does Edward have these strange bathroom habits?”

“Do you really want to know?” I laughed. “It could burst your lust-filled bubble you have regarding my husband.”

“Just answer me this: does Edward get up at the crack of dawn to take a shit?” Alex snickered.

“No,” I smirked.

“That’s all I need to know,” he replied, leaning back and sighing happily.

“This sucks. Really, really sucks,” Alice bitched. “I’ve inherited my father’s stomach issues and I’m so not happy about it. I want to go through a day where I don’t have to plan out where and when I have to take a crap. I remember Carlisle doing that when I was in college. I prayed I didn’t inherit that, but apparently my prayers fell on deaf ears.”

“Do you secretly wish that Edward was dealt the same hand?” Rose asked, arching a brow.

“Kind of. We shared a womb and all,” Alice snorted derisively. “Seriously, my brother has only gotten better as the years have progressed. He’s still in shape. He has all his own hair and even his gray is sexy. He looks distinguished while I just look drab.”

“Don’t be complaining, Ali,” I giggled. “Jasper looks mighty fine, too.”

“Only because I force him to go to the gym with me and make him get his hair colored, not to mention, his back waxed. He started sprouting hair back there once he hit forty-five. And don’t get me started on his man boobs,” Alice grumped.

“Alice, you realize that you sound kind of, just a teensy bit narcissistic,” Alex said.

“Narcissism is where you have love or desire over one’s own body. She’s trying to control everyone else’s body,” Rose quipped.

“What’s the word for that?” Alex pondered.
“Shallow,” I replied. “Alice, I love you. Don’t get me wrong, but we’re getting older. The days of being sexy, young and thin are long gone. We now need to embrace our wrinkles, flab and jiggles. We need to love our husband’s inability to keep it up and pray that they do other things with their fingers and tongue.”

“I’m guessing that SGD has NOOOOOO problem in that department,” Rose giggled.

“I plead the fifth,” I deadpanned. Alice huffed, scowling at me. “The only thing that matters is that we love each other, regardless of our ailments, idiosyncrasies and other random issues.”

“This coming from a woman who has a man who can get it up and is sexy as fuck,” Alice hissed.

“Your man could still get it up if he used the little blue pill,” Alex said, putting his arm around Alice’s shoulders. “There’s no shame in taking Viagra.”

“Do you take it?” Alice snapped.

“I don’t, but Demetri has a prescription,” Alex replied. “God, he’d kill me if he knew I was telling you.” Alice sniffled and snuggled into Alex’s arms. “What else is bothering you, sweet pea?”

“I hate the fact that everything is different. Adam’s in college. Gianna is twelve going on twenty-five. Jasper is so focused on work that he has minimal time for me and I feel like our marriage is unraveling,” she cried, looking around the steaming pile of mud. Part of me wanted to laugh since we were having the conversation in a mud bath, while naked.

“Have you told Jasper about how you’re feeling?” Rose asked, her face solemn.

“I’ve tried, but whenever I bring up our relationship, he claims he’s got some huge issue at Whitlock and leaves. He’s in denial…” Alice sighed, scowling at her left hand. She wasn’t wearing her wedding rings but I knew it was why she was looking at her finger.

“You need to corner him and force him to talk about his issues, Ali,” Rose replied. “He needs to see and understand the pain he’s causing. Drop off Gianna to Edward and Bella’s, under the pretense of having a sleepover and tell him how you’re feeling. I love Jasper, don’t get me wrong, but he’s got the mental capacity of a two year old.”

“I agree with Rose. However, approach him tactfully. If Jasper feels threatened, he’ll shut down,” I said, taking Alice’s hand. “Don’t be like a bull in a china shop, demanding he tell you what’s wrong. Perhaps, you need to take a vacation, rekindle the romance. You know?”

“Where was that place you went to on your honeymoon, Bella?” Alice asked.

“Isle Esme,” I replied. “But it’s under new management. Edward and I were looking to go there for our twentieth wedding anniversary but based off the website, it doesn’t look like someplace you’d want to go. It’s more geared toward young people who want to find love, not rekindle love. You know?”

“Shit,” Alice spat.

“We’ll help you plan a trip that Jasper will not want to forget. Ever. I promise,” Alex said, kissing her cheek. One of the staff members poked their head in and told us our time was up. We got out of the gelatinous goo and wrapped ourselves in bathrobes before padding to a nearby shower to rinse off the mud. The rest of our time was spent separated, getting skin treatments and facials before going into the main salon to finish up with our manicures and pedicures with our children.
We finished our day of beauty. I took Gianna with me so Alice could speak with Jasper. We spent the rest of the afternoon getting ready for our night out to see Cirque du Soleil. Gianna, the smart girl that she was, knew something was up with her parents. She asked if they were getting a divorce. I answered truthfully, stating that I didn’t know. I hoped that Jasper and Alice weren’t going to split up. They’d been together longer than Edward and me, dating for several years prior to their hasty wedding in Vegas. Their relationship has always been volatile, but they just got each other. Alice was excitable while Jasper was calm and collected, the voice of reason, as it were. Yes, he was an overgrown child, but for the most part he was cool as a cucumber.

As we met in the lobby, Esme explained that Alice would join us for the show but would not come to dinner. She was upset over her conversation with Jasper. I was worried about her and I sent a text to Edward, telling him to call his sister. Or kick Jasper’s ass. Whichever pleased him more. My guess was that Edward was going to call Alice and then kick Jasper’s ass.

The Cirque show was amazing. The performers were so bendy and beautiful. The music was gorgeous, too. It was all of the famous movie scores, intertwined with current singers performing the iconic ballads from the movies. I bought the CD during intermission, flummoxed at how ethereal it was. Alice did show up to the show, but the deadness in her eyes indicated she wasn’t into it. She acted like she was excited to be there, but Alice was not being Alice. She fooled Gianna, though.

After the show, Alice took the girls upstairs while Esme and Renee dragged Rose, Alex and me into the casino. Preston went up with Alice while Steve decided to stay with us. I begrudgingly sat down at a blackjack table with my mom, gambling a few hundred dollars away. I was never much of a gambler in the first place and this was not my cup of tea. The casino was bright and lively, but I didn’t like wasting money like this. Yes, my combined net worth with Edward was well into the millions, but my humble beginnings were ingrained in my noggin. Don’t waste money.

Two hours in the casino was more than enough for me. I went upstairs with Steve and fell into bed after checking on my children. They were asleep in the suite with a movie playing in the background. Mia’s head was cradled in Kyra’s lap. I swiped a blanket and covered them both, kissing their foreheads.

The next morning, Rose and I checked on Alice. She was still feeling down and asked if we could take Gianna shopping. We agreed and it was a girl’s day, spending way too much money on things that we didn’t need. As we were shopping, I called Edward, asking him if he had any intel on the Alice/Jasper situation. He was as in the dark as I was. Jasper wasn’t forthcoming and Alice spent most of the time crying with him on the phone. However, based on the tightness in his voice, he was very close to kicking Jasper’s ever-loving behind.

Once we got back from shopping, we all went out for dinner at the Bellagio buffet. It was one of the best on the strip. The options that were on there were amazing and delicious. Alice wasn’t eating much and her façade was fading. She tried to be her normal chipper self but obviously the problems with Jasper are greater than she led on. We finished eating, deciding to walk around the shops in the Bellagio to work off some of our meals. The Divas Show was at eleven and the kids were not coming with us. Steve was staying with them, along with Renee. She had no desire to see female impersonators.

We avoided the Jasper topic and got Alice to feel better, encouraging her to spend money on a new wardrobe in Gucci. She was remotely better after that, gushing over the new skirts that were all the rage. Before we hopped in the limo to the theater, she changed into one of the skirts. She looked sexy and much, much happier.

At the Divas Show, we all imbibed in a lot of alcohol. Esme was even brought up on stage and
danced with the bevy of drag queens, performing a kick line with them. She was laughing hysterically while doing it, but looked amazing! The star, Frank Marino, kissed her cheek and led her back to her seat and promised us a backstage tour after the show as payment for sharing her beautiful legs. Esme blushed, thanking him...her...Cher? Frank was in his Cher costume when made that promise.

An hour later, we were in Frank’s dressing room, surrounded by the performers and drinking champagne. Pictures were taken, left and right and it was so much fun. Hell, I even got some makeup tips from the impersonator who played Britney Spears. She had the most amazing lashes and they weren’t fake. I wanted her secret. She handed me an unopened mascara bottle, saying it was the best shit out there. I thanked her, posing for a picture and posting it on my Facebook page.

The next day, we spent the day lounging by the pool. Alice was in better spirits. Edward had called her early, saying he spoke with Jasper and that Gianna was going to spend the weekend with us following our return from Vegas. That put her mind at ease. After roasting for the morning, we went off in our separate directions. Kyra, Mia and me, along with Preston, went to one of the malls to check out some silver jewelry and souvenirs for the boys. Once back at Cosmopolitan, we got dressed for our final dinner out and seeing Wicked.

I had had a good time with the girls, but was ready to go home. Traveling was always draining and dealing with the drama with Alice was a bit much. Plus, I hadn’t had much of an opportunity to really talk to my mom. We had grown apart since I moved out to Chicago and I missed that closeness I had with her. Edward has suggested that she move to Chicago, but she was happy in Phoenix.

Wicked was phenomenal. I mean, better than when I saw it in Chicago. The woman who played Elphaba had a voice that could shatter crystal, it was so pure. I didn’t care for the actress who played Glinda. Her voice was slightly grating, but her portrayal of the good witch was spot on.

Back in the hotel, the girls went to pack up their belongings, since we were leaving at the ass-crack of dawn. Renee managed to drag me back down to the casino. I ended up winning nearly three grand at the blackjack table, hitting a run of great luck. I decided to split my winnings with my daughters, giving them both $1500. I’d give it to them once we got back to Chicago, encouraging them to put it into their savings account.

Unfortunately, going home meant dealing with the very real drama of Jacob. I’d rather deal with the marital drama then fear for my life drama. Plus, saying goodbye to my mom was heart wrenching as well. I didn’t want to see her go. I made her promise that she would come out and visit us once she got back from her trip to Thailand or wherever she was going. So, I was a nervous fucking wreck when I got on the plane, fearful of what could be waiting for me when I got home. Rose handed me two bottles of vodka along with some orange juice. I made myself a fairly strong screwdriver, passing out within the first half hour of the flight.

I jolted awake as we landed in Chicago. The weather was dreary from the looks of the workers outside, very cold. I scowled, wishing I was back in Vegas where it was closer to mid-seventies, as opposed to below freezing. I was slightly hungover and yeah, anxious.

Very anxious.

Back to reality.

Back to work, really. The script for Rose’s book was approved and we were in the planning stages with the director. Most of the meetings would be taking place via Skype. We’d only need to fly out in dire emergencies. However, it was now in the hands of the director, producers and studio. Rose and I were just advisors and consultants. They were tacking on screenwriter to my by-line, as well. I
was going to get a portion of the royalties, once the film came out.

There was also work that needed to be done for the Foundation and as weird as it sounded, I wanted to start writing for myself. I’d always had ideas running through my head, but never really did anything with them. The praise I received for the script for Rose’s book was the impetus I needed to get myself motivated to write my own book.

“Bella, we can get off the plane now,” Rose quipped, elbowing me in the ribs.

I looked around the plane and saw that it was empty except for me and Rose. “Sorry,” I mumbled. “Just stressing over…”

“The dog?” she asked, arching a brow.

“Kind of. That’s one of the many things plaguing my mind,” I quipped sarcastically.

“What else?” Rose questioned, pushing me out of the seat. We got our carry-on luggage and walked out of the plane, ignoring the scowls from the flight attendants.

“I’m worried about Alice and Jas,” I sighed. “What if they can’t work out their issues?”

“It’s not your place to worry, Bellini,” Rose replied, hugging me close. “Were you worried about me and Royce?”

“I knew he was a douche. I was more worried that you would kill him while he slept and I’d be stuck visiting you in jail, dealing with full cavity searches,” I snorted.

“That’s loyalty, Bella. I feel the love,” she smiled. “Being strip searched and visiting me in prison. I’m touched, Bellini, touched indeed.”

I rolled my eyes and walked toward the baggage claim. Steve was stomping behind us, making a big deal of our tardiness. Rose turned and gave Steve a harsh look. “We’re going to pee. Stop with the elephant impression, okay?”

“Fine,” he scoffed.

Rose smiled tightly, dragging me into the bathroom. “Don’t let this bullshit with Jacob get to you. He’s a mongrel who is thinking with his dick and not his brain, but that’s not saying much. The situation with Alice sucks, yes, but it’s not your issue. Let them deal with it. As long as SGD is keeping you sexually satisfied and happy, that’s all that matters, right?”

“Don’t forget my kids,” I mumbled, looking up at Rose like an admonished child.

“Your kids are fucking angels. Shit, they make my children look like hoodlums,” Rose laughed. “They are amazing kids and worship the ground you walk on. Now, let’s go home and spend time with our husbands before they have to go back to work tomorrow.”

“Thanks, Rose,” I said, hugging her tightly. “You’re always the voice of reason.”

“I try, baby doll,” she giggled. She tugged on my hand, leading me out of the bathroom. Steve was outside and he followed us to the baggage claim. Downstairs, we were greeted with signs from our family. Masen was bouncing on his toes, holding a poster saying ‘Welcome Home, Mom!’ I took off and ran into their arms, hugging them each tightly. However, when Edward’s strong arms encased me in a passionate embrace, I felt truly home. Feeling his body surround me and his calming, masculine scent waft all around me, I felt safe, happy and home.
Our reunion was marred with a few snafus. One being the lack of Jasper coming to pick up Alice and Gianna. Edward and I had to drive them home. It made for a very tight fit in the car. Alice was seething as she sat in between Mia and Masen. The second was the overwhelming feeling of being watched…

The sad thing was that I knew who was watching me, but where was the bigger problem.

A/N: Thanks for sticking with me on this one. I’m about half-way through planning the story (right now, we’re looking at it being around thirty-ish chapters). I’ve planned through chapter seventeen. Still trying to work the rest of it out and what the climax is going to be…

Lots of pictures for this one. They will be on my blog and a smattering will be on my tumblr. Links for both of those are on my profile. You can also find me on Facebook (Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation) or on twitter: tufano79. I’d appreciate some lovin!!

Up next will be back to Edward. Some closure will be happening in regards to Emmett. Should Edward accept Emmett’s apology? See him one last time? Leave your thoughts. Also, leave your thoughts regarding the Alice and Jasper situation…what do you think is going on there? (Affair? Need to rekindle the romance? Drifting apart?) I’m curious…See you on the flipside!
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Up next will be back to Edward. Some closure will be happening in regards to Emmett. Should Edward accept Emmett’s apology? See him one last time? Leave your thoughts. Also, leave your thoughts regarding the Alice and Jasper situation…what do you think is going on there? (Affair? Need to rekindle the romance? Drifting apart?) I’m curious…See you on the flipside!

Chapter Eleven: Mortal Coil

EPOV

Alice is driving me up the god damned wall. I love my sister, but fuck me…she needed to go home. It had been four days since they returned from Vegas. Alice had been staying with Bella and me. She refused to speak to Jasper. He blew her off and forgot to pick up Alice and Gianna. My sister was pissed. Fuck, so was I. When I helped all of my girls, Alice and Gianna included, get settled at home, I drove myself to Jasper’s house to rip him a new asshole.

He wasn’t home.

He didn’t show up to work the following day, either.

When he finally showed up to work three days later, well today, I pulled him into my office and punched him in the face, breaking his nose. It felt good. I was always considered a ‘pussy’ by my family but to do that made me feel powerful. Until I found out why Jasper wasn’t at work or at home or why he neglected to pick up his wife and daughter from the airport.

His mom was sick and had died.

They weren’t particularly close but she was still his mother. Jasper had flown down to Texas the day after the girls left for Vegas after he got a phone call from the local hospital, notifying him as next of kin. Everything happened so fast. Jasper’s mom, Delores, was placed in hospice and was on her deathbed, essentially. He had known for a few months that she was terminally ill with lung cancer. She had taken a turn for the worse over the holidays. The cancer had metastasized to her bones, liver and ultimately, her brain.

However, she was never a loving mother and practically ignored Jasper. He was never wanted as a child, really. He was an ‘oops’ baby. By the time Delores realized she was pregnant, it was too late to get an abortion and Delores’ family and her husband, Franklin, refused for her to give the baby up for adoption. It wasn’t right. So, Jasper was raised by nannies and servants while his mother and
father gallivanted at their parties, not caring about their son. Supposedly. Jasper’s father died when he was in high school. He drank himself to death, trying to get away from his wife. They hated each other and were promised to one another or something. It was an arranged marriage, or close to that. From what I heard about Delores, it would drive me to drink, too. But, at least Franklin Whitlock left Jasper money to go to college that couldn’t be touched by his wife. That’s what allowed him to go to MIT. It’s what also made Jasper be my best friend. He knew what it was like to not be wanted by a parent.

However, it was his mother that didn’t want him, not his father like me. Franklin loved Jasper, in his own convoluted way. Franklin was the one who arranged for the nannies while Jasper grew up, where Delores wanted to tie Jasper out in the yard like a dog. Franklin paid for college and left him a hefty inheritance upon his death. Delores despised her son, begging for money on a yearly basis because she was so destitute. That never changed.

When Alice was ranting and raving about how much she hated her husband to me and Bella, he was planning his mother’s funeral. When I was ready to fire his ass for not coming into work without any notice and missing a meeting with a set of possible buyers, he was at a crematorium, saying his final goodbyes to Delores. Okay, not goodbye but the final ‘fuck off.’ He drank an entire bottle of tequila, giving her the proverbial finger.

To say I felt like a douche was an understatement. But, it was unlike him to not say anything and to do this without any support from his wife, me, his kids…

“Why didn’t you call us?!” I barked as I held a towel to Jasper’s nose. It was bleeding like a mother, dripping down onto his suit jacket and dress shirt.

“I didn’t want to be a bother,” Jasper said, walking to my bathroom. “God damn, Edward. I think you lodged my nose into my brain.” He tilted his head back with a groan. “Fucker. I can’t believe you punched me!”

“Probably made you smarter, asstard,” I grumped. “Your wife thinks you’re cheating on her! She doesn’t know about your mom. Why the fuck didn’t you call her? Jasper! She won’t leave!”

“I’m not cheating on Alice. I’m personally a little sick of her, but I’m not cheating on her,” Jasper said, stuffing Kleenex up his nostrils. “I fucking need a nose job, asshole.”

I shot him a look. “Sick of her?” I blinked a few times, confused at his revelation. “She’s your wife. Everybody goes through phases where they’re sick of their spouses. I wanted to strangle Bella when she was pregnant with the twins. All of those late-night spicy food cravings? I’m surprised she didn’t explode from all of the chili peppers she ate.”

“You and Bella are fucking perfect, nauseatingly in-love and so sickeningly happy. Even while you were ready to strangle Bella while she was pregnant with the twins, you probably never wanted to chuck it all. Edward, I love your sister, but she’s so overbearing and bossy, I’m at that point,” Jasper grumbled, poking his nose. “She takes the ‘type A’ personality and multiplies it by a thousand. She’s driving me up the fucking wall. The world doesn’t revolve around Mary Alice Whitlock. Yet, she thinks it does.”

“Jas, you knew this when you married her. Alice’s middle name is bossy. It’s her coping mechanism for being the youngest child out of three,” I said, arching a brow.

“She’s taking it to a whole new level. She’s telling me what I can and cannot eat. She’s making me work out; like threatening to change the locks if I don’t spend at least four days a week at the gym. She’s forcing me to the salon to get my hair colored. I’m not even that gray. Just a little bit on the
sides. Hell, all of the processing from the hair dye is causing my hair to fall out. I’m going bald, Edward. BALD! She’s even dictating when I can go to the bathroom. It has to be around her schedule,” Jasper said, his face flushed. “Not to mention she’s become obsessed with working out and getting botox. In addition to that, I’m not allowed to…”

“Enough! My sister is an overbearing little shit!” I snarled. “Jasper, do you still love her?”

“I loved how she was a few years ago,” Jasper sighed. “This new Alice? This control freak? I don’t love her at all. She’s making my life hell.” That I did understand. She was trying to do the same to all of us in my household since coming back from Vegas. Hence, the reason for me in getting her to leave. “I don’t know if we’re going to make it.”

“Well, first off, you need to talk to her,” I said, glowering at him. He huffed out a breath. I smacked his arm. “Alice is up in arms and pissed at you. She doesn’t know about your mother and the fact that she died. That’s the biggest part of this situation. Her lack of knowledge! Secondly, you guys can’t throw away nearly twenty-five years of a relationship away over something small like being overbearing. Alice must be doing this to compensate for something.”

“Yeah. Getting old,” Jasper barked. “She’s been depressed ever since she noticed her first gray hair. Plus, she’s going through menopause. She’s all sorts of hormonal and having hot flashes and shit. I can always tell when she’s going through one…the air’s on it’s twenty degrees out.”

“Then, go to marriage counseling, convince Alice to go to a therapist. Don’t give up on your marriage because of this,” I said, scowling at my brother-in-law. “Go to my house, pick up your wife and kid and make it better, Jasper. I’m sorry about your mom and for smashing your nose into your face, but don’t throw this away. Got it?”

Jasper sighed, nodding slightly. “I hope that…this can be fixed,” he said, looking up at me. Pushing away from the sink, he smacked my head. “Next time, I’ll break your nose, jackass.”

“I’d like to see you try, Jasmine,” I smirked, slapping him on the ass. He flipped me off and he left my office.  I sent Bella text, giving her a heads up about World War III that was about to erupt in my home. Maybe? I prayed that Alice and Jasper could fix their problems. They seemed so trivial compared to what they’d dealt with before, but Alice is making a mountain out of a molehill. It was her forte.

I may have to have a conversation with my younger sister. I put it on my to-do list. Right under grocery shopping and clipping my toe nails.

I spent the rest of the morning trying to do my job, along with Jasper’s. It was a massive clusterfuck. There is a reason why Jasper is the face of the company. He’s a schmoozer. A total schmoozer.

Me? Not so much. Ask me to build something out of a few screws, a circuit board and a power supply and I could totally make something. Have a conversation and schmooze with a client? HA! I don’t think so. I had a phone conference with a client who used our web protection software. They were all about getting a refund since their servers were hacked and crashed due to a massive virus. It wasn’t our fault, technically. Our product protects software from corruption, but needed to be run regularly with their IT department. According to the tech consultant, it was not run on a regular basis, perhaps once every few months, resulting in the massive failure. I tried to talk the client through the process, but he just demanded a refund of over a million dollars. It wasn’t our problem that your company didn’t follow instructions. I refused to back down and we lost a client because I was fucking stubborn.

If Jasper had handled the call, he would have sold them something else like new servers or tablets for
the entire company, making us a tidy profit.

I’ll just stick with the technical end of my job, thank you very much. So, I sent out emails to the other conference calls, explaining that Jasper would have to reschedule and that he was dealing some personal issues at this time. He would contact them within a week. I couldn’t deal with that shit. I’ve got enough on my plate with my menopausal sister, hormonal teenage daughter, paranoid wife and delusional brother.

That’s right, kids.

My brother.

He’s called me three times since the first of the year, begging for forgiveness. Or was it four times? He really wanted to speak with me, but I don’t know.

Personally, I think he’s panicking about his impending death. It was scheduled for January sixteenth, just after midnight. I had thought a lot about what he had said to me and about his apology. I should give a rat’s ass, but I couldn’t. Bella told me, in her infinite wisdom that if I didn’t meet with Emmett one last time, that it would gnaw away at my psyche and make me into a bitter old man. It would eat away at me and I’d shrivel up, turning into my father.

I cringed at the thought.

I refused to be even remotely related to that douche. Yes, he fathered me and did apologize for his actions, but he was the epitome of an angry, bitter man who only saw what he wanted to see and that was not me. So, I needed to be better than that. But did it mean that I had to talk to my brother?

Yes, Edward.

No. Nope. I don’t want to. Maybe if I cross my arms and pretend that he doesn’t exist that he’ll go away? A temper tantrum sounds pretty appealing, too.

“Mr. Edward, you’re rambling to yourself,” Johnny snickered.

No, I’m not.

“Yes, you are,” Johnny bellowed, falling forward in hysterics. I sent a sharp look, in total denial that I was talking to myself. “You even looked like my nephew, crossing your arms and pouting your lips like a child.”

“Sorry. I’m just debating with my inner-voice about what to do with my brother,” I grumped. “I’d love to have some time where I am not dealing with traumatic issues. Psychotic ex-boyfriends stalking my wife? Deranged brothers begging for forgiveness? Overbearing, bossy, controlling sisters obsessing over getting old and sabotaging their marriage? Fuck, it would be just my luck if Kyra walks up to the office and proclaims that she’s pregnant!” My face was flushed and I could feel my blood pressure rising.

“Mr. Edward, you need to calm down,” Johnny said softly, putting his hand on my shoulder. “Breathe, slowly.”

“What would you do?” I asked. “You were there with this whole thing with Emmett…should I forgive him?”

“It’s not a question if you should, it’s a question of should you tell him that you already did,” Johnny replied sagely.
I sat there for a few moments. I had forgiven Emmett. I didn’t want to admit it though. *Denial ain’t a river in Egypt, bucko.* “I don’t want to appear weak. I’ve always been considered the weakest out of all of the kids, Johnny,” I frowned. “Emmett and my father were the bullies and Alice and my mom were my advocates. I was just the geek with thick glasses and no backbone, too worried about getting beat up or practicing my damn oboe. It wasn’t until I started dating Bella that I grew stronger. She is the reason for everything.”

“You’re not weak, Mr. Edward. If anything, you’re one of the strongest men I know,” Johnny said quietly. Another sharp look. *Liar.* “I’m saying this out of love and respect for you and Miss Bella. You built this company with nothing more than a few patents and a dream. You met the woman of your dreams and fought like hell to keep her, not to mention, your relationship is thriving. I see the love between you and Miss Bella and it’s amazing…and nauseating.”

“We’re not nauseating,” I grumped. *Yes, you are. Your public displays of affection almost got you kicked out of a high school football game.*

“Yes, you are but that’s okay,” Johnny laughed, smacking my back. *Ow, muscle man.* “The love you have for your wife is nothing short of amazing, Mr. Edward. You have a beautiful family and you should be proud of that. It was because of your strength to fight for that…” He sighed, looking at me thoughtfully. “Mr. Edward, talk to your brother. I know what he did to you and to your family. He’s been living in hell since his incarceration in that prison. Give him the solace that he needs before they take his life. You will regret it if you don’t.”

I sighed, running my hands through my hair. “You’re right, but I don’t want to talk to him face-to-face. The drama in my life is at an all-time high. Jacob, my sister, Jasper…seeing Emmett will only ruffle my feathers. I’d rather not have a heart attack at the age of forty-nine.”

“Out of all the drama you have, this is the one thing you can fix,” Johnny countered. “Regardless of whether you see him or not, he’s going to die on January sixteenth. Be the bigger man. I know you are that, but give Emmett the opportunity to atone for his sins.” Johnny got up and he checked his phone. “You about ready to go home, sir?”

I fussed with my tie, twisting it nervously. In a few days, I’ll be the oldest of two, not the middle child. Due to his actions, my brother is going to be put to his death via lethal injection. Should I make amends?

Do you want to be like Emmett or be better than Emmett?

Better than, I answered mentally. “Give me a few minutes, Johnny. I have a few phone calls to make,” I whispered, looking up at my bodyguard and friend.

“I’ll be outside, trying to ignore Eric’s longing stares,” Johnny snorted and then blushed.

“You still have feelings for him,” I said, leaning my head to the side.

“We’ve got too much history and it’s awkward,” Johnny grumbled. “I do care for him, but honestly I can’t forgive myself for letting him go. My close-mindedness ruined our relationship.”

“You should listen to your own advice. Talk to Eric,” I smiled. “Become friends and let it flourish from there. Okay?” Johnny made a face but nodded before slipping out of my office. I contacted the prison in Pontiac about meeting with my brother. For whatever reason, the only day they’d let me come down is the day prior to his scheduled execution. With a sigh, I agreed and made arrangements. I had a few meetings scheduled, but easily changed the dates or had Demetri take them over. Once I was done with that, I met up with Johnny. He was anxiously talking with Eric,
who was still hurt by Johnny’s behavior all those years ago, but the love he had for Johnny was there. Eric blushed when I gave him a smile before getting Johnny’s attention. We went down to the parking garage and drove back to the house in Wheaton.

Back home, I noticed Alice’s car was still in my driveway. “Aw, hell,” I groaned.

“What’s wrong, Mr. Edward?”

“My sister is still here,” I said, scowling at her car. “I do not need her in my face, telling me that I’m too fat.”

“Now you know how Mr. Jasper feels,” Johnny snickered. I made a face as I got out of the car. Johnny tossed me my keys before going to his car to drive to his apartment in downtown Wheaton. Stealing myself for the drama of my sister, I walked inside. Owen was in the kitchen, shell-shocked while Masen, the nosy, busy-body was sitting by the stairs, trying to hear anything.

“It’s not polite to eavesdrop, Mase,” I said, ruffling his hair.

“Shit!” he squeaked, stumbling into the wall.

“Language, Masen,” I chided.

“Sorry. You just startled me,” he replied, blushing. “Uncle Jasper came over earlier today and there was a huge blow-out, supposedly. Mom’s been in the guest room with Aunt Ali since he left.”

“When was that?” I asked.

“He stormed out of here when Steve brought Kyra and me back from school,” Owen said, adding some spices to whatever he had cooking on the stove. “He ran into Kyra, making her fall into a snow bank. She was pissed, screaming at Uncle Jasper for hurting her.”

“Is she alright?” I asked, my anger spiking. My best friend knocked my kid over? Oh, his ass is grass.

“She’s fine but angry that her jeans were stained and ruined by the snow,” Owen said, rolling his eyes. “What’s going on with Uncle Jas and Aunt Ali?”


“With Mia in her room. Uncle Jas wanted to take her back with him but she refused to leave because of how he acted towards Aunt Ali. However, Gianna is very upset at both of them,” Masen answered. My youngest son gave me a look. “Is Aunt Ali staying? She’s driving…"

“Masen, shut up,” Owen hissed, tossing a towel at Masen.

“What? Owen, she completely rearranged my closet and all of my clothes are, well, in large garbage bags in the garage. Yours too,” Masen replied, his eyes wide.

“What are you two talking about?” I asked, slipping off my suit coat and grabbing a beer.

“Apparently Aunt Ali went through all of our closets to pull out clothes that are no longer in style or whatever, donating them to Goodwill,” Owen answered. “Mom stopped her before she caused too much damage into your closet, but the destruction has been done to the rest of ours. They’re empty.”

“Then, Aunt Ali went off on Mom about her lack of grooming abilities,” Masen blanched. “Aunt Ali pointed out all of mom’s flaws, causing her to get really upset, supposedly. I don’t know what
happened, but Mom was very upset and didn’t want to help Aunt Ali.”

“Supposedly?” I asked.

“It happened this morning while we were at school. Steve told us,” Owen grimaced. “Uncle Jasper interrupted her attack on mom when he came over. Aunt Ali has been sobbing ever since.”

I pursed my lips, shocked at my sister’s behavior and shocked at Jasper, too. “I’m going to go upstairs, change and deal with this. Can you both handle getting dinner on the table?”

“We’re good, Dad,” Masen smiled, hugging me tightly. He lingered a bit too long.

“Everything okay, Mase?” I asked, rubbing his back.

“I know my timing sucks, but can we talk later tonight?” he asked, his pale skin flaming.

“Sure,” I smiled, patting his cheek. “Only if it’s good news?”

“I think it is,” he smiled crookedly.

I kissed his cheek before going upstairs to deal with the aftermath of Alice’s tirade, Jasper’s douchiness and my wife’s emotions. I pulled at my tie, mentally screaming for my mommy. I could hear Alice’s sobs. Cringing, I ducked into my room and saw the beginnings of a closet makeover, but thankfully, it wasn’t too disastrous. I changed into a pair of jeans and a sweater. Making a sign of the cross, I prayed for strength in dealing with my sister. “Don’t let me strangle her,” I whispered before knocking on the guest room door. I will not kill my twin sister. I will not kill my twin sister. I will not kill my twin sister.

That really sounded familiar…hmmm…

“Alice, let go,” Bella choked out. “Someone’s knocking on the door.” More sobs. With a sigh, my wife called out. “Come in!”

I pushed open the door and found Bella in bed with a very disheveled Alice. Her hair was all over the place and her skin was flushed. Bella’s eyes widened and she pleaded with me. Save me, Edward. Please! Get this elfin midget girl off my body. “Alice, let go of my wife,” I said, trying not to laugh since the way she was banded around Bella was like an octopus.

“Older?” she whimpered, looking up at me. Her hazel eyes were red and puffy. With a broken sob, she released Bella and ran into my arms, clinging to me like a limpet. I easily picked up my sister, carrying her to the chair in the room. Her sobs began anew. Bella got out of bed stiffly, walking past me and kissing my forehead. With a sad smile, she ducked out of the room and left me with Alice.

“What’s wrong with me?” Alice asked.

“I’m ruining my marriage,” she whimpered, tugging at my sweater. “My head…it’s all sorts of fucked up. Can you develop mental illness later in life?”

“I would think so, Ali, but tell me more than that. I’m shooting blind here,” I said, not divulging that I already knew what Jasper told me. He may be my best friend, but Alice is my baby sister. Brokenly, Alice told me about she hated getting older and losing her womanhood. She felt ugly, undesirable and out of control. So, as a result, she was trying to control everything else. She told me about Jasper and his mom, followed by her anger for his lack of consideration for not telling her. My sister went off on him for being selfish. That’s when he left, angry at her outburst. Hell, I was angry
at her outburst. Alice, my sister, could have the largest heart ever but could also be so spoiled.

“I don’t know what to do,” she whimpered.

“First off, Jasper’s mother died. Yes, they didn’t have a close relationship, but he just buried his mom,” I chided. “Alice, I love you, but the world doesn’t revolve around you or your problems. Throwing a temper tantrum isn’t cute anymore. We’re going to be fifty in June. Not five.”

She huffed out a breath and clenched down with her hands on my bicep. “Excuse me for having fucking feelings, Edward,” she spat. She tried to wriggle out of my arms, but I held firm.

“Stop,” I admonished. “We’re how old?” She growled at me. “Don’t give me that crap, Alice. I know that you’re upset about Jasper blowing you off, but throwing a temper tantrum will not solve the problem.” She stopped moving, obviously seething based off her panting breaths. “Alice, you need to listen to me. Was Jasper wrong? Yes. He should have told you. There’s no denying that. But, this is obviously a smaller problem in the grand scheme of things, right?”

“Yeah,” she sulked. “I’m ugly and I’m losing him.”

“You’re right. You are losing him, but only you can fix that, Younger,” I said, hugging her close.

“Jasper mentioned something about seeing a shrink,” Alice muttered.

“I wouldn’t discount it, Alice,” I replied. “I don’t want to sound like an ass, but you’ve grown more and more agitated in the past year. We’re getting older. We can’t stay young and beautiful forever.”


“Yeah, you definitely need to talk to someone about this because you’re not going to get any sympathy from me or my wife,” I said, my voice taking a steely tone. “Not when you belittle us, or Bella in particular.”

“Crap,” Alice whimpered.

“Yeah, crap. Talk to someone, Alice. Perhaps go on anti-depressants or hormone replacement therapy. Anything! But, this behavior is going to continue to drive a wedge between you and Jasper. Not to mention your family. I will not have you belittle my wife,” I said.

“It already did,” she mumbled.

“Well, it’ll get worse,” I replied. “You’re my sister and I love you. I’ll always look out for you, but I’ll also tell you when you’re wrong.”

“Let me guess, I’m wrong?” she quipped sadly.

“Very wrong, Younger.” I answered. “In many ways. You’ve got a lot of work to do to make it right. Number one, put my children’s clothes back into their closets.”

“Edward, that took me all morning. I’ll just buy them new stuff,” she grumped. I arched a brow, challenging her to defy me. “Fine.”

“Number two, apologize to Bella for pointing out her flaws. You essentially turned into one of the bullies you spent most of your life defending me from,” I said. Alice sniffled, nodding against my chest. “Number three, call a therapist, counselor or psychiatrist. You need some help. And last, but
not least. Go. Home.”

“I don’t know if Jasper will let me back,” she whimpered. “We said some horrible things to each other.”

“Worse comes to worse, spend time with Mom and Papa,” I offered. Alice sighed and played with my sweater. “Ali?”

“I’ll try and talk to Jas tomorrow. If things don’t work out, I’ll go to Mom’s over the weekend,” Alice answered. “I’m sorry, Edward.”

“I’m not the one you need to apologize to, Alice. It’s Bella, Jasper, Gianna, my children…” I rattled off. She cringed. I hugged her tightly and got up from the chair. She was leaning on my bladder. Sullenly, she told me that she wouldn’t be down for dinner. I nodded and went to check on my wife. Bella was angrily putting our clothes back into the closet. Her face was flushed and she was taking it out on the hangers. I wrapped my arms around her waist, pulling her away from the closet.

“She makes me so mad, Edward,” Bella hissed, squirming in my hold. “Every minute detail she found fault in me…she ripped me to shreds. Then, this nonsense with the clothes and that fight with Jasper? Fuck!”

“She was very wrong, gorgeous,” I said, sitting on the bed and pulling Bella to straddle my waist. “What did she say?”

“That I have no ass, my roots are showing, my left boob is bigger than my right, my thighs are dimply and I’m in desperate need of a manicure,” Bella spat. “Then, she went into my parenting… saying I was lousy mother.”

“That’s all bullshit, Bella. You know that,” I frowned. Now, I wished I had ripped my sister a new one. My wife was not a lousy mother. We both loved our children, giving them the best we could offer. “Where does she get off?”

“I don’t know, but she needs to get the fuck out of our house,” Bella growled. “She’s…ooooh! No words. I have no words to describe what she’s doing to me. I think the reason why my roots are showing are because of her shenanigans.” My wife huffed out a sigh and wrapped her arms around my neck, burying her nose into my hair. Gently I held her until Owen called up to let us know that dinner was ready. “Can’t we hide up here?”

“Come on, gorgeous,” I snorted, helping her off my lap. “We’ll have a nice family dinner and enjoy the quiet since Alice isn’t joining us.” Bella’s eyes widened and she smiled secretively. Threading our fingers together, we went downstairs to the kitchen. Owen had made spaghetti with meatballs, garlic toast and salad. Dinner was fairly sedate since Gianna was close to tears and worried about her parents. Mia was hovering over Gianna like a mother hen. Owen and Kyra were talking about his trip to Peoria in a few weeks while Masen was looking at something on his tablet.

“Aunt Bella, can I go up to Mia’s room?” Gianna asked, her eyes filled with tears. “I’m not really hungry.”

“Sure, sweetheart,” Bella frowned. Gianna pushed away from the table, dejectedly walking away. My wife sent me a harsh glare. I knew that I had to talk to Alice so she could be a mother to her daughter. If not, Uncle Edward would have to step in and take care of my goddaughter.

After dinner, I was stopped by Masen before I could go upstairs to talk to either my sister or my godchild. “Can we talk now, Dad?” he asked, his hazel eyes beseeching me. Bella pointed the stairs
and walked up, watching her as she ascended the steps. God, her ass looks like perfection. Maybe we can have some naked fun time...today has been stressful, to say the least. “Dad?”

“Huh?” I answered intelligently, still staring at Bella’s ass. I wanted it.

“Stop drooling over Mom,” Masen snorted, tugging on my sweater sleeve. I pouted as I let him guide me to the office of the house. “So, you know how we’re dealing with this crap with Jacob and stuff?”

“Unfortunately,” I grumbled, still pissed that my son dragged me away from ogling my wife. My wife! I needed to ogle her, damn it.

“Dad, you can have fun with mom after we talk,” Masen laughed, thrusting his tablet into my hands. On the screen was information about German shepherd puppies. “Can we get a new dog? German shepherds are amazing at protecting their owners and we need as much protection as we can get. You know?”

“A German shepherd is an awfully big dog,” I said as I scrolled through the different dogs, all at a local shelter. My son was adamant on getting a shelter dog, especially with how we got Wrigley, his adopted dog that died of bone cancer a little over a year ago. Wrigley was about thirty pounds at most. German shepherds are much bigger and well, more vicious. That’s the idea, bonehead.

“Dad, we need that. Mom needs that because you said yourself that this Jacob guy is very, very dangerous,” Masen said, clicking on a picture of an older looking puppy with more black fur than brown. He was cute. “We should check it out. Please?”

I sighed, looking at the dog and reading his information. He was six months old and already neutered. The family who picked him up originally couldn’t keep him due to severe allergies. Like you’ll deal with, Edward. Break out the Zyrtec. “When do you want to check out this dog?”

“We’ve got an appointment for five tomorrow,” Masen smirked.

“Awfully sure of that, bub,” I teased him, elbowing his side.

“As much as you said you hated Wrigley, you loved him, Dad,” Masen smiled crookedly.

“Oh, I loved the dog. HATED what he did to my allergies. Not to mention Owen? We both were miserable,” I chuckled. “But, I know you love having a pet and my guess is that a goldfish isn’t what you want.”

“A goldfish can’t kick ass, Dad,” Masen said, arching a brow. He sucked in his cheeks, making the fishy face. He dropped the face after a few seconds, giving me a stern glare. “That isn’t really intimidating.”

“You win. This round,” I quipped, kissing his temple. “I’ll work from home so we can be at the shelter on time. Do you still have Wrigley’s stuff?”

“In a box in my closet,” he beamed. He knew he had totally won, but I had to make him sweat.

“Now, I want to talk with your mother before we make a decision. However, I’m certain she’ll agree to it. She adored Wrigley, despite his rocky beginnings in our family,” I teased.

“I’ll never live that down, will I?” he grumped.

“Probably not, Mase,” I said. He shrugged and got up from the leather couch, clutching his tablet to
his chest. I heaved my body up off the couch a little bit later, walking to the family room. Thomas and Kyra were cuddled on the couch. I scowled at them but they were not alone. Owen and Mia were with them, watching some television show. “Did you all do your homework?”

They all grunted, transfixed on the television. I rolled my eyes and went upstairs to check on Gianna. I knocked on the door, finding Gianna curled up with Bella on Mia’s bed. In the guest room, I could hear Alice crying. However, her feelings should be secondary to her daughter. “You okay, Gianna?” I asked, sitting next to her and running my fingers through her blonde hair.

“Are my parents getting a divorce, Uncle Eddie?” she whimpered, looking up at me with her wide blue eyes.

“I hope not, sweetie,” I said. She sniffled and flung herself at me. I hugged her tightly as Bella kissed her head. “Your dad is dealing with something bad. Your grandma from his side died and he’s really upset. Plus, your mom is upset at your dad because he didn’t tell her about your grandma.”

“I don’t want my parents to get divorced,” she cried, burying her face to my chest.

“We don’t want that to happen either, Gianna,” Bella replied. “Uncle Edward and I know you’re upset and you have every right to be. Whatever happens, Gianna, know that both of your parents love you very much.”

“Then, why are you two comforting me?” Gianna snapped. “Why is my mom in her room crying while I’m upset too?”

“I don’t know, Gianna. I agree with you,” I said, hugging her tightly. “We both love you and if you ever want to talk to either Aunt Bella or me, we’ll be here for you.”

“Promise?” she asked quietly.

“I promise,” I said, brushing my finger on her nose like I did when she was a baby. She giggled and snuggled against my chest, trying to get comfortable. I lay back on the pillows and my wife and I stayed with Gianna until she eventually fell asleep. Kissing her forehead, I slipped out of her embrace and left the bedroom. Gianna whimpered quietly as we turned off the lights.

“Do you want to scream at Alice, or me?” Bella asked, her voice tight with anger.

“Neither. I’m going to call Jasper and tell him to pick up his daughter. She needs her parents. Obviously, Alice is having a spoiled moment.” I took out my phone and explained to Jasper what was going on in my house. He growled, asking if we could get Gianna ready. He would be over in fifteen minutes to love up on his daughter. Bella packed up Gianna’s clothes. She didn’t stir on the bed, but was very clear that she was distressed. I left her, my heart breaking for my niece.

True to his word, Jasper arrived and he was ready to go to battle with Alice. I shook my head and directed him to Mia’s room. However, Jasper, the pussy, couldn’t pick up his daughter who was not even eighty pounds, soaking wet. Easily lifting Gianna, I carried her to the car and tucked her into the backseat. “Do you need me to come with you?” I teased. “Carry her into the house?”

Jasper bit his lip and nodded sheepishly. “It must be a cold day in hell when you’re stronger than me,” Jasper snorted humorlessly. “In more ways than two.” I furrowed my brow. “You’ve been awesome with this whole thing, save for the punch in the nose.”

“Sorry about that, but I was only getting Alice’s version of the story,” I shrugged. “You’re both wrong, but in the same way, both right.” Jasper nodded, twisting his wedding ring. “I’ll follow you to the house, you weakling.” Jasper rolled his eyes, flipping me off and getting into his car. I got into
my car, driving behind Jasper until he reached his home. Carefully pulling Gianna out of the car, I carried her to Jasper’s guest room. “Why here?”

“I can’t sleep in our bed without Alice,” Jasper answered. I quirked a brow. “I still love her, Edward. Yes, I’m pissed at how she’s acting, but I still have feelings for her. I just need time to calm down. She needs time to pull herself together. If she gives you grief about Gianna, send her to talk to me, okay?”

We hugged and I drove back to my house. Hastily, I kicked Thomas out and sent all of my kids to bed because this drama with Alice and Jasper had me desperate for my wife. They were all pretty amenable to the idea and didn’t put up much of a fuss. That night, Bella and I made love numerous times. We both needed to be closer to each other.

You can’t get much closer than being inside of another person.

Just saying…

xx STTD xx

The next day, Alice screamed at Bella and me for sending Gianna to stay with Jasper. Bella snapped back, explaining that Gianna needed her mother last night and that Alice’s pity party could have waited. I stepped in before my sister could attack Bella and sent her to talk to Jasper, as per his instructions. I contacted my mother, explaining Alice’s mental breakdown and she said she’d talk to my sister, getting her the help that she needed. Apparently, my mother had a similar situation when she went through menopause but it wasn’t as severe.

By early afternoon, I had given up on trying to work and went in search of my wife. She was in the kitchen, cleaning like crazy. “How are you doing?” I asked.

“I’m a mess, really,” Bella replied, using a knife to get out the shit in the crevices of our stove. “I’m grateful your sister is gone. Edward, I love her, but I was ready to strangle her. Gianna is going to need months of therapy because of this fiasco. You know that, don’t you?”

“We’ll be there for her,” I said, walking over to my wife and pulling her away from the stove. She protested. “The dirt and grime can wait, gorgeous. I never got a chance to talk to you yesterday.”

“Though, you did fuck my brains out,” she giggled, elbowing my ribs.

“And you weren’t complaining,” I said, blowing a raspberry into her neck. She squealed, pushing me away from her. I laughed, hopping up on the counter. “Seriously, though. Masen dragged me into the office during the height of this drama to inform me he wants another dog.”

“Now?” Bella whined, walking to the fridge to grab some water. She held up a bottle and I nodded. Tossing it to me, I caught the water, slurping down half of the bottle in one gulp.

“He made some pretty valid points for a thirteen year old,” I said. Bella arched a brow, clicking her fingernails on the lid of her water bottle. “We need the extra protection and a German shepherd would be perfect for that.”

“Ugh! Think of all of the hair,” she groaned. “Wrigley wasn’t that hairy and he shed EVERYWHERE!”

“Bella, Masen doesn’t ask for much. He’s thinking about our family and he would like another dog. He showed me a picture of a gorgeous German shepherd that’s at a shelter in Wheaton. We’re going to see it tonight. I’ve already done some preliminary searching and found an excellent trainer who is
willing to take a new dog. It’s all in place.”

“Why couldn’t we get a malti-poo or something,” Bella deadpanned.

“Because Jacob could kick the malti-poo and it would disintegrate,” I retorted. “A German shepherd is a good hearty stock and brutal.”

“I’m not going to win, am I?” Bella asked, walking over to me and putting her hands on my thighs.

“Nope. Masen has me convinced,” I replied, cupping her face.

“You know what would convince me ever more?” she crooned.

“What’s that?”


“Done,” I choked out, hopping down from the counter and swinging Bella over my shoulder.

We spent the afternoon in bed and begrudgingly got dressed once we heard the kids start to filter home. Masen was nearly vibrating in his skin when I told him that Bella was okay with us getting another dog. The only person who wasn’t overly thrilled was Owen. Bella just handed him an allergy pill and gave him the mom glare. A few hours later, we were the owners of a very rambunctious but adorable German shepherd puppy named Max. We were going to keep him for the rest of the week and then drop him off at the trainers in Orland Park.

Max took to Bella right away and then to Masen. He didn’t care for Owen, but my guess was that the feeling was mutual. Owen kept reminding Masen that Max couldn’t come into his room. The good thing was that Max was a sweet dog and he would be a welcome part of our family.

The rest of the week flew by. I had to go to work after we got the dog and was surprised to see Jasper there. He looked like hell. I asked him how he was doing and he just shook his head. After a few days, he explained that he and Alice are going through a trial separation. She was going to stay with my parents while he stayed at the house. Alice was going to get some help and pull it together while Jasper grieved for his mom. They would reassess in a few months, but based off their reactions, there was still love there but the drama was causing them to crack.

Over the weekend, we dropped off the dog and went shopping for new dog supplies. Max would be done with his training in a week, two weeks at the longest. We also firmed up our travel plans for Owen’s trip to Peoria in few weeks.

Before I knew it, January fifteenth rolled around and I was nervously getting ready to drive down to Pontiac with Johnny. I was a nervous wreck. My hair stuck out every which way and I had changed shirts three times since I’d sweated out of each of them. Bella hugged me tightly when I left a little after eleven in the morning. My appointment time was at two. “You’ll do great, Edward,” she whispered, kissing my lips. “And you’re doing the right thing.”

“Right,” I sighed. “I love you, Bella. Thank you for…”

“You don’t have to thank me, angel and I love you more,” she smiled. “We’ll be here when you get back.”

“Okay,” I said, kissing her deeply before leaving with Johnny. The trip was quiet, save for some music on the radio. I drove because I needed to focus on something other than what I was going to do. I was going to say goodbye to my brother.
I went through the process of being strip-searched and analyzed before I was led to the same room where we met before. The only difference was that I was allowed to bring in a few things. I was carrying two photo albums, two letters from Mom and Alice, and one of Emmett’s childhood toys, a stuffed bear that had seen better days. The warden said that it was Emmett’s last day on earth, he could have some luxuries.

Emmett was led into the room and he looked a little better. His face was shaved and his hair was neatly combed. However, he still had that slumped posture along with a noticeable limp. The guards were less rude and left him unshackled. “Buzz when you’re ready, Mr. Cullen,” he said to me.

“Thanks,” I replied. The guard left and I was in the room with my brother. Alone. On his last day on earth. Holy shit. I didn’t know what to say. I opened my mouth and then immediately shut it.

Emmett arched a brow. “You okay, Edward?”

“I don’t know what to say,” I answered honestly.

“Join the club,” he chuckled. “All day long, the guards have been giving the look.”

“What look?”

“The look of pity,” Emmett replied and demonstrated it, jutting out his lower lip and moving his head to one side. “The look indicating that they feel a little sorry that I’m going to be injected with poison tonight just after midnight, ending my life. I’d rather deal with the sneers, thank you very much.”

“I don’t blame you there,” I said, looking up at him. “How are you doing with, um, that? The lethal injection thing?”

“I’ve come to terms with it,” Emmett shrugged. “I fucked up, Edward. I need to pay for my crimes and unfortunately that payment is my life.”

“It didn’t have to be like this, you know,” I said quietly.

“I know,” Emmett whispered. “I thought I had it all, but ended up throwing it all away. I…” He looked down and tears streamed down his face.

I moved and sat down next to him. My hand was shaking when I put it on his shoulder. When I made contact with his body, Emmett shuddered. “I forgive you, Emmett,” I murmured. “I know I was cold and harsh to you that day in the courthouse and again here in the prison, but a lot of time has gone by. Yes, you’ve made a lot of mistakes but I can’t, in my right mind or in my heart, let you die thinking that not one of your family cares about you.” Emmett shifted quickly, enfolding me into a hug. He sobbed brokenly, clutching at my body. I eventually wrapped my arms around him, rubbing his back.

“You have no idea what that means to me, Edward,” Emmett cried. He held on for a long time before pulling back. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have…”

“No, it’s okay,” I replied, rubbing his arm. “Unexpected, but okay.” I reached across and pulled on the bag I had carried in with me. “Do you want to see pictures of your nieces and nephews?”

Emmett smiled and nodded eagerly. I spent the rest of the afternoon, telling him stories of my children and showing him pictures of each milestone. Around five, a guard came in with two trays of food. It was Emmett’s final meal and the guard also was kind enough to bring me something, too. Once we were done with our meals, we talked about how Whitlock Technologies was doing and how it had grown since we opened. I told him about Mom and her marriage to Marcus. A flash of
sadness crossed Emmett’s eyes. I told him that Mom was happy and giddy in love. After that conversation, I handed Emmett the letters from Mom and Alice. He read them, tears streaming down his face, again.

The door opened and the guard walked in. His face was somber. “It’s time, Emmett,” he said.

“Can my brother stay with me?” Emmett asked, his voice sounding broken and hollow.

“It’s not protocol,” the guard hedged. “Let me talk to the warden.” He turned and left, leaving me with Emmett again.

“Edward, in case they don’t give you the go ahead to stay, I wanted you to know that I love you,” Emmett whispered, staring at me. “I’m proud of you and I’m sorry that I didn’t take the opportunity to get to know you. I was too much of a douche to…Yeah, I’ll shut up now.”

I stared at him and gave him a crooked smile. “I’m glad I came. I can’t say that I condone how you acted in the past, but in your mind, you probably had your own reasons.”

“Stupid reasons,” he barked. “I was just so worried that I couldn’t say that I was sorry. Edward, I was awful to you. I wish… I wished I could have done things differently.”

“I’ve already told you. I forgive you, Em,” I said. “I forgive you and in my own way, I love you, too.” He looked at me dubiously. “I love my wife a lot more, but I do love you, Emmett. You’re my brother.” Emmett pulled me in and gave me another hug. It was broken up by the guard.

“The warden said that your brother can stay with you,” he replied. “However, it’s time.” Emmett pursed his lips and stood up. I gathered the photo albums and quickly took out a picture of the family, pressing it into his hand. Emmett gave me an appreciative smile and I handed him his stuffed bear. He laughed and we followed the guard through a maze of cold, drab hallways until we arrived at the sterile room what held a hospital bed, an IV and a large machine with the medication that was going to stop Emmett’s heart.

The guards strapped him onto the bed and a nurse put in the IV. After that, a priest came in and the three of us prayed quietly before the doctor would set up the injections. The priest left and the doctor explained what would happen. Emmett was getting scared. The heart rate monitor attached to his chest was beeping wildly. I took his hand, rubbing his arm as the doctor continued his clinical explanation of how he was going to die. After that was set up, a judge walked in and read the decree made by the original trial judge regarding Emmett’s sentence. Emmett nodded stalwartly and the doctor flipped the switch of the machine. Emmett turned to look at me. “Thank you for being here, Edward,” he whispered. “Even with all that I did to you…”

“Like I said, I can’t let you die thinking that I hate you. You’re my brother and there will always be a part of me that will love you. I forgive you. Have you forgiven yourself?” I asked.

Emmett blinked and nodded slowly, the medication taking affect. “Tell Mom I love her,” he slurred. “Alice, too.”

“I will, Emmett,” I said. We held hands as he drifted into unconsciousness. The heart rate monitor was slowing and Emmett’s breath were growing shallower. Ten minutes after the process began, Emmett’s heart beats were barely registering on the machinery. I found myself crying, staring at his face. He had done this to himself, but there was a part of me that was sad that it had to come to this.

At a quarter after twelve, the heart rate monitored registered a flat line. Emmett had died by lethal injection. “Time of death, 12:15 AM, January sixteenth…” The doctor’s voice faded away.
“May you find peace, Emmett,” I cried quietly. “Peace that you didn’t have here. I love you.” I kissed his forehead and was led out of the room. My brother was gone.

A/N: Okay, so not very humorous. Sorry about that. Not every chapter is going to be riddled with humor and jokes. Ya know? Anyhow, we’ve got a lot of stuff going on in this chapter. Alice is going through menopause and well, she’s an emotional mess. My mom, when she went through the change, was like she had PMS for years. It sucked. But, Alice is also being a bitch. She’s very self-centered and it really showed in this chapter.

Pictures (there are two) are on my blog and tumblr. Links for those are on my profile. You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation or on twitter: tufano79. Also, thank you for those of you who have followed me to TWCS, AO3 and FictionPad. Suffice it to say, I will not be going back to Fanfiction.net because well, they suck. Pulling two stories without warning is deplorable. So, no more updates on there. Just on the three aforementioned sites. So, please, please leave me some lovin on them!

Up next will be Bella and some more information about Kyra and Mackenzie. Nerdella and Geekward will find out why Mackenzie is such a bitch to Kyra.
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Up next will be Bella and some more information about Kyra and Mackenzie. Nerdella and Geekward will find out why Mackenzie is such a bitch to Kyra.

Chapter Twelve: Teenage Girl Drama

BPOV

Edward had been a shell of himself after the day he spent with Emmett. Seeing his brother die really broke his heart. We held a small memorial and he was buried in the family plot in Chicago. Esme was saddened, as was Alice, but neither were as affected as Edward. He went through the motions of being a husband and father, but the glint in his eye was missing. I was worried about him but I didn’t want to push him. Edward needed time to grieve. I’d give it to him and if he needed to talk, I’d be there for him.

“Mom, don’t forget, you need to leave right after school tomorrow,” Owen said. “It’s supposed to snow some more and it’s already a three hour drive to Peoria without the snow."

Right.

Peoria.

The Illinois Music Educator’s Conference.

All-State Honor’s Orchestra where Owen was the concert master.

I didn’t want to go. I know Edward didn’t want to go. Owen was the only one who was thrilled about going. He was excited about staying at Jumer’s Castle Lodge in Peoria with his classmate, Mattias, who played oboe in the All-State Band.

But it was in Peoria.

In the middle of winter.

Why couldn’t the conference be in Chicago?

Closer to home!

“Your director is driving you and Mattias down there?” I asked.
“Yeah. There are three students from Wheaton Warrenville South High School, plus the four of us from Wheaton North, who are a part of the All-State groups. I’m so excited that you are going to be there, Mom,” he said, hugging me tightly before going up to his room to finish packing.

I sighed, walking into Edward’s office. He was randomly clicking on stuff on his computer. His eyes were glazed over and vacant. “Did you hear Owen?” I asked, sitting on the desk.

“Yeah,” he said, his voice sounding detached. “How long are we in Peoria for?”

“Tomorrow until Saturday,” I replied. “Four days. We’re staying at the same hotel as Owen, on a different floor though.”

“Mom and Papa are staying with the rest of our kids?” Edward asked, arching a brow.

“Yeah. I think they need a break from Alice,” I snickered.

“God, I hated foisting her on them, but if Alice had stayed, I would have strangled her,” Edward grumbled, his voice taking on some sort of inflection.

“How are you doing, Edward?” I asked, cupping his chin. I forced his golden eyes to look into mine. “I miss you.”

“I’m getting better, gorgeous,” he said, his lips quirking up into a crooked grin. “I never expected the death of Emmett to hit me this hard. I mean, he made my life hell for thirty some odd years and then he’s put to death by lethal injection and my ultimate tormentor is gone. I should be leaping for joy, but my heart feels empty.”

“Imagine how you would feel if you hadn’t gone to see him, Edward?” I said, brushing his hair away from his forehead. “Would you still feel this way?”

“I’d probably feel worse. Guilt on top of the emptiness,” he said, tugging on my hands. I sat down on his lap, wrapping my arms around his neck. “I’m starting to feel more and more normal. It just is hitting me hard that Emmett’s gone. He’s buried next to my father, who he killed. Talk about a sick twist of fate.”

“Carlisle must be rolling in his grave,” I snorted.

“I can only imagine,” Edward said as he kissed my lips softly. “Thank you for letting me grieve in my own way, gorgeous. You didn’t hover and I truly appreciate everything you’ve done for me while I turned into a morose, cantankerous old man.”

“We’re all entitled to those moments, Edward. At least you didn’t try to control our children, the dog and me while turning into a morose, cantankerous old man,” I snickered.

“Yeah, I’m not my sister,” Edward grumbled. “Speaking of which, she’s asking to spend some time with you.”

“Ugh, I’m really not in the mood to have my flaws aired out again,” I said, wrinkling my nose. “It’s bad enough we’re dealing with teenage girl drama that I also have to deal with menopausal woman drama?”

“What’s this teenage girl drama you’re talking about?” Edward asked.

“Mackenzie and her crew are making Kyra’s life hellacious. It’s taking bullying to a whole new level, Edward. Her cell phone was riddled with hateful messages from blocked numbers. Kyra
“refuses to let me do anything about it,” I said, frowning deeply. “But, my baby girl, her light is slowly dwindling. She’s even pulling away from Thomas.”

“I’m not complaining about that,” Edward smirked. “We may be old, but we’re too young to be grandparents.”

“Speak for yourself, you morose, cantankerous old man,” I teased.

Edward’s fingers tickled my sides and I laughed. I squirmed on his lap but he stilled his hands, kissing my neck, just behind my ear. “I love you, Bella. I don’t know if I told you that recently, but I do love you.”

“I know you do, baby,” I said, caressing his cheeks. “I may not be looking forward to this trip, but it could be fun. We can’t exactly hover over Owen while he’s rehearsals. We can use this as a mini-vacation. Spend time in bed, reconnect, cuddle, make love, just be…”

“Hmmm, that does sound enticing,” Edward purred, nuzzling his nose in my hair. “It’s making this trip sound more and more relaxing. We have a date, Mrs. Cullen, with that king-sized bed in Jumer’s Castle Lodge.”

“Whatever should I wear?” I quipped.

“A wink and a smile, my beloved wife,” Edward smirked. “Nothing else.”

“Done.”

xx STTD xx

The trip to Peoria was quite relaxing. Owen spent most of his time in rehearsal or hanging out with his new friends from the orchestra. We took him out to dinner on Thursday night and again after the concert Saturday afternoon, in Bloomington/Normal. He was all abuzz in the Italian restaurant, excited about this tremendous honor in his young career. He prattled on about how he wanted to be an orchestra conductor when he grew up and even planned out his college education. Owen was determined to be the youngest orchestra conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Despite Owen’s achievements, it was just nice to get away from the house and constant need of protection. Johnny was supposed to come with us, staying in a room adjacent from ours, but he got a nasty case of the stomach flu. He was unable to come and the rest of our protection were already on assignment with our children. Edward vowed that he’d keep an eye out on everything, plus we informed organization about the situation. All rehearsals were closed and under constant surveillance from the Peoria Civic Center staff. Steve threw a snit fit, but Johnny, pitifully argued Edward’s prowess with a gun and his ability to kick ass.

We spent almost the entire trip in bed. There was no part of each other’s body that we didn’t worship. Edward desperately needed me, to lose himself in my body. He was finally turning a corner regarding Emmett’s death and was at the ‘horny’ stage. I sure as hell didn’t complain. I gladly accepted Edward’s reverent touches to anxious fucking to tender lovemaking to animalistic taking of what needed. It reminded me of our honeymoon. Hell, it reminded me of our anniversary. Edward and I never had a dry spell in our sex life. We both were each other’s first and only. The comfort level we had with each other was unrivaled. I would do anything for Edward and he would do anything for me. The one thing that was constant was our love, devotion and respect for each other. If we lost those three things, our relationship would crumble.

And I don’t see that happening anytime soon.
When we got home late on Saturday night, Owen went directly to his room to call his girlfriend, Tasha. He wanted to tell her about his experiences. I just wanted to crawl into bed, but Esme and Marcus were both waiting for us, their eyes tight with concern. Edward ran his hand through his hair, tugging at the strands forcefully. “What happened?” he asked. “Who do we need to punish?”

“No one. We don’t think,” Esme said, biting her lip. “It’s more like a concern, really.”

“Kyra spent most of her time in bedroom while you were gone,” Marcus began. “She was arguing on the phone with someone and when Esme or I went to check on her, she’d hang up on the person, trying to act normally.”

“I tried to talk to her, but she wouldn’t tell either one of us anything. She did, however, spend a lot of time up in the apartment with Steve. I think he knows what’s going on or something,” Esme said, wrinkling her nose. “You raise your children the way you see fit, but knowing that my seventeen year old granddaughter is spending time with a twenty-five year old man…”

“Trust me. It’s a concern for us, too,” I growled. “We’ll talk to them tomorrow. If we try and have this discussion now, it’ll end up as a big blow up and that’s the last thing we all need at this time.”

“Are you going to stay here tonight?” Edward asked.

“Yeah. It’s well past our bedtime and being away from Alice has been a welcomed respite,” Esme said, giving us a conspiratorial grin.

“Has she improved?” Edward asked.

“She’s seeking therapy, but I think she needs more,” Esme shrugged. “With her mood swings and her hormonal shifts, she needs, possibly, antidepressants and something similar to hormone replacement therapy. I do not miss going through the change of life. It was awful.”

“Once it was done, you were more stable?” Edward questioned.

“I was never unstable. You and your siblings never saw me crumble. It was your father who dealt with the brunt of my emotional outbursts,” Esme chuckled. “Alice’s reaction is much more severe, I’m afraid. I’m trying to encourage her to see a psychiatrist, but she’s as stubborn as a mule.”

“What about Jasper?” I asked. “Has he been over?”

“They have dinner together on Wednesdays and Sundays. Their conversations are stilted,” Marcus frowned. “Alice is trying to end the separation, but Jasper is very clear-cut on what needs to be done on her part in order for them to try again. Therapy is one aspect, but they also need to seek couple’s counseling along. Plus, Jasper has hinted that she needs more than therapy, too. We all see it, but Alice is in denial about her controlling tendencies.”

“What has she done in your house?” Edward smirked.

“Completely rearranged the pantry, alphabetically. She tried to go through our closets, but we’ve taken to locking the doors so she can’t toss perfectly good clothing. She’s working out all of the time. It’s all about Alice. Gianna was given the choice of staying with us or living at home with Jasper. She’s choosing to stay with Jasper. She can’t handle her mother either,” Esme mumbled sadly. “We’ll keep trying to convince her to change her ways, but Alice is…”

“Alice,” we all chuckled sadly.

“We’re going to bed. Perhaps, we can take all of you out for brunch?” Marcus suggested.
“That sounds lovely,” Edward smiled. We hugged and watched as Marcus and Esme went upstairs to the guest room. Once the door clicked shut, he turned to me. “After brunch, we are going to have a little chat with Kyra and Steve.”

“We can’t lose our cool, Edward. We need to be patient. Obviously this is a situation that Steve knows about. Kyra feels safe enough with him to share this secret with him. We need to put her at ease to allow her to feel safe with us. Maybe it’s due in part to the fact Steve is an adult, but closer to her own age. You know?”

“Good point,” Edward said thoughtfully. “But, let’s think about it tomorrow, Bella. Sitting in that arena and then driving home? My brain is mush.”

“Me, too, angel,” I agreed. Removing our coats and carrying our bags upstairs, we said goodnight to the kids that were still up before going into our own bedroom, promptly crashing.

The next morning, we woke up to the sounds of Max barking and Masen’s laughter. I was comfy that I didn’t want to get out of bed, but our presence was requested by Edward’s parents. “I don’t wanna get up,” Edward grumbled. “Our bed is so fucking comfortable. I never realized how amazing it was until we got home. That bed in Jumer’s? Ugh!”


“I just want to be a bum. Why did we agree to go to brunch?” Edward grumped, his head popping up. His hair stuck out every which way, making him look even more adorable than he already was.

“Because your parents took care of three of our kids for the past four days. I think spending time with them and going out to brunch would be a nice gesture. It’s not like is breakfast with the queen, Edward,” I chided. “Seriously, get your sexy ass out of bed and join in the shower. I’ll give you a blow job.”

“Breakfast of champions,” he quipped, heaving his body out of the bed.

We fooled around in the shower until the water ran cold, scurrying to wash our hair and bodies in the freezing water. Dressing in comfortable jeans and sweaters, we went downstairs. Mia and Masen were playing with Max in the family room. Owen was talking with his grandparents in the kitchen, wiping his nose with his embroidered handkerchiefs. Only my son would ask for monogrammed handkerchiefs for Christmas. Owen was such an old soul and reminded me so much of my Edward. Kyra was curled up on the couch, her golden eyes downcast as she twisted a ring on her finger. She looked small and sad.

“We’ll get to the bottom of what’s troubling our principessa,” Edward murmured, kissing my temple.

“Good morning!” Marcus exclaimed. “How did you sleep?”

“Like the dead,” I giggled. “Being away affirmed our love of our mattress.”

“Those Jumer’s mattresses were quite lumpy,” Edward said, wrinkling his nose.

“I had no problem,” Owen shrugged.

“You, my dear boy, can sleep on the floor and are significantly younger than your mother and me,” Edward snickered. “You’ll understand the need of a phenomenal mattress when you get older. Trust me.”

“Where are we going for brunch?” I asked. Edward and I shared a secretive look. His spunk was not
as filling as he thought. I needed some more sustenance.

“Egg Harbor Café in downtown Wheaton,” Esme replied. “Plus, we’re going to take Mia and Masen shopping for some new clothes since they are going through a growth spurt. The boy has high-waters!”

“Yeah, Mase is wearing a pair of my cargo pants,” Owen explained. “It’s like he grew six inches overnight!”

“Masen, come here!” Edward called. The twins both got up and Mia was now easily taller than me and Masen was at Edward’s ear. “When did this happen?”

“I don’t know, Dad,” Masen replied. His voice had also dropped significantly, too.

“My babies,” I sniffled, hugging Mia to my side. “You’re growing up so fast!”

“Mom, we’re going to be in eighth grade next year. We’re not babies anymore,” Masen chuckled as Edward stared him disbelievingly. “So, is it cool that we go shopping with Nana and Papa?”

“One of the security guys have to go with you,” I chided.

“I can go, Miss Bella. I have to pick up some birthday presents for my twin girls,” Oliver smiled. “I’ll follow you in my car, Miss Esme and Mr. Marcus.”

“Sounds perfect, Oliver,” Marcus beamed, clapping him on the shoulder.

“Steve, you’ll be coming with us,” Edward said, trying not to sound pissed off but failing miserably. Steven nodded from his spot by the garage entrance, picking up his coat. We all bundled up since it was freezing but sunny. The snow had given way to icy temperatures. It was brutal. Mia and Masen got into the Audi SUV that Marcus had purchased. They backed out with Oliver following close behind in his Toyota Prius. I sat in the back, next to Kyra while Steve sat in front with Edward as my husband backed out of the garage. Owen was in the third row of seats in our Beast, texting wildly with his girlfriend.

Driving the short distance, we pulled up to the restaurant and were seated immediately due to the size of our party. Marcus insisted that Steve and Oliver joined us. It was too cold for them to sit in the cars while we ate breakfast. The food was amazing. We ate entirely too much, but that meant that we could have leftovers or sandwiches for dinner. After being away for the latter part of the week, I was behind on my chores and I knew that I had to go grocery shopping.

We finished breakfast, hugging and kissing Esme and Marcus before they took off toward Town Square Wheaton with Oliver driving behind them. We got into our car, driving back to the house. Owen went upstairs, finally really crashing from his weekend, saying he was going to take a nap. Kyra, with a sullen pout, tried to go upstairs, but we had a very difficult conversation to have with her. And Steve.

“Kyra, can you please join us in the family room?” I asked. “Steve, you too.”

They shared a joint look before settling on opposite couches. I sat next to Kyra, taking her hand in mine. Edward plopped down on his lazy boy, attempting to not give Steve his death stare. “What’s up, Mom?” Kyra asked, her brows furrowing.

“I’m worried about you, sweetie. There’s something going on with you and I can see it affect your relationships with us here at home, with Thomas and with your friends at school,” I said gently. “Does it have to do with Mackenzie?”
Kyra didn’t respond. She just curled up in a tiny ball on the couch.

“Kyra, sweetheart, whatever it is, your mother and I have to know what it is so we can try to make it better,” Edward said softly.

“K, your parents should know what Mackenzie’s doing. I’ve told you this time and time again,” Steve frowned.

**K? What happened to Miss Kyra?**

“They’re going to hate me, Steve,” she sniffled.

“Kyra, we could never hate you,” Edward said forcefully. “You’re our baby. No matter how old you are, you will always be our baby. Your mother and I love you so much!”

“They need to know,” Steve said, his voice taking on a concerned tenor.

“Kyra, let us help you. Obviously this is not good if Steve is urging you to tell us,” I said, brushing my fingers through Kyra’s ponytail. “Please, baby.”

“I need to get my computer,” she said, getting up from her spot. She ran up the stairs and returned a few moments later, searching for something. “Mackenzie and her crew are leaving me messages on my Facebook page, posting pictures of me that are less than flattering from when I’m changing at school and constantly attacking me. Steve says it’s harassment, but they’re just teasing me.”

“No, it’s harassment, sweetheart,” Edward said as he took Kyra’s computer from her hands. She sat down next to him, pointing something out on the screen. “That was taken right after gym.”

I got up, sitting next to Edward, staring at the photo. It was a blurry picture of Kyra bending down, wearing her jeans and her bra. Captioned underneath it was a cruel saying. *Look at the bubble butt! Kyra Cullen is letting herself go now that she’s fucking Thomas Mulroney. Is she pregnant yet?* The photo had over five hundred likes and twenty more cruel comments underneath it. Thomas replied in the last comment. *Stop being so cruel and take this picture down! Ever heard of child porn? Grow up. All of you! Why are you teasing one of the most genuine people in the damn school?*

“Kyra, I think that we need to talk to the police. Your boyfriend is right. This picture of you, while not sexual, is suggestive and whoever has it in their possession can get in big trouble since you are underage,” Edward said.

“That’s not all, Mr. Edward. Mackenzie, at least we think it’s Mackenzie, is texting Kyra at all hours of the night,” Steve explained.

“Here,” she said, handing me her phone. I scrolled through her texts and saw over fifty of them from a blocked number, telling Kyra to kill herself, that she was a waste of skin, calling her a slut, a whore, and other horrific words that no child should ever utter.

“Can you figure out who sent these?” I asked, handing it to Edward, tears springing in my eyes.

Edward growled before stomping up to his office to hack into the phone. A few moments later, he had a sticky note filled with four numbers. “Do you recognize any of these?” Edward asked, holding Kyra to his side.

“Mackenzie’s number is the top one. The second, I don’t know that person, but they’re local. The bottom two are Madelyn and Kimmie,” Kyra said dejectedly.
“Principessa, what these girls are doing is harassment. We should take this to the police,” Edward said softly.

“No! I’ll become a bigger target. Everything is collapsing around me and if we go to the police, it’ll be even worse,” Kyra sniffled, snuggling against Edward. “I’ll just ignore them and when I’m done with high school, never look back.”

“Kyra, we see what this is doing to you, baby,” I said, kissing her forehead. “Something needs to happen to make it better. Why is Mackenzie targeting you?”

“She hates me,” Kyra shrugged. Steve huffed out a breath. “It’s true. And the feeling’s mutual. Mom, please, don’t go to the police.”

“Well, we are going to get you a new phone number, keeping this as evidence if you do decide to change your mind,” Edward said. “I also think that you should set up a new Facebook account. Again, leaving this up as evidence. No one, I repeat, no one has the right to treat you this way, Kyra. You are an amazing, beautiful, smart and loving young woman. It pains me to see you so broken, baby girl. But, I know what it feels like. We both do. When you’re ready, we’ll support you in whatever decision you make regarding this horrific display of teenage girl bullshit. Mackenzie is harassing you, plain and simple and she should be punished. If it escalates, I’m sorry, but I’m going to make sure that she is given that punishment, Kyra. For now, we get you a new phone number and a new phone and set up a private Facebook account. You can change the privacy settings after this has passed over, but for now, only add people you know you can trust. Okay?”

“Kay, Daddy,” she sniffled, curling against his side. We sat in the family room for a few more minutes before putting on our coats. Johnny, who was weak as a newborn kitten, was staying back to watch over Owen while we went to get Kyra a new phone number. Thankfully, it didn’t take long and we were back home in an hour. My oldest daughter carried her new Whitlock cell phone up to her room, to transfer over the contacts and inform her friends of her new number. Steve looked like he wanted to say more, but he shook his head before going up to his apartment.

“Why do I feel that there is more to the story than she’s letting on?” Edward asked me, wrapping his arms around my waist.

“Because there is and whatever it is, it’s obviously big, Edward. However, we need to let Kyra come to us on her own. We can’t force her to tell us what’s wrong. Hell, I’m happy with what she did tell us,” I snorted humorlessly. “Well, not happy about those horrible things that Mackenzie is saying about my daughter, but…you know what I mean. Right?”

“And are we in agreement that we need to discuss this with the administration at her school? Why haven’t the teachers done anything? Cell phones are supposed to be in student’s lockers during the day,” Edward snarled.

“I’ll call the school tomorrow. We need to go when Kyra’s in class so she doesn’t know that we’re there, discussing this harassment with the principal,” I said. I took Edward’s face into my hands, staring into his somber golden eyes. “I know that this is killing you, Edward.”

“She’s dealing with the same bullshit that I did,” Edward growled, his eyes filling with tears. “Only, this is much more vicious. I’d rather be stuck in a locker than to be called some of those names that Mackenzie is calling our baby girl. Kyra is not a whore!”

“I know, angel,” I said, hugging him tightly. “We’ll figure this out. Mackenzie will get her just desserts.”
“I just don’t want Kyra to live life like I did prior to meeting you,” he mumbled sadly. “I was a shell, gorgeous. I was terrified of life, of living because I didn’t want to be teased. I never had this support at home because of my own family teasing me… Alice and Esme couldn’t fight the battles at school and at home. We have to make this right, Bella!”

“We will, Edward. Kyra is so much stronger than you give her credit for, though. She’s not you. She’s not me. She’s a combination of the very best parts of our personalities, Edward,” I murmured, kissing his lips. “What Mackenzie is doing to her is awful, but Kyra is handling it with poise and maturity.”

“I can see that, but I am still afraid that Kyra is going to be permanently scarred because of those horrific lies that Mackenzie is spreading about her,” Edward said.

“We’ll cross that bridge if need be. For now, I think that Owen has the right idea. Let’s take a nap because all of this is a million times worse due to the fact that we’re exhausted.” I tugged on his hand, leading up the stairs. We stripped out of our clothes, putting on comfy sweats. Curling up in our bed, we both fell asleep quickly, mentally and emotionally drained from the conversation with Kyra along with the underlying stress of Jacob still lingering around.

When I woke up, it was dark out. Checking the clock, it was a little after five. I slithered out from Edward’s tight hold on me to go to the bathroom and check on the kids. Kyra was snoozing on her bed, tearstains quite apparent on her pink cheeks. Owen was working on homework, oblivious to my intrusion. From sound of it, Mia and Masen were in the backyard playing with Max and working on his training. Padding down the stairs, I smiled at Johnny and Steve, who were watching television. “Do you guys want dinner?” I asked.

“I’m still full from breakfast,” Steve chuckled.

“Don’t mention food, Miss Bella. Ever,” Johnny moaned, rubbing his belly.

“How about some plain toast and ginger ale, Johnny? It should settled your stomach,” I said, pulling out wheat toast and a can of ginger ale. “You need to eat something.”

“I’ll try it, Miss Bella,” he grumbled. I made his toast and poured him a small glass of ginger ale. He wrinkled his nose as he nibbled on the toast. “I don’t want to puke anymore.”

“I don’t want you to puke anymore,” I replied sympathetically. “Eat what you can. If you’re not feeling better by tomorrow, you need to go to the doctor. This isn’t normal, Johnny.”

“Thanks, Miss Bella,” he said, sipping his pop.

I took a quick poll of the kids and they were all still stuffed from breakfast. They were okay with fending for themselves. Sighing contentedly, I grabbed my laptop to do some work on the newest Charmed movie. Once they started filming the first movie, the hype was amazing. It wasn’t going to be an Academy Award Winning movie, but it was going to earn the movie studio, Rose and me a lot of money. They already gave us the green light to start work on the second of the trilogy, Forever Charmed. I had re-read the book while we were in Peoria and was working on the outline: what was needed, what had to be cut and important dialogue that had to be included in the script. As I was working, Max ambled into the living room, sitting by my feet.

“Hey, bub,” I said, scratching his ears. “Did my twin terrors tire you out?”

“MOM!” they both laughed.

“You know I love you both,” I yelled back. They sang their love for me, settling into the family.
room. Max looked up at me, his tail wagging. He wanted to come up and snuggle against my thigh. “You shed, bucko.” He whimpered, cocking his head to one side. “Hold on, Max.” I put my computer down, grabbing a throw blanket from the family room. Tossing it on the couch, Max hopped up and settled down onto it. “You are so spoiled, bub. But, I kind of like ya.” He put his head on my arm with his tail thumping on the couch. I chuckled, scratching behind his ears before turning back to my work on the computer.

Edward came downstairs, looking all sleep rumpled. He kissed my lips and gave Max a pet before ambling into the kitchen. As Edward was searching for food, Max hopped up on the couch. His black fur stood up on end and he growled lowly.

“What’s wrong, Max?” I asked, looking out the window. The dog’s teeth were bared and he let out a vicious snarl before jumping off the couch. He barked angrily at the front door. Steve and Johnny got up, grabbing their weapons from Edward’s office and took off into the cold night. Max followed them, barking wildly.

“What’s going on?” asked Owen, stumbling down the stairs. Kyra was behind him, her eyes wide with fright.

“Something spooked the dog. Steve and Johnny went to investigate,” I answered. They came back a few moments later. Edward held me in his lap, holding me tightly. “Well?”

“Whoever it was, ran off and was wicked fast,” Steve puffed out. “Max almost caught up to him, but they jumped into a car and peeled off.”

“Is Max alright?” Masen asked, crouching down to pet his beloved companion.

“He’s fine. We wouldn’t have known if it weren’t for his barking,” Johnny said, winking at Mase. “Give that dog a t-bone or something.” Masen hopped up, encouraging Max to join him.

“I think Johnny was kidding!” Edward yelled to Masen.

“I know, but I think I saw a cooked hamburger!”

“Do you think it was Jacob?” I asked, my voice quaking.

“We couldn’t get a look at his face, but he was big. Really big,” Steve answered. “It was quiet on the Jacob front for a long time. It was only a matter of time before he would make his presence known. Come on, Johnny. Let’s see if there was anything on the tapes.”

Everyone scattered except Edward and me. “If it’s not one thing, it’s another,” I muttered.

“As long as we’re together, we can handle this, my Bella. I promise,” he whispered.

“I hope so. I seriously hope so.”

We never fell asleep. I was too panicked that Jacob had gotten as close to the house as he did. Edward was freaking out over the fact that Jacob got away. Plus, we both were ridden with anxiety at talking with the principal at Kyra’s school, Dr. Abnell. Once the kids were sent to school, Edward and I got ready for the meeting. Steve and Oliver were going to be with us at the meeting since they had seen some of the bullying first hand at school events and once school was let out. Edward also held Kyra’s old phone and had several screen captures of Kyra’s Facebook page with suspicious photographs, nasty rumors and horrible language.
Getting into the car, Edward drove us to the high school and parked in the visitor’s lot in front of the main office. We were buzzed into the school and waited in the front office for Dr. Abnell to finish whatever he was doing in his office. A tall man with a short, military buzz cut walked out, smiling at Edward and me. “Mr. and Mrs. Cullen, I’m Dr. Blaine Abnell. A pleasure to meet you.”

We shook hands with the principal. “Thank you for meeting with us on such short notice, Dr. Abnell. These are two men who work for our family, Steve Burgess and Oliver Jameson. They occasionally pick our children from school and have seen some of the things that were done to our daughter.”

“Come, let’s meet in one of our conference rooms,” Dr. Abnell said, gesturing down the hallway to a medium sized room. On the walls, there was map of the United States along with pins with student’s names on them. “It’s our college board. When we have a student get accepted to a college or university, we put their name onto the board. Some colleges, we have a lot of students attend.” He gestured to Champaign, where there was an arrow pointing to a list of thirty students attending there. “Others, not so much.” He pointed to University of Alaska in Juneau where there was one name. “We’re proud of our students, no matter where they go.”

“That’s cool,” Steve said, smirking slightly.

“It is. The kids love to see it, too. We have a larger version in our cafeteria,” Dr. Abnell beamed. “Now, in your email that you sent last night, you mentioned something about a student targeting and bullying your daughter?”

“Yes, Dr. Abnell. Mackenzie Suffolk, Madelyn Casteneti and Kimmie Yorke, all seniors, are bullying my daughter, online and face-to-face. I cannot attest to the face-to-face bullying, but they can,” I said, indicating Steve and Oliver. “We have proof that these girls are also cyberbullying my daughter, to the point of harassment and where we could press charges against them.”

“However, Kyra doesn’t want that,” Edward provided for me. “We wanted to make you aware of the situation so that if it’s witnessed by any member of your staff, it needs to be stopped.” He pushed several pieces of paper to Dr. Abnell. “Those photos were taken in the gym locker room. Underneath the photos are scathing commentary about my daughter, calling her a slut and a whore. My first complaint is where are the teachers? Yes, it’s a gym locker room, but aren’t there female staff members that monitor behavior in here? Secondly, cell phones are not allowed in school. They can bring them but they need to be off and in their lockers. These photos were taken and posted with a cell phone, Dr. Abnell. And this photo, in particular, can almost be considered child pornography with the amount of skin that is shown on this girl in the background.” Edward’s face was red and he was so angry. “You need to do something to remedy the larger problem of little supervision in the locker rooms and enforcing the cell phone rule. If those two things are addressed, situations like this would be nonexistent.”

“You’re right, Mr. Cullen,” Dr. Abnell replied somberly.

“Also, these girls sent Kyra text messages, telling her to kill herself, that she’s a waste of skin and that she’s, again, a slut, a whore and other horrible words,” Edward said, tossing Kyra’s old phone onto the table. “The numbers were blocked, but with a simple program, they were easily traced, along with the time they were sent. Lunch time. Steve, Oliver? Tell Dr. Abnell about the face-to-face bullying you’ve seen.”

“We drop off Kyra and Owen to school. We work for a private security firm, hired to protect Mr. and Mrs. Cullen along with their family,” Steve explained. “There’s a threat out there that necessitates their need for twenty-four hour protection. Anyway, both Oliver and I saw displays of physical aggression toward Kyra by Mackenzie, in particular. It happened after school and most
significantly at a school dance in December. Kyra was scratched by Mackenzie in the bathroom. I do not know the reason why Mackenzie attacked Kyra, but my charge had a three inch scratch on her neck that started just below her ear to just above her collarbone. Mackenzie, sir, is the ringleader in this attack on Kyra. That girl has so much hate for her, it’s scary. I’m not a school administrator, but there is something deeply wrong with that child and it needs to be stopped.”

“What are you going to do, Dr. Abnell?” I asked. “Are you just going to say some platitudes, thinking you’re going to appease our nerves? Or are you going to do something about some very serious problems in your building?”

“I am going to address the staff about the cell phone and supervisory issue. Any student with a cell phone will have it confiscated and the parents will need to pick it up. The thing is that they’re sneaky. Girls carry those purses and bags. Cell phones can easily be hidden in them,” Dr. Abnell said, frowning deeply.


“Dr. Abnell, this sort of behavior is disgusting and needs to stop. Sadly, it probably never will, but your actions can definitely quell this type of situation,” I said. “If you can’t fix this problem, we will be going to the police and filing charges against Mackenzie along with you for failure to protect my child. This school is where she’s supposed to feel safe. This,” I spat, waving the picture of my daughter with the caption of her having a ‘bubble butt,’ “is not safe. Fix this, Dr. Abnell.”

He nodded, his skin pale and drawn. Edward and I got up, leaving the office and getting into the car. Oliver was staying on campus while Steve was driving back with us. Telling off the principal didn’t feel nearly as good as I had hoped. My fear was that the problem was going to continue, if not escalate because of our involvement. At least we tried. It’s all we could do aside from dishonor our daughter’s wishes and get the police involved. She was already struggling with telling us this much. If we went against her request of not getting the police involved, she’d, for certain, shut down.

Back at the house, Edward did some work for Whitlock remotely and handled some meetings using Skype. I finished pulling together my outline before I sent it off to Rose for her approval. I knew she trusted me, but I wanted her thumbs up before I started writing. The rest of the afternoon and the rest of the week were quiet, thankfully. Unfortunately, on Friday, Kyra came home in tears.

“What happened?” I asked Oliver.

“I don’t know. Miss Kyra was sobbing when she ran out into the car,” Oliver shrugged. “I asked her what happened, but she just started sobbing some more.”

“It was Mackenzie, Mom,” Owen said, handing me her phone. “She got a text, supposedly from Thomas, breaking up with her.”

_You’re a slut. I don’t know what I ever saw in you. Why didn’t you spread your legs for me, bitch? We’re through! ~ Thomas_

“That’s not Thomas,” I muttered. “He adores Kyra.”

“Exactly,” Owen said, his hazel eyes darkening in anger. “I don’t think he knows about this. Thomas was talking to me about the date he was going to take Kyra on tomorrow.”

The doorbell rang and I put the phone on the table in the foyer, opening the door. Standing outside was a very disheveled Thomas, his eyes filled fear, remorse and uncertainty. “Can you shed some light on what happened?” I asked. I let him inside and Thomas was very near tears.
“I’m so sorry, Mrs. Cullen. I don’t know exactly what happened, but Mackenzie took my phone from my pocket while I was in line for lunch,” Thomas began. “She was playing with it when it was confiscated by Dr. Abnell. I don’t know what happened, but when I went to meet Kyra at her locker, she ran the opposite direction in tears. Mackenzie stopped me on the way to my car, saying that she was available for the date I was planning with Kyra on Saturday, since I’m recently single and all. Mackenzie supposedly sent some horrific text to Kyra from my phone and…it’s all my fault.”

“No, it’s not,” I said, guiding the distraught boy into family room. “Mackenzie has got this vendetta against my daughter and I don’t know why. Whatever it is, it needs to stop.”

“It all got really bad at the winter formal, Mrs. Cullen. After that, Mackenzie was relentless in her teasing of Kyra. I hate seeing her so sad all of the time. My mom told me to never hit girls but I really want to punch Mackenzie,” Thomas said. He slapped his hands over his mouth, his eyes wide. “I’m sorry, Mrs. Cullen. I shouldn’t have said that.”

“Thomas, it’s fine. I want to punch Mackenzie. That girl is a first-class bitch,” I snorted. Thomas blushed but laughed with me. “Look, I know how much you care for my daughter.”

“I love her, Mrs. Cullen. Kyra is amazing and sweet and so pretty,” he said dreamily, his blush growing redder. “I was going to tell her this weekend that I love her on our date. But, Mackenzie ruined that.”

“Do you have anywhere to go?” I asked.

“Not really. I have to be home for dinner, but that’s like in three hours,” he shrugged.

“Owen, can you get Thomas something to drink? I’m going to check on Kyra,” I said, getting up from my seat next to my daughter’s boyfriend. Walking upstairs, I heard Kyra’s heartbreaking wails and I wanted to drive to Mackenzie’s home to kick her ever-loving behind. Not even knocking, I let myself into Kyra’s room. Crawling onto her bed, I gathered my girl into my arms and cradled her gently. She gripped at my sweater, causing me hearing damage from her screams. “Baby girl, you need to calm down.”

“Thomas dumped me! Mackenzie got her claws in him!” she cried.

“Mackenzie…is a bitch,” I snapped. “She’s a hateful, spiteful little girl. But, she did not get her claws in your boyfriend.”

“Mom, he’s not my boyfriend. Thomas broke up with me. He texted me that I should have opened my legs for him and that he didn’t know what he saw in me!” Kyra shrieked, standing up and pacing in her room.

“Kyra, sweetheart, if he broke up with you, why is he sitting in our family room, upset that you were crying?” I asked.

Kyra stopped her pacing and her expression on her face was nearly comical in its dramatic change. “What?”

“Owen was telling me what happened, showing me your phone when the doorbell rang. Thomas was standing on the front stoop, nervous and concerned, sweetie,” I said, pulling her to sit on the bed.

“Thomas is here?” she whispered.

“Yeah,” I said, tucking her hair behind her ears. “He was really worried. His phone was confiscated
by Dr. Abnell while Mackenzie was playing with it. She sent you that text, baby.”

“I hate her, Mom,” Kyra snarled. “I hate her with every ounce of my being!”

“You’re not the only one. Owen and Thomas are ready to beat the crap out of her,” I snickered. “Why don’t you wash your face, brush your hair and then come downstairs? Okay? You and Thomas can talk and if you want, he can stay for dinner.” I got up and walked to the door. Before I left, I turned to Kyra. “Principessa?”

“Yeah?”

“After Thomas goes, we do need to talk about why Mackenzie is targeting you,” I said, furrowing my brow. “Steve mentioned something about the winter formal and so did Thomas.”

“Okay,” she huffed out. “After he leaves?”

“Yes, ma’am. I want your father there,” I said, leaving and giving her some space to pull herself together. I walked downstairs, giving Thomas a grin. He slumped against the sofa and for the first time since he walked into our house, he smiled. “Thomas, if you’d like, you can join us for dinner.”

“Let me call my parents and let them know, okay?” he said. “Can I use your phone?”

“Sure, sweetie.” I handed him the landline and he walked into the foyer to make his call. A few moments later, he handed me back the phone saying that he could stay, but he needed to go right after dinner to discuss the phone call his mom received from the school about his confiscated cell phone. Kyra came into the family room as he was finishing up his conversation with me. “Why don’t you two go downstairs in the basement?”

“Mom?” Kyra asked, her eyes wide.

“I trust you,” I said. Kyra took Thomas’s hand and mumbled something. I could make out what, but I ignored it. Deciding to keep it simple, I made soup with crusty bread for dinner along with a Greek salad. Around six, Edward came home. He had a meeting with Jasper, Demetri and Charlie about the budget. Whitlock had done exceptionally well the previous year and they wanted to discuss how they wanted to handle the extra profits. Some of it was going to the employees while the rest of it was going into research and development of new technology, mainly in the medical field, spinning off the new tricorder that Edward had developed. They all were in agreement but wanted to meet with the staff, informing them of their decision before going forward with the changes. So, Edward was in Chicago today, telling the workers of Whitlock Technologies that they would be getting a three percent raise on top of their usual raises for the year.

Dinner was pleasant. Thomas and Kyra were abnormally touchy-feely but given their misunderstanding and consequent understanding, I think they were allowed. Edward didn’t comprehend it, really, but I hadn’t had time to tell him prior to us sitting down to dinner. After clearing the table, Thomas said that he had to go home and face the music for his confiscated phone. I watched them walk to the door and Thomas took Kyra’s face in his hands. He murmured that he loved her before kissing her softly. Kyra beamed, saying those three words back and waved as he backed out of the driveway.

“What happened?” Edward asked as he put the leftover salad into a container.

“Mackenzie swiped Thomas’s phone, sending Kyra a text. Mackenzie alluded to the fact that Thomas was tired of waiting for her and chastising her for not ‘opening up her legs’ for him. Essentially, Mackenzie broke with Kyra, using Thomas’s phone. Long story short, Thomas loves
your daughter and was heartbroken. Mackenzie a bitch from hell and we are going to get to the bottom of this whole situation after we’re done with dishes. Got it?” I asked.

“I think so,” Edward said, putting the salad bowl into the dishwasher.

“Mom, thanks for letting Thomas stay for dinner,” Kyra said quietly.

“After the drama you had today, you needed it,” I smiled.

“Unfortunately, it’s not over,” she sighed. “You need to know why Mackenzie is bullying me.”

“Let us finish up the dishes and we’ll talk about it. We’re almost done,” I said.

“Here, wipe down the table,” Edward said, tossing her a rag. Kyra sullenly wiped down our table while Mia and Masen worked on sweeping the floor. Owen was bagging the garbage, getting ready to bring it out to the garage. Ten minutes later, we sent our three youngest children, along with the dog, down into the basement while Kyra sat down to talk with us. “Okay, Kyra, tell us about Mackenzie and why she’s targeting you.”

“Mackenzie was really nice but not exactly smart,” Kyra began. “Our friendship began when we were in eighth grade. I helped her in math because she didn’t get it. Mackenzie and I became fast friends and well, you saw how close we got. Anyhow, starting in our sophomore year, Mackenzie started dating Phillip. He was a senior at the time. This is where her stupidity comes into play. I apologize for my language, but if anyone is a whore, it’s Mackenzie. Phillip liked to share his ‘girl’ with his buddies. Mackenzie was all for it and she was over the moon that this senior boy wanted to be with her, even though she was passed around like a, um, a slut. That stopped when one of the guys got rough with her. Phillip didn’t like to see his girl with bruises so the group sex stopped. Mackenzie was still Phillip and they were having sex. Unprotected sex.”

“She got pregnant?” Edward asked.

“Yeah. Just before the start of junior year, Mackenzie noticed her boobs were tender and that she hadn’t had her period in a couple of months. Madelyn bought her a pregnancy test and it came back positive. Mackenzie didn’t know what to do. Phillip was in college and he did not want to be a daddy. Her parents would have thrown her out if they had found out that she was pregnant. Her only option was to get an abortion,” Kyra said, her eyes downcast.

“How did she pay for the abortion?” I asked.

“You remember when I asked if I could have $300 for a new purse?” Kyra whispered. We both nodded. “It went for Mackenzie’s abortion of her baby.”

A/N: Don’t hate me! Please don’t hate me…next chapter will be in Kyra’s point of view. There’s a big to-do regarding abortions in the Cullen clan. It will all come to a head next chapter, plus we’re going to get some drama with Jacob, too. I do apologize for the lack of updates on this one. RL and lack of time are kicking my ass. However, this came together in less than a day.

Anyhow, on my blog and tumblr, I’ve got pictures of Jumer’s, Peoria Civic Center, Johnny, Max (the dog) and Thomas. Links for those are on my profile. You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation. I’m also on Twitter: tufano79.

Finally, plagiarism…sucks…if it’s not yours, don’t take it. Thank you to those of you who pointed out a plagiarist of my story A Prescription for Love. The story has been removed and
the writer gave me some lame-ass excuse for ‘taking my story.’

Leave me some!
Too Close for Comfort

They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Next chapter will be in Kyra’s point of view. There’s a big to-do regarding abortions in the Cullen clan. It will all come to a head next chapter, plus we’re going to get some drama with Jacob, too.

Chapter Thirteen: Too Close for Comfort

BPOV

“Okay, Kyra, tell us about Mackenzie and why she’s targeting you.”

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“You remember when I asked if I could have $300 for a new purse?” Kyra whispered. We both nodded. “It went for Mackenzie’s abortion of her baby.”

KyraPOV

I sat on the couch, twisting my ring and watching as my parents began to comprehend what I had said. Using my father’s money, I had willingly helped Mackenzie end the life of her unborn child.
“So, let me try and understand what you just said,” my mom said. “Mackenzie got pregnant by her ex-boyfriend and you helped pay for the abortion?”

“Kimmie and I chipped in the most,” I mumbled. “Madelyn made the appointment and pretended to be Mackenzie’s mother at the appointment. It was stupid, I know…”

“Kyra, you know how we feel about abortions,” Mom said, frowning deeply.

“I know,” I muttered. “But, at the time, it made sense. Mackenzie was desperate and unable to pay for it herself. Phillip told her to take care of it and said that he wouldn’t even acknowledge that he was the baby’s father.”

My family is very liberal and understanding in most aspects except abortions. Mom was pro-choice, but that’s because it was her belief that it was a woman’s right to choose. Dad was very much pro-life as was Aunt Alice and Uncle Jasper. Since they had struggled with having children, unable to conceive their own, they hated the mere idea of abortion. Dad was in the same mindset. Personally, I knew that I would never get one. I hated being a part of Mackenzie’s choice, but what’s done is done. Even though I had helped end her baby’s life, she was determined to make my life hell.

However, I could take her hateful words and scathing comments. The look of utter disappointment in my dad’s eyes, it shattered me.

“I told you that you would hate me,” I sniffled, my throat choking up.

Dad shot up, his hands clenched in tight fists. He narrowed his eyes and walked away. Watching as he skulked out of the house, slamming the door, made my heart break. I’d ruined everything. My father hated me and I was a true disappointment to my family. Perhaps I should take the suggestions of Mackenzie, Madelyn and Kimmie, end it all and then I wouldn’t have to feel this way.

Mom got up and sat next to me. She reached for my hand, but I jerked away. “Kyra…”

“I’m a waste of space,” I spat. “I hate seeing him like that. I’ve disappointed you, Daddy…I’m a huge mistake.” I shot up and ran up to my room. Curling up on the bed, I sobbed into my pillow. The day started off good, got really shitty, improved drastically with Thomas’s admission of his love for me, but now was irrevocably ruined because of Mackenzie’s abortion that happened over a year ago.

You would think that since I had helped her, that Mackenzie would actually be grateful for what I did. But no. She was more interested in maintain her reputation then actually giving a shit about her friends. In fact, her brush with impending parenthood did nothing to stop her from having unprotected sex with more guys. I thinks she was on the pill, but even that wasn’t a hundred percent effective.

I managed to calm myself down long enough to send a text to Thomas.

_Thomas ~ dealing with some family drama. I am probably grounded or something…I don’t think I can go out with you tomorrow. I feel so bad. :’-( ~ K_

_Thank goodness my parents picked up my phone! AND I’m not in trouble…Do you want to talk about it? What happened? ~ T_

_Long story short, I’m a disappointment ~ K_

_Kyra, you are not! Talk to me, baby…can’t I do something? ~ T_
Do you still love me? ~ K

Always, Kyra. I wouldn’t have said it if I didn’t mean it. I love you…~ T

I love you, too. See in chem on Monday? ~ K

Ready to make fun of Mr. Brown. Call me if you need anything, Kyra. I want to be here for you ~ T

Just saying you love me has definitely helped ~ K

We said goodnight and I burrowed into bed. I prayed that sleeping would make this nightmare that had exploded go away, but I knew, foolishly, that it wasn’t going to. I drifted but woke up when I heard my parents fighting. They never fought. Based on the volume of the voices, it was bad. Stuffing the pillow over my face, I tried to drown out the screams of my parents and forget everything that had happened today.

I. Suck.

xx STTD xx

I woke up early the next morning, swiping some food from the pantry that I could nibble on in my bedroom. I didn’t want to face my family, especially my dad. I couldn’t handle seeing his anger and frustration with me. Swiping the food, I ran right into Steve who was dressed to work out. “Sorry,” I mumbled, trying skirt around him.

“Kyra, why are you raiding the pantry?” Steve asked.

“I’m avoiding my family,,” I answered. “I really don’t want to see them or the hurt in their eyes so I’m hiding out in my room until Monday.” I danced around him, but he grabbed my wrist. “Steve, seriously…I just want to be left alone.”

“Kyra, you can talk to me,” he said softly, looking directly into my eyes.

“Is Oliver in the apartment?” I asked.

“No, he had a date with his girls,” he explained, guiding me to the stairs. Clutching my box of pop tarts, cheese and crackers and pop, we went up to Steve’s apartment. He unlocked the door, leading me to the couch. I put my booty onto the cocktail table, curling up into a ball. “Alright, tell me what happened.”

“I told my parents about Mackenzie’s abortion. I told them that was the reason why she was bullying me. She knew I had the power to completely upheave her life, but instead, she’s doing it to me. What’s worse was the look on my dad’s face,” I sobbed, dropping my head to my knees.

“Why was that so bad?” Steve frowned. “Why would she make your life hell if you had this information, Kyra?”

“My dad is soooooo anti-abortion. It’s stemmed from what my Aunt Alice went through in order to have a baby. Obviously Adam isn’t hers, neither is Gianna. They had to adopt. Every child is a gift in my family’s eyes. The fact that Mackenzie threw one away so heartlessly…” I wiped my face, curling into a tighter ball. “I used my father’s money to help finance that. He has every right to be upset with me.”

“It still hurts, though,” Steve frowned. “Why would she make your life hell if you had this information, Kyra?”
“I don’t know. It’s not like I would say anything about it. I’ve threatened her, but I wouldn’t betray her trust like that,” I said, leaning my head against Steve’s shoulder.

“Kyra, she obviously betrayed yours by attacking you,” Steve growled lowly. “She doesn’t deserve your loyalty.”

“Besides, who would believe me?” I said dejectedly. “I’m not going to stoop to her level, Steve. For certain I’d be an even bigger disappointment to my family.” Steve put his arm around my shoulder, rubbing my arm. “To make matters even worse, I heard my parents fighting. They never fight.”

“Every couple fights, Kyra,” he said.

“Not my parents. Dad thinks that Mom walks on water and she absolutely adores him. They. Never. Fight,” I hissed. “I have a strong suspicion that it was about me and what I did. I don’t know how to fix it and I hate it.”

“It’s not your job to try and fix your parent’s relationship. The only thing that you can control is you. Can you go back in time to erase what happened? No. What you can do is try to get your parents to understand why you helped out Mackenzie. You were helping out a friend who was in a sticky situation. At the time, it seemed like the best decision. You probably never anticipated having a falling out with Mackenzie and this would have never come to fruition,” Steve said, hugging closely. “The one thing you shouldn’t do is hide from your family. Kyra, your parents love you…”

“That’s debatable,” I snapped.

“Kyra,” Steve admonished.

Hopping up off the couch, I glared at my friend/bodyguard. “You didn’t see the look in my dad’s eyes, Steve. It’s like the world just collapsed for him. I single-handedly destroyed my relationship with my father because of my slutty, skanky former best friend!”

“Your father adores you, Kyra,” Steve said, taking my hands in his. He stopped me from my frantic, frenetic pacing. “I’ve never seen a man love his child as much as he loves you. Mr. Edward would give everything to ensure your safety, Kyra.”

I wriggled out of his hold, swiping my food from the table. “You weren’t there. You didn’t see how he couldn’t even look at me. I’m a fuck up. Nothing I can say or do will fix it.” I turned on my heel, darting out of the apartment and into the main house. Masen was up, taking out Max. I ignored my little brother, running up to my room and locking my door. I crawled back into bed, covering my body with my comforter, crying brokenly.

Throughout the course of the day, several people knocked on my door. I ignored them. I didn’t want to be yelled at. I didn’t want to be reminded that I brought shame to our family. I just wanted to stay in my room until school on Monday. That’s if I go. Why should I? School is absolute hell.

My head was pounding and I felt empty. The day passed and I was left alone. I talked briefly to Thomas, apologizing for breaking our date. I told him what had happened after he left and he was worried for me. I just told him that I needed him to be understanding. Thomas said he loved me before he was called away. Hanging up the phone, I decided to go to bed. I barely slept the night before. My dad’s angry golden eyes haunted me. Tossing and turning, I tried to sleep but couldn’t. Looking at my clock on the nightstand, I saw that it was just before eleven.

I had to get the hell out of here. Being in my room, in this house, was stifling. I tossed on a pair of jeans and a hoodie. Pulling my hair up, I slipped out of my room and down to the garage. I swiped
my car keys, along with my wallet and cell phone. Sneaking out into my dad’s old Volvo, I backed it out of the garage and pulled away from the house. It felt oddly weird to not have anyone with me. Steve, Oliver, Casey and Johnny had become enfolded into our family. They were strong, focused and prepared to protect our family from the monster that was stalking my mother.

I ignored the sense of unease that washed over me and I drove out of the neighborhood.

xx STTD xx

EPOV

Kyra had used my money to help end the life of a baby. Money that I thought was going to be used for a purse. I’d rather she bought the fucking purse. I couldn’t be in the same room as Kyra. I loved her, but I was so pissed at her. She knew our beliefs about abortions.

That doesn’t mean that she shares them, idiot.

I got up from the couch, leaving Bella and Kyra in the family room. Grabbing my coat, I picked up a set of car keys and left the house. It was stupid, but I had to get out of there. I drove away and toward my mom’s place. I needed to talk to her. I needed to talk to someone.

Parking behind Alice’s massive SUV, I got out of the car and walked into the house. Marcus was reading in the family room when he saw me. “Edward, my boy! How are you…? Who died?”

“No one,” I said. “Is my mom around?”

“She’s in the kitchen, baking some cookies,” Marcus replied.

“And Alice?”

“I think she’s running the basement,” Marcus said, wrinkling his nose.

I rolled my eyes, going downstairs to get my sister. She was listening to some music and running at a near sprint. I slammed down the emergency stop button the treadmill and she scowled at me. “What the fuck, Edward?”

“Stop being a brat. I need you,” I said, narrowing my eyes at her.

“I’ve got another hour!”

“I don’t really fucking care. I need your help. Stop being so self-centered and help your older brother,” I snapped, dragging Alice off the treadmill and up the stairs. In the kitchen, my mom was making chocolate chip cookies.


“Apparently not,” Alice snarled. “He pulled me off the treadmill!”

“Alice, you’ve been on that thing for two hours,” Esme chided. “It’s a damn good thing he came when he did!” My mom turned to me, giving me a look of concern. “What is it, Edward? Is everything okay? It’s not Bella, is it?”

“No,” I said, sitting down at the kitchen counter. “I need your help. Parenting advice, as it were.”

Alice narrowed her eyes, shooting up from her seat at the table. “According to my husband, you’re a god when it comes to parenting. You don’t need my help.”
“Alice, sit your hormonal ass down and help your brother,” Esme hissed. Alice plopped back down, rolling her eyes and huffing loudly. Turning back to me, Esme gave me a soft grin. “Go on, Edward.”

“Have you ever dealt with a child who made a choice that you adamantly disagreed with?” I asked.

“Emmett made many poor decisions and the natural consequences were enough to scare him straight, until his trial,” Esme replied. “Alice got drunk and nearly lost her license that first summer in college.”

“That’s because you and Dad were trying to encourage a damn curfew,” Alice retorted. “I go from doing whatever the hell I wanted to being home by midnight? I was pissed!”

“And you lost your car,” Esme said, arching a brow. “Now, Edward, you wouldn’t be asking about this unless it was related to you or to your children. What’s wrong?”

“You know how Kyra is being bullied?” I began, tugging my hair.

“Kyra’s being bullied?” Alice asked, her brows shooting to her hairline.

“You would have known this if you weren’t wrapped in your own world, Alice,” I said, glowering at her. She shrank back, her face paling. “Sorry. I’m just on edge and very upset with my oldest child.”

“Explain everything to us, Edward,” Esme said calmly.

I began by telling them about Mackenzie’s harsh treatment of my daughter. The amount of torture that Kyra endured from the girl was vicious. Alice was ready to kill Mackenzie and Esme was trying to calm me down since I was a wreck explaining the level of brutality of the bullying. After I explained that, I told them the reason for Mackenzie’s torture.

“A year ago, roughly, Kyra helped Mackenzie with a situation that no teenage girl should be in. Mackenzie was pregnant,” I growled. “Under the guise of buying a purse, Kyra asked for some money but instead gave it to Mackenzie to bankroll an abortion.”

Esme bit her lip while Alice gasped, her face turning a bright pink. “That’s bullshit! Kyra knows how we all feel about abortions!” Alice snapped.

“She may know but does she necessarily believe?” I replied.

“Edward, are you mad at Kyra for paying for the abortion or at the act itself?” Esme asked.

“Both,” I frowned. “I refuse to be that parent where all of my kids need to believe the same things that I do. If Kyra is okay with a woman having the right to choose and supporting it, then fine. But, to be so sneaky about it is what’s upsetting me!”

“You said that this happened a year ago?” Esme questioned. I nodded. “Edward, regardless of your beliefs, it was Kyra’s choice to help out Mackenzie. What you should focus on is not where the money was spent, but the surreptitious manner that she got it. Obviously, this girl was in a bad place if her friends were helping her to pay for the abortion.”

“Her mom would have kicked her out,” I shrugged. “But my responsibility is not Mackenzie. That girl is…” I huffed out a breath, pinching my nose. “I’m so disappointed in Kyra. I had to get out of the house before I exploded on her.”
“You made the right choice in leaving,” Esme encouraged.

“You’re a stronger person than me. I would have gone off on her,” Alice spat bitterly. “Every child is a gift. Not one should be squandered and thrown away like that. The fact that Kyra helped with that, I’m disappointed in her, too.”

“And you will not say a fucking word to her, Alice,” I snarled. “If you go off on my child, I will kick your scrawny ass. She’s my kid. Mine to deal with. Your opinions are much stronger about this, but I came here for help. Not judgment.”

“He’s right, Alice. It’s not like Kyra got the abortion,” Esme explained.

“Just merely funded it,” Alice snorted derisively.

“Alice, you’re not helping. I came to you for help. Not petty, snotty commentary. No wonder Jasper is looking at divorce lawyers. You haven’t made one iota of change since you started this trial separation,” I snapped angrily at my sister. Her eyes widened and immediately filled with tears. “Shit, I’m sorry, Alice.”

Alice held up her hands, pushing away from the counter. Twisting off her wedding set, she tossed it onto the granite counter top, darting back downstairs to the basement. “God, I keep fucking everything up,” I groaned.

“Language,” Esme admonished lightly.

“Sorry, Mom.”

“Alice hasn’t changed. I love my daughter, but she’s not getting it. Perhaps hearing that from you will light a fire under her butt,” Esme said.

“She’s giving up, Mom,” I sighed, picking up her platinum wedding set.

“We won’t let her. Now, back to Kyra. I understand why you are mad at her. But, she was helping out a friend. Or at least at the time, a friend,” Esme said, wrapping her arm around my shoulders. “What she spent that money on was against your beliefs. Against the beliefs of your family, but you shouldn’t punish Kyra for that. Do you love your daughter?”

“With my whole heart, Mom,” I answered, giving her a dubious look. “I’ll always love Kyra, I’m just confused as to why…”

“Sometimes, as a parent, you’re not supposed to know those things. It’s frustrating as hell. For the longest time, I wanted to know why Emmett hated you, why Carlisle encouraged and fostered that hate, why you changed when you met Bella…Whatever the reasoning maybe, it’s in your head and if you want to share it, you can. If not, it’s your choice,” Esme smiled.

Sighing, I nodded. My phone buzzed from my coat pocket. Taking it out, I saw a few texts from my wife. Get. Home. Now! I kissed my mom, darting out of the house and back into the car. I drove to my house, almost fearful of what my wife was going to do to me. I knew that I probably hurt Kyra’s feelings when I stormed out. Walking up the stairs, I snuck into the bedroom. Bella was sitting on the chair, glaring at me. “If I had stayed…”

“You would have seen your daughter crumble,” Bella hissed. “She’s been crying most of the night, Edward!”

“If I had stayed, Kyra would have seen me explode. I do not want to be the father that screams at his
children,” I yelled, glaring at Bella.

“So, screaming at me is perfectly okay,” she growled.

“Bella, you know how I feel about abortions. The entire family knows those beliefs. I’m not going to be the one to say that you have to do as I say, but the fact that my oldest daughter helped that bitch of a girl pay for an abortion pissed me off to no end. It still does! I’ve never…”

“I’m just as upset, Edward, but sometimes you have to put on your game face,” Bella yelled, her chocolate eyes narrowing at me. “But, Kyra knew, Edward. She knew that you were ashamed of her.”

“I’m not,” I responded petulantly.

“Yes. You are. The one thing that you are dead set against is what Kyra helped with Mackenzie,” Bella spat. “I know you, Edward.”

“I’m disappointed but not ashamed,” I said, shooting my wife a look. “Why Kyra wouldn’t have approached us and told us about the whole thing?”

“She knows us, Edward. She knows that as soon as she would have said the word, we would have shot her down,” Bella said, sitting down on the bed, tugging my arm for me to join her. “What are we going to do?”

“Well, I went over to my mom’s place. I asked for her opinion. Alice, too, but she was worthless in what she had to say. Still focused on Alice and not anyone else’s problems. My mom, in her infinite wisdom, said that we were probably more upset about how Kyra manipulated us for the money, not necessarily on what it was spent on.”

“That makes sense,” Bella said.

“I don’t know what to do, Bella. I’m upset at Kyra. I’m pissed as hell at that girl, Mackenzie,” I snarled.

“You’re not the only one,” Bella sighed, snuggling against my shoulder. I wrapped my arm around her body, kissing her soft hair. “Should we punish Kyra for what she did? It was a year ago. The punishment would be for naught, really. Her guilt is more of a punishment than anything we could do.”

“Today has just sucked,” I grumbled.

“I know, baby,” Bella said, kissing my ear. “I’m sorry I snapped at you.”

“I’m sorry that I left, but it wouldn’t have been pretty,” I snorted.

“It was probably a good decision, but you didn’t see Kyra just fall into herself,” Bella warned.

“I’ll talk to her tomorrow. I promise,” I said, kissing my wife’s forehead. “I didn’t want to talk to her while I was upset and run the risk of saying something that could ruin my relationship with my daughter.”

“You still hurt her, Edward,” Bella sighed.

“A mistake I hope to rectify in the morning,” I said. “Now, I’ve got a killer headache and I want nothing more than to cuddle up with my wife.”
“That sounds perfect,” Bella said, crawling onto her side of the bed, tucking herself in. I stripped out of my dress clothes, curling around my beautiful wife. It wasn’t long before we both drifted asleep.

xx STTD xx

The next morning, it was craziness. Max had gotten sick after Masen took him out. I was about to go and talk to Kyra when my very upset youngest son dragged me to his bedroom where his new puppy was whimpering pitifully in his bed. Gathering the dog, we drove to the vet and sat in the stiff chair while a litany of tests were run on Max. Masen was fearful that the dog we had just got was sick like Wrigley.

Thankfully, Max had just gotten a stomach bug. The vet prescribed antibiotics, along with a bland diet and lots of rest. By the time we got home, it was just after four in the afternoon. Bella handed me a grocery list, telling me that we needed food. I scowled at her, asking her why she didn’t go. Mia had something for school that Bella was going to drive her to, so I was giving the honor of going grocery shopping. Dragging Owen and Johnny with me, I went to Mariano’s to pick up the items on our insanely long grocery list.

An hour later, we were home and in charge of cooking dinner. I kept it simple and broiled some hamburgers and having some pasta salad. Mia and Bella came home, with Oliver on their heels. We set the table and the only person missing was Kyra. “Owen, go upstairs and get your sister,” Bella asked sweetly.

Owen nodded, running loudly up to the second floor. I heard him knock on the door, but there was no response. Faintly, I heard the door open and then Owen’s heavy steps clambering down the stairs. “She’s asleep and I don’t think a nuclear bomb would wake her up.”

“Did she sleep at all last night?” I asked, my heart clenching.

“I don’t think so. Not much. I heard her crying, but I didn’t want to upset her more to find out why,” Owen shrugged, sitting down next to Mia.

“What’s wrong with Kyra?” Mia asked, nibbling on her pasta salad.

“If you sister wants you to know, she’ll tell you,” I said, arching a brow. “For now, let’s give her some space and your mother and I will talk to her later tonight.”

Over dinner, we talked about everything and nothing, avoiding the sticky topic of Kyra. Mia and Masen had a school dance next Friday. Owen was auditioning for the pit at school for the spring musical and Bella had the first three acts of Rose’s book, Forever Charmed, scripted.

Mia and Masen took care of the dishes while Owen tried to wheedle another driving lesson out of me since he was supposed to take his driving test in the next few weeks. Every time I was supposed to talk to Kyra, I got pulled away and I hated it. Owen’s pleading broke me and I took him for a two hour lesson on driving, focusing on less-than-ideal conditions.

By the time we got home, it was after nine. I trudged upstairs, knocking on Kyra’s door. She didn’t respond. I walked into her room, checking on my baby girl. She was curled up around her American Girl doll with clear tear stains on her sad face. I brushed her curls from her forehead, hating that my reaction probably caused her anguish and I wanted to slap myself for being such a douchebag. I couldn’t wake her. I wanted to take her pain away, but right now she was asleep. I kissed her forehead. “I love you, principessa,” I whispered against her skin. She whimpered, curling away from me. With a sigh, I left her bedroom and went downstairs.
“Did you talk to Kyra?” Bella asked as she sipped some wine.

“She was asleep. I didn’t have the heart to wake her,” I said, sitting down next to my gorgeous wife. “Tomorrow. I’ll talk to her tomorrow.”

“Okay, Scarlet,” Bella laughed, pinching my side. I barked out a laugh, stilling her wandering hands. I pulled her to my side and we watched the rest of a cheesy romantic comedy before locking up the house. I checked on Kyra one more time, running my fingers through her soft hair before closing her door and getting ready for bed.

Bella and I fell asleep almost as soon as our heads hit the pillow. That sleep was interrupted, though. The incessant banging on our door woke us both up. Bella extricated herself from my arms as I rubbed my face, completely disoriented by the banging. Bella opened the door to find a very frantic Steve in a pair of jeans and t-shirt. “Miss Bella, Kyra’s gone!” he hissed.

“What do you mean, gone?” I asked, arching a brow. I got up from the bed, pulling on a pair of track pants.

“I thought I heard the garage door open. I went to investigate, thinking it was Jacob, but instead, I saw Kyra’s car missing,” Steve said, his eyes wide with fear. “Is there a way you can track her cell phone?”

“Come on,” I said, stuffing my feet into a pair of shoes. I skirted past Steve, running down to the office. Logging onto the Whitlock computer, I checked to see if Kyra’s phone was turned on and it was. Turning on the tracking device, I tried to hone in on her location. For some strange reason, it wouldn’t pinpoint her location, only a vague overview. “Damn it!”

“Why can’t it be working?” Steve asked.

“Any number of things. A cell tower could be down. Kyra’s phone could be low on battery. Someone could be using a scrambler…” I said, my eyes widening. “She’s being followed!” Steve yelped, pushing away from the desk. I went to follow him.

“Edward, a sweatshirt or something!” Bella yelled, tossing me a shirt over the landing. I tugged the hoodie over my body and ran toward the car that Steve had idling. I flipped on my phone, giving Steve some cursory directions to where Kyra’s car may be. We drove, breaking every possible speed limit on the streets. Steve was searching while he was trying to get to my daughter safely. I kept looking at my phone, trying to will the blinking blue dot to stop in one location, but it still bounced all over the three block radius in downtown Wheaton.

“Fucking hell,” I snarled, tossing the phone into the cup holder. “That thing is useless as long as the scrambler’s on.”

“You said downtown, right?” Steve asked.

I nodded, keeping my eyes peeled for my old silver Volvo. We circled around the town, then around the small park in the center of the town and spiraling outward. Every so often, I’d check the GPS, only to be frustrated again. “Look there,” Steve said, pointing to a small car. It was closely following what appeared to be my Volvo. We were driving in the opposite direction. Steve turned around, following the small Volkswagen Rabbit. The Rabbit didn’t stick around for long. It turned quickly onto a small side street, showing Kyra driving erratically in front of us. I picked up my phone and saw that the scrambler was gone and Kyra’s signal from her phone was strong and right in front of us.
I dialed Kyra’s phone. She answered on the second ring. “Daddy?”

“Pull over, principessa. Let me ride with you,” I said softly.

She indicated and Steve pulled up next to her. “Follow us home. I’ll ride with her,” I said.

“Sure thing, Mr. Edward,” Steve said, his posture slumping.

I hopped out of the car, getting into the passenger seat of my old Volvo. Kyra was crying again, gripping the steering wheel. “Kyra, you’ve got to calm down if you’re going to drive.”

“I’m…I’m…” she sobbed. “I’m a disappointment!”

I frowned, gathering my daughter into my arms as best as I could in the confines of the car. “You’re not a disappointment. You never could be, Kyra,” I whispered against her messy hair. “Come on, sweet girl. Let me drive us home and we’ll talk, alright?”

She nodded against my shoulder. We switched spots in the car and I drove us back home, making sure that the Rabbit wasn’t following us. Twenty minutes later, I pulled the car into the garage with Steve directly behind me. He gave me a tight smile before going up to his apartment while I guided a very upset Kyra into the kitchen. “Sit, baby girl,” I said, encouraging her to sit on the stool. “Do you want hot chocolate or vanilla cappuccino?”

“Hot chocolate,” she murmured. “With marshmallows.”

“Got it,” I said, grabbing some milk and pouring it into a small pan. Darting into the pantry, I picked up two packets of hot chocolate and the container with marshmallows. Kyra put the hot chocolate into two mugs, tossing six marshmallows inside while I watched the milk so it didn’t burn. Once the milk was just about to bubble, I poured it into the mugs and tossed the pan into the sink, sitting down to with Kyra. We didn’t talk at first, just waiting for the hot chocolate to cool slightly. “Kyra, first off, I want to apologize for how I acted yesterday.”

“You had every right to be mad, Daddy,” Kyra muttered, spinning the mug on the counter. “I fucked up.”

“You didn’t fuck up. At the time, you were helping a friend. The way you did it wasn’t too hot, but I applaud you for helping out Mackenzie,” I said, rubbing Kyra’s back.

“It didn’t do one bit of good. She hates my guts, has made my life hell and is still carrying on like the slut she is,” Kyra spat bitterly. “Sorry. I didn’t mean to go off like that.”

“No, I get why you’re upset, Kyra,” I said. “Now, I want you to understand why I was upset with you yesterday. First off and most importantly, you’re not a disappointment. You never were and never will be. Got it?”

“Yeah, Daddy,” she said, sipping her hot chocolate.

“Look me in the eyes and make me believe it,” I said, gently cupping her chin. “You’re not a disappointment.”

“I’m not a disappointment,” she murmured. “If I wasn’t a disappointment, why did you leave?”

“Because…”I began, twisting my wedding ring. “Because, if I had stayed, I would have said things that would have hurt you, your mother and me. I was very angry at what you did. I still am, but I’m in better control of my emotions. I do not want to be the parent that says one thing and expects my
children to follow my rules blindly. I want you guys to formulate your own opinions. You know how I feel about abortions, but do I expect you to have the same feelings? No. I was just so upset that you would lie about needing money for a purse and do that to help Mackenzie.”

“At the time, it seemed like the right decision,” Kyra said. “Mackenzie’s mom is super strict and she would have kicked her out, Daddy. But hindsight is twenty/twenty. Mackenzie manipulated us to have us pay for her abortion. Now? She’s making my life miserable. I can’t wait until I’m done with high school and away from those catty bitches.”

I chuckled. “I don’t blame you, principessa. If Mackenzie sends you another threatening text or posts something on Facebook, I’m going to the police. Her behavior is appalling and I’m not afraid to have her arrested for harassing my oldest daughter.”

“I’m sorry for lying to you, Daddy. I knew that if I had told you what the money was for, you would have grounded me permanently and forbid me to see Mackenzie,” she sniffled. “In retrospect, that sounds like a good thing, but at the time…”

“I’m sorry for making you think that I was disappointed in you. Never, baby,” I whispered, kissing her forehead. “I love you, Kyra and nothing will ever change that. Sometimes, though, my temper gets the best of me.”

“Daddy, you’re the most chill person I know,” Kyra snorted.

“That doesn’t mean that I don’t have a temper. It just takes me a while to get there,” I smirked. “Now, there is something else we need to discuss. You leaving. Without protection.”

“Shit,” Kyra moaned, covering her face.

“Yeah, shit. Steve came pounding on our door when he discovered you were gone. Not to mention, there was someone following you. We don’t know if it was Jacob, but we had a hell of a time finding you since there was a scrambler being used to jam your GPS signal from your phone,” I said, giving her a stern glare.

“Someone was following me?” she squeaked.

“No. I was too upset,” she frowned. “I had to get out of the house. I felt like…I don’t know. I felt like you probably didn’t want me here and that if I left, all of your problems would be solved.”

“Kyra, this will always be your home,” I said, taking her face in my hands. “I’m so sorry that my reaction caused you to think that, but you are not a problem. Jacob is the problem and he almost got you.” Kyra paled. “I can’t lose any of you. Not you, your siblings, your mom, the dog…I was terrified when I was told that you were gone, principessa. It’s my job as your dad and protector to keep you safe.”

“I’m sorry,” she said, wrapping her arms around my neck. “I didn’t mean to, Daddy.”

“I know, baby girl,” I said, kissing her temple. “But there will be consequences for your leaving.”

“No for the money thing?” she asked.

“No. It happened so long ago that punishing you now would be pointless,” I explained. “From now until this whole situation with Jacob is dealt with, you will have someone with you. Steve, Johnny, Casey or Oliver will be your shadows. Additionally, you are grounded for two weeks for being out
past curfew and for giving me and your mother a heart attack. Oh, and not to mention Steve. The poor guy looked like he was going to hyperventilate.”

Kyra pulled back and frowned deeply. “I am keeping making mistakes.”

“We all do, Kyra. The thing is that you learn from your mistakes. What have you learned from this?”

“One, never trust Mackenzie and if she gets knocked up again, let her suffer the consequences. Two, I’m not a disappointment to you or to mom. Three, you’re kind of scary when you’re pissed off,” she snorted at that one.

“That was nothing compared to what could have been Kyra Marie,” I said, arching a brow.

“Anything else?”

“You love me unconditionally,” she said quietly, giving me a timid grin.

“That is a constant and unwavering, Kyra. I love you with my whole heart and I’d move mountains to make sure you were safe, happy and loved,” I said, hugging her tightly to my chest.

“I love you, too, Daddy. And I’m really sorry about lying to you about the whole Mackenzie thing,” she said against my shoulder. Then, she yawned.

“Alright, Kyra. You’re tired. I’m exhausted. Let’s go to bed,” I said, squeezing her slightly before letting her go. We put our mugs into the dishwasher and I rinsed out the pot. Flipping off the lights and setting the alarm, we walked upstairs.

“Daddy, I know that I don’t say this often, but I’m really lucky to have you and Mom for my parents. Thank you for being…you,” she said quietly. She hugged my waist. “I love you.”

“I love you more, principessa. Sleep well,” I whispered against her hair, kissing the crown of her head. She slipped out of my arms and into her room. With a wave, she shut her door. Turning on my heel, I went into my room and saw Bella on the bed, petting Max. “What is that doing on our bed, Bella Cullen?”

“You were gone. I was worried. Max noticed. He jumped up,” Bella blushed.

“He’s getting hair all over our nice, clean bed,” I grumbled, trying to push Max off my pillow. “You know that he makes me sneeze! This is the safe zone!”

“He’s right, Max,” Bella said, urging the dog off the bed. He whimpered, jumping onto the floor and skulking toward the chair near the window. Hopping up onto the chair, Max looked forlornly at the bed, wagging his tail. “I’m assuming you found Kyra, right?”

“Yeah, with a tail,” I growled, stripping out of my hoodie and track pants. “Steve and I think that Jacob was trailing her, scrambling her GPS signal on her phone.”

“She’s alright?” Bella asked, her voice raising in panic.

“She’s fine and she’s on restriction for the next two weeks,” I said, dusting off the dog hair from the bed. “We also talked it out and she understood why I was so upset.”

“Okay,” Bella sighed, curling up against my chest. “I don’t know about you, but, I’m ready for our lives to go back to normal. No Jacob being a douchebag. No teenage girl drama. No more fighting with Alice. Just you, me, our children and normalcy. You know?”
“I do know,” I said, kissing her lips. “For now, we just need to adjust to our new normal with all of the craziness. When all of this dies down, normal will seem boring.”

“I like boring,” Bella snorted. She ran her fingers over my belly. “Can we just get away?”

“Are you serious?” I asked.

“Yeah. Just you and me. With all of this drama, I feel like we’re not together,” Bella said, climbing and straddling my legs. “I miss you. I miss us. I love our kids, don’t get me wrong, but Kyra’s situation with Mackenzie, Owen’s trip down to Peoria, Masen and the dog and Mia with her slew of sporting events. Not to mention the stress of Jacob, our constant need for protection and the situation with Alice, they’re all pulling us in a million and one different directions.”

“Like a weekend away?” I questioned, my heart stammering at the prospect of being alone with my wife for a few days. No kids, though I do love them with my whole heart. No Jacob. No drama.

“An extended weekend,” Bella said, kissing my lips softly. “We leave on a Thursday and come back on Monday.”

“You plan it and I’ll follow you,” I smirked.

“Really?” Bella squeaked.

“Really,” I said, giving Bella her favorite crooked grin. She squealed, throwing her arms around my neck. “Now, today has been absolutely awful. Never a dull moment and Jacob almost got our baby girl. I need my wife.” She pulled back, her eyes softening. “Let me love you, Bella. Please?” With a sensual kiss, she tugged off her t-shirt and I lost myself in my wife, temporarily forgetting that bullshit in our lives.

A/N: Originally…originally…I was just going to have this be a Kyra chapter, but I couldn’t get it long enough. So, I combined two chapters into one. Bonus for you guys. Also, bonus for you will be the next chapter. Bella’s surprise getaway…where should they go? I welcome any and all suggestions, folks. As a result...LEMONADE! You know you all want it.

No picture teasers for this one. Sorry. :-( But, for the next chapter, there will be…their locale, perviness and yeah. You can find that on my blog and tumblr (links are in my profile). You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation or on twitter: tufano79. Leave me some!
Mardi Gras

They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Chapter Fourteen: Mardi Gras

BPOV

“Bellini, you and Edward will have an amazing time in New Orleans,” Rose said as she helped me pack for our weekend getaway. Somehow, by the grace of God, I managed to get a hotel in New Orleans, the weekend before Mardi Gras. We were staying at the Hotel Monteleone in the Tennessee Williams suite. We were flying out to New Orleans on Friday, staying through Wednesday following the big Mardi Gras parade.

“Thanks for coming out to stay with the kids while we have this mini vacation. The past few months have been…” I sighed.

“I know, Bellini. Everything will work out. Jacob has disappeared, thankfully. Kyra and Edward are thick as thieves. Alice is still driving me up the wall, along with your mother-in-law and the rest of the family, but we can’t really do anything about her.”

“She’s pissed off at all of us for not doing more about Kyra’s decision to help Mackenzie with the abortion. It happened over a year ago. What does she want us to do?” I asked, tossing in some sexy lingerie into my bag. “If it’s not the drama with Mackenzie and Kyra or dealing with a lunatic ex-boyfriend, I’ve got handle my husband’s sister who is all sorts of fucked up. Jasper is looking for divorce attorneys.”

“Tim met up with Jasper for drinks a couple of days ago. The man is a mess. He still loves Alice, but the way she’s acting, it’s wedging them further apart,” Rosalie sighed, frowning deeply.

“I feel badly for Adam and Gianna,” I frowned. “Adam is taking it okay, but Gianna, she’s spending more time here with us than at home. Jasper is trying to be there for her, but she needs a mother. Gianna is going through a lot and her mom is going through her change of life.”

“Define a lot,” Rose asked.

“Gianna has gone through a growth spurt and she’s started her period. Jasper drove her over to our house so I could take her to get pads because she was inconsolable. It was like Alice didn’t talk to her about the birds and bees. She didn’t know what to do or anything,” I explained. I closed my suitcase, putting it on the floor so I could focus on Edward’s bag. “I love Alice, but this behavior is a huge change from the bubbly girl I met nearly twenty years ago.”
“Has she started to see a shrink?” Rose questioned, her brow arched.

“She still refuses to see that there’s anything wrong with the way she’s acting. It’s like she doesn’t realize that she’s distancing herself from her friends and family. Her main focus is to keep herself as youthful as possible at the expense of her relationships. Her marriage is on the rocks. Her children are turning to me and Edward for guidance. And Esme, sweet Esme who couldn’t harm a fly, wants to strangle her daughter due to her behavior,” I deadpanned. “A vacation. We need a vacation. A longer one than five days.”

“What are you planning on doing in New Orleans? Well, besides each other,” Rose smirked.

“Charming, Rosalie,” I snickered.

“What? Don’t deny it, Bellini. You and Edward handle stress differently than other people. You fuck each other stupid,” Rose guffawed, going to my bag and swiping a tube of lube that I stuck in the pocket. I rolled my eyes, swiping the tube from her hand and stuffing it back in the pocket. “Seriously, Bellini, you and Edward are quite, um, horny for each other. Even after so many years of marriage. It’s nice to see.”

“Are you and Tim okay?” I asked.

“We’re fine. I’m trying to convince the mister to get a prescription for Viagra or Cialis, but we’re all good,” Rose winked. “Seriously, what are you guys doing down in New Orleans?”

“Well, one of the days, we’re going to be complete tourists. Edward and I planning on going to a Mardi Gras museum and the Audubon Zoo, then go to Chalmette to eat at Rocky and Carlo’s. My friend, Bridget, who lived down there, suggested it. We’re doing that on Saturday. On Sunday, we’re probably going to roam around Bourbon Street, do a cemetery tour and explore the voodoo connections of the French Quarter. Monday, we’re planning on doing the Lundi Gras parade since on Mardi Gras, we were invited to the Rex Ball. When the concierge, Ing, found out who we were, he made arrangements for us to get an invite since the Rex Organization uses Whitlock computers and software. The only downfall with that is we have to wear a gown and a tuxedo. I’ve had our dress clothes shipped down there and they’ll be waiting for us in our room once we arrive,” I said.

“And you guys return on Wednesday?”

“Yep. We should be home by dinner time. Our flight leaves at eleven in the morning with a connection in Memphis,” I said, checking the itinerary on the dresser.

“Why didn’t you take one of the Whitlock jets?” Rose asked.

“Because, they are not there for us to use on a whim,” I chided. “They are supposed to be used for Whitlock business. I was a nervous wreck when Edward told me he used the jet to fly out the kids to California when we were there discussing the first movie. It wasn’t related to Whitlock business and it’s a misappropriation of funds. That’s a big no-no.”

“Bella, I love you, but you need to get fucked. You’re too fucking uptight,” Rose snickered, leaning back on my pillows. I rolled my eyes, packing Edward’s boxer briefs along with some jeans, t-shirts and button-downs. “Is your security force coming with you?”

“Not with us. Ricky lives in nearby Florida and he said he’d be our protection while we were in New Orleans. Everyone else is staying here in Chicago. It’s safe to assume that Jacob won’t even know we’re gone, but Edward wanted something. And with all of the activities the kids are involved in, we needed all of the security up here.”
“Yeah, go over this schedule for me, Bellini. The color coding is making my eyes cross,” Rose laughed. She placed the detailed, color-coded schedule between us. She gave me a withering glare, teasing me that I was too much of a control freak with my children’s hectic lives.

“Okay, Masen has musical practice almost every day after school except Friday. That’s the blue. He should be done no later than half past four. Mia has basketball practice that goes until five. Hers are purple, but when she has games, that’s the magenta color. Games last longer, they’re usually done by six-ish. Plus, she has a practice on Saturday morning, in preparation for the conference games next week. Owen is in the pit for the musical at the high school. He has rehearsals on Mondays and Thursdays after school, usually until five as well. Those are in orange. He’s also got wind symphony on Wednesdays after school. That’s yellow. Kyra has tutoring sessions for National Honor Society at one of the local elementary schools on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Her sessions are in green and go until four. Don’t worry about driving them places, Steve, Oliver, Casey or Johnny will handle the chauffeuring. If you want to go to Mia’s games, that’s great, but she knows that you don’t have to be there. I have meals labeled for you in the fridge and freezer.”

“Bella, I’m not completely helpless. I have my own husband and children,” Rose laughed.

“And I also know that Tim cooks,” I deadpanned.

Rose wrinkled her nose before sticking her tongue out. “I still think that this schedule is insane, Bellini.”

“It is crazy, but I’d rather have my kids be involved in school than acting like jack asses on a street corner. I’m lucky that all of them are respectful and do well, with little to no push back. Now, we’ve got an early flight tomorrow. Edward should be home soon.”

“Why is he so late?” Rose asked. “It’s after nine.”

“Conference call in Hawaii. They’re talking about ordering some of his new tricorders at some of the medical centers in the Aloha state.” I checked the clock in our room. “They should be on their way now.”

“Does it really work?”

“They’ve tested it on several different patients at a slew of hospitals locally. It accurately gives heart rate, blood pressure, temperature and minor arrhythmias. Plus, it’s helped with the diagnosis of broken bones and sprained muscles. It’s not as detailed as what was used in Star Trek, but it is a useful diagnostic tool. They’re outfitting them in the emergency rooms, urgent care centers and some medical offices,” I said. “Edward’s just finalizing details with the hospital administrators.”

We chatted until the garage door opened an hour or so later. The three of us, plus Johnny, hung out while Edward and Johnny ate dinner. Edward thanked Rose for staying with the kids. Tim was coming over the weekend with Ava and Lucas, leaving on Sunday night so they could go to school on Monday. We went to bed shortly after Edward and Johnny ate. My husband was exhausted from working over eighty hours this week. I had barely seen him. He’d get up before the sun and get home just before we went to bed. He was putting in extra hours so he could enjoy our weekend getaway, but his golden eyes were drawn, tired and he was done.

Going to bed shortly before eleven, my husband crushed me to his chest. He was abnormally clingy. “What’s wrong, Angel?” I asked, running my hand along his taut belly.

“I don’t know,” he replied, his voice sounding completely drained. “I’m happy we’re going away, but this past few months has kicked my ass. And it’s going to get worse when we get home.”
“Why?” I questioned.

“Jasper filed for divorce, asking for full custody of Gianna and Adam,” Edward muttered. “Alice is going to be served with papers while we’re in New Orleans.”

“Nothing can be done?” I whispered.

“No. Alice’s behavior as grown more and more erratic. I understand that her hormones are out of control, but it’s her blasé attitude that’s upsetting the most. She doesn’t want to get help. Mom’s tried to talk to her. I’ve tried. Even Marcus has pulled her aside, but she doesn’t see that anything is wrong with her. You know?” Edward responded sadly.

“Do you think that the papers will light a fire under her ass? Will Jasper not go through with it if she proves that’s willing to work on getting better? Improving their relationship?”

“Jasper doesn’t want a divorce, but he misses Alice. The old Alice. The one that was normal and funny and who didn’t obsess about her looks, weight and loss of femininity. Jasper still loves her, but they can’t keep going on like this. To answer your question, I think that Jasper would stop the divorce proceedings, but Alice has to make a marked change and right now, I don’t see that happening. I don’t even recognize my younger sister. She’s a shell of her former self because of this menopausal insanity that she’s experiencing. I’m almost afraid of you going through it,” Edward cringed.

“Some women have a rough time. My mom, she had a year of hot flashes and then nothing. She was fine. I’m assuming I’ll be like her,” I said, kissing his chest. “Was Alice a mess when she got her period?”

“Ugh, it was awful. She’d bitch about the cramps. My mom had to take to the gynecologist at the age of fourteen to get her put on the pill regulate her cycles along with her debilitating cramps. Once the shot came out, Alice went on that and her problems went away because essentially, she didn’t have her little friend,” Edward said. He chuckled humorlessly. “I know way too much about my sister’s girly problems.”

“I hope that Jasper and Alice get their happily ever after and that this doesn’t end up with a broken family,” I said sincerely.

“Me, too,” Edward replied, cupping my chin and kissing my lips softly. “I love you, gorgeous. I’m never leaving you. You know that, right?”

“I know, baby,” I murmured in the darkness. “I’m never leaving you, either. I promise.”

“Show me,” he pleaded. My needy husband desperately wanted us together. I was more than willing to oblige. In a way, I craved him as well. Removing our clothes, he brought me to orgasm with his fingers before he slid inside of me. With whimpers and renewed promises of our love, we came together before succumbing to exhaustion. Our need for each other was sated and we curled up together, so closely that you didn’t know where Edward ended and I began.

xx STTD xx

Landing in New Orleans, we met up with Ricky. He was holding up a cheesy sign, grinning like a goofball as he leaned casually against a beam in the baggage claim. The sign was decorated with Mardi Gras colors, stating ‘Welcome to New Orleans, Cullens!’

“Wow, you got old, Mr. Edward,” Ricky laughed, hugging my husband.
“Pot meet kettle,” Edward quipped, poking him in the belly. “And none of this ‘mister’ business. We’re friends. Please?”

“Old habits die hard,” Ricky shrugged. Turning to me, he smiled. “You look as beautiful and youthful as ever, Miss Bella. Why are you still with this old fart?”

“Because he’s my soul mate, Ricky,” I giggled, kissing his cheek before giving him a hug.

“That’s good. You two are so perfect for each other,” Ricky smiled. “Do you have bags?” We both nodded, walking toward our carousel to pick up our luggage. As we waited for our belongings, Ricky and Edward chatted about random things, mainly about Whitlock Technologies and Steve. I sent a text to Rose and all of my children, explaining that we were in New Orleans, safe and sound. After retrieving our bags, Ricky led us out to the parking garage, toward a rented black SUV.

Settling into the car, Ricky drove us to the Hotel Monteleone. “I know you guys are on vacation. I want you to enjoy it. For the most part, I’ll be a quiet, invisible shadow. I’ll be nearby, but I won’t be hovering like your regular team. In fact, when you go to the ball, I won’t even be there because my wife and I are not invited guests, like you. I took the liberty of informing the ball organizers of your issue and they explained that they have their own security. If they don’t have a ticket, they won’t be coming in.”

“Thank you for planning ahead,” I smiled at Ricky.

“I will be driving you to the event and you have my phone number if an emergency situation arises,” Ricky explained, expertly navigating the highways to the French Quarter of New Orleans. “Patty and I will be on the same floor as you. Thank you, Miss Bella, for arranging for the rooms. They are amazing. Even though I’m working, we’re treating this as our second honeymoon.”

“I’ve already extended your stay until next weekend, in the same suite that we’re in. It’s a small token of our appreciation for flying out to be with us,” I said, rubbing Ricky’s arm. “I’ve already cleared it with your wife and she has plans for you.”

“I imagine she does,” Ricky smirked, waggling his brows lasciviously.

“Yeah, ewwww,” Edward laughed. “I don’t need that visual, you perv.”

“What? Just because I’m in my late-fifties, doesn’t mean that I like to get it on. All natural, too,” Ricky snorted. “None of that Cialis shit.”

“Stop, Ricky. Just, no,” Edward whimpered, jutting out his lower lip. Ricky snickered, pulling up to the hotel and parking the car. Gathering our suitcases, we entered the large, elegant lobby of the Hotel Monteleone. Checking into the hotel, we went up to our suite. Edward told Ricky that we were probably just going to take a nap and possible explore a little bit of Bourbon Street. I invited Ricky and his wife out for a late dinner and we made arrangements to meet up in the lobby at seven.

I made sure our formal wear had been delivered, which thankfully, it had before we crawled into the king-sized bed to cuddle together to take a nap. I slept hard and probably got the best rest in months while in that comfy bed in the Tennessee William’s suite. When I woke up, I heard Edward speaking quietly on the phone.

“Thank you. My party of four will be there at nine,” Edward said, his voice lilting and smooth. I sat up, rubbing my eyes and watching as my husband finished working on whatever he was doing on the computer.

“Where are we eating?” I asked sleepily.
“Hmmm, a sleep rumpled Bella. My favorite,” Edward chuckled, walking over to me and crawling into bed. He caged my body with his arms, kissing my nose.

“Not good enough,” I said, pulling him closer to me. With a rumbling growl, Edward’s mouth descended onto mine and our lips moved together languidly. He kissed me for a few moments before rolling off to the side. His hand was cradling my face, caressing the apple of my cheek. He looked so handsome with his bronze hair with the perfect smattering of gray all disheveled. His lips were slightly swollen from our kisses and his golden eyes were twinkling, shining with the love he had for me and for our relationship.

“You are so beautiful, Bella,” he whispered, rubbing his thumb over my lower lip. “I’m one lucky man to have you as my wife. Thank you for planning this trip away. We so needed it.”

“I agree, angel,” I smiled, kissing his thumb. “Everything was spiraling out of control. I would have liked to take our kids with us…”

“I wouldn’t. Bella, I love our children, but we needed some us time. We needed to be away from Chicago, the threat of Jacob, the looming drama with Alice and Jasper and just life. Over the summer, we’ll take the kids to wherever they want to go, but this weekend is all about us. You and me,” Edward said, pulling me closer to his body. “And Ricky and Patty.” His nose wrinkled. “Even though we’re on fucking vacation, we still have protection.”

“I’m sorry,” I frowned, feeling incredibly guilty. It was my psycho ex-boyfriend that was causing this unrest.

“Stop, gorgeous,” Edward chided, cupping my chin to look into my eyes. “It’s not your fault.”

“Not directly,” I said, arching a brow. “I was the idiot who dated Jacob, thinking that his moronic, stupid ass was good enough for me.”

“Bella, did you ever think that Jacob would have turned out the way he did?” Edward asked. I bit my lip, shaking my head. “Then, it’s not your fault. He’s the one with the screw loose.”

“I just pray that he doesn’t do anything to our family,” I muttered.

“Not if Steve and our security team have anything to say about it,” Edward replied. “Now, we’re going out on Bourbon Street and we have a reservation at Redfish Grill at nine. I need to let Ricky know and then we can wander around the French Quarter. Do you want to shower?”

“Probably. I hate that grimy feeling of being on a plane,” I said, making a disgruntled face. “I see that you already showered.” I ruffled his slightly damp hair.

“I’m with you with the foul nastiness of flying,” he shuddered. “You were down for the count and I was restless. I decided to shower and do some work before I really turn my mind off for our time here in New Orleans.” I scowled at him. “Don’t put on the puss, Bella. Charlie sent me at text, asking questions about an order that was placed through me for some of the new police tablets for Chicago Police Department. I responded to his request and spoke with the representative, verifying the order. It took no more than fifteen minutes.” I kept on my scowl, arching a brow at him. “I’m yours for the rest of the weekend.” He flashed his signature crooked grin, nuzzling my neck.

“If I see you on your work computer again, it’s being chucked out the window, Cullen,” I deadpanned.

“The only time I’ll be on it is to look up directions and verify reservations,” he said, holding his hand over his heart.
“Promise?”

“I solemnly swear,” he chuckled, kissing my lips. I got up from the bed and went to grab some clothes for our explorations of the French Quarter and Bourbon Street. I picked out a pair of plum colored jeans with a light pink camisole. Edward said that it was warm out, but to bring a jacket, just in case. I was going to wear my light-weight leather jacket and a pair of cheetah print flats.

After a nice long, relaxing shower, I fingered in some mousse into my hair and reapplied my makeup. Once I was finished, I got dressed, walking out into the living room of the suite. Edward was wearing a pair of jeans and a light teal button down shirt with the sleeves rolled up. I handed him my credit card and driver’s license, which he placed in his wallet before we went downstairs to meet up with Ricky and Patty in the lobby.

We spent an hour and half wandering around Bourbon Street. It was filled with revelers of all shapes, ages and sizes. What shocked me more than anything was how brazenly some women asked for Mardi Gras beads by flashing their boobs. I snuggled closer to Edward, trying to cover up my chest. Patty was doing the same, but watching the tradition with rapt attention.

“What’s not in the mood for some public nudity?” Edward asked lowly.

“Definitely not for some five cent beads,” I snorted, looking up at him.

“Good. Because, these are mine,” Edward retorted, staring at my breasts. “And I fully intend to spend at least an hour becoming fully reacquainted with your perfect tits.” He reached around my body, squeezing my left breast underneath my jacket. I smacked his hand, giving him the evil eye.

“Behave, Edward,” I hissed. He chuckled, grabbing my hand. Threading our fingers together, we walked happily until we arrived at the restaurant. It was a fairly casual restaurant, but came highly recommended by the hotel. Our table wasn’t ready yet when we arrived. We sat in the bar and drank some Arbita beer until we were ready to be seated. We didn’t have to wait long, thankfully. Enjoying some local and delicious seafood, prepared in a Creole style that was absolutely sinful. Splitting some amazing desserts, we walked back to the hotel and went our separate ways. I called the kids, checking on them. Kyra was out on a date with Thomas and another couple. Oliver was with them. Owen was having some sort of Xbox battle with his brother and Lucas in the basement while Mia, Gianna and Ava were doing makeovers in Mia’s bedroom.

Sending my love to my children, I was barely off the phone when my husband picked me up and carried me to the bedroom. He spent over two hours lavishing my body with kisses, nibbles and licking every inch of my skin. We didn’t make love, just spent two hours enjoying some fucking amazing foreplay.

xx STTD xx

Early the next morning, Edward woke me up with some slow, tender lovemaking. I nearly cried when he kissed me so adoringly as he slipped inside of my body. The sheer joy in his golden eyes was nothing short of beautiful and my heart grew for this beautiful, sexy man who was my husband for nearly twenty years.

Our plan for today was to spend the morning and early afternoon at Audubon Zoo. Edward, being a dork, was humming a Dixieland jazz standard of the same name. Dressed in a pair of jeans and some light-weight tops, we went met up with Ricky, who drove us to the zoo. His wife was enjoying some time with a friend of theirs and was meeting up with us for dinner at Rocky and Carlo’s. Pocketing the camera, we went to the zoo and acted like silly kids, just having fun and reminiscing from when we didn’t have four kids, a hell lot of responsibilities or really any cares in the world.
Ricky hung back in the shadows, not really interacting with us. For that, we were grateful. The constant need for protection back at home was weighing on both of our minds. Jacob had been silent since that almost moment with Kyra. That added to our fears. She was almost taken in February. It was now early March with no word on the Jacob front. Edward was secretly hoping that his dick had turned gangrenous and fell off, causing him to die from sepsis.

_Unlikely, hubby of mine._

Jacob, while being an impulsive, domineering asshole, had the patience of a saint. I just knew that he was waiting for the right moment to get us while we were least expecting it. My fear was that he would hurt one of my children in order to get to me. I would die for my babies and do anything to ensure their safety, even if it meant going into the clutches of a madman. I prayed it didn’t come to that.

“Gorgeous, it’s a beautiful day and I don’t like the scowl you have on your face,” Edward said, poking at my cheek.

“Sorry, just thinking about the mongrel,” I replied.

“He doesn’t exist here,” Edward said, dragging me to the lion exhibit. “Jacob Black is merely a figment of our imagination and has no place here in New Orleans or on our vacation. Do I need to take you into one of the bathrooms and fuck some common sense into you?”

“Edward, we’d scare young children or become one of the exhibits,” I snorted. “I don’t want us to be on display, ‘Nerds Fucking in their Native Habitat.’”

“Geeks, Bella. We’re geeks,” he sighed, tugging me to his side. “And the bathroom wouldn’t be our native habitat. That’s our bedroom, baby.”

“What about the piano?” I snickered.

Edward growled, kissing at my neck as I squealed. Dancing out of his arms, I gave him the ‘mom eyebrow’ and pointed at him, demanding that he behave himself. Holding up his hands, he laughed heartily as we continued our exploration of the zoo. We took pictures and just hung out until Ricky sent us a text, reminding us about the Mardi Gras museum and their hours on Saturdays. Stopping in the gift shop on the way out, we ended up buying some trinkets for the kids, t-shirts, key chains and some stuffed animals before getting into the car, driving to the museum.

The museum was amazing, displaying all of the different floats from previous years. They were colorful, whimsical and just awesome. Some of the more unique floats, Edward and I took pictures with, Ricky acting as photographer. Shortly after that, we decided to drive to Chalmette to go to Rocky and Carlo’s. From what Bridget told me, this was a local, cafeteria-style diner that had delicious mac and cheese and stuffed peppers that were to die for. Sitting with Ricky and Patty, we ordered the specials and died and went to heaven from the tasty, albeit very fattening meal.

Driving back to the hotel, the sun had set and the revelers had swarmed the streets. I was tired. So was Edward. _Yeah, right._ My husband was staring at me hungrily all during dinner. He was not tired. He was horny.

Who was I kidding? I was horny, too. Playing with my husband and just have a day of fun had reminded me of our relationship when we were dating. Hell, it reminded me of our first few months of marriage, too. The carefree days really lingered in my mind. We had a good run of them, the days of no protection, until Jacob decided to be a douche.
Back at the hotel, I told Edward that I was going to shower. It was humid and walking around all
day had made me sweaty and gross. My horny hubby asked if he could join me, but I encouraged
him to call our children. Masen wanted to talk to Edward yesterday, but low batteries on my phone
had cut our call short. Stripping out of my clothes, I walked into the bathroom to scrub myself from
the grime of the zoo and grease from the restaurant.

Swiping one of Edward’s button-down shirts, I padded to the bedroom. Laying down on the bed, I
curl up around the pillows and began putting on lotion onto my legs. As I got closer to my apex of
my thighs, my need for my husband grew. I had been turned on prior to my shower and now, my
arousal was almost painful. I could hear him talk to our kids, but I was in need of some sort of
release. I put the lotion on the nightstand. Opening the shirt, I ran my hand up and down my body,
cupping my breasts. I imagined it was Edward’s slightly calloused hands doing the touching and it
made my arousal grow.

Twisting my nipples, I moaned quietly. In my mind, Edward is nibbling on my breasts. It feels divine
and all I want is his mouth on me, kissing every inch of my skin. Working myself to a near frenzy, I
slid my hand between my legs. Palming my sex, I was shocked at how wet I was. Whenever I
played with myself, I couldn’t get myself this turned on. Perhaps, it was due to the fact that Edward
was going to walk in at any point, see me with my hand touching my pussy that made me so fucking
wet. Languidly, I ran my fingers through my folds. I slid them inside of my body, whimpering at the
feeling. My silken walls clung to my fingers while I curled them up, trying to massage my g-spot.
Licking my lips, I moved my fingers up to my clit, circling the sensitive bundle of nerves. “Yes,” I
sighed.

“Starting without me, gorgeous?” Edward growled from the doorway.

“I was wet,” I smirked, still playing with my clit. “Horny and desperate for some action. You were
still on the phone.”

“I’m not on the phone anymore,” he murmured, his golden eyes trained on my hands. “Do you need
help?”

“I want you to tell me what you want me to do,” I said, sitting up slightly, still rubbing my pussy.

“Take off the shirt,” he said, arching a brow. I shrugged out of the shirt, tossing it onto the ground.
“Spread your legs, gorgeous. I want to see your sexy body.” I bit my lip, opening my thighs so he
could get a clear view of my dripping core. He sat down on the edge of the bed. “Perfect…now, put
those sexy little fingers into your pussy.”

“Like this?” I asked, dipping them barely inside of my body.

“Now, when I touch you, is it like that?” Edward chided, his voice gruff. I shook my head slowly.
“Deeper, Bella.” With a low whimper, I sunk my fingers further inside of me. “I can’t believe how
wet you are, gorgeous. How did you get this turned on?”


“And you’ll have me, Mrs. Cullen,” Edward smiled, his fingers gliding along my legs. “After you
bring yourself to orgasm.”

“I’d rather have your tongue on me,” I quipped, jutting out my lower lip.

“Baby, I’m so close to burying my face between your thighs, but you told me that you wanted me to
tell you what to do,” he admonished lightly, but his eyes darkened. “Rub your clit, Bella. With your
other hand, fuck that pretty little pussy.”

With my left hand, I circled my clit while my right slid between my folds as I began pounding my sex. Edward watched me, removing his clothes as I brought myself closer and closer to the brink. “Are you close, Bella?”

“Hmmm, yes,” I moaned, writhing on the bed. His warm hand slid up my leg. My hips were bucking against my hand, uncontrollable from the feelings I was experiencing. Dripping down my wrist, my arousal seeped out of me. Edward was slowly stroking his cock. His muscles in his forearm were rippling with each stroke. “Bring your cock over here, angel,” I demanded. “I want a taste.”

He groaned, moving closer to my face. Removing my one hand from my body, I wrapped it around his cock. His arousal was covered with my juices. Sitting up, I gave his erection a long lick, from his body to the head. He shuddered, still watching my one hand circling my clit. Cupping his cock, I slid it between my lips and began bobbing my head, relishing his velvety hardness. “Bella,” he choked out, “as good as that feels, I want to be inside of you when I come.”

“I’ll get my taste later?” I pouted.

“Who am I to deny my wife?” he smirked. “Finish yourself off, Bella. I want to see you come. I want to see your hand plunging deep inside of your wet pussy. I want to see your breasts bouncing as you fuck yourself with your hand. I want to hear you scream as you gush all over the bed, excited and aroused all because of your fantasy of me, of us.” His hand snaked between my legs and he rolled my clit with his fingers. “Put your fingers inside, Bella.” I looked at him, pushing three of my fingers into my core. “That’s my girl. Hard, I want to see you fuck yourself hard.”

Edward’s lips are a hairsbreadth away from mine. We’re sharing the same oxygen and it was fucking erotic. His golden eyes are trained on me, watching my reaction as I pound my pussy with my hand. My moans and whimpers were out of control. I was close. Edward’s hand roughly circling my clit and my hand inside of me, I was about to fucking explode. Out of nowhere, my body seized up and waves of pleasure washed over me. Edward kept circling my clit, staring into my eyes as I experienced one of the most powerful orgasms I’d ever had. Collapsing against the pillows, I tried to catch my breath. Edward’s mouth was on my neck, suckling and nibbling at the sensitive skin behind my ear. “I need you,” he crooned in my ear. “I want you. I love you.”

“Please,” I murmured. He grasped my hips and rolled onto his back. Straddling his waist, we kissed each other hungrily. I was rocking over his erection, coating his cock with my arousal. He looked at me, stopping my movements and guided me to hover over his body. He teased me with the head of his cock along my folds. I whimpered again.

“I love you,” he said again as he thrust his hips up, filling me.

“Oh, Edward,” I sobbed. “I love you more than words can express.”

“Show me,” he replied, cupping my face with his large hands.

And I did.

We made the sweetest love, cherishing every breath, every thrust, every moment together. It wasn’t about getting off. It wasn’t about feeling the pleasure. What we did in that hotel room was something more. Rolling us over, Edward tried to get as close as he could to me. Every part of our bodies was touching. It was so intimate. He whispered his adoration of me and I did the same for him. When we came, it was quiet and powerful. I felt my heart grow with the love I felt for my strong, amazing and nerdy husband.
With tired murmurs of love, we crawled underneath the bedspread. Edward held me to his chest, lightly caressing my back as we began to drift, happily encased in each other’s arms.

xx STTD xx

We spent all day Sunday in our suite. We didn’t even bother to get dressed. Okay, Edward got dressed when room service came up to deliver all of our meals, but that was just him pulling on his jeans hastily before tossing them off. There was no part of the hotel suite that was ‘unchristened’ by me and my horny hubby. It was amazing to just be with him.

On Monday, we wandered around the French Quarter, exploring the various Voodoo shops and taking one of the many cemetery tours. Originally, we had planned on doing that on Sunday, but our insatiable need for each other was more pressing. We also celebrated Lundi Gras since we were going to be at the Rex Ball on Tuesday. It was sea of people and I was honestly not very comfortable. The sheer amount of humanity packed on the streets of New Orleans was overwhelming. It was fun to say that we had gone, but it would not be something that we’d do again.

Tuesday, Edward treated me to some time down in the hotel’s spa before we got ready for the Rex Ball. It was amazing getting a fully body massage, wax treatments, manicure, pedicure and my hair and makeup done. Patty joined me when I was getting my manicure done, getting her fingers painted as a treat from her husband. Finishing up at the spa, I went upstairs to get dressed in my gown that I had sent to the hotel. It was the same color as the stone in my engagement ring, alexandrite. The dress was strapless and had ruching that clung to my form. The shade was a deep aquamarine color with an opalescent sheen. I wore my earrings that Edward got me from Harry Winston along with my heart pendant and an alexandrite bracelet. As I was putting my phone, cash and lipstick into my silver clutch, my heart nearly beat out of my chest when I saw Edward in his tuxedo.

“Damn,” I breathed. “You are so sexy in a tux, Edward.”

“What? This old thing?” he snorted, cocking a hip. “It makes my ass look big.” He looked at me, his eyes traveling the length of my body. “Now, you…you are a vision, Bella. So gorgeous.” He walked over to me, wrapping me in his arms before settling his hands on my ass. “I’m going to have the most beautiful woman at the ball tonight.”

“I wouldn’t go that far,” I quipped, kissing his jaw.

“We’ll just have to agree to disagree. Now, the hotel has arranged for a limo for us to the ball. We should get going. It’s supposed to be here in ten minutes,” Edward explained, kissing my forehead. Picking up his cell phone, we grabbed our keys and a wrap for me before going down to the lobby. Ricky was waiting down there, holding his camera. We stood together, smiling while he snapped a few photos. With a hug, we got into the waiting limo, driving to the Sheraton Hotel where the Rex Ball was being held.

There were paparazzi outside. Edward and I stood and smiled, being special guests of the organization. We were blinded by flashbulbs and led into a large room. There was a great deal of pageantry and elegance. It began with the military band, playing an impressive musical program. Their full-dress uniforms were crisp and the music was almost magical. Shortly after that, the Rex court began their processional. The dresses and costumes were almost effervescent with the amount of glitter and rhinestones on them. What surprised me was the amount of pageantry of the ball. I almost felt like I was in a royal court, not a hotel in New Orleans.

We all greeted Rex and his Queen before we began dancing. I was having so much fun with this and I felt like a princess, dancing in the arms of my prince. An hour later, they left the ball to greet the King and Queen from the Comus Ball in the historic meeting of the courts. We followed them across
the street and watched another display of pageantry.

“This is so magical,” I whispered to Edward.

“This whole trip has been magical,” Edward murmured back, kissing my head. “It’s exactly what we needed. I had so much fun. All of the drama in our lives has been weighing on me and just being able to spend time with you, be silly and us has recharged my batteries.”

“I don’t want to go back,” I frowned. “This year has just sucked.”

“I know,” Edward sighed. “First, Kyra starts with her diva attitude. Then, Jacob comes out of whatever hole he’s hiding in. Thankfully, Kyra pulled her shit together only to have her life turned upside down because of the bullying with Mackenzie.”

“Let’s not forget about Alice and Jasper,” I deadpanned.

“Not my concern,” Edward huffed.

“She’s still your sister and Jasper’s your partner,” I said, threading my fingers through his.

“You’re right,” he said, his brows furrowing. “There is one thing that makes this year not as bad, though.”

“What’s that?” I asked.

“I’ve had you by my side and knowing that you love me…” Edward murmured, cupping my cheek. “That means more than anything and with that, we can face anything.”

“Love truly does conquer all,” I said, kissing his mouth.

“And then some,” he growled, deepening our kiss.

If only I could believe his words…

A/N: So, originally, I had planned for there to be a great many more lemons, but eh…I wasn’t feeling it. The citrusy action is more in your imaginations in this chapter. We’ll be going back to Chicago in the next chapter and hearing from Edward. What do you think is going to happen with Alice and Jasper? Let’s not forget Jacob…what’s his doggy ass doing?

Anyhow, lots of pictures with this one. They are on my blog and tumblr. Citrusy pics are exclusively on my tumblr. Links for both of those are on my profile. You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation or on twitter: tufano79.

Up next…we’re hearing from Edward and a new point of view, Owen! Cars, dates, and possible drama?? Leave me some!
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

We’ll be going back to Chicago in the next chapter and hearing from Edward. What do you think is going to happen with Alice and Jasper? Let’s not forget Jacob…what’s his doggy ass doing? Up next…we’re hearing from Edward and a new point of view, Owen! Cars, dates, and possible drama?? Leave me some!

Chapter Fifteen: New Cars and Prom Proposals

EPOV

“Dad? Can I talk to you?” Owen asked quietly. I was working in my home office, not wanting to go into work. Jasper was cranky and awful. I was avoiding him.

“What’s up, Owen?” I answered, turning to face my oldest son.

“Um, well, you know how Tasha and I have been dating?” he mumbled, twisting his hands. I nodded. “We haven’t ever gone out on our own. We’ve always been with Kyra and Thomas or out as a group. I would, um, you know, like to take her out for a date. Do something special for her so I could ask her to prom? It’s a month away and I don’t want to have a crowd of people…”

“Owen, I know you do, but Jacob is still out there,” I sighed.

“Dad, please? I’ve gotten my driver’s license and I’ve never used it! I want to pick up my girlfriend, take her out to a nice restaurant and ask her to prom without an audience,” he grumbled. “I know that Kyra is allowed to go out on dates.”

“Kyra has Steve trailing her,” I explained. “Plus, do I need to remind you of the night that Kyra went on a joyride? Jacob or someone following her almost got her. I don’t want that for you, Owen. Your mother and I, we want you to be safe. You know?”

“I do know, but this is stifling, Dad,” Owen grumped, sitting down on the leather sofa. “Why haven’t the cops found this Jacob guy? Mom and you deserve to not live in fear! So do we.”

“I know, Owen. I agree. We’ve spoken with the police and they are keeping an eye out for him, but he’s fallen off the grid,” I sighed.

“Dad, please?” Owen begged. “Even if it’s an arrangement like Kyra with one of the guys tailing me, I would like to go out with Tasha.”
“Let me discuss it with your mother and the guys before I give you an answer, Owen,” I said. He jumped up from the couch, doing some goofy dance. “It’s not a yes. Don’t get too excited.”

“But it’s not a no, either,” he retorted. “Thanks, Dad!” He bounced out of my office. Slumping, I threw my arm across my face. Owen made a good point. Why hadn’t the police found Jacob? *Stupid dog. Ruining my life and the life of my family.* I couldn’t grumble for too long. My work phone rang and I went back to the grind.

It had been three weeks since our return from New Orleans. The kids were on spring break. Things at our house were quiet. Almost normal. Kyra and Thomas were planning to go to prom in a month. Masen had his production in two weeks. Mia was taking a break from school sports, asking to be signed up for karate. Owen had passed his driving test and was in final dress rehearsals for the musical at his high school. He and Tasha were still going strong. Obviously, since he wanted to ask her to the prom.

All around us, though, was chaos. Jasper had divorce papers served to Alice while she was at her shop. Suffice it to say, my younger twin exploded in shock. She refused to get the help that she needed and as a result, Jasper has become quite unruly at work. He had been snapping at interns, making stupid mistakes and just given up on everything. I tried to talk to him, but he threw me out of his office. If he didn’t calm down, Demetri, Charlie and I were going to force Jasper to take a leave of absence while he got himself all straightened out. He had until the end of the week. Yes, he was struggling with his personal life, but it’s not okay to treat your coworkers and friends like they’re dirt.

Alice, on the other hand, was ignoring the problem. She was pissed off at Jasper, but didn’t do a damn thing about it. She up and flew to Paris, leaving Jasper and his children here in Chicago. We were all trying to convince her to come back, but she changed her phone number and was unreachable. The Whitlock clan were in shambles and it was all due in part to my selfish, bratty sister.

Bella and Rosalie were in Los Angeles, meeting with the producers of the *Charmed* movies. The second script was approved by the producers and studio. Production would begin after the conclusion of the press junket for the first film, in roughly three months. They were also planning the red carpet events. Over the Fourth of July weekend, we were going to be walking the red carpet for the first *Charmed* movie. I didn’t want to go, but Bella said that if she had to get gussied up in a gown, that her husband was going to be in a tuxedo by her side. Plus, she promised me lots of sex.

*Sold!*

God, I’m such a horny bastard. I’m making up for all that lost time when I was a teenager.

I finished my work day and went to make dinner for my family. Bella was returning the following day. I would approach her about Owen’s request then. As I was dishing up the chicken stir fry, all of my kids, plus two security guards, Steve and Oliver, and Thomas clambered into the house. Mia and Masen set the table while Owen and Kyra carried the meal to the table. Everyone got their drinks and we sat down at a packed dinner table.

“Dad, this is really good,” Kyra smiled, popping some chicken into her mouth.

“Thanks,” I smiled, putting some broccoli on my plate. “I’ll be happy once your mom is home, though. She’s so much better at creating meals on the fly.”

“At least you can cook, Mr. Cullen,” Thomas snickered. “Both my parents are not good in the kitchen. I mean, they have a few good meals that they can make, but you can only have spaghetti so many times before you lose it.”
“Didn’t you and your siblings pay for your parents to get cooking lessons?” Kyra asked, giggling quietly.

“Yeah, but they refused to go. I love my family but they’re so stubborn,” he chuckled. “I ended up going so we could have something other than chicken fingers and tacos for meals.”

“What did you learn how to cook, Thomas?” Mia asked.

“I learned how to make beef stew, a chicken dish similar to this, macaroni and cheese…the real kind, not the crap out of a box, vegetarian lasagna, and a breakfast casserole. When I get home early enough, I usually cook for my family. Plus, Kyra has shown me some other recipes that your family likes, too,” Thomas said, smiling adoringly at my daughter. Ugh, puke. She better still be a virgin.

I felt a sharp kick to my shin. Kyra was glaring at me, her lips pursed. I smiled sheepishly. Apparently, I had been glaring at my daughter’s boyfriend. Seriously, she was my baby girl. My principessa. She is too young for sex! “Dad!” Kyra hissed.

“What?” I barked, arching a brow at her.

“You were growling,” Kyra said quietly. “Stop obsessing over my non-existent sex life.” Oh, thank God. She rolled her eyes as I slumped, happy that my daughter was not jumping into the sack with the first teenage, horny boy that gave her attention. I liked Thomas. He was great, but his penis was not coming anywhere near my baby girl. Ever.

“Hey, Dad?” came the sweet voice of my youngest daughter.

“Yeah, Mia,” I replied, shaking my head.

“Can Gianna come over and spend the night?” Mia asked, biting her lip. “I think Adam is trying to talk to Uncle Jasper or something and she doesn’t want to be in the crosshairs.”

“I know that Adam sent me a text asking if he could hang out if things don’t go well,” Owen said, handing me his phone.

“This is ludicrous,” I griped. “Of course Gianna and Adam can come over. I want to strangle Uncle Jasper and Aunt Alice, but they don’t even have to ask.”

“I can go pick up Gianna after dinner, Mr. Edward,” Oliver said. I smiled at him appreciatively.

The rest of the meal was uneventful, thankfully. Masen, Owen and Thomas helped with the dishes while Mia went with Oliver to pick up Gianna. Kyra went outside to play with Max, who was now freaking huge, with Steve. A half hour later, Gianna came over. She was sad and barely talking. I greeted her with a hug. The poor girl just sobbed against me. Mia smiled sweetly, leaving me with my niece.

“Sweet girl,” I said, caressing her hair. “Talk to me.”

“Uncle Edward,” she sniffled, “Why does my mom hate me?”

 Fucking Alice. “Your mom doesn’t hate you, Gianna,” I soothed, rocking her gently. “Your parents are just going through a really rough patch…”

“It doesn’t matter! They’re adults and they should be there for us!” she snarled, gripping my shirt. “Like you and Aunt Bella…”
“You’re right, Gianna. I shouldn’t be making excuses for them. You and your brother should be your parents’ number one priority. I know that Adam is talking to your dad right now. If it doesn’t help, I’ll be speaking my mind to both him and your mom,” I said. *If we could fucking find her. God damn it, Alice! Don’t you care that your daughter is crumbling?* I took Gianna’s face in my hands. “Look at me, Gianna. I know that right now everything sucks.” She snorted. “But, I love you and so does Aunt Bella. I wish I could do something to make it better for you.”

“You already are, Uncle Edward,” she said, throwing her arms around my neck. She cried against my shoulder and I just let her. My niece was in pain and someone needed to be there for her. Heaven knows her parents aren’t. She eventually calmed down and went upstairs with Mia. They put on a movie in her bedroom. I went to my office after I checked on the rest of our full house, to do some research and find my sister.

What I did was highly illegal and definitely unethical, but my sister needed to pull her head out of her ass. I put a trace on her credit card, discovering that she was checked into the Sofitel Paris la Fauborg. I called the hotel, demanding I be put through to her room, despite the fact it was almost four in the morning.

“I told you that I didn’t want to be disturbed,” she spat.

“Listen to me, Mary Alice Cullen,” I snarled. “This time of acting like a child is over. You need to start acting like a parent, an adult and the good human being that you were raised to be. I’m tired of raising your children.”

“Edward? How did you find me?” she squeaked.

“It doesn’t fucking matter because you will get on a plane and fly home. Your daughter thinks that you hate her and if you want to salvage what’s left of that relationship, you better come home and fix it. Plus, your husband has lost his mind because of your behavior. Your family is in ruins because of your inability to cope with the fact that you’re getting older. Come home, find a shrink and fix your family. If you don’t, you won’t have a family left,” I said, quietly and calmly, but my ire was clearly evident. “You wanted a family…children…husband…Now, you’re callously throwing them away because of…I’m ashamed of you, Alice. I can’t believe you would act like this. Make the right choice.”

I didn’t wait for her to answer. I just hung up the phone and pinched the bridge of my nose. I hated giving my sister an ultimatum, but she had to know what she was doing to her family. I just prayed that she pulled her head out of her ass before it was too late.

xx STTD xx

When Bella came home the following day, I was so desperate for her. I wanted to pay the guys $10,000 to take the kids to the city so I could spend some time with my wife, but then I’d be no better than Alice. I did, however, kiss the living shit out of her. She squirmed in my arms, protesting that we were being too x-rated in front of our children, but after dealing with Gianna, Alice and after midnight, Adam, I needed to reconnect with my wife.

I had given up that Adam was coming over. I was beginning to lock up shortly before midnight when my cell phone rang. I saw that it was Adam and he was very upset. I stayed up, waiting for him to arrive. When he did, his face was red with anger and he was trembling. My nephew was so upset about his parents’ divorce and their lack of any sort of attention towards their needs. He was ready to spit nails. In fact, he was so upset that he had punched his father in the nose. Adam’s knuckles were bruised and I feared that they were broken.
However, the good news was that Jasper’s run in with Adam’s fist had finally forced him to realize that he needed time to focus on his family. Jasper was taking an indefinite leave of absence and I was now fully in charge of Whitlock Technologies. Another piece of good news was that Alice booked a flight back home. Perhaps there was hope for them yet.

After a Bella-made meal, Kyra and Thomas went out on a date. Owen and Adam hung out in Owen’s room with Masen. Mia and Gianna were in the basement, playing on the Xbox. We curled up on the family room couch and I just buried my nose in my wife’s hair.


“I missed you,” I pouted, pressing a kiss behind her ear. “Besides, I had to deal with the drama yesterday with Gianna and Adam, not to mention giving my sister what for in Paris.”

“I thought she changed her number?”

“I did some hacking and traced her credit card. I found out where she was staying and woke her up at like four in the morning, telling her that her daughter thinks that Alice hates her and that her family is crumbling because of her selfishness,” I said, wrinkling my nose. “I’m just so over this Jasper/Alice drama. I love them both, but they are not handling this whole thing very well. Adam and Gianna are being pushed off to the side. I hate that.”

“Well, we keep doing what we’re doing and show them love. I feel badly for them, too. I can only imagine how much therapy both of them are going to need,” Bella quipped dryly. “Oh, speaking of children…Owen cornered me while I was chopping up the cucumbers for the salad.”

“Let me guess. He brought up his need to go out on a date with Tasha?” I asked.

“Bingo,” she giggled. “I get why he wants to do it, but I don’t want him to be out there without any sort of protection!”

“Kyra and Thomas are able to go out with a shadow,” I shrugged. “Why couldn’t it be the same with Owen?”

“Because Jacob might be familiar with our cars,” Bella pouted.

“Can I make a suggestion?” I asked. Bella arched a brow. “When Kyra goes to school, she’ll need a car, right?”

“Not necessarily,” Bella deadpanned.

“I was thinking that we could sell her the old Volvo and pick up something for Owen,” I said. “Something small and used. If we do that, Jacob won’t recognize that car and Owen will have the opportunity to take Tasha out on that date or dates. We can give him the same deal we gave Kyra with gas and insurance. I know that he still teaches private lessons and makes good money.”

“I’m concerned that Kyra will get all pissy because we’re buying Owen a car,” Bella said.

“I don’t think so. She’s really grown up the past few weeks. I can’t believe how much she’s taken Gianna under her wing,” I mused. “It was really sweet to see.”

“Did I miss something from last night?”

“After I calmed down Adam, I was going to grab a bottle of water. Gianna and Kyra were in the kitchen. Our oldest girl reminded me so much of you when I saw them. Kyra was holding Gianna
and murmuring quietly that everything was going to be fine; that we loved her and always will. Then, she made her cousin some hot milk with nutmeg, just like you do when they’re upset. They finished their drinks and Kyra fell asleep in the trundle bed, humming quietly while Gianna struggled to sleep. I was never more proud of her.”

“Oh, my baby,” Bella sniffled, clasping her hands in mine.

“So, based off that, Kyra will not be upset about us buying Owen a car. I’ll even look up the cost of the Volvo and promise not to go over that amount to keep it fair,” I said. Bella thought and nodded. She curled to my side and sighed. I kissed her forehead. I had hopes that I would be making love to my wife, but when Kyra came back from her date, Bella was snoozing on my lap. My daughter decided to be a pain in the ass and snapped a photo of us, posting it to Facebook. I half-carried, half-dragged my wife up to our bedroom. I stripped her out of her clothes and covered her nearly naked body with the duvet cover. Climbing into bed with her after I locked up the house and made sure everyone was okay, I quickly joined her in the Land of Nod.

The next morning, we woke up Owen to have our conversation with him involving the car and his taking Tasha out on a date. He was sleepy and not fully coherent when he sat down at the kitchen table. So was Bella. She had slept hard and when the alarm went off, she nearly jumped out of bed. Unfortunately, since she was sleeping so deeply, she was jarred awake and not all with it. She was currently holding her coffee mug, inhaling the steaming liquid. Owen was doing the same, trying to wake up.

“Why am I up at the crack of dawn, Dad?” he grumbled, looking at me from behind his thick frames.

“It’s not the crack of dawn, Owen,” I chuckled.

“It’s before noon. In teenage speak, that’s the crack of dawn,” Bella quipped. Owen nodded, yawning widely.

“I’m sorry that I woke you up at the ‘crack of dawn.’ I was just going to tell you some good news. But, if you’re too sleepy,” I said, going to go upstairs so I could put on my running gear.

“Wait! Dad, what is it?” Owen asked, stumbling toward me.

“Jeesh, you’re like a newborn lamb, kiddo,” I snickered, guiding him back to the kitchen. He rubbed his eyes and plopped down on the stool. He took a hefty sip of his coffee and looked up at me expectantly. “So, your mother and I spoke last night about the whole date thing. I know that you cornered her before dinner.”

“I did not corner her,” Owen said, giving Bella a sly grin.

“Yes, you did. We had the entire conversation while my ass was in the freezer, Owen,” Bella giggled. “Obviously, this means a lot to you and you are right in wanting to experience the freedoms of having your driver’s license and ability to take your girlfriend out on dates.”

“It’s something that I never experienced,” I blushed, remembering my horrific high school days. “I hate that this round the clock protection has stifled that for you. After discussing it, we came to the conclusion that we’re going to purchase you a used car, something no more than $10,000, since that’s the asking cost of Kyra’s Volvo. The first installment of car insurance will be paid by your mother and I, but the rest is on you along with gas. When you do go out with Tasha, one of the guys will follow you and will be close by. Owen, you have to understand that you have to plan your date carefully because nothing can happen to you. When Kyra goes out, Thomas has to lay out the entire date to Steve or Oliver, whichever is following them. You’ll have to do the same.”
“Let me understand this…” Owen said, taking off his glasses and pinching his nose. *Damn, he looks so much like me when I was his age. It’s like going back in time.* “You and Mom are buying me a car, letting me go out on a date in said car but with one of security guys tailing me?”

“That’s the long and short of it, yes,” I nodded.

“When are we getting the car?” Owen asked, his eyes twinkling and his body vibrating in anticipation. *Now, he’s awake.*

“Today?” I replied. “I’ll have to spend more time in the office now that Uncle Jasper has taken some time off, so today is the last day I can ‘work’ from home. We could go in the morning and have everything set up by this afternoon.”

“Really?” Owen squeaked.

“No, Owen, I’m lying,” I deadpanned. Bella smacked my arm, pouring my coffee into our mugs.

“Ignore him. He took his sarcasm pills this morning,” Bella giggled.

“I can’t believe this!” Owen beamed. “I’m going to shower! Can we leave in ten minutes?”

“Give me an hour. I have to check in with Whitlock and also shower, okay?”

Owen nodded excitedly, springing off his stool and running up the stairs. I finished my coffee before doing the same to get ready. Well, after I thoroughly kissed my wife. An hour later, I was dressed in a pair of jeans and a green sweater. Owen was flipping through pictures on his tablet, trying to find the best car for the amount I was going to spend. “How about a Prius, Dad? It’s a hybrid and has great fuel economy. They have six of them at the Car Max in Aurora.”

“Only you would be worried about fuel economy,” I snickered.

“What? It makes sense. The oil isn’t going to be around forever, Dad,” Owen said, handing me his tablet.

“Let’s head on over there and take a test drive,” I said, tossing him the keys to the Land Rover. He beamed crookedly, practically skipping out of the house. I wandered to my wife’s office on the main floor. She was rereading the third book from Rose’s *Charmed* series. She had to get started on the final movie screen play. “We’re heading out, gorgeous.”

“Who is going with you?” Bella asked, looking up from her book.

“I don’t know. I’ll see if Oliver or Casey can come with me,” I shrugged.

“Be safe and I love you, Edward,” she smiled, getting up from her perch. She wrapped her arms around my neck, kissing my lips sweetly.

“I love you more,” I replied, kissing her pink, pouty mouth once more before jogging up the stairs to get one of the security guys. Oliver was free and he clambered into the backseat, excited to help with the purchase of Owen’s new wheels. We drove to the nearby Car Max and met up with a young girl, wearing the blue uniform from the massive used auto dealership.

“Welcome to Car Max. My name is Imogene. What can I help you with today?” she asked cheerfully.

I poked Owen. He blushed and stepped forward. “I’m looking for a car. I saw on your website that
you have some Toyota Priuses?"

“We actually got three more in today,” she said, leading us through the sea of cars. “What year were you looking for?”

“Well, I have a budget of $10,000. Something that fits within that monetary amount?” Owen said.

“We have four Toyotas that would work, Mr…?” she trailed off.

“Cullen. Owen Cullen,” my son stammered. “This is my father, Edward Cullen and a close family friend, Oliver Diggle. I just got my driver’s license and my dad said he’d help with my first car.”

“That’s very nice of you, Mr. Cullen,” Imogene said, giving me a warm grin.

“Owen’s a good boy and it seemed fair. My daughter got my old car when she started driving and she’ll be heading off to college soon. Owen will need something to drive around in,” I explained.

“Would you like to take a test drive?” she asked.

“If it’s possible,” Owen said.

“Well, I’ll need your driver’s licenses and proof of insurance,” Imogene explained. Both Owen and I handed over our IDs. I also handed her the insurance card. She pointed us toward the cars that Owen was interested in while she went to pick up some car keys along with file our information for the test drives. We checked out the information for each of the cars, but Owen was keen on a white Prius. It was in pristine condition. “Good choice, Mr. Cullen. This car was owned by an elderly woman. She had purchased it and then two weeks later, she had a heart attack. Her children sold it to us since they didn’t have a need for it. It’s nearly new with less than a hundred miles on it.” Imogene opened the door and encouraged Owen to sit. “It still has that new car smell!”

“Would you like to take this on a test drive, Owen?” I asked.

“Can I?” he replied, looking at Imogene expectantly.

She dangled a key. “Here you go! Let me get in the passenger seat. Dad, do you want to go with him?” Imogene asked.

“I think he’ll be fine without me,” I smirked. Owen looked shocked but so happy. Imogene nodded, jogging to the passenger seat. They chatted for a few minutes before the car started and Owen pulled out. Oliver and I went inside of the showroom since the weather was still fairly cold for spring.

“Your kids are very lucky, Mr. Edward,” Oliver said quietly. “I pray I have the opportunity to be the dad that you are with my girls.”

“Have you heard anything more?” I asked.

“With the salary that you’ve given me, I’ve hired a PI and now have an attorney on retainer. Nothing is solid in regards to possible abuse, but at least I’m making headway in possibly seeing them more often. Which reminds me… I have a court date in two weeks in the city. It’s custody hearing. I was wondering, well, if you could testify as a character witness on my behalf.”

“Is it full custody?” I asked.

“Not yet. Small steps,” Oliver said, smiling ruefully. “Hopefully, I’ll get weekends with them. I’m keeping my fingers crossed.”
So am I, Oliver. You deserve to have your children,” I said, squeezing his beefy shoulder.

“God has a plan for me. I just know that if I’m patient, it will be laid out for me to see and to follow,” Oliver said quietly. “I was sent to be with your family, Mr. Edward. Seeing you with your children, how you love them unconditionally, the adoration you and your wife have for each other; it has given me hope. I’m thankful for this job and for the opportunity to be a part of this.”

“We’re more grateful for you, Oliver. And I’d be happy to testify on your behalf. It’s the least I can do since you’ve given up so much to help my family,” I said. Oliver didn’t say anything but the appreciation in his eyes was enough.

Ten minutes later, Owen parked the car in front of the showroom. He was vibrating out of his skin. He hesitated in giving back the keys to Imogene, but based on the infectious grin on his face, my son had found his car. He bounded over to me, slinging his arm over my shoulders. “Those were some slick wheels, Dad.”

“I can imagine,” I chuckled, hugging him slightly. “What’s the next step, Imogene?”

xx STTD xx

OwenPOV

I had a car. Holy crap, I had a car! My awesome dad bought me a car. A car! A vehicle with four wheels, power windows and an auxiliary cable to plug in my music. I had a car!

I wanted nothing more than to call up Tasha and take her for a ride, just because I could. But the lingering fear of Mom’s ex-boyfriend and his psychotic tendencies prevented that. Instead, I spent the afternoon taking pictures of my new wheels and setting it up the way I wanted it.

My car was awesome. It was a Toyota Prius that was white with some sort of racing stripes along the bottom of the doors. It looked sleek and really did have that new car smell. Part of me was kind of squicked out that I had bought a used car from a dead lady, but I didn’t care. It was everything that my dad and I both wanted. It was safe and inexpensive (per my dad) and eco-friendly but fun (for me). Once we got home, my dad set me up with new insurance, saying he’d pay for the first six months, just like he did for Kyra, but after that, I had to pay for my insurance and gas.

I was in the driveway, reading the owner’s manual when Kyra sauntered out. She plopped down in the passenger seat. “I’m surprised you chose white, Wan.”

“It’s a sweet car, K,” I beamed, looking at my sister.

“It’s totally you,” she giggled. “I kind of figured you would choose a hybrid or one of those electric cars.”

“You’re not mad?” I asked.

“Hell, no! It’s fair. I got Dad’s old Volvo and from what I’ve been told, I’m taking it to school with me. You need a car, Wan. Especially senior year. I know you’re not as involved in school as me, but you live in the damn building,” she said, rolling her eyes. “It’ll be nice to just be able to drive yourself.”

“I know that Mom and Dad are also going to make me taxi around Mia and Masen,” I said, shrugging slightly. “I don’t care. I’ll just be happy when I have that freedom to do that.”

“You’re not the only one,” Kyra sighed, leaning her head back against the headrest. “I get their fear
of this Jacob guy. He sounds like a total douche canoe, but do you know what a pain in the ass it is to have Steve or Oliver or Casey or Johnny hovering while you’re on a date? I mean, I’m making out with Thomas and four seats down, there’s Steve. Awkward.”

“Yeah, you are at least making out. Tasha and I, we haven’t gotten past the whole holding hands thing,” I blushed. “I don’t know how to kiss a girl, K. I never thought I’d have the opportunity, you know?”

“Wait a minute…you and Tasha have been together since the winter formal and you haven’t kissed? Why not? She’s a cute girl!” Kyra wailed.

“I know! That’s why I’m freaking out. I’m this geeky nobody with this hot girlfriend. I’m waiting for her to dump me or to start spreading rumors that I’m gay or something,” I huffed. “Right, that already happened with Mackenzie.”

“Bitch. I hate her,” Kyra snarled. “I know I’ve apologized for that behavior, Owen, but I have to say it again. I’m sorry that I didn’t stick up for you when she was saying that crap.”

“It’s okay, K. I know you didn’t want to commit social suicide,” I said, moving to set up my preset stations.

“That’s the thing! You’re my brother! We came from the same womb, Owen! We are the genetic combination of Mom and Dad after they did the bump and grind,” Kyra giggled.

“Don’t mention that. Ever. Mom and Dad don’t have sex. They’re, like, old,” I shuddered.

“I hate to burst your bubble, WAN…they fuck like bunnies. I had to ask Steve something and well, on the security monitors, there was a video clip of Mom and Dad going at it on the piano,” Kyra said, biting her lip.

“The piano? The piano?! The PIANO?!?!?!” I screamed. “Ugh, I need brain bleach. My hands were on there.”

“Well, so was Mom’s naked ass and Dad’s…” Kyra trailed off.

“Stop, K. I don’t want to puke in my brand new pretty car,” I whimpered, leaning my head against the steering wheel. “On the piano? Really?”

“Sorry, bub,” Kyra said sympathetically. “If it’s any consolation, Dad looked a lot like you when he was a kid and well, from the brief glimpse of what I saw, he’s got some pretty slick moves. Maybe you inherited his sexual prowess.”

“Kyra! I mean it,” I grumbled.

“I’ll stop. Sorry,” she said, rubbing my shoulder. “Back to Tasha, that girl is enamored with you. She thinks you hung the moon. You have to kiss her. I’m probably guessing that she’s freaking out and wondering why you haven’t kissed her.”

“It’s not like we’ve had any time alone, Kyra. Each time we go out, it’s either with her friends or on a double date with you and Thomas. I don’t want our first smooch to be in front of an audience,” I said, pushing my glasses up my nose.

“Owen, I love you but don’t ever refer to as a kiss as a smooch. Ever again. Nana and Papa say that,” Kyra deadpanned.
I rolled my eyes. “It doesn’t matter what I call it, I still don’t want to have my first kiss in front of everybody. It’s something special, you know?”

“Yeah, I do. So…when are you going to lay one on her?” Kyra asked, smiling widely.

“Well, the reason I got the car was so that I could take Tasha on a proper first date. I’m going to pick her up, take her to dinner and ask her to prom. I’m hoping, *hoping*, that things will go from there. You know?” I said, my face flaming. “One of the security guys is going to be trailing me and hopefully give us a little bit of privacy.”

“Do you know where you’re going?” Kyra questioned, bouncing excitedly and reminding me of Aunt Alice.

“I haven’t a clue. Tasha is out of town for spring break and will be back on Friday. We tentatively made plans for Saturday, but nothing is set in stone,” I shrugged.

“Come on, Owen…we need to plan the most ideal, romantic and kissable date ever,” Kyra squealed, jumping out of the car.

“Kyra don’t slam…” *SLAM!* “…the door,” I groaned. She hopped in front of the car, gesturing madly. With a sigh, I tossed my owner’s manual into the glove compartment. Getting out of the car, I followed my very hyper and excited sister. I apparently wasn’t walking fast enough since she yanked me into the house.

“Your girlfriend will be so wooed by your efforts, she won’t be able to help but to say yes to prom and kiss you silly,” Kyra said, dragging me up to her room.

“I need my arm to drive, K and possibly to kiss,” I said flatly.

“Eh…No, you don’t. You need your lips!” She obnoxiously kissed my cheek, pushing me onto her bed.

xx STTD xx

It was Saturday afternoon. I was out with Mom, grocery shopping. She was buying up all of the meat in Mariano’s. I was hovering by the flowers, trying to figure out which bouquet Tasha would like. “You look confused, sweetie,” said the older woman behind the counter. “What’s wrong?”

“I’m, uh, taking my girlfriend out tonight and I wanted to get her some flowers. Not roses. Those are boring. Something different and pretty,” I said, shoving up my glasses.

“Does she have a favorite color?” the woman asked.

“She’s a total girly girl. Tasha likes pink and purple,” I replied, twisting my watch.

“Well, come back in fifteen minutes. I’ll have something, that’s not including roses, for you to give to your girlfriend,” she smiled.

“Thank you,” I beamed. I set the alarm on my watch, scurrying to find my mom. She was loading up the cart with cheese, eggs and cream cheese.

“Oh, you’re back. Can you get some bagels and rye bread?” she asked me, handing me the list. “Also, your sister wants tortillas for her wraps.”

“Sure, Mom,” I said, dashing down the bread aisle to pick up the needed items. Walking back, I put
them into the basket. “Anything else?”

“Are you excited about your date tonight?” she questioned, giving me a wry little smirk.

“I’m nervous as hell. I mean, we’re going out to Capital Grille and then going to a movie,” I said. “I’m asking her to prom with our dessert…”

“Oooh, fancy.” Mom giggled. “She’ll say yes, Owen. Tasha is a sweet girl and will be excited to be your date for prom.”

“I hope so,” I blushed. “I’m just anxious. Everyone is giving me advice on how to act, how to dress, how to eat…Tasha and I have been going out for five months. She knows how I act and stuff.”

“It’s just more nerve-wracking because it’s just the two of you,” Mom said sagely, pushing the cart toward the cereal aisle. “Well, the two of you and Steve.” She gestured behind us to the lingering shadow of Steve as he shopped for him and Oliver.

“I wish we didn’t have anybody,” I sighed. I liked Steve, Oliver and the rest of the guys. They were like cool uncles who could carry guns and driving like maniacs. We were all grateful for what they were doing for us, but it was stifling.

“I know that you are over having the extra protection. So are we, Owen. If only Jacob would make his presence known or we had proof that he was gone for good,” Mom sighed. “Like a corpse.”

“Mom!” I laughed.

“What? He’s a thorn in our side and I’m with you with the need for extra protection. What I wouldn’t give to go grocery shopping without a twenty-six, six foot two shadow following me, filling his cart with crap,” Mom giggled, staring back at Steve.

He was at one of the numerous free sample tables, stuffing his face of barbecue meatballs. He was completely clueless that we were talking about him. He looked up, arching a brow. “What?”

“Nothing, Steve. Just praising your name,” Mom said, pushing the cart down the soda aisle. “Would it kill you to get some vegetables?”

“I eat veggies. When we have dinner with you,” Steve winked, tossing a twenty-four pack of Coke into the bottom of his cart, followed by another one.

“How you are so in shape, is beyond me,” Mom chuckled. Steve just shrugged, picking up a case of sports drinks. As we were searching for caramel macchiato yogurt in the dairy case, my watch chimed. I jumped, grinning like a moron. “What’s that?”

“Flowers for Tasha,” I said, kissing my mom’s cheek. “I’ll be right back!” Darting back to the floral department, I saw the kindly woman as she was putting finishing touches on the prettiest pink and purple bouquet. I walked closer, my mouth, undoubtedly scraping the floor.

“I take it that you like it?” the woman smirked.

“It’s perfect,” I breathed.

“And no roses,” she said, pushing the vase with the flowers toward me. “Good luck, kiddo. I hope your girlfriend likes them.” I nodded dumbly as I put a five dollar bill on the counter as a tip. Carrying them carefully, I met up with my mom at the checkout lane. I paid for my bouquet before mom paid for the groceries for the entire family. Steve helped us load up my mom’s beastly SUV
and we drove back home.

I was getting so nervous. I couldn’t decide on what to wear. Kyra was in my face telling me to get a haircut and wear my contact lenses. Tasha liked my shaggy hair and my contacts hurt my eyes. I wanted to get the Lasik surgery like my dad but my prescription was too erratic. It had even out for at least a year before I could be considered a candidate. But, why would I change how I look for just one date? I’m still goofy, dorky Owen Cullen, the concert master of the school orchestra and the captain of the Mathletes team. Tasha thought I was something special without the changes. She liked me for me.

At least, I hoped she did.

“Owen, at least let me put some gel in your hair,” Kyra said as she sat down on my bed, holding an obnoxiously large purple tube.

“Kyra, I’m fine,” I said, running my hands through my shaggy locks.

“Kyra, stop bothering your brother. He doesn’t need you fussing over his hair or his clothes,” Dad said, arching a brow as he leaned casually against my door frame.

“But…?” Kyra whined.

“Gianna mentioned something about wanting a manicure,” Dad shrugged. “Mia is probably butchering the poor girl’s nails.”

“Mia! You better not be cutting her fingernails!” Kyra bellowed, leaving my bedroom.

I collapsed against my bedspread, grateful that my loving but incredibly obnoxious sister was out of my room. Dad chuckled. “You are a lifesaver, Dad.”

“Kyra reminds me a lot of Alice in her constant need to make you into a fashion plate. I’d buy my own clothing, but it was not chic enough for my sister so my pleated khakis and button down shirts that I bought from Walmart or wherever I found them were discarded for more fashionable and expensive options that I found to be uncomfortable and not me,” Dad shrugged. “I still, to this day, hate wearing jeans. Thankfully, your mother found me a brand that are comfortable and that don’t make me look like a douchebag poser.”

“So, Kyra will probably do this forever?” I groaned.

“Until she finds her own husband to nag about his clothes,” Dad laughed. “Alice significantly laid off the clothes issue once she moved in with Uncle Jasper and they were officially married. Granted, she had her mental breakdown a few months ago where she tried to pull the same stunt with all of you but your mom put a stop to that.”

“How is Aunt Ali?” I asked.

“She’s actually back home and we’re all having a ‘Come-to-Jesus’ talk with her tonight. Uncle Jas is tired of fighting her and we’re all exhausted of her shenanigans. Uncle Tim and Uncle Dem are going to hang out with all of the kids at Alice and Jasper’s home while we have this meeting with her here,” Dad explained. “Johnny is going to be with them.”

“Good luck with that,” I frowned. “I know that this whole thing with Aunt Ali has been tough.”

“That’s putting it mildly. I love my sister, but I’m worried about her and she needs to realize that time is moving forward, even though she doesn’t want it to be,” Dad sighed. “Now, enough about that.
This is a good day. The best day, for you! I saw the flowers that you bought for Tasha. She’s going to love them.”

“I hope so,” I blushed. “I’m just anxious. What if she says no to my invite to prom?”

“I’m not going to lie and say that it won’t hurt. It’s her prerogative, though, to say no. However, if I were a betting man, I’d place my money on her saying yes. She’s a sweet girl and I think she genuinely likes you,” Dad said, grinning crookedly while he patted my shoulder. “Now, Steve said that he will be in the bar while you two are eating. Then, he’ll follow you to the movie theater, if all goes well. Okay?”

“What about when I drop off Tasha? And pick her up?”

“He’ll be parked down the street so he won’t freak out Tasha’s parents,” Dad said. “If anything seems suspicious, please call Steve right away.”

“I will, Dad,” I said, twisting my watch nervously.

“Now, you probably should be getting ready. Capital Grille is about forty-five minutes from here, plus you need to pick up your date,” Dad said, giving me a reassuring smile.

“Oh, God…”

“Deep breaths, Owen. And trust me, I know what you’re feeling,” Dad whispered conspiratorially. “Except my butterflies were on a plane to Phoenix before I met your mother. But, when I saw her, I knew…just have fun, Owen. Relish in the moment and don’t be afraid.”

“I’ll try,” I murmured. Dad wrapped his arms around me, hugging me close. I wanted to crawl into his lap like when I was a kid after I had a nightmare. My dad gave the best hugs and he always knew how to calm me down. I think it was because he was so much like me when he was younger. Now, Mom’s hugs were amazing, comforting and warm but Dad always wanted to protect all of us, but me most of all. I was his clone and he wanted me to experience everything that he hadn’t.

“I love you, Owen. I’m proud of you and I want you to know that no matter what happens tonight, I’ll still love you and still be proud of you,” he said against my ear. Kissing my cheek, he pulled back. “Have fun and be safe.”

I nodded. Dad got up from the bed, leaving me in my bedroom. With a sigh, I put on a pair of black corduroys and white shirt. Deciding to snazz it up a bit, I put on a gray vest along with my pocket watch. Sliding my black frames onto my face, I stuffed my wallet and cell phone into my pockets. I sprayed some cologne on before darting down the stairs. Steve was waiting for me. He gave me a slight nod as I picked up my car keys. I also grabbed the flowers before going out to my car. Carefully, I placed the flowers on the passenger seat before I went through my pre-drive ritual.

*Open garage door…done.*

*Check mirrors…done.*

*Adjust seat…done.*

*Fasten seatbelt…done.*

*Depress brakes…done.*

*Check surroundings…done.*
I drove the twenty minutes to Tasha’s house. Her family lived in a modest home on the south side of Wheaton. Parking on the driveway, I picked up the bouquet and nervously walked to her door. My hand was shaking as I rang the doorbell. No sooner had I rung the bell did the door open and I saw Tasha. She looked so beautiful. Her light brown hair was pinned back from her face and fell around her shoulders in soft curls. Her face was blushing, matching the pink flowers in the bouquet as she pushed up her glasses on her nose. She wore a deep purple dress with some pink accessories. Immediately behind her was her dad, glowering at me.

“Hel-hello, Mr. Campbell,” I said nervously.

“Dad, stop intimidating my boyfriend,” Tasha hissed.

“I liked him better when he was just a guy you hung out with,” Mr. Campbell grumbled at his daughter. “Group outings…now, a date? I don’t like this.”

“Harold! STOP scaring Owen,” came the shrill voice of Mrs. Campbell. She teetered to the entrance, dragging him from behind Tasha. “How are you doing, Owen?”

“Fine, Mrs. Campbell,” I blushed, plucking a single daisy from the bouquet and handing it to her.

“How sweet,” she smiled. “First flower I’ve gotten in nearly twenty years.” She smacked her Mr. Campbell, who skulked away. “Now, you kids have fun. Tasha call us when you’re on your way home, okay?”

“Kay, Mom,” she said, hugging her mother. “I’ll see you later. Love you.” Tasha kissed her mom’s cheek but she sneered at her father. He rolled his eyes, going back into the living room. “Mom, can you put these into a vase?”

“Sure, sweetheart,” Mrs. Campbell nodded as she took the proffered flowers from Tasha. I offered her my arm and helped her to the car, opening the car door. I heard the distinct sound of a shutter opening and closing. Mrs. Campbell was taking pictures. I blushed as I scurried to the driver’s seat.

“Was my mom taking pictures?” Tasha asked, her voice small.

“I think so,” I chuckled.

“Ugh, my family is so embarrassing,” Tasha groaned.

“They could be worse,” I shrugged.

“This is true,” Tasha agreed. We drove in silence for a few miles as I got to the main street to take us to the restaurant. I could tell, out of the corner of my eye that Tasha wanted to say something. She was wringing her hands. “Is it dumb that I’m nervous?”

“If it makes you feel any better, I’m nervous, too,” I said, shooting her a warm grin. “We’ve been out but we’ve always had other people around. It’s different. We’re along together.”

“Yeah,” Tasha mused, looking over at me. “I know that you won’t do anything stupid, because well,
you’re a freaking genius, but it’s weird not having that buffer of our friends or your sister and her boyfriend.”

“A good weird, or bad weird?” I asked, my heart stammering against my ribs.

“Good weird, definitely,” she giggled. “Though, do you have security with you?”

“Steve is behind us in Dad’s Volvo,” I said, pointing out the back window. “That one guy who dated my mom is still at large.”

“That’s got to be tough for you and your family. Why would anyone want to hurt your mom? She’s so nice. You guys have the perfect family,” Tasha said, her brow furrowing in anger and confusion. “I hope that the guy gets caught because I’m certain you all are over having the extra security.”

“We were over it when it started,” I snorted humorlessly. “Now, enough about that. How was your trip?”

Tasha spent the rest of the drive telling me about her family’s trip to Texas to visit her mom’s family. When we got to the restaurant, she was telling about her cousin, Floyd, who thought he could ride a horse because he had rode a pony when he was ten. A pony that was attached to a harness and that walked in a circle. Anyway, Floyd got onto the horse backwards and while he tried to turn around, accidently poked the side of the horse which caused him to buck and sent Floyd across the barn, breaking his nose, his wrist and several of his ribs.

Over dinner, I told her about how I got the car and the process of purchasing it with my Dad. However, as the meal progressed, I grew anxious again. For dessert, I had planned on asking Tasha to prom. It was cheesy and silly, but on the plate that housed her favorite dessert, cheesecake, I asked the word ‘prom’ to be added along with a question mark.

“Owen, are you okay?” Tasha asked. “You’ve barely touched your meal.”

“I’m fine,” I said, giving her a tight smile. “I’m going to run to the bathroom. Be right back, okay?”

Tasha nodded, looking very concerned and honestly, confused. I walked briskly to the bathroom and shut myself into one of the stalls. My head was spinning, freaking myself out over the possibility that Tasha was going to say no to going to prom with me.

“It’s not like you’re asking her to marry you, dude. It’s prom!” Blowing out a breath, I went to wash my hands before going back to the table.

Sitting back down, I tried to eat normally. Tasha was talking about her school’s upcoming performance of Into the Woods, which she was playing the part of “Little Red Riding Hood.” The performance was two weeks after spring break, and two weeks before prom. It was the same schedule that I had for the musical of which I was playing in the pit at my school. Her conversation did help me in my stress over asking her to prom, but it still lingered in the back of my head.

The waiter came back, asking if we wanted coffee. I said no, but asked for some hot tea. Tasha, the caffeine addict, begged for it. He also took our leftovers to be wrapped up since neither of us could finish our meals. The waiter shot me a wink before he left our table.

“That was weird,” Tasha said, watching our waiter’s retreating form. “Why did he wink at you?”

“Maybe he thought I’d be interested?” I suggested, shrugging slightly. “He’s a good looking guy but I’m straight, as you know.” I picked up her hand, threading our fingers together. “I like girls. Well, I like one girl in particular.” Tasha blushed, squeezing my hand. “You’re so pretty, Tasha and I’m so lucky that we’re together.”

“I’m the lucky one,” she murmured, looking up at me through her insanely long eyelashes. She
blinked and I was mesmerized. We were slowly inching closer and I thought, *this is it…*

“Sir, I have your dessert,” coughed the waiter.

*Darn it!* “Thank you,” I said through gritted teeth as he placed the plate onto the table. It was covered, which I was going to remove when I was ready to ask her. He looked sheepish as he placed our drinks on the table as well, darting away.

Tasha made her coffee, sighing happily as she took her first sip. I was letting my tea steep and the nerves hit me full force. “What movie are we seeing?” Tasha asked.

“There’s a theater just across the parking lot. I haven’t really planned that far ahead. Probably choose one that is playing when we get there?” I shrugged.

“Well, my dad tried to implement a curfew of 9:30,” Tasha spat bitterly. *What? It was almost nine now!* “Thankfully, my mom stepped in and it’s extended to eleven. My brothers are singing with the children’s choir at church at the ten o’clock service. We all have to be there.”

“You don’t look all that excited to go to service,” I chuckled.

“I don’t like our pastor. The children’s choir is great, but the pastor is so long-winded. The sermons go on for like days,” she said, rolling her eyes. “And usually, he sneaks it in that we’re all going to hell because of our addiction to all things technological and sexual. Your dad is actually the antichrist in my pastor’s eyes.”

“Great,” I laughed.

“I personally think your dad is cool. So is your mom. They’re so chill,” she beamed. “If only they could talk to parents and help them be normal, not psycho and overprotective.”

“They do it because they love you and because you’re the only girl in your family,” I said. She nodded, biting her lip. “Now, do you want dessert?”

“Yeah. I saw that they had cheesecake on the menu and you know my love for cheesecake,” Tasha giggled. I smiled, pushing the plate towards her before removing the cover. On the plate was a large piece of cheesecake and my question for her. “Owen?”

“I know I already took you to the winter formal, but I really, really want to take you to prom. So, will you go with me?” I asked, my voice cracking.

“Oh my gosh, YES!” she squealed, jumping out of her seat and into my arms. The chair I was in nearly tipped over but I managed to keep us upright as I hugged her tightly. Tasha pulled back, staring into my eyes. Her own hazel orbs were twinkling expectantly and I decided to go for it. Leaning in, I cupped her face with my hand and lightly pecked her mouth. *Holy crap…that’s amazing!* Tasha squeaked, her eyes wide with shock. Then, she smiled and crashed her mouth against mine and we began kissing in earnest. I wanted to do more, but my brain reminded me to breathe and that we were a very public restaurant where they probably don’t want to see to teenagers making out like horny, well, teenagers.

*You and you girlfriend can enjoy the wonders of making out in the back of a movie theater, Cullen.*

We finished our dessert after I took a picture of the two of us with the prom ‘proposal’ with my phone. Then, I paid our bill, using the money from lessons and some birthday money from Nana. We left the restaurant. I gave Steve a thumbs up and he beamed excitedly for me. Tasha and I drove the short distance to the movie theater, choosing to see a mindless romantic comedy. Neither one of us
really watched it because we explored kissing each other in the back of the theater and I was excited and very turned on by the time we left. I knew that I would probably have to take a very long shower once I got home to take care of my problem between my legs and I’m shocked that Tasha didn’t notice that I was walking stiffly when we left the movies. All the blood was not in my brain but elsewhere.

The drive home was a bit of a blur. All I could remember was holding Tasha’s hand, smiling happily that she had said yes to my invitation to prom and that we had *finally* shared our first kiss (followed immediately by our second and then first hard-core make out session). I pulled into the Tasha’s driveway just before eleven and I walked her to the door. Cupping her sweet face, I kissed her swollen lips. “Call me when you get home?” she whispered, looking up at me.

“I promise,” I said, stroking her cheek. She kissed me once more before going into her home. I practically floated to my car. Life was perfect and I was finally over-the-moon happy. I wasn’t Owen, Kyra’s dorky younger brother or ‘closet faggot,’ like what Mackenzie called me. I was Tasha’s boyfriend. I was someone’s boyfriend. I had a girlfriend. A beautiful girlfriend who I was taking to prom. I had a car and the respect of my parents. I had…

CRASH!

*Why am I upside down?*

*Oooh, my head hurts…*

*Dad? Mom? Tasha?*

*HELP!!!! Help…help…h…*

**A/N:** What happened to Owen? Will he be okay? Sorry about the cliffhanger, but this was planned. I hope to have the next chapter up relatively soon. I can’t tell you exactly when since my time is a bit cramped as of late. But, it won’t be a two month wait, I promise you that.

I have pictures for this chapter on my tumblr and blog (links are on my profile). You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation or on twitter: tufano79.

Up next will be BPOV and it's going to start earlier in the evening, after Owen leaves, running parallel to this chapter, at least at the end. We’ll find out what’s going on with Alice along with the outcome for Owen. Leave me some!
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

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Chapter Sixteen: A Parent’s Worst Nightmare

BPOV

“Bella, relax, gorgeous,” Edward cooed as I nervously worked in the kitchen. “You’re making me jumpy.”

“It’s a little hard for me to relax. Owen is out, on his own, on a date with Tasha,” I began.

“Steve is following them,” Edward argued.

“Still, he’s driving his own car. Something could happen. I have a strong feeling that something will happen,” I grumbled. “Secondly, your sister is coming over and we all know that it’s going to be fucking World War Three. She better have pulled her head out of her ass.”

“I hope she did,” Edward said, standing behind me and wrapping his arms around my waist. “She’s got to realize that the world doesn’t revolve around Alice Whitlock.”

“What time is everyone coming?” I asked, leaning against my husband’s body.

“Around seven,” he replied, kissing behind my ear. “Demetri and Alex are staying at Jasper’s place, watching the kids with Oliver. Tim got called away on business last minute.”

“Hmmm,” I replied, twisting Edward’s ring. “So, it’s you and me, Jasper, Esme and Marcus?”

“Rose is coming, too,” Edward murmured, his kisses moving further down my neck until he reached the juncture where my shoulder met my neck. My head lolled to one side, allowing him ease of access and losing myself in his sweet kisses. “And once they leave, I want to make love to my wife. Show you how much I love you, gorgeous.”

“I know how much you love me,” I whispered. “You show me every day. You show our children every day. And I love you more than words can express, Edward.”

He turned me, gently cupping my chin and stared into my eyes. His golden orbs were filled with such emotion and love, that I thought I was going cry. Moving closer, he brushed his lips with mine.
and I just melted against his chest. He kissed me so tenderly, showing me how much he loved me in a way that was socially acceptable. My husband could be the sweetest man on the planet but he also had a wicked dirty mouth and could fuck me to oblivion. Right now, I was eating up his adoration, twining my fingers into his thick bronze, with a touch of gray, hair. We broke apart when the doorbell rang. Edward kept his hands on my face. “I love you, my gorgeous wife. Together, we’re going to get through all of this. My sister…Jasper…Jacob…we’ve been through so much. This is nothing.”

“Okay,” I said, kissing his lips once more. Edward gently patted my ass before he left the kitchen to open the door. I made sure I had some coffee made along with some goodies, sweets. Jasper walked in with my husband. He looked old and haggard. His eyes didn’t hold the same twinkle they had before. “Hey, Jas. How are you doing?”

“Crappy,” he answered, sitting down at the island. “I’m seeing a counselor and trying to make sense of my life, but everything is in shambles, for obvious reasons. My children hate my guts. Alice is being Alice and my best friend won’t even acknowledge me.”

“I let you in,” Edward said, arching a brow as he sipped some water. “I want you to reconcile with my sister, if it’s possible, Jasper. Besides, you did make working at Whitlock unbearable until Adam knocked some sense into you.”

“The kid has a strong right hook. I deserved it,” Jasper said, rubbing his nose. “How are things at the office?”

“Fine. Things are working like a well-oiled machine. Demetri has stepped in as CEO and I’m doing his and my job,” Edward explained. “He’s more a schmoozer than I am. We even got a few other big contracts for our software and servers.”

“Awesome,” Jasper smiled. “Maybe I should retire early?”

“Don’t push your luck. This week has kicked my ass with you not being there. Tonight was the first night that I got home before seven. I’m too old for this shit. I know that your life is all sorts of messed up, but you have to come back. Demetri and I are losing our hair over this,” Edward snorted. The doorbell rang again and my husband pushed away from the counter. He opened up the door and his parents came inside, hugging him and walking to Jasper, giving him a hug and kiss as well. We were all chatting, Rose letting herself in because she was just that pushy. The doorbell rang once more and everyone stopped talking. Alice was here. Shit was going to stop right here, damn it.

I walked to the door and opened it. Alice was standing on the doorstep, twisting her wedding rings nervously around her fingers. She looked up at me, her eyes filled with tears and shame. I stepped to the side, letting her in and guiding her to the living room. Alice didn’t look like she normally did with her hair coiffed and her makeup on to perfection. She was wearing a pair of loose jeans and a sweatshirt that looked like it had once belonged to Jasper.

“Go ahead,” she said, sounding defeated. “Rip me a new asshole. I deserve it.”

“You do deserve it, but Alice, we want to help you,” I said.

“We?” she asked, looking up at me. I turned and everyone had taken a seat in the living room. Edward sat on the other side of his sister. She looked at him, her eyes filling with tears. “Older, I fucked up.”
“I know, Younger,” he said, rubbing her back. He took his hand back and moved so he was next to me, wrapping his arm around my waist. “Alice, I don’t presume to know what’s going on with you. I really don’t understand why you’re so consumed with staying younger. Your behavior…”

“Let Alice tell her reasons,” Esme said quietly.

“I don’t know why. I’m understand that I’m being selfish, but I can’t stop wanting to go back to how I felt years ago. I hate the way I feel,” she sniffled. “Everything is drying up, my hair is gray and I feel old.”

“But, life doesn’t stop, Alice,” Rosalie said, leaning against the door jamb. “All of us women will be going through menopause. It’s a fact of life, just like having your period. However, the biggest issue shouldn’t be how you’re feeling but how this is impacting your children. You know, Adam and Gianna?”

“They must hate me,” Alice muttered.

“It’s the other way around, chickadee,” Rose spat, never one to beat around the bush. “Gianna has been staying here because she needs a mother.”

“It breaks my heart to see my niece cry and sob because she thinks her mom hates her,” Edward said, his eyes narrowed at his sister. “Alice, I’m not going to read you the riot act, but you need to listen to what I’m going to say. Grow. Up.” He shot up, kissing my head and stomping out of the living room. Her face broke down into her tears and she fell into herself.

“Alice, you need help, sweetheart. We’ve been telling you this since Vegas,” Esme said sweetly. “What’s been going on in your family is impacting all of us. Jasper is on a medical leave from work. My grandchildren are calling Marcus and me or staying with Edward and Bella because of what’s going on at home. Alice, you ran away…Do you want things to improve with you and Jasper? Do you want to get divorced? Do you want your children thinking that you don’t care about them?”

“I want things to get better,” she said, wiping her nose. “I just don’t know how to fix it. I’ve made a royal mess of everything.”

“Ali, you have so many people in your corner, rooting for you,” I said. “We’ve been willing to help you, but you pushed us all away. It just kept escalating.”

“Alice,” Marcus said, moving so he could sit in front of her. “You need to take things, one step at a time. What’s most important to you?”

“My children,” she said, tears running down her cheeks.

“Then, you need to reestablish a relationship with them,” Marcus said calmly, taking her hands. “Show them that you still love them. Show them that you will be there for them for as long as you can. I’m not going to lie, it will be tough. Gianna is so broken hearted.”

“I decided to bring her to her a counselor, with Jasper’s permission. She wouldn’t eat, Alice,” I said coldly. “It will be an uphill battle with Gianna. She doesn’t trust you anymore. She’s okay with Jasper, but has been turning to me for guidance.”

“How can I fix my relationship with my daughter?” she cried, looking around at all of us. “I don’t know what to do.”

“Fix you,” Jasper said from his spot in the corner. “Alice, if you want us to every work out or if you ever want your children to realize that you are okay, you have to fix you. I still love you, Ali, but not
like this. Not this shadow of the woman I married, who’s obsessed with bringing back her youth. Not this self-absorbed person, only worrying about themselves and not the people she’s hurting the most. I don’t want to lose over twenty-five years with you, Alice, but if it continues, I will go through with the divorce. I will file for sole custody of our children. I will cut you out of their lives because they mean more to me than whatever you’re dealing with.” He stood up, looking at her.

“You have one year to get yourself together. Until then, we live separately and you will have supervised meetings with Gianna and Adam, if he wants it. Since he’s of age, we can’t dictate what he wants to do. I hope that we can move past this, Alice…”

“Me, too,” she whispered, gazing at Jasper with glassy eyes. He went to caress her cheek, but he pulled his hand back. He muttered something about calling about visitation and he left the house. Her eyes hardened and she looked at all of us. “What do I do? I have to make this right. I’ve got a year to do it…”

And for the first time since Alice’s craziness began, I saw a glimpse of the woman I met twenty years ago. The one who was determined and spunky and wouldn’t take no for an answer. We spent the rest of the night laying down plans to help Alice get her life together. It all started with getting her an apartment so she wouldn’t have to stay with Esme and Marcus. Edward, after he had cooled down, was in charge of that. I talked her through what happened with Gianna and how to hopefully get her back on board. Rosalie gave Alice a name of a shrink and a physician that could help with her insanity due to her ever-changing hormones. Marcus and Esme just provided the parental love that Alice needed since her life was in shambles.

It was close to eleven when Rosalie got up to go home. She had to make sure that her children weren’t having a wild party in her Trump Tower condo. She kissed Alice’s head and hugged me tightly. “She’s going to suction onto you like a freaking Hoover. Don’t let her drown you in her sea of crazy,” Rose said in my ear.

“I’ll try,” I chuckled, kissing my best friend’s cheek. “Drive safe.” Rose walked over to Edward, smushing his face. He nodded and wrapped her in a hug before walking to the door with her.

“We’re tired, too. Alice is going to stay because she wants to talk to both of you,” Marcus said, kissing my cheek. “I know that you are all upset with her and so are we, but go easy on her. She’s fragile at the moment.”

“I’ll try, Papa,” I said, arching my brow. Marcus chuckled, ruffling my hair. Esme hugged me, patting my cheek before leaving with her husband. Alice was still curled up on the couch, just staring out the window. Some lights flickered and we saw Oliver park the car with Kyra, Mia and Masen. They had come back from their evening with Adam and Gianna at Jasper’s place. They saw Alice in the living room, hugging both Edward and me before going upstairs. Masen came back down with Max, taking him outside for his final walk for the night in the backyard. Once Masen was upstairs with Max, Edward and I went back into the living room.

“Do you both hate me?” she asked, her voice sounding uncertain and small.

I shot a look to my husband. He sat down on the chair opposite of Alice, pulling me into his lap. “Alice, we don’t hate you. You’re my sister. I know that despite all of the bullshit you’ve been pulling, you’re still a good person. I don’t hate you. I don’t like you very much, but I don’t hate you.”

“You have a lot to make up for, Alice,” I said. “I don’t think you understand how hard it was for me to see Gianna fall apart. Edward got the brunt of it…”

“What do you mean?” Alice asked. She stared at Edward. “Tell me!”
“The night I called you in Paris, Gianna lost it. She was hysterical and it was her comment about you hating her that made me call you. No child should ever feel that. I felt it, Alice. With Carlisle. He made me feel like I wasn’t worthy of his love and I felt that way until he died. I did not want my sweet, beautiful niece thinking that her own mother hated her. I had to pick up the pieces of Gianna. Bella did the rest. It was that night that Gianna admitted that she wasn’t eating. She had no control in her life and she was controlling her food intake because of your behavior,” Edward sighed, burying his nose in my neck. “It’s going to take time for us to forgive you.”

“Are you speaking for Bella, too?” Alice snapped, glaring at her brother.

“Yes, Alice. He is. The way he feels about this whole situation is how I feel. We’ll be there for you and continue being there for Gianna and Adam, but the onus is on you to change,” I said, threading my fingers with Edward’s. Alice pinched her nose and tried to get her emotions under control. As we were sitting there, our doorbell rang.

“It’s nearly midnight,” Edward said, patting my legs to get me stand up. He walked to the door, pulling it open. I followed him and my heart fell to my feet when I saw a police officer from Wheaton standing on our doorstep.

“Mr. Edward Cullen?” asked the officer.

“Yes,” Edward said, holding me to his side. “What is it?”

“Sir, there’s been an accident involving an Owen Cullen. He’s been transported to Central Dupage Hospital with a Steven Burgess,” the officer said, reading from his notes.

“Is he okay?” I asked, my heart pounding and my skin crawling. “What happened?”

“He was fine when he was extracted from the car. He was unconscious but breathing on his own,” the police officer explained. “The car, however, was a complete loss. Steven said that he was following Owen and saw the whole thing happen.”

“Edward, we have to go,” I sobbed, grabbing Edward’s arms.

“We will,” Edward soothed, crushing me to his chest.

“The kids! We need to…” I said, tears flowing freely down my cheeks.

“I’ll stay with them. Go with Owen,” Alice said, tentatively rubbing my back. Edward didn’t wait. He grabbed the keys from Kyra’s Volvo that was sitting out on the driveway. We clambered into the car and followed the police cruiser to the hospital. The officer led us to the front desk, who gave us information about Owen. He was in surgery for a broken leg. Steve was upstairs waiting with him. We got to the surgical floor, finding Steve with his head buried in his hands.

“Steve!” Edward called.

“Mr. Edward,” he said, his voice sounding shattered. “I’m so sorry. It all happened so quickly. I was going to call you but they had already sent a cruiser.”

“Tell us what happened,” I said, taking Steve’s hand.

“Owen and Tasha had an amazing time at the restaurant and the movies. He was a perfect gentleman and Tasha was so excited to be going to prom with him. He practically floated to his car. I followed him a safe distance. Close enough to stop something if it had happened but far enough that I wasn’t hovering. But, it was a car, running a red light that caused the accident. It crashed into the passenger
seat of Owen’s car, sending the vehicle careening and flipping off to the side of the road. The car that hit him was off to the side. The drive got out, hopped into a waiting vehicle and sped off.”

“Was it Jacob?” Edward snarled.

“I don’t know, Mr. Edward. It was dark and I was more focused on getting to Owen. He was upside down and his head was bleeding. I called 911 and they arrived within minutes, extracting him from the wreckage. I explained that I was a family friend and they let me ride in the ambulance with him,” Steve said, his eyes dropping to the floor. “I’m so sorry. I’ve failed your family.”

Edward was about to say something, but I gave him a stern glare. “Steve, this wasn’t your fault. It could have been Jacob or it could have been a true accident. We need you to stay strong, okay?”

“I’ll try,” he said, getting up from the chairs. “I’m going to go to the chapel, pray for Owen. I told the doctors that you’d be waiting for them if they had any news. I’m so sorry. I wish I could have done something to stop it.” He didn’t even wait for a response. He shoved his hands in his pockets and walked away, his posture defeated.

“I know it was Jacob. I just know it,” Edward hissed, his hands clenched.

“We don’t know for certain, Edward. Don’t take it out on Steve. He was there for Owen in the ambulance,” I said, my body trembling for my son. “God, I want to know what’s wrong with him!”

“Me, too,” Edward soothed, hugging me tightly. “I hope he’s okay.” I nodded and we stayed in the waiting room for a couple of hours. I was a nervous, sobbing mess when the doctor came out looking for us.

“Mr. and Mrs. Cullen?” he asked. We stood up and nodded. He led us to a small room near the waiting area. “Well, I’ve got good news and bad news.”

“Good news, please,” I whispered.

“The good news is that Owen is going to make a full recovery,” he said, patting my hand. “The bad news is that it’s going to take some time.”

“What’s wrong?” Edward asked, holding me to his side.

“Well, he broke his leg in several places. We’ve had to put in titanium rods to correct the breaks. In addition to that, he’s got a pretty serious concussion, broken ribs and bumps and bruises covering most of his body. He’s been admitted to the ICU because we have him in a medically induced coma. We’re giving his body a chance to recuperate. We’ll wean him off the meds probably the day after tomorrow.”

“Will he have a limp or any lasting damage?” I asked, worried about my baby.

“With physical therapy, Owen should make a full recovery,” the doctor said.

“Can we see him?” Edward choked out, his body shuddering next to mine. “I have to see my son to make sure he’s okay.”

“He’s still in recovery. A nurse will come get you when he’s set up in the ICU,” the doctor said kindly. He got up and left us in the room.

“My baby,” I sniffled, my tears falling down my cheeks unabated. “He’s…”
“Shhhh, love,” Edward soothed, gathering me in his arms. I wrapped my arms around his neck, sobbing quietly. I could feel him crying against me as well. This was a parent’s worst nightmare: having a police officer escort you to the hospital because one of your children was in an accident. We stayed in each other’s arms, clinging to each other until the nurse came to get us to see our baby boy. We walked solemnly to the ICU and were ushered into Owen’s room. He was attached to so many machines. Thankfully, he was breathing on his own and didn’t have a respirator. His pale skin was covered with bruises. He had a set of stitches along his left eyebrow and another set further up the left side of his head. They had shaved his hair to patch him up. His right leg was encased in some sort of wire thing, obviously keeping the pins and titanium rods in place from his broken leg. His other leg was wrapped in plaster, obviously broken as well, but not as severely. I collapsed in the plastic chair, picking up his hand.

“Owen, baby, can you hear me?” I asked, trying to keep my voice even and calm. “I need to know you’re alright, sweetheart.” He didn’t make any movement. He just lay there. Tears spilled over my cheeks and I was barely able to stay calm. “Momma’s going to stay with you, my sweet boy. I’m not going anywhere.”

“Bella,” Edward began.

“If you fucking say that I need to go home because Jacob’s still out there, then you have another thing coming, Edward,” I sneered. “My son is in the hospital. He needs me. Needs us. Now, you let me stay or you will have drag me out and it will not be pretty if you do.”

“Okay, gorgeous,” he conceded, kissing my forehead. “Let me call Steve, see where he’s at. I’m also going to call Alice, check on our other children. If I have to, I’ll go home to take care of everything.”

“You should be here, too. He needs both of us, Edward,” I said, my voice cracking.

Edward looked at him and he leaned down, kissing Owen’s temple. “I’m here, son. I love you,” Edward whispered. “I’ll be back, Bella. Try and get some sleep.” I nodded, kissing Owen’s hand and moving my chair closer. He slipped out of the room and I talked quietly to Owen, telling him about what had happened while he was on his first real date. However, I wanted to hear my son’s baritone voice, telling me about his evening with Tasha. I had to stop because my voice was squeaking and the exhaustion was covering me like a wet blanket. I put my head down on the bed and closed my eyes. It was only a matter of moments before I was down for the count.

I woke up a few hours later. Edward was snoring quietly in a recliner that had been brought into the room. His neck was at an awkward angle. I also noticed that I had been moved as well into my own recliner. How that happened without me waking up was a miracle. I must have been really tired. I stood up and adjusted my neck and body. I checked on Owen, brushing his hair from his face before going in search of a bathroom and some coffee. The bathroom was easy. A nurse directed me to a private bathroom next to Owen’s room. She even gave me a tooth brush and some tooth paste. I finished brushing my teeth and I felt somewhat human, I went to the cafeteria to get some coffee and breakfast for both me and Edward. I picked up some coffee, a fruit salad, some yogurt and two muffins. Paying for my breakfast, I carried it back up to the ICU, leaving it in the small family room just around the corner from Owen’s room.

I gently shook my husband awake and dragged him to the room where I brought our food. “Oliver picked up Steve,” Edward yawned, “around three. He needed to get his car from the accident site. Johnny came here and he’s been hovering in the waiting area. The nurses wouldn’t let him in since he wasn’t blood related. I tried to get him in here, but they were adamant on it.”

“Who’s with the kids?” I asked.
“Alice stayed. She was going to make some breakfast and hang out with them, possibly bringing them here once Owen wakes up,” Edward replied, taking a hefty swig of his coffee. “Oh, this is like toxic sludge. How can they pass this off as coffee?”

“Beggars can’t be choosers. I got the only toxic sludge they had,” I said, sipping my own cup of crap. “Did you move me into the recliner?”

“An orderly brought it in. I moved you from the seat because you were about to face plant onto the floor. You barely stirred when I settled you into the recliner,” Edward said, taking a bite of the fruit salad. “Seriously? This cantaloupe tastes like Jasper’s socks. The food at this hospital leaves much to be desired.”

“Maybe the muffin is better?” I said, pushing the blueberry muffin toward my husband. He nibbled it, wrinkling his nose but not making any sort of comment. “Did you see the doctor as you were making your calls?”

“Yeah. They’re going to lessen the medications this afternoon and hopefully Owen will wake up after that,” Edward said. “We’re going to have to contact the school. From what the doctor’s said, he needs to be completely immobilized for at least six weeks, if not more.”

“We’ll get him a tutor,” I said, moving from my seat and sitting on Edward’s lap.

“He’s going to be pissed about prom and his car,” Edward frowned, tucking my hair behind my ear. I turned in his arms, crying for the experiences that my son was going to miss out on. Not wanting to leave Owen alone for too long, we went back into his room and stayed there until the doctor came around, checking to see how he was doing. The doctor arranged for a CAT scan, to assess for any brain injuries. If there weren’t any indications of swelling or bleeding, the medications would be lessened in his system. While Owen was getting scanned, Edward drove back to the house to get some fresh clothes and check on the rest of our children. Johnny stayed with me, being a pillar of strength for me. I was a mess, knowing that my son was in a medically induced coma with a bionic leg.

Edward came back an hour later with a bag filled with clothes and toiletries. The nurses led me to a doctor’s lounge so I could shower and clean up. Once I was finished, I put on the pair of yoga pants and sweatshirt. Twisting my damp hair into a bun, I went back to Owen’s room. He was back and the doctor was speaking with Edward. “Here’s my wife, Dr. Snow,” Edward said, gesturing to me.

“Ah, Mrs. Cullen,” Dr. Snow smiled, shaking my hand. “We completed the CAT scan. It looks good. We’re already taking Owen off the medications. He should be waking up by dinner time.”

“That’s good,” I smiled. “I want to know that he’s okay.”

“Understandable. He’s probably aware of this conversation and frustrated that he can’t participate,” Dr. Snow chuckled.

“When will be discharged?” Edward asked.

“About a week. We need to remove the brace around his right leg,” Dr. Snow explained. “He also can’t be jostled.”

“We’re already making arrangements for him to finish out the school year with a tutor,” Edward said.

“Okay, good. I don’t want him to be back in here for another surgery because some kid was rough housing in the hallway,” Dr. Snow shuddered. “He will have to go through physical therapy, should make a full recovery. Anything else?”
“When will he be moved from the ICU?” I asked.

“Once he’s awake, we’ll put him on the pediatric floor. Yes, he’s sixteen, but he’s still a kid,” Dr. Snow smiled. “If either of you need anything or you have any other questions, just ask the nurses or they can get in contact with me.” He left and we talked quietly, waiting patiently for Owen to come out of his sedation. Just before six, he started moaning and moving slightly on the bed. I darted to his side, taking his hand. I murmured words of encouragement while Edward brushed Owen’s hair back from his face. He finally came to just before seven, confused and befuddled.

“What happened? Where am I?” he asked, blinking rapidly. “Mom?”


“Do you know where you are?” Edward asked, taking out a pair of Owen’s glasses and placing them on his face. He looked around, noticing the machinery and the contraption on his leg.

“A hospital? What happened?” Owen demanded, his hazel eyes flashing with anger and confusion.

“Owen, last night, when you were driving home, you were in a car accident,” Edward said.

“Tasha! Is she alright?” Owen asked, trying to get up but his ribs and his two broken legs stopped him.

“You had just dropped off Tasha,” Edward continued, calmly and quietly. He looked directly into Owen’s eyes. “She’s okay. Worried sick about you because you didn’t call her, but she’s fine.” Owen slumped back onto his pillows, grimacing deeply. “Anyhow, you were in a car accident. A car blew a red light and you were t-boned in the intersection.”

“Do they know who did it?” Owen asked.

“The person who hit you fled the scene but thankfully, there was a police camera at that intersection. It’s notorious for people turning on red lights and speeders. The police are going to get a picture of the accident, try and identify the driver of the car or the person in the getaway vehicle,” Edward said.

“Do you think they’ll catch them?” Owen whimpered.

“I hope so,” Edward said, looking up at me. Based on his angry glare, he knew something. And it wasn’t good.

Owen was discharged from the hospital after ten days. We all took turns staying with him, with either myself or Edward staying overnight. Owen was not happy about finishing out the school year with a tutor. He hated the fact that he couldn’t take Tasha to prom. He abhorred that his car was totaled. All in all, Owen was being a jerk to everyone in our family. He was set up in my office off the kitchen since he couldn’t up and down the stairs. I didn’t blame him. I’d be pissed, too. The only time he was somewhat normal was when his tutor came over for his lessons or he was practicing his violin. The rest of the time, Owen was a surly, crabby brat.

Jasper had to go back to the office since Edward wanted to be close by in case Owen needed help. I couldn’t do anything physical with him because he was so big. That and we had discovered who had driven the car that had t-boned my son. Using a rental car, Jacob Black ran the red light and smashed into my son’s car. He was injured, a gash on his face but he had an accomplice. Another car pulled up next to the rental and Jacob hopped in. The other car, which had been an untagged vehicle and untraceable, sped off with another person driving. They were wearing a hat and we couldn’t identify
them. Edward’s need to protect us had been quadrupled. It had turned out that Jacob had followed Owen. Or rather, followed Steve.

Steve was a mess. He felt responsible. In a way he was, but it wasn’t his fault that Jacob was a douchetard. I had forgiven Steve, but my husband was holding a hell of a grudge. He was very close to calling Ricky to replace Steve. I told Steve to not let Edward strong arm him. It was a combination of too many things that caused the accident. I reassigned Steve to work with Mia and Masen so he was out of the house while Edward was home.

I was working in the kitchen, avoiding the Grump and outlining the third movie for Rose’s books. Kyra came in, having just come home from school. “I have an idea,” she said, plopping down next to me.

“Shoot,” I said, looking at my daughter.

“Since Dad is being all overprotective,” Kyra said, waving her fingers.

“He’s not overprotective. He’s concerned. Jacob caused an accident that nearly killed your brother,” I said, arching a brow. “It’s a little too close for comfort.”

“I agree. I was talking to Thomas and a couple of the girls who sit at the table with me and Owen. We kind of were thinking about having a prom. Here?” Kyra suggested. “I know that’s one of the reasons why Owen is being such a crabbypants. He really wanted to take Tasha to the dance, slow dance with her and make out, normal date stuff.”

“What about Thomas?” I asked. “Doesn’t he want to take you to prom?”

“He does, but Dad said that it’s not happening,” Kyra grumbled. “We could set up a tent like Uncle Dem’s and Uncle Alex’s wedding anniversary. Hire a DJ?”

“When would this happen?” I questioned, secretly thrilled that my daughter was suggesting this.

“Obviously not this weekend since I just brought it up. Maybe a week after our already scheduled prom?” she smiled.

“I think that’s doable,” I said, patting Kyra’s cheek. “You do your homework and plan the whole thing, I’ll pay for it all. I want my children to enjoy this rite of passage, even if it’s in our backyard.” Kyra squealed, hugging me tightly before darting off to her bedroom. She patted her father’s chest as she passed him on the stairs. Edward pointed to her, his brow arching. “We’re hosting prom.”

“Okay,” he said.

“Well, since Owen is Super Gimp and you told her that prom wasn’t happening, we’re going have a prom in our backyard,” I explained. “I said that she had to do the research, make the arrangements, but I’d pay for it.”

“I hate that this is impacting their lives,” Edward said, hopping up on the counter. “Fucking Jacob. Our son has at least a year’s worth of rehab. Our daughter is missing out on her only prom and I still want to throttle Steve.”

“On a positive note, Alice was started on antidepressants, hormone replacement therapy and is in heavy counseling,” I quipped. My husband gave me a ‘I’m-not-amused’ stare. “Edward, you’re going to give yourself a heart attack. This situation is awful. I get that. But trying to control everything around you? You’re acting like Alice…a little bit.”
“Bella, there’s a psycho, rabid dog who is out to kill everyone in our family all because he can’t handle rejection,” Edward said, his eyes narrowing. “I’ve got a son who is miserable and can’t walk. I don’t want to live like this. But, until that fucking douchewad is caught, this is how it’s going to be. I’m fucking protecting my family and if that makes me look and act like my selfish sister, fine. I just can’t stand the thought of losing any one of you.” He jumped off the counter and leaned against the sink. “If it’s not one thing, it’s another, Bella. I can’t take this anymore. I’m going to be fifty. A half a century. I cannot lose my family. I cannot lose you, Bella. I want our quiet lives back. I want Jacob to fall back into the abyss of nothingness.”

Tentatively, I walked to my husband and put my hand on his back. Abruptly, he turned and crushed me to his chest. My strong, normally infallible husband sobbed against my shoulder. All of this was crashing down all around him. “I’m sorry, Bella,” he said, pulling back and wiping his face. “I just can’t relax. Not until Jacob is gone from our lives. I don’t know how to do it or what else we can do to protect ourselves. Even with all of the extra help from the guys, he still managed to get to Owen. He’s probably out there, right now, laughing his ass off because he sees the anxiety he’s causing us,” Edward spat. He tugged at his hair.

“I don’t know what we can do, either, Edward. I know this waiting game is awful, but it’s the shitty hand we’ve been dealt,” I whispered.

“I just can’t lose this. I can’t lose my family and Jacob will not take my family away from me,” Edward said eerily. His eyes were glazed over and he was looking at me, but not seeing me. I was worried for my husband, for my family, for my children. Something had to give. I just didn’t know what.

All I knew was that Jacob Black needed to meet his maker. And there had to be a legal way to do it. Right?

A/N: And I’m ending it there. Next up will be a combo chapter, Edward and Kyra. Now, I’m going to be perfectly honest with all of you. I’m struggling. Normally, I have an idea of what will be the climax of a story but I’m at a loss when it comes to this one. Obviously, it’s surrounding Jacob and his obsession with Bella, but I don’t know how to get there. Arrrrgh…If any of you have any bright ideas…leave me a review, a PM or carrier pigeon. I think that’s why I haven’t been coming back to this story all that often. You know?

No pictures with this one. But, you can check out previous pics on my blog and/or tumblr. Links for both of those are on my profile. You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation.

Up next will be the mini prom that Kyra’s organizing along with some bonding time with Alice (with Edward) and some desperation sex…We’ll see. Please, leave me some loving and suggestions for what you think should happen. Thank you!
Rites of Passage

They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Next up will be a combo chapter, Edward and Kyra. Up next will be the mini prom that Kyra’s organizing along with some drama…

Chapter Seventeen: Rites of Passage

KyraPOV

“Owen, what about this one?” I asked, holding up another suit. It was black with small gray pinstripes.

“It doesn’t matter,” he grumbled, barely looking up from his book. “The idea you had about a mini prom is great in theory. For people who can WALK! I’m going to be stuck in this freaking chair.”

“Dr. Snow said that you’ll be out of the cast and on crutches. You can’t walk completely, but you’ll be out of the wheelchair,” I said. My brother shot me a dubious look. “Pick a suit! You need to look handsome for Tasha!”

“Owen Masen Cullen, stop yelling at your sister,” barked Dad. He walked into my brother’s quasi bedroom, which was my mother’s office near the kitchen, giving him an evil eye. “She’s doing all of this for you. It’s going to be an amazing prom. You’ll have those memories that some of us never experienced.”

“Didn’t you go to prom, Dad?” I asked.

“Nope. I think I was too busy rebuilding my computer,” Dad laughed. “Or avoiding my older brother. I didn’t really become what you see before you,” he posed like a model, making both Owen and me laugh, “until I met your mother. I was in my late twenties.”

“Did Mom go to her prom?” Owen asked.

“I don’t think so,” Dad replied. “I think the one dance she went to was in eighth grade and your Uncle Tim pulled a prank on her because he ‘liked’ her. Now, Owen, be nicer to Kyra. She’s going through all of this trouble to ensure that you get your prom. Yes, we know it’s not school sponsored, but it will still be fun.”

“I can’t dance. I can’t walk, Dad,” Owen said, pointing to his two broken legs.
“The left one will be uncasted and in a boot by this time tomorrow. It will be interesting, but it’ll work out,” Dad smiled crookedly, his eyes crinkling at the corners. “How many people did you invite?”

“Well, obviously me and Tim, Tasha and Owen. Plus we have these girls who sit at our table at lunch, Mae, Gabby, Lori and Khaleesi.”

“Khaleesi?” Dad snorted. “Where her parents Game of Thrones fans or something?”

“When you see her, she looks like the chick who played Khaleesi on the HBO show,” I said. “White blonde hair and icy blue eyes. Really pretty and very sweet. Anyhow, those four girls plus their boyfriends. I also invited some of Owen’s friends from the orchestra. He gave me a list of names when he wasn’t being a Sullen Cullen.” Owen rolled his eyes. “Plus, I also invited Ava, Lucas and Adam and their respective significant others.”

“Why don’t you invite Justin and his girlfriend, too?” Dad suggested. I snapped, sending Justin a text and asking him if he wanted to come. “So, the final tally, Kyra?”

“Ummmm, roughly twenty? Mom’s using the same caterer that she used for Uncle Demetri’s and Uncle Alex’s anniversary. We’ve got the tent and the dance floor. Mom and I are going to pick up the decorations with Aunt Alice.” I tried to hide my distaste for my father’s sister.

“She’s trying, K,” Owen said. “When Dad had to go into the office and Mom had to take Masen to the dentist because of that mishap with the football in gym, Aunt Ali came and sat with me. She made me lunch, helped me go to the bathroom, brought me my guitar so I could calm down since I was in pain.”

“She’s not my favorite person either, Kyra, but she’s still your aunt. Be respectful. She’s working through some stuff,” Dad said, putting his arm around my shoulder. “She loves all of you kids.”

“Tell that to Gianna,” I muttered. Dad sighed, giving me the stern parental glare. “What? It’s true. The girl is messed up, Dad. She thinks her mother hates her and turns to Mom for everything, not that I blame her.”

“Owen, I’m going to borrow your sister for a little bit, okay?” Dad said, gently pulling me from Owen’s room. My brother snorted, picking up his book and reading with his ear buds before the door was closed. “Kyra, I know that you are not a fan of Aunt Alice. What she did to Gianna and to her family is something that she is struggling with. She feels incredibly guilty for abandoning them.”

“She should,” I said, crossing my arms. “Dad, she acted like me when I was having my teenage tantrum at the beginning of the school year. She’s like, old. She shouldn’t be having tantrums.”

“It was a hormonal thing,” Dad explained, grimacing slightly. “You know how you get before you have your period?”

“PMS? Ugh, yes. I’m so cranky and all I want is chocolate,” I said. “Being on birth control helps, but I’m still a bitch.”

“I wouldn’t go that far.” Dad gave me sheepish grin. I shrugged. “Well, imagine that times a hundred. That’s what Aunt Alice is dealing with. Her body is changing radically,” Dad said softly. “Nana went through something similar, but she went on medication when she went through menopause. Aunt Alice was in denial.”

“Oh,” I said. “Will she ever get back to normal? I mean, she was fun and crazy and…”
“With time, principessa, we hope so. For now, she’s trying rebuild the bridges that she burned when she had her meltdown. Alice is trying, like Owen said. Now, what’s the theme for this prom?” Dad asked.

“I’m not being creative. I’m using the same theme as our prom at school: ‘A Night to Remember,’” I replied. “The decorations are going to be black, gold and silver with some red lights all along the tent. All of the girls are going to wear black, gold or silver dresses and the guys are wearing tuxedos or black suits.”

“It sounds great. Do you have a DJ?” Dad asked.

“Not yet. I’ve called a couple of places, but no one has called back. I really don’t want to have my sound dock out there with my mp3 player,” I grumbled.

“Let me see what I can do,” Dad smiled, hugging me close. I nodded and snuggled in his arms. “Until then, go do your homework.”

“Yeah?”

“The black pin stripe would be nice,” Owen said quietly. “And can you help me with getting Tasha a corsage?”

“No, silly. It’s like a small bouquet that she holds. It'll last longer,” I said, showing him what I was talking about on my phone.

“Got it,” he blushed. “I also need help with this.” Owen pointed to his hair. He had a chunk of hair that was shaved off from his stitches. They had been removed but he had a pretty substantial scar where they were located, not to mention his bad ass scar above his eyebrow. On the day of the ‘prom,’ I was getting my hair done with Tasha, Mae, and Khaleesi. Perhaps Dad could take Owen to get his hair styled to hide the bald spot? I’d mention it to him.

“We’ll fix it, Wan,” I said, taking his hand. He smiled, shifting on his wheelchair. “I’ll bet you’ll be happy to get out of the chair.”

“Yeah, but I’ll still be clumsy since I’m going to have a walking cast. I was praying that they’d give me crutches, but Dr. Snow said that it would probably be a walker. I’m sixteen and I have to use freaking walker. That’s sad. I also get to start physical therapy next week, too. I’m sooooo not excited about that.”

“Why?” I asked. “Don’t you want to get better?”

“I do. But, I was reading up on what they do for my type of injury and what’s in store for me. I’m
going to be out of commission for a year, K. One good thing comes out of it, though. No PE next year,” he smirked. “Mom’s working it out so I can take some classes at College of Dupage or even one of the small private colleges for credit. I’d go to school in the morning but my classes at the colleges in the afternoon. I may get to graduate early.”

“That’s awesome. Do you know what you’d take?”

“Probably something related to music. I know I want to major in music or try and complete my gen ed requirements,” Owen said, shrugging slightly.

“Are you done with your plates?” asked Mom.

“I’ve got it,” I said, grabbing my dish along with Owen’s.

“You guys keep talking,” Mom smiled, taking the dishes from my hand. “It’s nice to see you two get along. Such a breath of fresh air from earlier in the year.” She kissed my cheek before going back into the kitchen. Mia and Masen took Max outside with Dad and Oliver. Steve was still in the doghouse. Okay, not really, but he felt so guilty over Owen’s accident. He barely showed his face. He had been reassigned to Mia and Masen, getting him out of the house. My dad was pissed off at Steve, but honestly, there was nothing he could have done. You know?

“Have you talked to Steve since your accident?” I asked.

“Sort of. He apologized, feeling really bad about what had happened. It’s not his fault. He wasn’t in the car with me, nor could he have prevented it,” Owen said, his brows furrowing. “Dad still hates him, though.”

“Mom’s working him. I’m thinking that they need to do a little bump and grind,” I snickered.

“Yeah, ew,” Owen grumbled.

“What’s ew?” Mia asked, plopped down next to me after she came in from playing with our dog.

“Mom and Dad having sex,” I laughed. Masen blanched, burying his nose in Max’s fur while Mia looked positively mortified. “It happens quite frequently, you know.”

“Please, I’d like to go through my childhood without being sent into therapy,” Masen said, hugging Max. “We have enough drama without knowing that little tidbit of information.”

“Do you know if they found that Jacob guy?” Mia asked, changing the subject.

“I don’t know. Mom and Dad haven’t said anything,” Owen said. “We still have the security detail, so I’m assuming he’s still at large.”

“I’ll be glad when he’s caught,” Masen said. “I heard Mom and Dad fighting again last night when I snuck down for a midnight snack. They never fight.”

“Every couple fights,” I said. “They’re probably just frustrated. It’s a full house with all of us, plus the two of them and the security guys?”

“And a partridge in a pear tree,” Owen laughed.


“They need a romantic vacation when all of this is done,” Mia said, swooning on top of me. “Their twentieth wedding anniversary is coming up this year. Maybe we can arrange something for them? A
romantic getaway?”

“Talk to Nana and Papa,” Masen said. “I’m certain they’ll help us.”

“Let’s get this Jacob asshole caught and then we’ll work on getting our parents a vacation where they can rekindle the romance,” I purred. “Maybe we’ll get a new sibling out of the deal.”

“KYRA!” they all bellowed.


xx STTD xx

EPOV

I was sitting on our bed, watching my wife rub some lotion onto her arms. Owen had his appointment to get his casts removed and to see what his range of motion was going to be. His bionic limb was healing nicely but was covered with scars and stitches. My poor son threw up all over Dr. Snow when he saw his zombie leg. I ended up giving him my button down shirt since his t-shirt was completely covered in vomit before we left. However, we did receive some good news about his injuries, both legs were now in removable boots. It would make showering so much easier for Owen. I loved my son, but carrying him into the tub and washing a nearly grown man was tough. He wouldn’t let Bella help and he was trying to stubbornly do it himself, but I helped him usually. Dr. Snow also gave us the go ahead to start Owen on his physical therapy. It was going to be slow going for next few months, but it was a start. The therapists would begin their work with him at home for few months. Once he was more mobile, we’d take him to a local facility to finish the physical therapy.

“Alice is coming over tomorrow,” Bella said, crawling into bed. “We’re taking Kyra, Mia and Gianna shopping for decorations for the prom.”

“Who’s going with you?” I asked automatically.

Bella sighed, frustrated about our constant need for protection. “Casey, I think. Oliver is spending time with his daughters and Steve is hanging out at the house.” I bit back a groan. Bella smacked me. “Stop it. Edward, he couldn’t do anything to control it. What would you have him do, jump out in front of a moving car?”

I opened my mouth, but closed it quickly. “I’m sorry, but why am I paying them this exorbitant amount of money when my child is laying on a hospital bed in our office?”

“Edward, seriously. Yes, Jacob is a fucking lunatic. Yes, what he did was monstrous. But, it wasn’t Steve’s fault!” Bella said, her voice piercing through our bedroom. She clapped her hands over her mouth. “Shit. I hope that didn’t wake anyone up.”

I scrubbed my face. “I’m just over all of this bullshit. I’m ready to just plop myself in the middle of a road, with a sign, ‘Take me, Jacob. Stop terrorizing my family,’” Bella sneered, punching her pillow.

My heart fell to my feet and I started panicking. I couldn’t do this without my wife. She was my soul. She kept me grounded. She…
“Whoa, Edward,” she said, scrambling over to my side of the bed. “Breathe, baby.”

“Can’t,” I rasped. My throat felt closed off. My head was pounding and I thought my heart was going to explode through my chest. Bella felt my neck and she squeaked. Picking up a phone, she was sobbing to someone on the other line. She was trying to press me back onto the pillows, but I was too busy trying to breathe. I clutched the comforter, my vision growing dark along the edges.

“Edward! EDWARD! Stay with me,” Bella sobbed. I couldn’t stop. My eyes drooped and then, nothing…

Blinking my eyes a few times, I didn’t recognize where I was. It was dark and there was an obnoxious beeping. Looking around, I saw medical equipment and I began panicking again. Did I have a heart attack? A nurse came in, turning on the lights. “Mr. Cullen, it’s good you’re awake,” she said calmly.

“What happened?” I rasped. She didn’t answer because Bella came running back in, throwing her arms around my neck. She was hysterical, burying her nose in my chest, apologizing profusely.

“Mrs. Cullen, calm down,” the nurse chided, moving my wife away. “I need to check his vitals, alright?” She nodded, clutching her hands together. The nurse checked my vital signs and smiled softly. “Do you want anything to drink?”

“Some water would be great, thanks,” I said. The nurse nodded and scurried out of the room briefly. Returning with a pitcher and glass, she poured me some. I sipped it, thanking her with a smile.

“If you need anything, just use the call button, Mr. Cullen,” she said quietly, fluffing my pillow and tucking me in. Bella was glaring at her, shooting daggers at the nurse while she left.

“What happened, Bella?” I asked, feeling like I was run over by a truck.

“I thought you were having a heart attack,” she sniffled, picking up my hand. “Your heart rate was through the roof…”

“I’m assuming, I didn’t?” I asked.

“You had a panic attack. A severe panic attack, but your doctor wanted you admitted because of the severity of it. He also said that he wanted to monitor your heart. You’re going to have a stress test…”

“I’m under enough stress,” I said, shooting her a glare. “What the fuck was that, Bella? That statement?”

Bella dropped her gaze and twisted her wedding rings. “My frustration,” she muttered, slumping down onto the recliner next to my bed. “This whole thing is a nightmare, Edward. Owen is injured. You’re sick. I’m a nervous wreck.” She held up her hands, which were trembling. “If I just surrendered, all of this would stop.”

“If that’s how you’re thinking, then get the fuck out of my room,” I snapped. My heart rate began to skyrocket again. I was angry, tired and…”

“Mr. Cullen, you have to…” the nurse said as she came back in. She gave Bella a hard stare. “You have to calm down. Do you want a sedative?”

“Yes,” I said tersely, crossing my arms over my chest. The nurse nodded, leaving the room and coming back with a syringe. She injected it into my IV. I could feel it working almost immediately.
“Mrs. Cullen, if you can’t remain calm, you will be asked to leave,” the nurse admonished. “Your husband is very sick.”

“I know that,” Bella snarled.

“Then, let his body rest,” the nurse said, as if talking to a small child.

“Look, blondie, I know what he needs and he doesn’t need your fake tits and mock concern. I know he’s sick and he needs me,” Bella growled.

“That’s not what I heard,” the nurse retorted coldly. “You can stay, but if Mr. Cullen asks you to leave again, you will be escorted out.” I faded out by then and just let sleep wash over me.

The next time I woke up, it was bright and sunny. I was still in the same room. Bella was curled up on the recliner. Her face was covered with tears and she was clinging to one of my shirts. On the other side of me was my mom. “Edward, sweetie,” she cooed, running her fingers through my hair. “How are you feeling?”

“Groggy,” I said, my voice rough. “Sore. Who’s with the kids?”

“Jasper and Demetri are with the boys. Alice, along with Marcus, are with the girls shopping for the dance,” Mom said quietly. “Owen wanted to cancel it, but it’s all set up and paid for.”

“Who’s with them?” I asked, shifting so I could sit up.

“Casey,” Mom replied, sitting on my bed. “You need to stop worrying, Edward. You’re in the hospital because you’ve worried yourself sick.” I huffed out a sigh, my head falling back on the pillows.

“I don’t know how,” I whispered, tears welling in my eyes. Mom gasped, folding me up in her arms. I clung to her, trying to keep my tears quiet. I didn’t want Bella to hear me. “With Emmett, I knew what to expect. He was my brother…Jacob? He’s a loose cannon. He hurt Bella when they were dating, he’s nearly killed my son and…and…and now, Bella is willing to sacrifice herself just to end it. I can’t lose her.”

“Oh, my sweet boy,” Mom soothed. “You carry the weight of the world on your shoulders.”

“I can’t fix it,” I sobbed, clinging to my mom’s blouse. “And I got to pee.”

“TMI, Edward,” Mom laughed.

“Sorry,” I chuckled, lifting the covers. Thankfully, I was still in my boxer briefs. I did not want my bare ass to be on display. Mom offered me an arm, but I waved her off. Clutching the stand for my IV, I shuffled to the private bathroom and quickly relieved myself. While I washed my hands, I looked up at myself in the mirror. I looked like hell. I was pale with dark circles under my eyes. My hair was a disheveled mess, even more so than usual and I was very scruffy. Shaking my head, I walked back into the room. Bella had woken up and was talking to my mother. I climbed back into the uncomfortable hospital bed and curled up, facing away from them.

“Edward, sweetheart, I’m going to go,” Mom said, brushing my hair from my face. “I just dropped off some clothes for you for your stress test. I’m pretty certain you don’t want to wear a hospital gown while you’re running on a treadmill.”

“Ah, no,” I said, giving her a sad smile. “Thanks, Mom.”
“Thank your wife. She’s the one who called me, asking me to bring you some workout gear,” Mom smirked. I nodded, kissing my mom’s cheek. “Love you, Edward. Take it easy.”

“I’ll try,” I said.

“Thank you for bringing the bag, Esme,” Bella said quietly, her voice sounding impossibly sad. “Hopefully we’ll be out of here tonight, if not tomorrow.”

“Marcus and I are planning on staying at your place tonight, Bella. I love you, sweetheart,” Mom said, kissing my wife’s cheek. She walked out and for the first time in nearly twenty years we’d been together, the air between Bella and me was tense and uncomfortable.

“The nurse came by while you were sleeping and your stress test is scheduled for two,” Bella said quietly. “She also will be here to remove your IV if you want to shower or something.” She put the bag on the bed, backing out of the room. Her face was shattered.

“Bella, wait,” I said.

“I’m just going to go. You said you didn’t want me here,” she sniffled, holding herself together.

“You were threatening to hand yourself over to Jacob. Why would you do that? Do you know what he’d do to you?” I asked, looking at her. Bella bit her lip and shook her head. “A lot worse than you probably would think. He had no qualms in trying to kill Owen, causing his car accident. What makes you think he wouldn’t do the same to you? I can’t…he…Bella, he can’t have you.”

“You’re mine, I mentally added, but I didn’t want to say it. I reached my hand to her. I was still exhausted and loopy from the sedative, not to mention hungry. I didn’t trust myself to get up off the bed again. Bella walked over to me and took my hand. I tugged on her, guiding her around the bed so I could hold her. She lost it against my shoulder, nearly ripping the fabric of my hospital gown as she fell into my arms. I held her tightly against my chest, rubbing my hand on her back as she cried. All of this was breaking us and perhaps that was Jacob’s intention, I don’t know.

“I’m sorry th-th-that I suggested…” she trailed off, leaning her head on my shoulder. “I hate this whole thing.”

“So do I,” I sighed, kissing her messy hair. “Like I told my mom, I hate that I can’t fix it.”

“I heard you,” she said, her voice muffled by my shoulder. “I just wish that there was something we could do to end this. This nebulous ‘not knowing’ crap is what’s our problem. That why I said what I said, Edward. It would have given us a definitive idea of what we were dealing with.”

“Regardless, you are not going to give yourself up, Bella. I can’t lose you,” I said, taking her face in my hands.

“I can’t lose you either. Last night terrified me,” she muttered, tears falling down her pale cheeks. “I thought you were dying, Edward. You were so pale and you wouldn’t wake up.”

“I’m glad you’re awake now,” barked my doctor, Dr. Bobber, as he walked into the hospital room. “You gave us quite a scare, Edward.”


“You had a panic attack. A severe panic attack brought on by the stress you’re enduring,” Dr. Bobber chided. “We ran an EKG and heart scans while you were out. Thankfully, your heart appears to be fine. I do want to run a stress test, though. I’m certain your wife told you about that.”
“Yep,” I said, wrinkling my nose. “But, can I get some food? I haven’t eaten all day.”

“Yeah, we’ll get you some lunch before you come down,” Dr. Bobber nodded. “Now, in regards to this panic attack, I’m worried. I’ve been a doctor a long time and I’ve only seen an attack like yours in extreme PTSD cases. You were catatonic, Edward.”

“I don’t know if Edward’s told you about what we’re dealing with, but an ex-boyfriend of mine is stalking and terrorizing our family. Owen was in a car accident about a month ago that was caused by this monster. We’ve got security up the ass but my ex is in the wind and the fact that we don’t know what he’s doing or when he’s going to strike next is what’s getting to all of us,” Bella explained. “I made some comment yesterday that I should just leave without protection so Jacob could get me and all of this would be over.”

“Okay, I’m not married to you and that’s making me nervous,” Dr. Bobber chided.

“See?” I said, glowering at her. “That’s bullshit talk, Bella.”

“I see that now,” she mumbled, twisting my wedding ring. “What can we do?”

“Well, I want to conduct this stress test and make sure your heart’s okay. Then, I want you to meet with Dr. Zimmer. He’s a psychiatrist. With the attack you had, I think you may need some anti-anxiety medications. Bella already made the appointment for Tuesday afternoon. Finally, I want you to both meet with a counselor. Obviously this is affecting your relationship and most likely your family. You need to talk about it and work together as a family to not have another moment like this,” Dr. Bobber said. “Okay, let me get you something to eat. I do think we can take out the IV, though, if you’d like to shower.” He quickly removed the IV and tossed the tubing into the biohazard container. “If your stress test comes through okay, I’ll discharge you. If there’s anything that concerns me, you’re going to be a guest overnight again and more extensive testing tomorrow. I’m not concerned about your ticker, as I see it now, but I just wanted to let you know. See you in a bit, Edward.”

Dr. Bobber left the room, speaking with someone right outside my room.

“Why don’t you get cleaned up?” Bella said. She was still hesitant around me, skittish. She grabbed my toiletries along with some clean underwear, placing them on the bed. Her hands were shaking.

“Gorgeous,” I murmured, trying to stop her fussing. Gently grabbing her hand, I pulled her to me. “You’re just as jumpy as me, baby.”

“This is a nightmare,” she sniffled. “When my strong, amazing husband has a panic attack, rendering him unconscious, it frightens me. Scares me beyond all belief. I can’t…I want this all to be over.” I wrapped her in my arms as she silently crumbled.

“Perhaps you should talk to Dr. Zimmer, too?” I suggested. “We’re both a mess. This is a nightmare. I’m tempted to just pack us up and leave Illinois. Move to some remote location in the middle of Alaska or something…”

“Tempting, but we have our lives. We can’t run away from our problems,” Bella sighed. “Now, come on. Let’s get you cleaned up.” I nodded, following my wife into the bathroom.

xx STTD xx

KyraPOV

I wandered around some high end craft store. My mind, though, was on my parents. Last night was a
mess. Mom was screaming at my father to wake up as she shook him violently. He was pale, sweating and completely unconscious. We didn’t know what was wrong. However, he wasn’t having a heart attack. His heart rate was fast, but within the normal range.

“Kyra, come check out these decorations,” Mia said, her voice somber.

“I don’t want to look at the decorations. I want to be home,” I said.

“Kyra, I know you’re upset. Your mom called and said that your father is fine. He had a panic attack,” Aunt Alice explained. “He’s having some precautionary tests done now but should be home by the time we get back.” I bit my lip, wanting to believe her. Today had been a mistake. I should be with my family, not shopping for some dance.

“Just pick whatever. You guys know the colors,” I said, pushing my way out of the store. Steve had been assigned to us today. Casey was supposed to come, but he ended up calling in sick. Steve followed me, catching me before I ran too far.

“Running off isn’t the answer,” Steve said quietly.

“I do not want to be here,” I said, glaring at him. “My dad is in the hospital because that fucktard, Jacob, won’t leave us the fuck alone. I want him dead, Steve. I want to find him and kill him. He’s ruining my family, ruining our lives. Why can’t he…” I sobbed. Steve grabbed my arms and tugged into a hug. “I hate him.”

“I hate him, too,” Steve said as he led us back to the car. “He’s a cruel, vindictive man who gets off on causing pain of others. I’ve never seen a guy like this. I’ve been working in the security business for a while and most are not as patient as Jacob. He must be reveling in what he’s causing.” I nodded, toying with a button on Steve’s shirt. “I know you’re scared, but you can’t let Jacob win.”

“He’s already winning,” I snarled, pushing away from him. “He’s hurt Owen, taken away our prom, caused my dad to have this freaky panic thing and ALL of this is causing my parents to fight. They never fight. Ever. Disagreements, yes, but not screaming matches.”

Steve rubbed his face. “I don’t know what to say. I want him caught just as much as you, Kyra. I want him brought to justice because you and your family are amazing. You don’t deserve this.”

“It just feels wrong to do all of this when my father is in the hospital,” I said, crossing my arms over my chest. “Yes, I want a prom and to give that opportunity to Owen, but not at the risk of my family’s health.”

“Kyra, from what I’ve heard, your dad will be home tonight. Things are going to get better,” Steve said, taking my hand. As he was talking, Aunt Alice, Mia and Gianna walked out of the store with several carts filled with stuff. “Is there anything left in the store?”

“Some,” Aunt Alice snorted. “I just got a call from your mom. They’re home. Your dad is physically fine but they want to talk to everyone.”

“He’s fine?” I sniffled, clinging to Steve’s arm.

“He’s fine,” Aunt Alice said, wrapping her arm around my shoulders. “Now, let’s load this stuff up into the car and get you home.” Aunt Alice kissed my cheek and handed Steve the keys to her car. Working quickly, we loaded up the back of her SUV. Mia sat next to me in the car. Steve drove us back to our house, parking on the driveway. Aunt Alice pushed me and Mia out to see our parents while Gianna and Steve helped her unload the decorations. Mia and I ran inside, finding my father on the couch.
“Daddy!” we both squealed, crushing against him.

“Whoa!” he laughed, wrapping his arms around us. “My girls!” I snuggled against his side, leaning my ear against his shoulder. “I’m fine, babies.”

“Are you sure?” I asked. I brushed his hair back from his face and stared into his golden eyes. “Dad, are you sure?”

“Physically, I’m fine. Mentally, not so much,” Dad explained, cupping my cheek. “I had a panic attack last night. All of this kind of got to me.”

“Kind of?” Mia whimpered. “Daddy, you were white as a ghost and not awake.” She wrapped her arms around his waist, trying to burrow into his body. Dad kissed her forehead, closing his eyes as he held us both. Mom was talking with Aunt Alice. It looked like she was trying to pay Aunt Alice for the decorations but she wouldn’t accept it. I saw them hug and Aunt Alice left.

“Where’s Owen and Masen?” I asked.

“Owen and Masen are outside with Max with Johnny,” Dad answered. “We need to have a family meeting.”

“You’re not okay!” I snarled.

“Kyra, stop,” Dad said, taking my hand. “I’m fine. I’m okay. The doctor gave me a clean bill of health. We just need to discuss some things about our situation.” We nodded, staying next to Dad. He sighed, rubbing our arms as he sat on the couch. A few moments later, the boys were back inside. Owen was situated on Dad’s recliner with his feet up and an icepack on his leg. Masen was on the floor, petting Max. All of the security guys, except Casey who was still sick, supposedly were on the other couch while Mom was sitting on the arm of Owen’s chair.

“Now, I’m certain all of you were concerned about what happened last night,” Dad began. “I’m fine. I experienced a panic attack due to the hell we’re dealing with Jacob. It’s driving me nuts that I can’t fix it and my body just shut down.” He hugged Mia and me. We were still very upset about seeing our strong, infallible father on a gurney with an oxygen mask over his face and mouth and our mother sobbing as she followed them out of the house. “It’s scary, but nothing is physically wrong with me. It was emotional and mental, manifesting itself in a physical form.”

“Will you have another one?” Masen asked, methodically petting Max in order keep calm.

“I certainly hope not,” Dad chuckled. “I’m going to see a psychiatrist about possibly getting on some anti-anxiety medication. We’re also going to start counseling, as a family and on your own. This whole thing has…”

“Sucked,” Mom provided, her nose wrinkled. “It’s sucked and it’s my fault.”

“Bella, it’s not,” Dad soothed, looking at her sadly. “It’s Jacob’s fault, not yours. It will never be yours, gorgeous.” Mom huffed, her eyes trained on the floor. “Now, I know that all of our lives have been affected in some way or another. We need to talk about it. I love everyone in this room.” His eyes cut to the three security guys. “Everyone. You are a part of our family and I want this over as much as the next guy, but you are still a part of our family and always will be.”

“Thank you, Mr. Edward,” Oliver said. “All of us have a great deal of respect and love for you and for your family. It’s honor to work for you.”

“And Steve, I’m sorry about the cold shoulder I’ve given you since Owen’s accident,” Dad said. “I
know it wasn’t your fault.”

“I still should have done more, Mr. Edward,” Steve sighed. “Thank you, though.”

“Now, I’m going to see this psychiatrist on Tuesday, thanks to your mother,” Dad said. Mom snorted, rolling her eyes. “Hopefully, Dr. Zimmer will give us a name of a family therapist. In regards to what’s going on, nothing is going to change. Jacob is not going to rule our lives. We will maintain the security and Kyra, I want you and Owen to have this dance in our backyard. I’ve got a DJ for you along with all of the decorations in the garage that Alice bought. Once Jacob is caught, I want to take all of you on a vacation…away from here so we can just be as a family. No worries about protection or lunatics lurking behind every corner.”

“I think you and Mom should go away, just the two of you, too,” Owen said. “It’s been bad for us, but worse for you.”

All of us kids nodded. “I think Owen is right,” I said. “I hate hearing you two fight.”

“Kyra, even though we argue, your father and me, we love each other very much. This whole situation is too much to bear and that’s why we’re fighting,” Mom said. “We also want what’s best for all of you. Being involved in this is not healthy and that’s why we’re going to do some family counseling. That will start the week after we finish up with this prom thing.”

“I still feel bad about hosting it, now,” I grumbled.

“We don’t. Because of what Jacob is doing, you’re missing out on a rite of passage. Neither your mother or I had a prom. We want you to have that moment even if it’s in our backyard,” Dad said, hugging me close.

“But, you’re okay, Dad,” Owen asked, his brows knit together.

“I’ll be better once all of this is done, but I’m healthy as a horse,” Dad explained. “Now, I am starving. I ate some crap at the hospital and would love to take ALL of my family out for dinner. Who wants steak?”

xx STTD xx

The rest of the week went by quickly. Dad went to the psychiatrist who gave him some anti-anxiety medications along with a sleeping pill. Dad said he wouldn’t use the sleeping pill, but we’ve all heard him scream from his nightmares. Mom is also struggling, too. This whole thing is obviously weighing on my parents, but they are muscling through it. Over the weekend, my classmates go to their prom. Mom and I went to the store to pick up my dress for our dance the following weekend. The week of our prom, Mom and Dad started seeing a counselor that Dr. Zimmer suggested. Dad went one day, Mom went another day and then they went as a couple after Mom’s appointment. Family counseling would start in two weeks. The counselor, Maureen, wanted to get to know my parents before us kids were added into the mix.

The Friday before the dance, the tent was set up and the crew that Aunt Alice hired to decorate the tent was hard at work. I could tell that Aunt Alice was doing better and she had really stepped it up when it came to helping us out. Mia and Masen were spending the weekend with Nana and Papa so they wouldn’t be bothered by what was going on in the backyard. Mia wanted to come, but Mom explained that it was for the older kids. In addition to having the dance, my parents were allowing everyone who was invited to spend the night. I was shocked when Mom told me that. However, she was adamant on all of the girls staying up in my room and the boys staying in the basement.
When I woke up on Saturday, I sent a text to the girls. We were all getting our hair done at a local salon. Dad was taking Owen to get his hair cut and his own version of a spa day. Shortly before noon, Mom and I pick up my friends, Mae, Lori and Khaleesi. We went to the salon to get our nails done along with makeup and hair. It felt like we were getting dolled up for an awards ceremony, not ‘prom.’ Mom also got her hair cut and colored. She was grumbling that her roots were showing.

Paying for all of our services, Mom, under the watchful eye of Steve, drove us back to our respective houses. Dad had arranged for a party limo bus would pick up each of my friends to arrive at the house. Oliver, who had a commercial driver’s license, was driving it. I went outside once we got back, checking the tent. It was bedecked with black, silver and red fabric. There were several low tables with some black low chairs. Along the back wall, there was a table for the food, which was going to be delivered right before they were to arrive. The DJ was set up in the corner with lights, speakers and his computer. He was doing a sound check. As I wandering around, Dad came out.

“Wow…” he breathed.

“Hey, Daddy,” I smiled. “I like the haircut.”

“I was looking kind of shaggy,” he snorted. “But, you…you are gorgeous, principessa.”

“I’m not even dressed, Dad,” I laughed.

“You’ll always be gorgeous,” he said, walking over to me and enfolding me in his arms. I loved his hugs, all warm and snuggly. He led me over to one of the lush black benches. “I can’t believe that you’re all grown up, baby.”

“I’m not completely grown up. I can still be a teenage pain in the ass,” I giggled.

“You can, but you’ve matured in so many ways, Kyra,” Dad said, taking out a box. “I’m proud of you and I love you so much.”

“I love you, too, Daddy,” I smiled. “What’s that?”

“You know how your mom and I wear these necklaces?” he asked, pulling out the platinum key from his shirt. “Mom wears the heart and I got the key. You can figure out why we have them. I hold the key to her heart, when in reality, she holds the key to mine. Anyway, you’ve always been infatuated with the necklaces.” I nodded, fingering his pendant. “I remember you playing with it when you were a baby.”

“It was sparkly. Mom’s was sparklier, but still I loved seeing them on you,” I smiled.

“Well, I got this for you,” Dad said, handing me the box. It was from Tiffany’s. Dad was always about giving the best. I took it from him, smiling gratefully. Untying the white bow, I lifted the lid and shook out the velvet box inside. Cracking it open, it was a pendant that had both a heart and a key. “It represents both your mother and me. Your mom is giving Owen his own pendant. He’s just getting the key.”

“It’s beautiful, Daddy,” I whispered. “Can you put it on me?” He nodded, taking the box from my hands. He slipped it around my neck and it lay just between my collarbones. I gently touched it, smiling at its symbolism. “Thank you…”

“You are the very best parts of your mother and me, Kyra,” Dad said as he turned me back around. “You are beautiful and strong, like your mother. You are smart and calm, for the most part, like me.”

“Daddy, you’re handsome and I have your eyes,” I smiled.
“Just my eyes. Not my eyesight,” he laughed. “God, I was blind. Thank heavens for Lasik.” He took my hands and rubbed my knuckles. “I know that everything is up in the air and it’s a struggle, but we couldn’t have done it without you. I love you, principessa. I’m so lucky that God gave you to us.” He looked up at me and he was crying. I reached up and wiped a tear away. “It’s your prom and I’m sobbing. Imagine when you get married.”

“I’ll make sure I have an extra handkerchief, Daddy,” I laughed. Dad gave me a crooked smile, leaning forward to kiss my cheek. I threw my arms around his neck, holding him tightly. He swayed me, rubbing my back as he whispered quietly that he loved me.

“Okay, enough of me being a wuss,” Dad snickered. “Your mom sent me out here to get you so you could change into your dress. Oliver left to pick up the limo bus and is on his way to get your friends.”

“Great. Thank you again for the pendant, Daddy. It’s…there are no words for how beautiful it is,” I said, closing my fingers around it. He kissed my cheek, leading me out of the tent and into the house. The caterers are here, preparing the food in our kitchen. I went upstairs, dressing in my prom gown. It was a beautiful silver dress that clung to my body. My mom let me borrow her diamond tennis bracelet and I wore a pair of dangly rhinestone earrings. I asked if I could borrow Mom’s new earrings from Harry Winston but she said no. They were worth more than my first year of college.

Making sure I had Thomas’s boutonniere and Tasha’s nosegay, I paced around the main floor of the house. Everyone was due to arrive in ten minutes. Owen was sitting on the living room sofa, picking out a random song on his guitar. He looked very smart in his suit. His hair was expertly cut and looked akin to something my dad would do. It was artfully disheveled. “You look good, Owen,” I said, smiling at my brother.

“I’d feel even better if I could walk normally,” he said, gesturing to his boot-clad feet. He scowled at his walker, which had been attacked with ribbons and such to make it look a little less walker-like. “But, thank you for the compliment and for arranging all of this.”

“Did Mom give you a present?” I asked.

“Yeah. She gave me a key pendant. It’s very similar to Dad’s,” Owen said, unbuttoning his shirt to show it to me. “Did Dad get you?”

“He gave me this,” I said, pointing to my own pendant.

“That’s really pretty, K. It’s a combination of Mom and Dad’s necklaces,” Owen smiled. I nodded. As we were chatting, the limo bus pulled up. I squeaked in anticipation. Oliver helped everyone off. All of the girls looked gorgeous in their dresses and the guys were handsome in their suits or tuxedos. Parked on the street, Ava and Lucas walked up with their respective others along with Adam who was by himself. Justin had a big project to finish at school and couldn’t make it with his girlfriend.

Opening the door, I smiled at everyone as they came in. My parents came down, greeting our friends. Thomas was the last person inside and he looked so adult in his tuxedo. “Wow, you look great Thomas,” I said.

He smiled but it didn’t reach his eyes. “So do you, Kyra,” he replied, kissing my cheek. He handed me my nosegay, which I thanked him for and went to give him a kiss on the lips. He skirted my attempt. What is up with him? I ignored it and led him into the living room. My parents were taking pictures with our friends. Tasha was cuddled up to Owen, holding him tightly. I could tell that her arms were doing a number on his ribs but he held her with a smile on his face.
After we took pictures out front and then in the house, we went outside to the tent. Everyone was so excited about what was set up. Music was pumping throughout the structure and the lights were flickering. In the corner, I saw a picture booth set up along with Victoria, who had set up a station for photos. Owen and Tasha went first since he was in pain. The rest of us went to get good and sit around the dance floor. Thomas was being very distant with me. Still cordial, but not the normal actions of my boyfriend. We went to take our photos with Victoria. We smiled, or at least, I did, but Thomas looked uncomfortable. Once we were done, I dragged him out of the tent. “What’s going on?”

“Nothing, Kyra,” he said exasperatedly.

“Bullshit,” I said, narrowing my eyes. “You haven’t said three words to me and you look like you’d rather be in Mr. Brown’s class than here. What is it?”

“We’ll talk about it later,” Thomas said. “I promise. I’m sorry I’ve been distant, but…we’ll talk after tonight. Possibly tomorrow?”

“Fine,” I answered, turning on my heel.

The rest of the night was a little bit better. Thomas loosened up, but he still was not acting affectionate toward me. We danced until midnight when we had stop due to noise ordinances. Everyone went inside and we went downstairs after we changed to watch movies. I ended up sitting next to Lucas and his girlfriend since Thomas was acting so weird. We watched three movies before the girls went upstairs into my room and Mia’s room. The guys stayed in the basement. I couldn’t sleep for the life of me. In my heart, I knew that Thomas was probably going to dump me. Why else would be so cold and distant?

Getting up around eight, I go downstairs to make some breakfast for my friends. Thomas is sitting in the family room, twisting his phone. He looked at me, his blue eyes iced over. “Look, I’m sorry about being an ass last night.”

“What’s wrong?” I asked, picking at the counter. “Did I do something?”

Thomas pursed his lips, tossing his phone towards me. It was a picture text from an unknown number. It showed me in Steve’s arms the day my dad was in the hospital. “That. You did that. You’re cheating on me?”

“What? No! Steve is a friend. Remember when my dad was in the hospital? Steve was just calming me down,” I said, pushing the phone back to him. “I’ve never cheated on you, Thomas. Who sent that to you?”

“I don’t know but it seems pretty suspect. That is more than a friendly hug,” Thomas sneered. He tugged on his hair and gave me a glare. “Look, Kyra, you’re a nice girl. We had fun, but…”

“Don’t say it,” I said, narrowing my eyes, tears already forming. “You let one photo from an unknown caller dictate our relationship? I thought you loved me.”

“I do, Kyra,” Thomas said. “I do love you, but…” he sighed, “I know I don’t want to do the long distance thing. I’ve been accepted to the University of Nebraska and I’m going back there as soon as we graduate. I think it’s best that we end this now.”

“Fine,” I said. “Grab your shit and get the fuck out of my house.”

“Kyra,” Thomas murmured, reaching for my hand.
I snatched it back. “No, you don’t get to soothe me. You…you…you b-b-broke my heart,” I sniffled. “You ruined what should have been an amazing experience b-b-because of t-t-this!”

“Kyra?” Dad called, walking down the stairs in a pair of jeans and t-shirt. Steve followed him, looking confused.

“Make him leave, Daddy,” I cried.

“Thomas?” Dad asked.

“I’m sorry, Kyra,” Thomas said, picking up his duffel and walking past my dad. “I didn’t mean to hurt her feelings…”

“You heard my daughter. Get out,” Dad said coldly. “Steve, drive Thomas home. Make sure you stop before you drop him off.”

“Do I have to?” Steve quipped, grabbing Thomas’s shoulder and guiding him out of the house. Once he was gone, I lost it, collapsing against my father’s chest.

“Principessa,” Dad soothed, holding me tightly. “I’m so sorry…”

“He accused me of cheating, Daddy,” I cried. “He showed me a picture of Steve hugging me when you were in the hospital. I didn’t cheat on him. I’d never…”

“I know, sweetheart,” Dad said, kissing my hair. “Thomas obviously wasn’t the right guy for you or he would have listened. He’s a fool to let you go.” I felt another pair of arms around my body. I looked and Mom had come down. I cried in my parent’s arms, hating that Thomas had ruined my prom.

Somehow, I managed to pull myself together and serve everyone some breakfast when they woke up a few hours later. I was a zombie. Owen noticed it and was worried about me. My dad hovered, giving me extra hugs when he could. Around one, Oliver drove everyone back to their respective homes, except Tasha. She was staying for dinner because she hadn’t seen Owen since their date. I crawled upstairs and lay down on my bed. Mom came up, sitting next to me. “I know it hurts, baby.”

“He’s an ass,” I shrugged. “He should have done this before so I could have…I don’t know.”

“It’s these early relationships that you discover what you want and what you don’t want,” Mom explained. “Thomas had some redeeming qualities and in time, those will come back. He was your first boyfriend, your first kiss and your first love.”

“You found all of that with Dad,” I said, frowning slightly.

“Your dad was all of my important firsts, but Uncle Tim was my first crush and Jacob was my first kiss. I got lucky and in time, so will you. In relationships and love, there has to be some ugliness before you get to the true beauty of it,” Mom said, brushing my curls from my face. “Right now, your dad and me, we’re dealing with the ugly. But, we have so much beauty in our relationship that sometimes it feels unreal.”

“Yeah?”

“We have you, Owen, Mia and Masen. You four are the greatest things we’ve ever done,” Mom murmured. “There will be times where your heart will be broken but your family will always be there. Your father and I will always love you, even if we aren’t with you. We will always be proud of you.”
“Kay,” I sniffled. “I love you, Mom.”

“I love you so much, baby,” Mom smiled, kissing my forehead. “Why don’t you take a nap? The past couple of days have been hard.” I nodded. She kissed me again and left me on the bed. Before turning off the light, I reached into my desk drawer and pulled out my journal. I dated it and tapped my pen to my lips.

First boyfriend? Check…Thomas

First kiss? Check…again, Thomas

First love? Check…again, Thomas

First broken heart? Unfortunately check…again, Thomas

Another rite of passage completed in my teenage life. It seemingly came out of nowhere. He accused me CHEATING! He showed me a picture of Steve and me hugging when my father was in the hospital. He used that bullshit excuse to end our relationship because he didn’t want to deal with the long distance thing. Coward. Now, onto the next rite of passage, the next boy, the next step in my life. What’s next on the horizon?

Graduation…not checked yet…coming up in three weeks. Congratulations, Class of 2029!

I wonder if college boys are as stupid as Thomas?

A/N: So, my original plan for this chapter changed. I liked this better. JUST saying. Pictures for this chapter are on my tumblr and blog (links in my profile). You’ll see the inspiration for the mini prom, Kyra, Tasha, Owen and Thomas’s outfits, along with their boutonnieres and nosegays. Kyra and Owen’s necklaces will also be posted as well. You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation or on twitter: tufano79.

Up next will be more along the lines of what I had planned for this chapter with Edward and Alice, graduation and some citrusy goodness. It will be in Edward’s POV. Leave me some loving!!
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Up next will be more along the lines of what I had planned for this chapter with Edward and Alice, along with some bonding time, graduation and some citrusy goodness. It will be in Edward’s POV. Leave me some loving!!

Chapter Eighteen: Commencement

EPOV

It had been a week since we had the prom in our backyard. Owen and Tasha were stronger than ever, spending nearly every free moment together. I was happy to see my son finally getting out of his funk from the accident. Kyra, on the other hand, had fallen apart since Thomas broke up with her. Every night, she cried herself to sleep. She barely ate and she moved around the house in a zombie state. It took all of my control not to go over to that boy’s house and smack him stupid. My baby girl was hurting because of him.

He saw this random picture of Steve hugging Kyra from this unknown number and assumed that Kyra was cheating on him. My daughter tried to explain to Thomas that it was the day that I had been admitted into the hospital with my anxiety attack. She was upset and Steve was only trying to calm her down. Thomas just walked away.

What made things even more awkward was the fact that they were paired up for a project in chemistry class. Her chemistry teacher, Mr. Brown, would not them switch partners. Kyra wouldn’t work with him, so she was doing all of the work on her own. She didn’t want to call Thomas, let alone see him for this project. She just wanted to survive until the end of the school year and then move on with her life, going to Northwestern University in the fall.

I was waiting for Kyra to come out of school. Oliver was with me. We all were giving Kyra a little extra attention due to her depression from being broken up. She would smile sadly, relishing in the love her family would give her for a few moments but only time will heal her broken heart. As Kyra was walking out, the girl that she had helped a year ago with the abortion, Mackenzie, was screaming in my daughter’s face. Kyra was trying to ignore it, but this girl was brutal. I got out of the car, ready to step in.

“Mr. Edward, don’t,” Oliver warned. “It may seem cruel, but Kyra needs to handle this. That girl has tormented her ever since Thomas ended their relationship. Kyra doesn’t need you to sweep in and make her an even bigger target.”
“What do you mean?” I asked, glancing at my security guard.

“She doesn’t need ‘Daddy’ to make her problems go away. It’s one of the many things that Mackenzie spews in her rants,” Oliver frowned.

“Why won’t she say something? Why won’t she go to the school administration?” I growled, frustrated.

“She has, but Mackenzie has spun it saying that Kyra has been bullying her. It’s a situation of hearsay. The response of the school is for the girls to avoid each other,” Oliver replied, his brow furrowing. “Obviously, Mackenzie is not following that rule.”

“Oh, look, Kyra, Daddy’s here. I bet you two are going to have a sexy romp in the back of his car. You are such a slut, Kyra. No wonder Thomas dumped your skanky ass,” Mackenzie sang.

Kyra threw down her books and slapped Mackenzie, sending her sprawling onto the pavement. “Listen, bitch, I’ve had enough. You are a waste of breath, of space and of skin. Your sole purpose in life is to be an epic bitch, tormenting those you perceive as being less than you. It’s one thing for you to call me horrible names, but to slander my father? To slander my name? It’s appalling that you would even think that. My father loves me and respects me. You leave my family out of it.”

Mr. Brown approached my daughter. “Miss Cullen, what’s going on?” he asked.

Mackenzie hopped up, clutching her face and breaking out the crocodile tears. “Mr. Brown, Kyra slapped me,” she sobbed.

“And with good reason, young lady,” Mr. Brown huffed. “I overheard what you said. Now, the school has a zero tolerance policy in regards to violence. I didn’t see anything, though. I just heard the vitriol you were spewing about Miss Cullen and her very nice father, who is standing right there.” Mr. Brown waved and I blankly did the same. “I may not have seen what Miss Cullen did, but I certainly heard what you said. You will be written up for bullying and harassment, Mackenzie. You will be called down to your dean first thing tomorrow morning.”

“But? I was on the ground!” Mackenzie wailed.

“You tripped,” Thomas said as he strode passed Mackenzie. “I may have broken up with Kyra but there is no way in hell that I’ll go out with you. Stop tormenting Kyra just because I won’t touch your skanky ass.” He gave Kyra a sad smile before continuing onto his car. Mackenzie turned on her heel, picking up her strewn backpack and stomped in the opposite direction.

Mr. Brown leaned in, speaking quietly with my daughter. Kyra nodded, her face flushed. With a pat to her shoulder, Kyra walked away from Mr. Brown, waving shyly. My daughter reached the car and her golden eyes were filled with tears. “Are you okay, principessa?” I asked.

“Not really, but I have to get into the car before I lose it. I don’t want them to think that Mackenzie is capable of getting to me,” Kyra answered, her voice wavering. She scrambled into the backseat, curling up into a tight little ball. Oliver gave me a reassuring slap on my back and got into the driver’s seat. Sighing, I was the last one into the car and Oliver pulled away. Kyra was biting her lip, trying not to sob. She looked so tiny and fragile. The drive home was tense, filled with random sniffles and quiet whimpers. As soon as the car had stopped in our driveway, Kyra grabbed her bag, bolting from the car and into the house.

“Kyra!” I shouted to her retreating form.

“Just let her be, Mr. Edward,” Oliver said. “When she’s ready to talk, she will.”
“Is it always like that?” I asked, looking at him. “Mackenzie in her face?”

“Usually. Mackenzie is like a shark in the water…she detects fresh blood and attacks,” Oliver replied flatly. “With Kyra not going to prom, Thomas’s break up and whatnot, Mackenzie is on Kyra like white on rice. Hopefully, that teacher will get that girl the punishment she deserves.”

“Expulsion would be nice,” I deadpanned. “Hell, I was ready to call the cops for harassment and battery.” We walked into the house. Casey was sitting at the counter, chatting with Johnny.

“Mr. Edward, Miss Bella took Owen to the doctor with Steve. Owen was complaining about his leg and they got an appointment for late this afternoon,” Casey explained. “Johnny and I picked up Mia and Masen. They are in the backyard with Miss Alice along with Gianna.”

“Is everything alright?” I asked.

“The scar from the incision was inflamed and warm to the touch. Miss Bella would rather err on the side of caution,” Johnny said. “They should be back in an hour or so. Steve called a few minutes ago, explaining they just were sent into the examination room.”

“Okay,” I sighed. “If Bella calls, come and get me. I’m going to be outside with my sister and children. Please leave Kyra alone for now. She had a rough day.”

Johnny frowned. “The poor girl. She has been through enough. I can probably guess why she is upset.” Johnny cracked his knuckles. “Can I go over to his house, boss? Show him what happens when he makes girls cry?”

“It wasn’t Thomas, Johnny. It was Kyra’s former friend, Mackenzie, who is now the bane of her existence. Thomas actually stood up for Kyra, though kicking his ass does sound cathartic,” I snorted.

“Damn,” Johnny grumbled. “I was hoping to make some high school punk pee in his pants.”

I rolled my eyes as I slid the back door open. Alice was sitting on the porch, looking more like her usual, pulled-together self. Her hair was expertly styled but she had cut it short in a bob, allowing her natural color to shine through. Her black hair was now peppered with gray hair, making her look sleek and refined. Her hazel eyes twinkled as she watched Mia, Gianna and Masen play with Max, tossing a disgusting tennis ball back and forth. “Hey, Younger,” I quipped, sitting down next to her.

“Older,” she smiled. “Did the guys tell you about Owen and Bella?”

“Yeah. Is everything okay?” I asked.

“Owen was complaining all morning about his leg. The physical therapists noticed it was swollen and warm. It may be an infection in the incision. The therapist said that antibiotics should help, but Bella wanted to get him checked out by Dr. Snow,” Alice said. “I was over anyway, having lunch with Bella when she made the call. I said I’d stay until she came back. Did you pick up Kyra?”

“Yeah. On my way back from my own therapy appointment.” I said. “I worked in the morning, doing some work for the Foundation. We’ve got a couple of centers opening in the next month or so. I was arranging for travel for Mom and Marcus, who are going in our place since Bella doesn’t want to travel and I do not want to leave my family.”

“I could go, too,” Alice murmured. “I’ve taken a leave of absence from work until I get my head screwed on straight. I’m better, but having something to focus on besides my meds or head shrinking sessions would be a nice little bonus.”
“Well, there is a site opening up in New Jersey. Mom and Marcus asked if I could go in their place because they are flying out to Italy to see Aro and his newest grandchild. They would rather have some time to pack and such before leaving. Could you do that?” I asked.

“When?” Alice answered.

“The week after my birthday,” I said. “You would fly out on a Monday, make sure that the center is ready to be opened, sign off on any requisition orders and then help coordinate the grand opening with the center’s administrator. The opening is happening on Friday.”

“I’ll do it,” she beamed. “Can I bring Gianna with me? Pending Jasper will allow me…”

“Is he fighting you for custody or visitation?” I asked.

“No. He just doesn’t trust me. Not that I blame him. I wouldn’t trust me after what I did,” Alice shrugged. “I am a horrible mother and Jasper has every right to be pissed off. I’m trying to do right by my children, but he won’t let me be with Gianna or Adam without Bella, you or the security guys around.”

“How are things going with Gianna? I know that she was…apprehensive,” I whispered, treading on dangerous ground.

“It’s slow going. It will take time, but this trip may be what we need,” Alice sighed, tucking her hair behind her ear.

“Why don’t you ask Gianna first? If she’s willing, then cross the bridge with Jasper,” I suggested.

“Not to sound harsh, but Gianna may not be ready to go on a trip with you, Ali. She still feels more comfortable with Bella, me and Jasper.” Alice blushed, her eyes falling to the patio. Tears fell onto her cheeks. “Alice, I’m not saying this to be mean or to upset you, but I’m just laying out the facts.”

“You’re right,” Alice sniffled, wiping her face. “Now, I kind of know what you felt with Dad about his perception of you.”

“I don’t follow,” I said.

“Dad always took Emmett’s side whenever you were the topic of discussion. His hatred of you was apparent and your relationship with him was irrevocably damaged because it,” Alice hissed, her hands closing into tiny fists.

“Damaged? We didn’t have a relationship. He only tried to make amends after his death,” I said, arching a brow. “You do not treat Gianna like Dad treated me. His contempt of my existence oozed out of him. You love your daughter, but you lost your way and you’re trying to make it right. Like you said, though, it’s slow going. Gianna needs to know that you’re reliable, willing to be there for her. She needs to know that regardless of how you feel, you’ll drop everything to help her. She needs love, affection, guidance and reassurance, Alice. She got that from Bella and me while you were gone. Jasper tried, but he was not the mother she desperately wanted. Bella and Kyra stepped into those shoes. You have to…you have to be patient.”

“You know that patience is not one of my strong suits,” Alice said, smiling wryly.

“No, it’s not,” I chuckled. “You will have to work on that, Ali. Kids are resilient, but when you betray their trust?”

“Yes,” she sighed. “I get it. I just wish I could go back in time to undo what I did. You’re a genius. Can’t you invent a time machine?”
“Younger, it’s not physically possible,” I guffawed. “You can’t go back in time. I have no flux capacitor or the ability to bend the time stream. While I am able to invent some things that were technically considered to be science fiction, time travel will never become science fact.”

“Damn,” Alice frowned, giving me a put-on smirk. We sat outside, enjoying the perfect late spring weather. It was nice to have warm temperatures since the winter had been so brutal. As we were sitting in the back, Kyra came down. Her eyes were red and puffy and her pale skin was tearstained.

“Kyra, what’s wrong, sweetie?” Alice asked.

“Nothing, Aunt Alice,” Kyra replied, somewhat coldly. “Dad, can we go into the house?”

“Sure, Kyra,” I replied, standing up and enfolding my sweet daughter into my arms. Kyra gripped my shirt, sniffling quietly as I guided her into the kitchen. I guided her to the stool next to the counter while I grabbed some milk for both of us, along with a plate full of Bella’s chocolate chip cookies. Putting the two glasses and large plate in front of us, I sat down next to my baby girl. I pushed the plate closer to Kyra. When I had hugged her, she was almost skeletal. “Talk to me, principessa. How long has Mackenzie been doing that?”

“It never really stopped,” Kyra muttered, picking apart a cookie. “She still tormented me, but only when I was alone, which was rare since Thomas was always by my side until he dumped me. Then, after prom, I was still friends with Mae, Gabby, Lori and Khaleesi, but the only time I was with them is lunch. Mackenzie took it upon herself to follow me and point out every single negative thing and remind me that Thomas dumped me. She kept calling me a slut, a whore, a skank…” Kyra wiped her eyes, picking up the glass of milk and sipping it daintily. “It’s like she knew why Thomas broke up with me.”

“Could she have been the one who took those pictures of you and Steve?” I asked.

“I don’t know. I wasn’t really paying attention, Dad,” she said miserably. “The number on Steve’s phone, I didn’t recognize it. The photos were taken like they were from one of those lenses. You can see from far away…”

“Telephoto,” I said, furrowing my brow. Kyra nodded. “Did you or Steve notice anyone around?”

“No, but then again, I was a mess. I was worried about you,” she said, looking up at me. Her golden eyes were filling with tears. “This whole thing is a mess, Daddy. Could it have been Jacob?”

“I wouldn’t put it past him,” I sighed, cupping Kyra’s cheek. “But, why would he waste his time in trying to follow you, take pictures and then encourage Thomas to break up with you? That doesn’t make sense.”

“No, it doesn’t,” Kyra grumbled. “And then Thomas sticking up for me? I don’t understand any of this, Dad. All I want to do is curl up and sleep until I go away to college. I hate this.”

“Well, you can’t curl up and sleep until you away to college. You have three weeks left of school, Kyra. It also looks like you have an ally in Mr. Brown in regards to Mackenzie,” I soothed.

“He has her in his remedial chemistry class. From what he told me, she’s been spreading rumors left and right during class. Saying things along the same lines as what you heard with us having an incestuous relationship,” Kyra shuddered. “Dad, I love you, but ew.”


“He asked me to come meet with him before class to discuss what was said and to get the facts
straight before he would submit the referral to the office. He also told me that I could complete the project that was to be done with Thomas on my own. He said I had enough on my plate.”

“Now, why didn’t you come to your mother or me about the situation with Mackenzie?” I asked.

“I was hoping that if I ignored it, it would go away. You know?” she shrugged. “It only got worse. Today had been the worse by far. I would have talked to you and to Mom tonight if you hadn’t seen what happened. I hated that I lost my temper and slapped her…”

“I would have done the same. So would your mother,” I explained. “Mackenzie is a horrible girl and deserves to be smacked around. I do not condone violence, but I was proud of you, Kyra. It took a great deal of restraint to not pummel her.”

“Believe me, I wanted to,” Kyra smirked. “But, I do want to walk across the stage for commencement. Plus, I was nominated to give one of the two senior speeches. One automatically goes to the valedictorian. That is not me. I think the valedictorian is Julian McManus or his twin brother, Adrian. Those kids are like freaky smart.”

“And the other speech?” I asked, grinning crookedly.

“The teachers nominate several students and we give our proposed speech to the staff. They will award the speech to the person who gets the most votes from the faculty,” Kyra blushed. “The ‘auditions’ were held the week before our prom. It will be announced tomorrow during last period. I was very proud of what I wrote and I really want to share it to the student body.”

“Regardless if you get it or not, I’m proud of you, Kyra,” I breathed. “I love you more than you can possibly know.”

“Thank you, Daddy,” she blushed, finally picking up a cookie. “I love you, too.”

Bella came back a few hours later. Owen did have a minor inflammation in his leg. It was caught early and would be controlled with antibiotics. We would have to keep a close eye on his progress. Alice stayed for dinner with Gianna before driving her back to Jasper’s. Dinner was fairly quiet due to Owen not feeling well and Kyra still processing what happened after school.

After everyone went to sleep, I found my wife making lunches in the kitchen. Sliding behind her, I wrapped my arms around her waist. Nuzzling her neck, I inhaled her sweet, strawberry scent. “I missed you today,” I whispered against her skin.

“You always miss me,” she quipped, turning in my arms. “But, I missed you, too. I missed your muscles today. Steve and I struggled getting Owen out of the car and into the wheelchair. Well, Steve did fine but I struggled. Our son is packing on the pounds.”

“The poor kid is struggling with his recovery. He isn’t able to do anything physical due to his injuries and physical therapy is great for rehabbing his legs, but do very little to prevent him gaining weight,” I explained. “He’s built like me. Once he gets back on his feet, the weight will fall off.”

“Yeah, you suck. You stop drinking soda and you lose like fifteen pounds,” Bella grumbled, poking my stomach. “If I want to lose weight like that, I have to stop eating.”

“Well, don’t do that. I love you the way you are, gorgeous,” I growled, tipping her head back and kissing her pillow-soft lips. She deepened our kiss slightly, pulling back and blushing. “What?”

“Tell me what happened today after school,” she muttered, her brown eyes darkening in anger. “What did that little bitch do to my daughter?”
I told her what happened and the conversation I had with Kyra while Bella was at the doctor’s office. With each passing moment, she grew more and more rigid in my arms. Her eyes were no longer warm, but ice cold and she looked ready to kill. When I finished, I took her angry, but exquisite face in my hands. “Bella, Kyra does not want us to butt in. She has a few weeks left of school. She has an ally in her chemistry teacher.”

“That girl is ruining Kyra’s senior year because she…” Bella hissed.

“Because she’s an immature brat. Kyra is being the bigger person in ignoring it. She’s also showing her maturity in her reactions. Yes, she lost her temper with Mackenzie, but she was well within her rights to smack that girl,” I said calmly, hugging my wife to my chest. After a few moments, Bella relaxed and wrapped her arms around my waist. “Now, let’s finish making these lunches so I can show you how much I missed you.”

“It better be rough and hard, Edward,” she snarled against my chest. “I’m in that type of mood.”

“Your wish is my command, Mrs. Cullen. We are going fuck each other stupid,” I replied, my voice dark.

“Then, the kids can make their own damn lunches,” she purred, looking up at me. I dipped my head, claiming her lips hungrily. We barely made it to our room before we were naked and joined, fucking like animals on the floor.

*I’m so going to feel that tomorrow.*

xx STTD xx

The next day, Bella and I were incredibly sore from our coupling. Kyra just gave us an arched brow when we hobbled downstairs, the lunch boxes still strewn on the kitchen counter. Johnny was snickering quietly and Steve was red as a tomato. Apparently, we were quite loud and almost the entire house heard us.

Bella flushed, but smiled secretively.

I just beamed like an idiot.

I had sex.

I’m nearly fifty and I can still get it up.

A lot.

There is no shame in that.

The kids went to school. Owen had physical therapy and Bella and I had our own therapy session in the early afternoon with Dr. Niwa. I worked from home, changing the airline tickets from my mother and Marcus to Alice and Gianna’s name for the Foundation opening in New Jersey. I also did some work for Whitlock, checking on orders and discussing new ideas with research and development.

After lunch, Bella and I went to Dr. Niwa’s office. We spent nearly an hour discussing the situation with Kyra and Mackenzie, brainstorming ideas of how to show our support of our daughter without smothering her or wanting to physically maim Mackenzie. We also aired our frustrations out about how Jacob was still in the wind, causing our family to have continued protection and our lives are being disrupted.
We left Dr. Niwa’s office and drove to pick up Kyra. Steve was with us. When we pulled up to the school, Kyra was surrounded by several of her classmates. She was excitedly talking and beaming happily. Khaleesi was hugging Kyra and Thomas was smiling, listening to her talk. When Kyra saw the car, she hugged Khaleesi and sprinted toward us. Wrenching open the car door, she flew inside. “Guess what?” she asked, breathlessly.

“What?” Bella asked.

“I got the other senior speech. I’m speaking at the high school commencement!” Kyra squealed, throwing her arms around Bella’s neck. “I was called down to the office during my last class of the day. The principal congratulated me, saying that my speech was the best one that the faculty had heard in years! My speech would be just before the class is presented. I’m so excited!”

“Congratulations, baby,” Bella breathed.

“Thanks, Mom,” Kyra said, her eyes twinkling.

“I think we should go out to celebrate,” I replied. “Where do you want to go, Kyra?”

“I want to get dressed up,” Kyra replied. She plucked at her loose yoga pants and Wheaton North hoodie. “I’ve been dressing like a bum for the past week or so. Can we go somewhere where we need to be all dressed up?”

“Why don’t we go to Gibson’s or Hugo’s Frog Bar?” Bella suggested. Kyra nodded happily, hugging Bella again.

“I’ll make the arrangements,” I said, taking out my phone and looking up the number for Hugo’s in Naperville. I managed to reserve the back patio from seven to nine. The weather was perfect and this is what we needed as a family. I also called my mom, Jasper, Alice, Rose, Charlie and Demetri, inviting them to come along to celebrate Kyra’s wonderful news. Almost everyone was available, except Rose and Tim. They already had a date planned, but would promise to be at the commencement ceremony since Rose was Kyra’s godmother.

Back at the house, we told everyone that we were going out and to dress nicely. We also invited all of the security guys. Casey said that he’d stay back and keep an eye on the house, making sure that no one would try and sneak in. Johnny said he’d bring him back a doggy bag, if he didn’t give it to Max first. Casey scowled at Johnny, tossing a paper towel at him. Johnny just guffawed, going upstairs to change into a pair of dress pants and a sport coat.

I changed and was sitting at the kitchen counter, surfing the web for a new camera. If my baby girl was speaking at commencement, I wanted to commemorate it. Owen’s walker distracted me and I turned to him. He was huffing and puffing, sitting down at the kitchen table. “I hate this thing,” he grumbled, pushing the walker with his boot. “I’d rather use crutches.”

“Being sick on top of being injured, you’re just weak, Owen,” I argued.

“And fat,” he pouted. “These are your pants. I couldn’t button my own. You’ve got a few more inches around the belly than I do.”

“You calling me fat, boy?” I snorted.

“No. Just hefty,” Owen smirked. I rolled my eyes, closing the computer. “Can Tasha come with us? I already called her and she said that she’s available.”

“Of course, Owen,” I answered. “We’ll pick her up on the way. And I’m not hefty. I’ve been
wearing the same size pants since I met your mother.”

“You keep telling yourself that,” Owen chuckled.

“Says the boy who has to wear his father’s trousers,” I quipped. Owen huffed, getting up and shuffling out of the kitchen. “Love you, Owen.”

“Love you, too, Pudge!” he shouted back from the music room. Shortly after, I heard him play his violin.

I went back to searching for a camera, buying a new DSLR that also shot high definition video. It was nearly three grand, but it was worth it. Or rather, it will be worth it. I wanted to treasure that moment of Kyra speaking to her graduating class forever. I barely remembered speaking at graduation at Bradley High School. I was more focused on not vomiting all over the podium. Speaking publically was not something I was comfortable doing in high school. Hell, even now, I was a nervous bundle of energy whenever I had to give a presentation or speak for a Foundation event. I hid it well, but I still panicked about puking all over myself.

Bella came downstairs, wearing a black wrap dress that accentuated her slender frame but highlighting her sexy curves. Her hair was curled, pinned into a low ponytail and she wore her new earrings along with the pendant I got for her so many years ago before we got married. “You look ravishing, Mrs. Cullen,” I breathed. “I still can’t believe that you are still with me after so many years.”

“Why wouldn’t I be?” she asked, sliding between my legs and running her fingers through my hair. “You’re smart, funny, sexy and amazing in bed. I keep you around because you can make me come with your tongue.” Leaning forward, she kissed me deeply, massaging my tongue with hers. I moaned. “With your fingers.” She picked up my hand, drawing my middle finger into her mouth, flicking it with her hot tongue. “And with your long, thick cock.” Her hand palmed my growing arousal. I whimpered.

“Dear God…stop seducing each other,” Johnny laughed, walking into the kitchen to grab a bottle of water. “You two were incorrigible when you were younger. It’s gotten worse over time.”

“Jealous or not, you two are the horniest couple I’ve ever met. It’s sweet to see, but I fear for your children. They must be scarred with all of the humping you do,” Johnny quipped.

“Our children are perfect,” I said. “They see a happy couple. We are never inappropriate in front of them.”

“I know, I know,” Johnny said. “I’m just giving you shit.”

“Eric is still interested,” Bella whispered.

“I know,” Johnny whispered back. “I hurt him deeply when I left the last time. I don’t want to do that again. I love him, but he deserves better.”

“He tried dating,” I shrugged. “He had a few relationships here and there, but he never stopped loving you despite how things ended between you two. Give it another chance, Johnny.”

“We’ll see,” Johnny shrugged, nibbling on his fingers nervously. He got up and went upstairs into the attached apartment, mumbling something about checking on the security cameras.
“Do you think he’ll take the plunge again?” Bella asked.

“I don’t know. Johnny always holds his cards close to his body. He’s a tough nut to crack,” I replied. Bella snuggled against my body, rolling her hips and causing my cock to harden. I bit back a groan with each pass of her delectable ass. “Gorgeous, keep that up and the kids will get a ring-side seat of me fucking you.”

“Our kids would survive the trauma,” Bella laughed, stepping away. I pouted, missing her soft, warm body. “Oh, stop. It’s not like I’ll say no tonight.” She kissed my ear, her lips caressing my skin. “I’m still quaking from last night…”

“Fuck me,” I breathed, dropping my head onto her shoulder.

“Later, angel,” Bella said, scratching her fingers through my hair. She kissed my cheek before distancing herself from me as Mia and Masen came into the living room. A few moments later, Kyra came down, dressed in a bright purple dress with some insanely high heels. Her hair was swept up in some elaborate ponytail, but she looked elegant as opposed to youthful. I saw the beauty of my wife in my daughter, noticing that she was a young woman. My baby girl had grown up right before my eyes. My heart shattered. I was proud of the beauty and elegant woman she had become, but missed the sweet, innocent girl that had crawled into my lap when she wanted a story or jammed herself in our bed when a storm rolled through. Bella must have seen my realization. She took my hand, squeezing my fingers gently. “Come on, everyone. Let’s head out. Steve, can you drive my car with Owen and Mia? You need to pick up Tasha on the way. Oliver, ride with them as well.”

“Sure, Miss Bella,” he replied.

“Johnny, you’re with us, Masen and Kyra,” Bella smiled. “Everyone load up!” The kitchen exploded in a bustle of activity. I was rooted on my stool, feeling out of sorts, proud but sad. Bella walked over to me, taking my face in her soft, warm hands. “I know what you’re thinking…” she whispered.

“Where did she go? The little girl who idolized us?” I choked out. “She’s about this tall and has copper-colored hair in pigtails.”

“She grew up,” Bella murmured, wiping beneath my eyes. “It hit me the day of the prom. She’s not a little girl anymore. Our baby has matured into something amazing, angel.”

“I…there are no words to describe how I feel, Bella,” I said shakily. “I’m…”

“It’ll come to you, baby. Now, we’ve got a speech to celebrate and then, I want you to make love to me tonight. It’s hitting me hard, too,” she said, smiling gently. There were tears in her espresso colored eyes. I crushed her to my chest, burying my nose in her sweet smelling hair. My wife clung to me, quietly sobbing for a few moments before she pulled it together. “I love you, Edward Cullen. You are the best father and most amazing husband in the world.”

“I love you with my whole heart and soul, Isabella Cullen. You are the strength and glue that holds this family together,” I murmured, kissing her gently. She smiled against my mouth. “Shall we?”

“Yes,” she said, wiping her face daintily.

Getting into the car, we drove to Hugo’s Frog Bar and were immediately led to the back patio. It was packed with our family and closest friends. I also managed to call Khaleesi, Mae and Gabby to join us, celebrating with Kyra. My daughter squealed excitedly, hugging her best friends and giving me a warm smile as we settled into our seats. I ordered several bottles of wine for the adults. Appetizers
were soon brought out and everything that was stressing us out was a distant memory.

After desert, I gestured to Kyra to join me. We walked over to a somewhat secluded corner of the patio. It was located on the other side of the statue. “Dad, thank you for making this happen. I know that the past year has been awful…”

“Kyra, it’s nothing, principessa,” I smiled, hugging her close. “I am…so proud of you…”

“Nana said that you spoke at your high school graduation,” Kyra murmured. “What was it like?”

“For me? Awful. I hated speaking publically. I still do. I barely got through my speech without throwing up all over the podium. I was this huge nerd that was tormented and teased, giving the valedictorian speech. In my mind, I was being ridiculed by my peers and I was waiting for Emmett to throw a rotting tomato at me,” I deadpanned. “He didn’t and I got through it. A number of my teachers were impressed with what I had to say, thinking it was insightful. I couldn’t even tell you what it was about. I was just grateful it was all over.”

“Do you still have your speech?” Kyra pressed.

“Probably. I think that Nana had my handwritten copy framed and hung up with my high school diploma,” I blushed. “Not to mention a rather unfortunate picture of me with my black cap and gown.”

“NANA!!” Kyra sang, walking back to my mom. “Do you have Dad’s speech and the picture of him wearing his cap and gown?” I groaned, shaking my head as I followed my daughter back to the party. The rest of the evening was a lot of fun. We focused on Kyra’s commencement and forgot about Jacob and his shenanigans.

When we left at close to eleven, both Bella and I were a little drunk. Both of us were a little sad and reminiscent of Kyra. So, we drowned our sorrows in a bottle of merlot. Each. As a result, we were a little handsy with each other while we waited for the cars to be pulled up from the valet. Owen and Masen were trying to hide, embarrassed of our public displays of affection. Kyra was too busy chatting my mom, spending the night with her to get the dirt on my high school nightmare. Mia went home with Jasper and Gianna, having an impromptu sleepover.

In the car, Bella and I sat in the backseat, making out like horny teenagers. Johnny was driving. I could hear his snickers from the front seat, but I was more enticed by the sexy, mewling woman in my arms, whispering how badly she wanted me. The drive back to our house was too long. Owen seemed to take even more time, hobbling to his ‘room.’ The smirk on his face was a clear indication that he wanted us to cool down. Bella was having none of that. She whispered in my ear, “Be upstairs in five minutes. I want you to peel my dress off with your teeth.” She swatted my ass, stumbling up the stairs and giggling.

I walked into Owen’s ‘room’, also known as Bella’s office and checked on him. “You are a stinker,” I said, giving him a mock glare.

“You two needed the hose,” Owen smirked, removing his walking boots and taking his medication. “Consider my actions as delayed gratification.”

“Do you need anything?” I asked, deadpan.

“Nope. Go love up your wife, Dad,” Owen chuckled, removing his shirt. “See you tomorrow.”

I kissed his forehead. “I love you, Owen,” I said. “You cockblocker, you.”
He snorted. “Love you, too, Dad,” he replied, pushing me out of his room.

I left the door open before grabbing a couple of bottles of water and darting up the stairs. I checked on Masen, who was already asleep with Max in his bed. I encouraged the dog onto his bed on the floor next to Masen’s closet. The dog gave me a forlorn look. I knew as soon as I left, he’d be back in the bed with my son. Closing the door, I practically sprinted to my bedroom and locking the door once I was inside. Bella was looking out the window, her hair tumbling down her back in soft, chestnut waves. Walking up behind her, I wrapped my arms around her waist. My lips suckled on her earlobe, tasting her sweet skin. “I believe I have a dress to peel off.”

“At your teeth,” she purred, turning her head. I took her chin, caressing her lips with mine, claiming her mouth with my tongue. She turned in my arms, sliding her hands up into my hair. My palms slid down her sleek black dress, resting on her ass and massaging it. With each pass of my hands, I gathered more of the fabric of her dress up until I felt the lace of her panties. Once her dress was completely up, I bent down, wrapping her legs around my waist and carrying her to the bed. Sitting down the edge, I continued kissing her, tasting her mouth and lips. “Edward…” she breathed.

“I love you, my Bella,” I replied, unzipping her dress. “My gorgeous, beautiful wife…” Pulling off the dress, I kissed every inch of skin that I uncovered. Her perfume assaulted my senses, making me more turned on. Standing her up, I tasted her belly, nudging the dress over her hips and onto the floor. She stood before me in a pair of lacy black panties and a matching black bra. She looked so sexy in her finery, highlighting her beautiful womanly figure.

“I love you more, Edward,” she breathed, unbuttoning my shirt and pushing it, along with my jacket over my shoulders. She pushed me back and crawled onto the bed. “And you didn’t remove my dress with your teeth.”

“Perhaps I can use my teeth elsewhere?” I quipped, cupping her sex with my hand. I could feel her arousal through the thin fabric of her panties.

“Only if I get to do the same,” she smiled, reaching for the belt buckle of my dress pants. Making quick work of my pants, I was soon naked on the bed. Kissing her deeply, I traced my fingers along the curve of the breasts, unclasping her bra and tossing it onto the floor. Guiding her over my lap, I took her nipple inside of my mouth, biting at her tender flesh. “Fuck that feels so good.” She was grinding her body over me. Her wetness was covering my cock through her panties.

Rolling my hips, I pinned her to the bed with my body. I kissed down her torso. Painfully slowly, I removed her lacy underwear, tossing them onto the floor. Spreading her legs, I inhaled deeply, relishing in her spicy fragrance. Bella moaned, her hands flying to my hair and tugging gently on the strands. With a wolfish grin, I ran my tongue along her wet folds, tasting her decadent flavor. It was better than anything we’d had tonight at Hugo’s Frog Bar. Flicking my tongue along her clit, I moaned at how aroused she was.

“Edward, I want to taste you, too,” she breathed.

“Straddle my face and you’ll get your taste, love,” I growled, laying on my back. Bella smiled wickedly, crawling over my face. Her sweet pussy was right in front of me, ready for all of the pleasure I could give her. Without any preamble, I plunged two fingers inside of her and hungrily began feasting on her dripping sex. Bella moaned lowly as her mouth sank onto my cock, which was leaking and painfully hard. It was sensory overload with everything around me. With Bella’s writhing hips above me, coating my fingers and soaking my face with each pass of my tongue and her relentless attack on my erection with her own tongue and teeth.

My wife hummed around me, making my insides quiver. It had been too long since we’d been
intimate. Bella wasn’t really into it due to the drama with Jacob and her worries about me with my anxiety attack. I was more focused on my family, Owen and Kyra, specifically. But, this was how Bella and I usually bonded and coped with our issues. Being close, feeling her skin against mine, it grounded me. Calmed me. For Bella, it provided the protection she desired desperately. Being in my arms, it made her feel safe.

“Edward, I’m so close,” Bella panted while she stroked my length with her tiny hands. “Fuck me with your fingers, baby.”

“Gladly, love,” I snarled, twisting and curling my fingers inside of her warm pussy. She was rocking over me, sucking my cock and bringing me closer to my own release. The welcome tingle in my belly began and I focused my attention on my girl…my sexy wife. I languished her pussy with open-mouthed kisses and deep thrusts with my hands. Her muscles clenched around my and her thighs were quivering, trying to stave off her imminent release. I wanted to taste her as she came. I didn’t want her to hold back. Using my teeth, I gently scraped her clit and with a guttural moan, Bella’s body squeezed my fingers almost painfully as she came. Her mouth stopped the movements on me. I took the opportunity to move away. I wanted to be inside of my wife when I exploded.

I had a good recovery time for a man that was almost fifty, but it wasn’t like when I was younger. Ten minutes and I was ready to go. Now? It was more like a half hour. Maybe.

I took my wife in my arms, kissing her deeply as she shattered. Bella was whimpering as I languidly brought her back to earth. Her eyes were rheumy with desire when she looked at me. “I want you, baby,” she cooed, her fingers caressing my lips.

“You have me, gorgeous,” I replied, kissing her fingertips.

“Inside me, Edward. Make love to me,” she murmured, draping her leg over my hips. I nodded, rolling us onto the bed so I could easily slip into my only love. She spread her legs, gripping them up by my ribcage. With one swift thrust, I was inside of her. We both moaned loudly. The feeling of completeness, of being whole, washed over me and I lost myself in my wife. My reason for living. Nothing was more perfect than sharing one body with my wife. Our lovemaking was sweet and was about reconnecting. It was about soothing each other and healing our wounds from the previous weeks. We shared the same body, the same breath, the same love, the same soul…

Coming together, Bella and I kissed while we exploded in each other’s arms. I collapsed on the bed, staying as close to my beautiful wife for as long as I could. When Bella scratched her fingers along my back, I slid out of her and rolled to my side. Bella cuddled close to me, pressing her face to my bicep and sliding her leg between mine. “It’s been too long since we’ve done that,” Bella breathed against my chest.

“Yeah,” I said, holding her close. “I know things have been…”

“A mess,” Bella snorted. “We’ve both been focused elsewhere, Owen, Kyra, this mess with Jacob…” She kissed my chest, snuggling ever closer. “Tonight was a great night, Edward. Amazing, really.”

“It was, gorgeous,” I smiled, nuzzling her sweet smelling hair.

“I almost forgot that we have a psycho chasing after us,” she muttered.

“I think that we need to keep living our lives. We’re letting Jacob’s actions dictate what we can and
cannot do. Obviously, precautions will need to be made and that’s what Steve and his team are here for,” I began.

“But, what about Owen and what Jacob did to my son?” Bella asked. “He has no qualms in trying to kill an innocent teenage boy…”

“I know, love. I just think that we need to get back to our regular routine. Our lives have, for all intents and purposes, come to a dead stop. It seems counterintuitive to keep hiding out, living in fear,” I soothed. Bella looked at me dubiously. “You had fun tonight, right?”

“Yeah,” she said, nodding against my shoulder.

“So did I. So did our children,” I explained. Wrapping my arms around her, I kissed her forehead. “Just consider it, gorgeous. Okay?”

“Kay,” she mumbled sleepily.

I yawned and pulled the blankets over our naked bodies. “Sleep, my Bella. I love you. More than words can ever say.”

“I love you until the moon and back,” she cooed, kissing my lips. Dropping her head to my chest, her breathing evened out and she was soon dead asleep on my chest. I watched her sleep until my own eyes grew heavy. I relished in the normalcy of tonight and for the first time since the whole debacle with Jacob started, I slept soundly.

xx STTD xx

“Mom! Dad! We’ve got to go!” Kyra bellowed from the foyer. “I have to be at school in like twenty minutes!”

“We’re almost ready,” Bella replied, slipping on her heels and flipping her chestnut locks out of her blue dress.

It was the day of Kyra’s high school graduation. Bella was a weepy, sobbing mess. She clung to me as we showered together, upset that our baby girl was now graduating high school. I was as equally upset, but had to remain strong for my wife. Trying to get Bella ready was a challenge since she was suctioned to my side. Hence, our tardiness.

The guys, except for Steve, were working as security/chaperones for the commencement ceremony. Even Ricky and his wife were attending. Ricky was working with Johnny while his wife was sitting with us. After the ceremony, we were hosting an open house, graduation party for Kyra. The backyard was being set up with blue and gold decorations. Alice and Rose were supervising the workers while we were going to the ceremony.

“Now, fifteen minutes! I do not want to be late! COME ON!” Kyra screamed. Her voice was tinged with hysteria. “Parking is going to be awful!”

“Come on, gorgeous. Our baby girl is graduating from high school. We have to go,” I urged as I guided Bella out of the bedroom. She put on a smile and we went downstairs. Kyra grabbed Bella’s hand, dragging her to the garage and into the car, where Steve was waiting. I clambered into the front seat while Bella and my children were situated in the back. The only person not going was Owen. He couldn’t walk that far. I set it up through my camera and phone that I was going to send it directly to his laptop.

Somehow, by the grace of God, we got to the school in good time and found an awesome parking
spot after we dropped off Kyra at the field house. Oliver was waiting for her, ready to escort her to her spot in line. We all found our spots in the bleachers in the large gym. I set up my camera on the tripod and sent a test signal to Owen. He texted back saying that he was able to read it, loud and clear.

A half hour later, the orchestra begins playing Elgar’s *Pomp and Circumstance*. The faculty of the high school begins their procession into the gym, taking the seats in the front of the graduates. Following them, were the members of the school board, school administration and the six students that were asked to do something for the ceremony, including Kyra. Finally, the graduates settled in their spots, remaining standing until the orchestra finished playing the iconic graduation song. Two of the students in the front of the gym asked the audience to stand up while the pledge of allegiance was read, followed by the singing of the national anthem.

The ceremony began with a welcome address by the principal of the school. He shared his connection with this class since he was hired as the principal just before they started their freshman year. He talked about their growth as a class and the maturity of the students as a whole. Bella elbowed me and showed me the program. She pointed in the class list where Mackenzie’s name should have been but was noticeably absent. Using her phone, Bella explained.

*Mackenzie failed four classes this year and hasn’t been in school the past few weeks after her tiff with Kyra. She’s seemingly fell off the face of the planet. Her friends can’t get ahold of her.*

I smirked, happy that Kyra’s final weeks as a high schooler went by without any incident from the wicked witch of the western suburbs. I took Bella’s phone and responded. *Good riddance to bad rubbish. Now, watch our daughter. She’s about to speak.*

Bella gasped, taking her phone back and clutching my hand tightly. I zoomed in on my baby girl as she stood proudly at the podium, a stark contrast from when I spoke at my high school graduation.

“Good afternoon to the faculty and staff of Wheaton North High School, family and friends, honored guests and the class of 2029. For those of you who don’t know me, my name is Kyra Cullen. I was chosen to give one of the speeches today at our commencement ceremony. The speech I prepared for my audition won me this spot and I do intend on using some of what I wrote, I wanted to change it up a bit.

“After I was told that I was to speak, I found out that my father, Edward Cullen, also spoke at his high school graduation. My grandparents showed me the grainy video of his speech and while the quality of the video wasn’t all that great, the message he shared hit me hard.

“Be true to yourself.

“Now, my dad, whom I love so much, was so nervous, barely got through his speech. I later found out that he hated speaking publically and still struggles with it to this day. You’d never know, though. My father is an amazing speaker and it’s because he speaks from the heart. That adage, ‘be true to yourself,’ rings true in the way he lives and the way he treats my mom, my siblings and me. If you are not true to yourself, how can you portray honesty, respect and dignity to your friends, coworkers and fellow humans?

“After today, we are going out into the world. We’ve graduated from high school. Some of us are going to college. I’m proud to say that in the fall, I will be attending Northwestern University in Evanston where I plan on getting a degree in psychology, with a minor in English. I’m excited and scared. Some of us are going to join the army. Some of us are going to live in their parent’s basements because they have no clue what they are going to do. The one thing that we are all doing is leaving these secure walls of high school. We don’t know what is going to happen tomorrow or
the day after that. The one thing that gives me solace in that is my father’s words of wisdom: ‘Be true to yourself.’

“I love you Mom and Dad…I’m grateful that you have shown me how to be a good person and taught me many life lessons. Thank you to my friends, past and present. I appreciate my teachers for giving me the knowledge to start my life. And I’ll leave you, the class of 2029, with this…”

“According to Steve Maraboli, ‘It’s time to care; it’s time to take responsibility; it’s time to lead; it’s time for a change; it’s time to be true to our greatest self; it’s time to stop blaming others.’ Be true to yourselves, to your friends, your family and to humanity. Congratulations and best of luck!!”

The crowd applauded. Bella and I were barely keeping it together. Kyra found us in the crowd, winking before taking her seat next to the class valedictorian. He gave her a fist bump before he stood up to give his speech. It was nowhere as dynamic as Kyra’s, but the kid was nervous, just like I was when I gave my speech in high school.

Once the speeches were done, the presentation of the class of 2029 began. The names of the graduates were slowly read off and it took nearly forty-five minutes to get through all five hundred and twenty seven names. The principal congratulated everyone and they moved their tassels over their mortar boards, indicating they had graduated. With a loud whoop, every mortar board was tossed into the air. The orchestra began playing some other sort of march and the graduates began their processional into the courtyard.

Cleaning up our stuff, we met up with Kyra in the courtyard of the school. She hugged both of us, crushing her diploma in her arms. Hugging and kissing, we took numerous pictures, with the help of Steve. As the courtyard emptied out, we walked to our car, driving to the house. Immediately following the ceremony, we had a family graduation party where we all gave Kyra our presents. The open house would begin around four and go until midnight.

Kyra changed out of her dress and into a skirt and blouse, covering her new bikini since we’d opened up the pool. We ate a late lunch, drinking pop and eating from the buffet. After that, we all gave Kyra her presents. They were all necessities that she would need in college. The security guys got her a large laundry basket with treats, first aid kit, laundry detergent, flip flops and an economy pack of Ramen noodles. Jasper gave her a top of the line Whitlock laptop with every program she’d ever needed for school. Alice coordinated, getting her a matching bag and a Whitlock tablet. My mom gave Kyra her very own Cullen crest, in the form of a charm bracelet along with a nice chunk of money. Everyone else, except me and Bella and her siblings, gave Kyra money since they knew what we were planning for our daughter.

Mia gave Kyra the present that Masen, Owen and Mia picked out. It was a charm necklace, each with a charm representing them and another charm saying ‘seester.’ Kyra hugged them, putting it on along with her necklace that we’d given her at prom.

The last present was from Bella and me. We handed her an envelope. Kyra arched a brow as she tore it open, looking inside. Several photos fell out along with a contract. “Holy sh…snickerdoodle,” she squeaked. “You rented me an apartment?!?”

“With everything that is still up in the air,” Bella began, “it’s best that you are out of the dorms and in an secured apartment building. Adam lives on the same floor as you. It’s a two bedroom apartment. You can get a roommate or live by yourself. It’s up to you.”

“But, we’ve arranged for the apartment for the next four years, Kyra,” I smiled.

“Oh my gosh!!” she squealed, jumping up and into our arms. She hugged and kissed us, yelling at
how happy she was. Then, she began prattling about everything she needed, but Bella assuaged her fears, promising to go shopping with Kyra closer to her move-in date.

And like that, my baby girl, my principessa, was now an adult and beginning her life.

No wonder it's called commencement…

A/N: I knew this was a long time coming. I’m sorry for the delay. I was working on it and then this week imploded. My mom ended up in the hospital, coughing up blood and was admitted for two days. She’s fine now, but it was scary. Not to mention, my days are now focused on work and such. If only I could spend all day writing… you know?

Anyhow, up next will be the continuation of the graduation party. It will be a combination chapter, Bella and Kyra. Not to mention, some drama…and I’ll leave it at that.

Pictures for this chapters are on my blog and tumblr (links for both are on my profile). You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation and on twitter: tufano79.

ALSO, if you want some more Geekward and Nerdella, I have submitted an outtake for FandomGivesBack4Christy. It’s an outtake from Edward’s 20th high school reunion called Return of the Nerds: An ANSOL Outtake. Thank you to Dani ‘Robified’ Pattinson for organizing it (and asking me to donate a o/s), Mina Rivera for creating the banner and Birdee18 (Bridget) for betaing. $10 gets you the compilation including stories by me, Sarge’s Girls and many others! The last day to donate is September 30th!

As always, please leave me some lovin!!
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Slight change in plans … Originally, I was going to have a continuation of the graduation party but we’re going to move ahead in time. There will be some drama and it will still be a combo chapter, with Kyra and Bella. We’re getting closer to the culmination of everything. What will happen to Jacob? What about Kyra? Steve? Bella? Edward? Alice? Jasper?

Chapter Nineteen: Physical Therapy, Birthday Surprises and Ghosts of Friends Past

BPOV

“Mom, we’ve got to get going,” Owen said, using his crutches. “I don’t want to be late for my physical therapy session.” He shifted anxiously, looking out the window. Ever since his accident, he had been leery of getting into cars. Not that I blamed him. Owen was in a horrific car accident, caused by my psycho ex-boyfriend. He had every right to be afraid, but he needed to get back into the real world. The first, minute step was going to physical therapy three days a week. Unfortunately, Owen was also adamant on not driving, even though he had the cast on his right foot removed. He still had to wear a brace to for support, but he was without a boot.

And slowly getting better.

“Mom! COME ON!” Owen bellowed.

“Oh, just let me call Steve. He’s supposed to come with us,” I said, picking up my cell phone and calling Steve on his cell. Owen grumbled, hobbling away from me and sitting down in the family room. We were all under a great deal of strain with all of the protection.

It was now just before Edward’s birthday, three weeks after Kyra’s commencement ceremony and we were ready for Jacob to be caught. Kyra couldn’t even go out to her friend’s graduation parties because of the threat of Jacob and possibly Mackenzie. Kyra was convinced that Mackenzie is in cahoots with Jacob. It was unproven, but it was enough to make us all on edge with this additional threat.

On his cell phone, Steve picked up right away, darting into the main house from the apartment. He was dressed in a pair of jeans and a tight black shirt. Around his shoulders, he had his shoulder harness which carried a gun. He had another around his ankle and a knife strapped to his other leg.

My husband was a man obsessed with all of the protection. All of the body guards now were armed to the teeth.
“Mom, can I come with you?” asked Mia. She was dressed in her workout clothes. Or rather, Kyra’s workout clothes. My youngest daughter had had a growth spurt. Owen’s physical therapist didn’t mind if we worked out while Owen strengthened both of his legs. It kept us sane while we waited. Edward ran. I used the strength machines. Kyra and Mia did a combination of both. Masen was the ‘slacker’ of the bunch, reading his books. He was athletic, but preferred to play golf, go hiking or rock climbing. Justin and Adam got Masen hooked on those.

I was going to spend my time, though, working on my edits for the third *Charmed* movie. I shifted my computer on my shoulder and nodded. “Of course, sweetie. Are you getting ready for volleyball?” I asked, hugging her close.

“Nah. I just want to get out of the house,” she shrugged. “Hang out with my older brother and my mom.”

“It’s not like we’ll be able to talk, Mia,” Owen snorted. “Billy kicks my ass at therapy. I spend most of my sessions in agonizing pain. I’m crying on the inside, screaming for my mommy.” He winked at me, snickering quietly. I just rolled my eyes.

“As well he should, Owen. You gained so much weight from being bed-ridden. Now? You’ve got muscles!” Mia teased, poking her brother’s toned shoulder. Owen swatted at his sister, who deftly danced away. Since he had started going to physical therapy, more than what he did in the house, Owen’s body had changed significantly. All of the weight he’d gained from his accident melted away and he looked so much like my husband.

Well, more like how Edward looked like when he was teenager.

Edward was in shock in how much he and Owen resembled each other. It was like they were twins, separated by nearly thirty years. The only difference between the two is the hair. Edward’s hair at sixteen, nearly seventeen, was a warm bronze. Owen had lighter hair, darker eyes and about five inches shorter than Edward.

“Oh, let’s get going,” I said, tossing the keys to Steve. “We have to get back by three since I have a conference call with producers from Aunt Rose’s movie. We need to make arrangements for the premier for our family. Not to mention, I have to go over the script with the director of the second movie, too.”

“I can’t believe we’re going to a Hollywood movie premier,” Mia breathed. “When is it again?”

“It’s been bumped back due to some unforeseen reshoots until the last weekend in July. The weekend before Kyra moves into her apartment, we’re in Los Angeles,” I said, checking my phone. Walking to the fridge, I picked up a couple of water bottles, following my two children and Steve into the garage. Oliver and Johnny were staying with Kyra, who was working as my personal assistant, earning some extra money for college and Masen, who was hanging out with a friend from school. Edward was at work in the city with Ricky.

Casey up and left without any sort of notice.

Steve called his dad and he flew up, acting as Edward’s personal body guard. Yes, Ricky was technically retired but he was in amazing shape. So, Ricky and his wife were staying in a corporate apartment in the city. Besides, I trusted him more than I trusted Casey.

There was something about Casey that I didn’t honestly trust or rely on.

My phone chirped with a text from my husband.
I just wanted to say that I loved you and that I hope everything goes well today. I should be home by five. Ricky and Becky are coming to dinner. I have reservations made at Cooper’s Hawk for the private dining room. I love you more than my own life ~ Edward

I smiled, quickly tapping out a reply. Thank you! I didn’t want to cook tonight! You are an amazing, sexy man. Not to mention, my hero! I love you, too ~ Bella

“MOM! Come on!” Owen moaned from his perch in the backseat of the car.

Gotta go, Angel. Owen is bellowing. We have a physical therapy appointment. Kisses to you ~ Bella

Oh, I fully intend to give you more than kisses, Mrs. Cullen. *Waggles brows* Much love ~ Edward

I whimpered, tossing my phone into my purse. Owen honked the horn, scowling at me. “Okay, okay,” I chuckled, getting into the passenger seat. Steve started the car, backing it out of the garage and driving to the physical therapist. Mia was playing with her MP3 player while Owen was texting Tasha. They were planning a date at the house.

Arriving at the therapist, Mia went to the treadmill, warming up with a slow jog, while Owen hobbled to the massage table, meeting up with Billy. I sat down in the waiting area, taking out my computer and opening up the document of the script for Charming Endings. Ironically enough, the ending was not coming together. I couldn’t get the final scene to mesh with what Rose had written. With a novel, you could be a little freer with your imagination. The magical elements were abundant in the final fight scene with “orbing” witches, exploding demons and multi-colored pyrotechnics. I couldn’t figure out how to incorporate the magic into the final scene. With the constraints of budgets, special effects and actors, I had to be creative, but with all that was going on in my life, my mojo had ultimately left. I had no muse.

“Miss Bella, would you mind if I go to Starbucks next door to get some coffee?” Steve asked. “I didn’t get much sleep last night.”

“Is everything okay? It’s not Jacob, is it?” I replied, panicking slightly. I gripped his arm, my fear coursing through me and causing my stomach to turn.

“No, Miss Bella,” Steve replied, putting his hand on my shoulder. “I was just late talking to a friend. She needed some advice.”

“A girlfriend?” I asked, shooting him a look. He shook his head, blushing slightly. Based off his reaction, his friend was a girl who he did have feelings for. I smiled encouragingly, reaching for my purse. “Well, I should be fine. Here, get me a caramel macchiato and a blueberry scone.” I handed him some money. He waved me off, getting up from his seat and leaving the waiting room. I turned back to the document, skimming what I had written previously, hoping to get some inspiration. Unfortunately, I was just as uninspired as I was before.

Steve came back with our coffees and my scone. He settled down next to me. “Here you go, Miss Bella,” he said, handing me my drink. He took a hefty swig of his drink, sighing deeply. “Mana from heaven, I tell you.”

“How late were you up?” I asked, teasing him slightly.

“I went to bed around three in the morning,” he grimaced. “My friend was freaking out about classes that they’re taking in the fall. It’s a heavy course load. Not to mention, they’re transferring to a new school.”

“That sounds exciting,” I chuckled.
“It is,” he smiled. “And I spent most of the night telling my friend the same thing, but they were still freaking out.”

“Perhaps you could share some of your good advice to Kyra,” I said. “She’s been a hot mess since her high school graduation. She’s growing up and she’s in denial that she’s growing up.”

“She’s getting a gift that most college freshman would dream of,” Steve said. “I lived in the dorms with two guys who hated to shower and would leave pizzas on the ground until they could walk away on their own. I scrounged up as much money as I could and moved out when I was junior. I lived in a tiny studio apartment in a really shitty part of town, but it was mine and I was able to be as anal as I wanted.”

“That sounds so disgusting,” I shuddered. “I was lucky in the roommate department during college. Ugh, not showering?”

“It was foul,” he grimaced. “Now, with Kyra and her apartment, how is she going to afford the bills and such?”

“Kyra is going to still be my personal assistant when she’s home for breaks and work at Whitlock when she’s able. She’ll still get paid. Additionally, we’re going to help her, too. With Jacob still being on the loose, having her in a secured apartment with a doorman is the best option.”

“What happens if Jacob gets caught?” Steve asked. “Will Kyra still live in the apartment?”

“Yes. And it’s not an apartment. It’s a condo. Real estate is a good investment,” I snickered. “Besides, when she moves out, we can rent it out.”

“Mom! Why didn’t you get me any Starbucks?” Mia whined, sitting down next to me and swiping my coffee. She took a sip, humming in contentment.

“Give me that,” I laughed, taking the coffee from my youngest daughter. “It’ll stunt your growth.”

“Mom, I’m already five inches taller than you,” Mia giggled, crossing her long legs. “I don’t think my growth is stunted. Speaking of which, I need to go shopping. All of my jeans are too short and my shirts hit above my belly button.”

“I’ll take you and Kyra shopping over the weekend. She needs some things for her apartment,” I said, kissing Mia’s temple. “Oh, honey …”

“I know. I’m smelly,” Mia giggled. “Another side effect of my growth spurt.”

“Go sit over there,” I snorted, pushing her across the waiting room. Mia laughed, sitting across from Steve. She picked up a magazine, flipping through it as we waited for Owen to finish up. From the looks of it, he was almost done. Billy was massaging his leg and setting him up for stim and ice. I finished my coffee, sharing my scone with Mia. Owen limped over to us once he was done with his therapy. We scheduled the next appointment in a couple of days and drove back to the house.

Mia and Owen both went upstairs, showering off the grime of their workouts. Masen was sitting in the living room, munching on a sandwich and tossing popcorn to a happy Max, begging for the tasty morsels. Kyra was sitting in the kitchen, typing furiously and chatting on her Bluetooth headset. “Oh, she’s here, Aunt Ro. She just got back from taking Owen to physical therapy,” Kyra took off her headset, handing it to me. “Something about the movie, Mom.”

“I was going to call the producers this afternoon,” I said, slipping the headset into my ear. “What’s up, Rosalie?”
“Oh, nothing … except that the director for the second movie decided to quit Hollywood and move to Tibet to bond with the Dalai Lama on the Matterhorn.”

“Rose, the Matterhorn is in Switzerland,” I deadpanned. “And the director we chose for the second movie was not our first choice anyway.”

“But, production is starting in two weeks! Where are we going to find a director to start production in two weeks! Ezra worked on this for over six months and we finally got our two visions to align,” Rose wailed. “What the fuck are we going to do, Bellini?!”

“I’m calling the producers now and we’ll brainstorm some ideas,” I soothed.

“I want to be in on it, Bella,” she sighed, frustration filling her tone. “Why don’t we fly out there?”

“Rose, I can’t. It’s Edward’s birthday this weekend, not to mention Father’s Day. I have plans. So should you,” I said, arching a brow. “Father’s Day for Tim and your kids?”

“But, the movie!” she huffed.

“Let me talk to the producers. If we can’t come up with a liable solution, then we can fly out next week. Okay?” I offered. Rose grumbled. “Okay?”

“Fine,” she growled. “You better work some magic, Bellini. I want this to be amazing and I don’t want some loser hack to butcher my book. I know that these movies won’t win Academy Awards, but I want them to be loyal to the vision I had in my novels.”

“Do you trust me?” I asked.

“You know I do, Bellini,” she said. “You are my best friend and you’ve been with me through thick and thin,” Rose said, her voice quiet and sincere.

“Then, let me be your agent, your friend and the voice of reason. I’ll call you once I’m done talking to the producers, okay? We’ll get a director that is better than Ezra,” I said.

“Wasn’t that a bad from twenty years ago?” Rose asked.

“Probably,” I snorted. “I love you and I’ll talk to you in a few hours.”

“Love you, too,” Rose said, laughing nervously. “You better work your magic, Bella. Please?”

“You got it, sweetie,” I said, ending the call. I pinched my nose, blowing out a breath. “Kyra, can you check to see if there are any flights available to Los Angeles for early next week? I may have to take a trip out there if I can’t resolve this mess about the director for the second Charmed movie.”

“Sure, Mom,” Kyra said, her fingers flying over the computer keyboard. “I’ll give you a list of options for you, Aunt Rose and one of the security guys. Steve or Oliver?”

“Oliver,” I said, shouldering my bag and walking to my office. I dialed the producers and spent nearly two and half hours with them trying to fix the clusterfuck with the director for Forever Charmed. With the producers, we managed to get a short list of directors to take over the movie, one of which was the director of the first film. I called Rose and told her the news. She was not happy with the options, stating that we needed to go to LA. With a curt nod to Kyra, we booked the tickets, scheduling to leave on Tuesday and coming back on Friday.

When I was done with my phone calls, I started making dinner and Edward strolled in, tossing his
bag onto the family room couch. He came over to me, wrapping his arms around my waist. He kissed my neck, running his lips along the column of my neck. “I missed you today,” he whispered, nipping at my ear.

“I missed you,” I smiled, turning in his arms and kissing his lips gently. His eyes were tight and filled with trepidation. “What is it?”

“Just a bad day at the office,” he answered, sighing deeply. “We lost a big account because of Jasper losing his temper with a client. I tried to salvage it, but the client called him unprofessional and is going to all of the papers about the treatment he received. I’ve already got Eric working on a statement, explaining the situation and hopefully salvage our reputation.”

“Did he see Alice?” I asked.

“They had a joint counseling session prior to the meeting and from what I gathered, it didn’t go well,” Edward grimaced.

“MOM! Gianna and Adam just texted, wondering if they could come over for dinner. Uncle Jasper is …” Kyra yelled from her room. “Drinking himself stupid, according to Gianna.”

“Fuck,” Edward groaned.

“We’ve got more than enough. Send them over and for them to bring an overnight bag,” I answered. I looked up at my husband, who was pinching his nose. “One step forward and two steps back, it seems.” I hugged him, pressing my ear to his chest. “Why don’t you go change and I’ll set the table for eight.”

“I’ll make sure that the guest room is set up for Adam and pull out the trundle bed in Mia’s room,” Edward said, kissing my head and stomping up the stairs. A half hour later, the table was set, Adam was in the living room talking to Edward and I was calming down Gianna in the kitchen. Despite the positive trip she’d had with Alice for an opening of a Cullen Children’s Foundation, Alice had reversed all of it with one negative marriage counseling session. I had managed to get her calmed down and dinner on the table. It was a somber affair. Gianna barely ate her meal, pushing her food around the plate. Once dinner was done, Kyra took Gianna’s hand and led her outside. My heart swelled when I saw my daughter comfort her cousin, but broke as I watched Gianna crumble.

KyraPOV

“Why are my parents such fuck ups?” Gianna wailed, clinging to me. We were sitting on the hammock that my dad had installed in the backyard after my high school graduation party. He found the sound of nature to be soothing. I didn’t blame him. This was a tranquil, happy place and Gianna needed that. “My mom was awful to my dad in therapy today and because of that, Dad was an asshole to me and Adam. I want my life back to normal!”

“I know, Gianna. We all want Aunt Ali and Uncle Jas to be happy, as well as you and Adam,” I soothed, rocking the hammock slowly. “What did your dad say?”

“He was drunk when he came home. He was mumbling something about Whitlock Technologies and he barely made it to the liquor cabinet, downing two shots of Jim Beam,” Gianna said, curling up against me like a cat. Then, he started rambling about how my mom is not making any strides in improving her behavior and causing a rift between all of us.”

“What does he mean?”

“I had that trip with my mom last weekend and it went great, but I felt like I was with a friend. Not
my mom,” Gianna shrugged. “I still feel more comfortable talking to Aunt Bella or Nana about my
problems. Hell, I trust you more than my own mother.”

“I’m assuming you told Uncle Jas that,” I murmured. Gianna nodded. “My guess is that he told her
that during their therapy session and that resulted in an epic fight.”

“And that fight did something at work, K. Dad told some client to shove it where the sun don’t shine
and Uncle Edward was really, really mad at him,” Gianna hissed. “I overheard Uncle Edward
talking to Adam about what happened after Dad left and they might get in trouble because of what
he said.”

“Don’t worry about that, Gianna,” I said, brushing her hair back from her face. “My dad probably
has plans to save the company’s ass because he’s the shit.”

“What’s going to happen, K? Dad was slurring about how Mom was worse than Maria and then he
called her a bitch,” Gianna whispered.

Who the hell was Maria?

“Regardless of what happens with your parents, you know you have a safe place here,” I said,
kissing her head. “Mom and Dad love you and would do anything for you.”

“I know. I love Aunt Bella and Uncle Edward so much,” Gianna said. “Can’t I just stay here?”

Ummm …

“For now, let’s just get you calmed down and we’ll talk about that later,” I deflected. Gianna
nodded. The lights in our backyard flickered on and the pool glowed an eerie blue as the sun set.
Everyone else came outside. Mia and Masen were trying to get Gianna to smile, but she was too
upset. Dad just lit a fire in the fire pit, listening to music and talking about celebrating my Dad’s
fiftieth birthday, which was also Aunt Alice’s fiftieth birthday. After much discussion with my mom,
we’d decided to keep it quiet. It was abundant that Aunt Ali didn’t want to celebrate this landmark
occasion and Dad was indifferent. So, we were just going to spoil him with a day of rest and
relaxation. With everything that was going on with Jacob, his panic attack and now this new
situation with Aunt Ali, it was needed.

Shortly before ten, my parents went inside. All of us kids went downstairs to watch a movie. Gianna
was suctioned to me, holding her brother’s hand as we watched some sci-fi thriller. It was loud and it
drowned out my dad screaming at Uncle Jas on his cell phone. Once the movie was over, Adam
stayed in the basement with Owen and Masen. I helped Gianna, who was half asleep up into Mia’s
room and I dragged my exhausted body to my own bedroom, which was slowly being packed up so
I could move into the apartment near Northwestern University. I picked up my cell phone, checking
for any messages. There was a text from Steve.

What happened today? Your dad was pissed off when he came home and I hate seeing Gianna so
upset - S

My eyes were crossing, I decided to just call him. He picked up right away. “Everything alright?” he
asked.

“I just got your text. Sorry I didn’t respond earlier. I was trying to calm down Gianna,” I replied,
snuggling into my bed.

“That girl has been through hell and back,” he sighed. “I like Mr. Jasper and Miss Alice is okay, but
they are very selfish. Do they not see how their behavior is affecting their children?”
“I’m certain they do, but it’s too much of a mess for them to really do anything about it. Honestly, I think the best thing is for them to get a divorce. That way, the drama won’t consume them and it’ll give Gianna a chance to finally heal,” I grumbled.

“Not Adam?” Steve asked.

“Adam is older and he’s taking it a little better,” I shrugged. “I don’t know. It’s just my family is in turmoil. This sucks.”

“Well, in a few weeks, you’ll be in your apartment away from the turmoil,” Steve chuckled.

“And away from my family,” I said, my heart clenching. “I’m excited about starting classes and opening up a new chapter in my life, but in the same respect, I’m terrified.”

“I know. We went over this last night,” Steve deadpanned.

“Shut it,” I snickered. “How did you handle being away at college?”

“I loved it. Then again, I didn’t have to contend with the bullshit your family is dealing with,” Steve said quietly. “It was nice to be away from my family and to finally be my own man. Not the star quarterback or prom king or Ricky’s son.”

“You were the prom king?” I teased. “Did you wear a crown and have a sash?”

“Yes, I was the prom king. I did have a crown from Burger King, but no sash,” he deadpanned. “I didn’t even want to go, but since I was nominated for the prom court, I took a friend. Little did I know that the senior class padded the votes for me to win.”

“So, what was your prom theme?” I giggled.

“A Moment Like This,” he answered. “We had lost a classmate and it was her favorite song. To honor her, that was our theme.”

“Were you close to her?”

“I was. She was my girlfriend,” he said quietly. “We had dated all throughout high school. Though, during our junior year, she complained of being tired all of the time and she bruised easily. Her parents took her to the doctor and discovered that she had an aggressive form of leukemia. She died just after homecoming. It was our last date.”

“Steve …” I whispered. “I’m so sorry.”

“I loved her, Kyra,” he murmured. “I was ready to be with her forever, but she was taken from me, from us. That’s why they elected me prom king. To honor her. There hasn’t been a day where I haven’t thought of Thea. I also haven’t talked about her since high school, either. It was too painful. In college, I just focused on my studies and then I started working.”

“I’m certain that Thea is watching over you every single day,” I said, trying to get that sad, sing-song quality out of his voice. My mind also reeled at the possibility that Steve, sexy Steve was a virgin like me.

_Probably not, slut. He was in a long-term relationship._

_Where did that come from?_

“Kyra, I’m sorry to cut this short, but I’m going to head to sleep. I’m scheduled to be with your
father tomorrow since my dad is off,” he said, somewhat distantly. “Sweet dreams.”

“You, too,” I whispered, but to dead air.

xx STTD xx

Steve hadn’t spoken to me since our conversation about his dead girlfriend, Thea. He was professionally polite, but asked to be assigned to different details, avoiding me, it seemed. I tried not to stress out about it. Instead, I threw myself into my job and planning for my dad’s day of relaxation and celebration, which also coincided with Father’s Day.

Gianna and Adam were spending time with Nana and Papa. Uncle Jasper decided to take another leave of absence from Whitlock and checked himself into a rehab facility. He had always had an addiction to alcohol, but hid it well. This was the first time it impacted his family. Alice was concerned, but not as concerned as she should have been. If I were her, I would have fought to have Adam and Gianna stay with me and not our aging grandparents. They were both very spry in the early seventies, but handling teenagers, let alone a very emotional and anxious one, is a chore.

I also found out that Maria was Uncle Jasper’s first wife, who had taken him to the cleaners, nearly losing Whitlock Technologies in the process. Aunt Rose told me that when she called the day after Adam and Gianna came over. She didn’t know much but Maria was this gold-digger who broke Uncle Jasper’s heart, causing him to shut down for a couple of months and then turning him into a man-whore until he really met Aunt Alice. They’d only met in passing prior to that.

“Kyra, come on! Mom and I are going shopping. I need some new clothes!” Mia said, leaning against the door jamb. “I also know that you need your kitchen stuff. We’re going Oak Brook Mall so I can hit up Express and you can raid Crate and Barrel. Besides, I need to pick up a present for Dad. What did you get him?”

“I got him this limited addition Star Trek figurine from Ebay. It was signed by his favorite actor before he died,” I said, pulling up the picture on my computer. My dad had this shrine to Star Trek in his office. He had every figurine from every spinoff of the original Star Trek except Lieutenant Commander Data. I found this figure online being sold from England. After researching the seller and the figure, I found it to be legit and bought it. It was wrapped in my closet, ready to be presented to my dad when he had breakfast in bed. “Here.”

“Oooooh, cool. It’s the one he’s missing, right?” Mia asked.

“Yep,” I smirked. “I’m the shit!”

“You are a shit,” Mia giggled, smacking my arm. “Seriously, though. Mom is ready to go since she has to pack for her trip to Los Angeles. Dad was not pleased at her having to leave, but it’s her job.”

“He’s just freaking out since we haven’t heard anything about Jacob since Owen’s accident,” I said, locking my computer and tossing my hair up into a messy bun. I grabbed my purse and slid my feet into a pair of flip flops. We went downstairs. My mom was sitting on my dad’s lap in the kitchen, running her fingers through his thick hair. They were kissing softly and whispering too quietly for us to hear. It was so sweet to see. My parents were so much in love that they still cuddled and did so openly in front of us. It was never disgusting, but very, very sweet. “Enough canoodling,” I teased.

“Shut it, offspring,” Dad grumbled, attacking my mom’s neck, causing her to squeal and dance off my dad’s lap. “I’m just kissing your mother since she has to go to Los Angeles.”

“I don’t want to. I can’t help that the director quit for Forever Charmed,” she argued, tossing her cell
phone and wallet into her summer purse. “We’ll be back by Friday, Edward. Early on Friday. Our flight comes into O’Hare at eleven.”

“I still don’t like it,” he pouted, grabbing Mom and hugging her close. His head was resting on her stomach and his grip was tight, causing his fingers to turn white. She pressed a kiss to his hair, scratching his scalp. She cupped his chin, eventually and kissed his lips, leaning to whisper something in his ear. He sighed, nodding and got up from his seat. “Don’t leave until I come back, gorgeous.”

“I promise, angel,” she replied, squeezing his hand. Dad darted out of the kitchen and up the stairs. “Mia, can you go get Steve from the apartment? He’s assigned to us today.”

“Sure, Mom,” Mia said, skipping off toward the garage and up the stairs to the apartment.

“Is Dad okay?” I asked, gesturing upstairs.

“He’s a bit anxiety-ridden about me leaving,” she answered, wrapping her arms around my shoulders. “But, it’s only for a few days and Oliver will be with us.”

“I don’t blame him, but Jacob is probably hovering here in Chicago. It’s us who need to be on guard,” I shrugged. “Did you send Dad to get his anxiety meds?” Mom nodded, kissing my temple. He came back, still looking a bit nervous, but more steady on his feet. “Feeling better, Dad? Took your happy pills?”

He narrowed his eyes and pulled me from my mom’s embrace. He hugged me tightly, encasing me in his strength. “When you’re married and have children, you’ll understand my fears, principessa. I love you all so much. I can’t … I won’t …”

“Dad, we’ll be okay,” I soothed, scratching his back.

“I know, but be safe,” he said, squeezing me tightly before releasing me. “And don’t spend too much money. I know you’re buying stuff for your new apartment.”

“I’m starting from scratch, Daddy,” I giggled.

“Yeah, well, don’t send me to the poor house,” he snickered, reaching into his wallet and handing me a credit card - a credit card with my name on it. “This is for apartment purchases only: food, appliances, towels, gas for the car and stuff like that. There is a limit of $2,000. You’ve grown so much since this fall that your mother and I feel like we can trust you to make wise decisions in your spending habits. If you follow the rules, it will be paid off each month. This card will be monitored closely. If there is clothing, jewelry, makeup or items that are not related to the apartment, you will lose this card and won’t get any sort of spending money while you’re away at school. We’ll pay for your tuition and books, but you’d have to come up with the rest. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” I said, taking the card and looking at it. “So, anything related to the apartment.”

“Stuff like groceries, necessities needed for your home, gas to go to and from campus …” Dad explained. “Rent will be automatically deducted, so that’s not included on this.”


“You’re welcome,” he said. “Use it today, but be mindful of the spending limit.”

“I will. Thank you,” I said, tucking the credit card into my purse. I had a credit card! My dad trusts me! I stood on my tiptoes, kissing his cheek softly. “Love you, Daddy.”
“Love you more, principessa,” he cooed.

“When am I going to get my own credit card?” Mia asked, her tone teasing as she glided into the kitchen. Steve was behind her, shifting on his feet uncomfortably.

“When you go to college,” Dad snickered, ruffling her hair. She smacked at his hands, laughing loudly. “The same goes for all of you kids. Now, have fun today and don’t go wandering off. You never know …”

“Got it, Daddy. We’re going to get me clothes first and then to Crate and Barrel to deck out Kyra’s new digs,” Mia squealed, threading her arm with mine. I nodded eagerly. “Love you, Daddy!” She tugged on me and we went out into Mom’s car, settling into the backseat. Steve got into the driver’s seat, backing it out of the garage and opening the sun roof. “Can you turn on the radio, Steve?”

“Sure, Mia,” he said quietly, flipping on the radio. He waited for my mom to come out and once she got into the car, Steve backed out the car and we drove to the outdoor Oak Brook Mall. Steve parked near Macy’s and we wandered inside, heading directly for Express. Mia needed a whole new wardrobe since her clothes were now so small on her. She’d grown so much and was wearing some of my clothes, along with hand-me-downs from Aunt Rose, who was closer to Mia’s height. We spent nearly two hours in Express and then another hour in another store, buying Mia much needed clothing. I also got a few things. My mom wanted to spoil me, as well, and I was not about to say no to the cute dresses and sassy tops I’d tried on.

After we got Mia her new clothes, we went in search for a birthday present for my dad for my little sister before we went to Crate and Barrel. Steve was hovering behind us and still ignoring me. It was pissing me off, but I brushed it off. It’s not like we were friends. He was an employee of my parents, who was hired to protect our family, not befriend them.

In Crate and Barrel, we got almost everything I needed for my kitchen. I only needed a few other items, but my mom said that those items would be better purchased at Kohl’s or Target since dish towels, wash cloths and rugs were more disposable. Why waste money on expensive items that would be bleached and beat to a bloody pulp on a daily basis. I agreed with her. We packed up our purchases, driving to a nearby Target to get the remaining items before driving back home.

Once we got back, the first part of our present to my dad was a night out for dinner while we got things together. Mom was already in on it. She dragged Dad up to the bedroom, explaining that she was taking him out for his birthday. He was too flummoxed to respond. He just followed her like a lost puppy. I got dinner ready for my siblings and the security guys that were staying back with us, which were Steve and Johnny. Ricky was going to be with my parents while Oliver was staying outside of the restaurant, keeping his eyes peeled for Jacob.

My parents came down, dressed up to the nines and looking even more in love than earlier today. My dad’s fingers were twined with my mom’s and she was idly toying with his hair with her free hand. “We’ll be back around ten. If there’s anything, just call me,” Mom said, checking her phone.

“Have fun tonight and just forget about everything,” Owen smiled. “You two deserve some rest and relaxation.”

“The only thing that would really do that is Jacob’s head on a platter,” Dad snorted humorlessly. “But, we’ll try. Love you all!”

“Be safe,” I called. They waved and left us in the house.

I dished up dinner and we made our plan of attack for Dad’s day tomorrow. Mia and Masen were
going to cook Dad breakfast, since it was the one meal of the day that they could cook without burning down the house. Owen was going to help me with dinner and we all were going to bake the cake tonight. In addition to the meals, we all had presents for him, just to make him smile. Obviously, mine was the figurine. Owen was going to give him a composition that he wrote while he was recovering. Mia found several books he wanted in a book store along with some aromatherapy candles. Masen was giving him a homemade coupon book, filled with coupons for such things like mowing the lawn, doing the laundry, deep cleaning the garage and other chores that we normally didn’t do. He also got my dad a couple of ties since that was Masen’s thing for Dad.

Working together as a team, we managed to set up the dining room and plan our menu. After that, Mia and I worked on the cake while Owen was practicing his song and Masen was wrapping his presents. And failing miserably.

“Do you think Dad will like all of this?” Mia asked as she made the glaze for the cake. “I mean, with everything that’s been going on …”

“Everyone deserves something special for their birthday,” I answered, shaking the cake out of the pan and covering it with some aluminum foil. We’d made Bacardi rum cake. It was decadent and delicious. Not to mention, Dad’s favorite. “Besides, it’s not every day that our dad turns fifty.”

“He doesn’t look fifty,” Mia giggled. “If I had to guess, I’d put him at late thirties or early forties.”

“I agree. He’s in killer shape and the fact that he has all of his hair works in his favor, too,” I laughed. “At least he doesn’t look like Khaleesi’s dad. He’s a troll.”

“Oh, I know. All of those things on his face and that horrific comb-over,” Mia shuddered, picturing my friend’s father. “His daughter is gorgeous, but he’s so ugh!”

“True that, sister mine. True that.”

xx STTD xx

Dad’s birthday was perfect and he was over the moon excited with all we did for him. He loved breakfast that Mia and Masen prepared for him and the presents they gave him while he munched on their slightly burnt muffins and mushy bananas. However, the seductive looks that my parents gave each other indicated that my mom gave my dad a present of the sexual variety last night. He was so mellow and sated that Mia and Masen could have fed him sawdust. He would have loved it.

After dinner, Aunt Alice called, wishing her older brother a happy birthday, but her voice was somber. Dad thanked her, but picked up the phone and slid into the office to speak with her privately. Mom worked on the dishes since we had cooked for Dad, setting up the cake, coffee and the rest of his presents out in the backyard. Masen and Max were playing with Owen, who was pathetically trying to throw a ball. Mia was in a bathing suit, sloshing around in the hot tub and I was tempted to join her. My suit was underneath my summer dress.

“Kyra, come into the hot tub! The water’s great!” Mia said, leaning back and dipping her hair into the bubbling water. “We’ve been working all day for Dad. Let’s relax before he comes out to open your present.”

“Okay,” I said, removing my dress and dancing over to the hot tub. I heard something in the bushes behind our house. I looked up, trying to see anything. It was twilight and everything was an indistinguishable gray. I shrugged it off, sliding into the hot water and moaning quietly. “Ooooh, this is nice. I’m going to miss this hot tub while I’m away at school.”
“Move over, K,” Owen said, stripping off his t-shirt and awkwardly getting in. He grimaced when
the hot water hit his zombie, bionic limb but then moaned in contentment. Masen eventually tossed a
bone out for Max and he joined us in the hot tub. “Do you think Dad liked his day of rest and
relaxation?”

“Oh, definitely. His eyes aren’t as fatigued and his posture isn’t nearly as rigid. He definitely enjoyed
being spoiled and pampered today,” I said, playing with my necklace.

“What do you think he’s talking about with Aunt Alice?” Mia asked.

“I don’t know. Probably about their birthday. Maybe Uncle Jasper and the kids?” I shrugged. Dad
and Mom came out. The look of serenity that was on his face was gone, replaced with one of anger.
He also had a tumbler with some scotch. Mom was idly rubbing his shoulders, trying to get him to
calm down. He sat down heavily, downing the drink quickly before pinching his nose. Mom got up,
removing her own dress and walking to the hot tub. She nodded to Dad, gesturing for him to join us.
He held up a finger, going back inside. “Is everything okay, Mom?”

“Everything’s fine, sweetheart,” she said, dangling her feet into the hot tub. “Your Aunt Alice was
feeling lonely and took it out on your father. I invited her to join us, but she said that she wanted to
be alone. But, with Alice, what she says isn’t always what she means. Your dad is just changing into
his swim trunks.”

As she said that, my dad came out, wearing his navy blue floral swim trunks and carrying an armful
of towels. He tossed them onto the ground and sat down next to my mom, nuzzling her neck. “Guys,
everything today was amazing. I’m the luckiest guy on the planet. I love you all so much,” he said,
his eyes crinkling with his warm smile.

“We’re glad you liked it, Dad. You still have your cake and the rest of your presents,” Mia said,
moving so she was next to him and playing with his feet. He chuckled, kicking some water her way
and sliding into the water.

“I’ll open them later. I just want to enjoy the rest of my day with my favorite people on the planet,”
he said, helping Mom into the water. She sat down on his lap, twisting his wedding band with her
fingers. He caressed her cheek, kissing her sweetly. We spent the rest of the evening talking,
laughing and celebrating. It was well after nine when we got out of the hot tub to eat the cake Mia
and I prepared. We were all prunes from being in the water, but happy.

The next day, Dad worked from home so he could spend as much time with Mom before she flew
out to Los Angeles early the next morning. I helped Mom by setting up her itinerary, arranging for
transportation to and from the airport and doing laundry. Mia helped out with the last chore since
there was more laundry than God. It had really piled up. Unfortunately, most of it belonged to Owen
and Masen.

And can I share the boy’s laundry is disgusting! What is up with the stiff socks? Gross!

Mom left before the sun on Tuesday with Oliver and Dad took her to the airport, then he went to the
office with Ricky. I was responsible for getting Owen to his physical therapy appointment. Johnny
was with Mia and Masen, who were over at Nana and Papa’s. Steve was the one driving us to the
therapist and he was still not acknowledging my existence. Owen signed in, hobbling to Billy’s table.
I sat down, pulling out a book and my MP3 player. If Steve was going to continue being a douche,
then fine. I’ll just pretend he doesn’t exist, just like he was pretending like I didn’t exist.

Douche bag.
About ten minutes after we arrived at the physical therapists, a cup of coffee appeared in front of me. I looked up, glaring at Steve. “It’s a peace offering, Kyra. Please?”

I tugged out my ear buds and accepted the coffee. I took a tiny sip. Café Mocha, my favorite. “Thank you,” I said icily.

“Look, I’m sorry about ignoring you for the past few days,” Steve said, his voice quiet and pleading. “It’s been such a long time since I thought about Thea, let alone spoken to anyone about her. The fact that I brought her up with you … It scared me. I feel very comfortable around you, Kyra. And strangely protective, too.”

“You don’t get to be my friend one week, ignore me the next and expect me to easily forgive you,” I spat, glaring at him. “I’m sorry about your girlfriend. She probably was an amazing girl. But the way you treated me after you told me about her was just mean.”

“I’m so sorry, Kyra,” he said, his voice sounded shattered.

“Whatever. I need to get some air. Do not follow me,” I said, arching a brow at him.

“You can’t be anywhere alone,” Steve choked out.

I shot him a glare. He bit his lip and I got up, walking out of the physical therapist. I stomped for over a block. I needed to get away. Everything with Jacob and Aunt Alice and … it was fucking stifling. I was crossing the street. I heard the sound of an engine roaring, though. Looking over my shoulder, there was a black sports car barreling toward me. I recognized the driver. Her angry gaze meeting mine as she sped through downtown Wheaton. Mackenzie. My feet were planted and my heart was in chest. A pair of strong arms wrapped around me, shoving me out of the way and causing both of us to fall onto the ground. I groaned, my head pounding.

“Kyra! Kyra! Keep your eyes open for me,” Steve said, his hands cupping my cheeks. I blinked. He was blurry and his voice was fuzzy. “Kyra! Don’t close your eyes, love!”

I moaned, my eyelids losing the battle in staying open. Everything faded to black, but the head did not stop pounding.

A/N: We’re getting closer and closer to the climax of the story. What do you think about Mackenzie trying to run over her former friend? Can we say cuckoo for cocoa puffs? And what about Steve? What do you think about him? Hmmm?

So, initially, I was going to finish up Star Crossed, but I may finish up this one instead. This story, while involved, doesn’t need ALL of my brain to be written. For Star Crossed, there are so many moving parts that I need to figure that out before I come back to it. Additionally, with my mom’s illness (she’s very, very sick), I need to be able to be flexible with my writing. As a result, I’ll be focusing my attention on this for the foreseeable future (along with Monday/Friday updates for Caught in the Flames).

Up next, we’ll start in Kyra’s head and then move to Edward’s. How will he react to Kyra’s accident? We’ll also hear from Jasper, Alice and in his wisdom, Ricky. (I really like Ricky. He’s like Jiminy Cricket in this fic, the voice of reason.) No pictures with this chapter, but once Kyra gets moved into her condo, there will be pics of that along with her college campus. You can find previous pictures on my blog (link for that is on my profile) and my tumblr (again, link is in the profile). You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation. I’m also on twitter: tufano79.
Leave me some!
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Up next, we’ll start in Kyra’s head and then move to Edward’s. How will he react to Kyra’s accident? We’ll also hear from Jasper, Alice and in his wisdom, Ricky. (I really like Ricky. He’s like Jiminy Cricket in this fic, the voice of reason.)

Chapter Twenty: When Will This End?

KyraPOV

Why do I have elephants dancing on my skull? Make the pain stop.

“Mr. Burgess, she’s coming around,” came a foggy voice. “Miss Cullen, wake up. Open your eyes for me.” I felt someone rub on my sternum, between my breasts. **Fuck! STOP THAT!**

“Ugh,” I groaned, curling up and swatting the hand away. I pulled my eyelids back, noticing that I was in the back of an ambulance. A young paramedic was sitting to my right while Steve was on my left, holding my hand. He had a pretty nasty gash on his temple that was haphazardly dressed with some gauze and tape. The paramedic took out a penlight, shining it in my eyes. I slammed my eyes shut. **“Oh, don’t do that. It makes the throbbing in my skull worse.”** Once the light went away, I reopened them.

“Pupils are equal and reactive,” the paramedic noted, jotting down a few notes. **“Miss Cullen, can you tell me what day it is?”**

“Tuesday,” I grumbled, closing my eyes again. **“Can I go home now?”**

“You lost consciousness, Miss Cullen. We have to take you to the hospital. You, too, Mr. Burgess,” chided the paramedic. **“That cut needs stitches.”**

“Look, I have another person I’m responsible for. Can I follow you to the hospital? I promise to be right behind you,” Steve said, his voice pained.

“You shouldn’t drive, sir,” argued the paramedic.

“I won’t. Please,” he begged, his fingers threading through mine. I blinked a few times, relishing in the feeling of Steve’s hand in mine. He moved our hands, pressing his lips to his fingers, but I could feel the heat through them.

“Okay, but you have to assure me that you won’t get behind the wheel,” the paramedic grumbled.
“I promise,” he said, squeezing my hand. He looked down at me. His blue eyes were filled with such concern. “Owen and I will be right behind you, Kyra. You’ll be okay.” His fingers traced my cheek and he leaned down to kiss my forehead. With another pained look, he got out of the ambulance stiffly, jogging toward the physical therapist. Ten minutes, my mom’s car was behind the ambulance with Owen behind the wheel. The paramedic barked to the person in the driver’s seat and we took off. The movement made my stomach churn. I threw up twice, covering the floor with my breakfast. The paramedic injected some anti-nausea medication into my IV and I felt immediately better and very, very sleepy.

Arriving at the hospital, I was wheeled into a private room. Steve and Owen were ushered back immediately after I was changed into a hospital gown. My clothes, it seemed, were covered in my own puke. Gross.

“K!” Owen said, hobbling over to me and taking my hand. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” I replied, squeezing my brother’s hand. “I saw that you drove.”

“Under duress,” he grumbled, shooting Steve a furtive glance. “But, seeing Steve bleeding made me crumble. It’s not something I’m going to do again. You know? I was a nervous anxious mess, but I had to make sure my sister was alright. You’re alright, right?”

“I’ve got a headache and my stomach is in knots, but I’ll be fine, Wan,” I soothed, wincing as I shifted in the bed. Apparently, it was more than just my head that was hurting. My back was also stiff and my right ankle was throbbing as well.

“Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Peters,” said a young doctor with thick glasses. He assessed the scene and arched a brow at Steve, then to me. “You must be Steve Burgess and you’re Kyra Cullen?” We both nodded. “I’ll be taking care of both of you. Can you tell me what happened?”

“I was crossing the street when a car came out of nowhere, speeding up to hit me,” I said.

“I ran to her, pushing her out of the way and we both took a tumble onto the pavement,” Steve finished. “I bumped my head on a piece of metal, cutting my skin above my eyebrow. Kyra hit her head on the curb, causing her to fall unconscious.” Steve grimaced.

“Are either of you hurt anywhere else?” Dr. Peters asked.

“My back hurts and my ankle is throbbing,” I explained. Dr. Peters nodded, checking out my ankle and pressing me forward to look at my back. He made note of it on my chart before turning to Steve.

“My wrist,” Steve said, cradling his right hand to his body. It was already swollen and bruised.

“Okay, we’ll get your wrist x-rayed and then we’ll stitch up your gash,” Dr. Peters said. “Have you had a tetanus shot recently?”

“About two years ago. I stepped on a nail,” he cringed.

“Good to know. You should be fine in that respect. Serena will take you to x-ray, Mr. Burgess, while I assess Miss Cullen,” Dr. Peters smiled. Steve shot me a look. I gave him a faint smile as Serena ushered him out of the room. Dr. Peters shone another penlight into my eyes and I growled.

“I’m sorry, Miss Cullen.”

“Kyra,” I said.

“Kyra,” he parroted, “but this is to check if you have an intracranial bleed. I need to see if both pupils
were reactive to the light. If one was bigger than the other, that’s a bad thing. You lost consciousness
and hit your head against the pavement. How many fingers am I holding up?”

“Three,” I answered, looking at his hand.

“Following my finger, please,” he said, moving his hand slowly from left to right and then up and
down. He muttered something under his breath, jotting on my chart. “Okay, I don’t think you have a
brain bleed, but it’s something we want to watch. Your nausea and loss of consciousness concerns
me. Now, please sit forward, Kyra. I want to check out your back.” I nodded, sitting up. Owen held
my hands, rubbing his thumbs over my knuckles. “You’ve got some pretty substantial scrapes on
your back and a lot of bruising. Nothing that requires any sort of stitches, but it will be tender for a
while.”

“Great,” I grumbled, falling back. “What about my ankle?”

Dr. Peters lifted the blanket and poked around my ankle. It was swollen and bruised. “Okay, we’re
going to take an x-ray of your ankle, but I think it’s just sprained. We’re also going to get a CT of
your head just to make sure that your brain is fine.”

“Will I be able to go home tonight?” I asked, biting my lip.

“We’ll see,” Dr. Peters said, grabbing another nurse. “Take Miss Cullen to radiology for a CT scan.
Once the results come in, page me.”

“Understood, sir,” the nurse replied. Dr. Peters left and the nurse gave me and Owen a concerned
smile. “I’m Beth and I’ll be working with you today. Do you need to call your family?”

“I called our dad before I got into the car. He’s on the way to the hospital now, but he’s coming from
the city,” Owen explained. “Our mom is out of town. I left her a message, but she’s in the air to
California.”

“You know she’s going to want to fly back as soon as she finds out,” I groaned.

“Probably,” Owen agreed, wrinkling his nose. “And you know that Dad is probably going to fire
Steve.”

“Okay, you can debate this in a little bit,” Beth said, breaking up our little argument. “Let’s get your
head scanned and an x-ray of your ankle. The sooner that gets done, the sooner you can go home.”

“Let’s go,” I said. Beth laughed, pushing my bed to the radiology wing. I lay down and had a head
CT, immediately followed by some very uncomfortable ankle films. By the time I was back in the
room, Steve was in there with some fresh stitches and black brace around his wrist. He was on the
phone, talking in hushed tones. From his frenetic pacing, he seemed nervous, worried. Owen was
checking his phone. Once Beth settled me back into my room, she left. I snapped my fingers at
Owen. “What’s going on?”

“Steve is on the phone with Ricky, trying to calm him down,” Owen explained, sitting down next to
me. “Dad kind of flipped his lid when he found out about Mackenzie almost running over his oldest
daughter. He’s ready to fire Steve, or at least cause him significant bodily harm.”

“It wasn’t his fault, Wan,” I said, crossing my arms. I groaned as my body ached from the
movement. “It was my fault. I’m the one who ran off.”

“You may have run off, but you’re the second person under Steve’s protection that was hurt,” Owen
said, grimacing slightly. “I was the first and now you.”

“Kyra, it was,” Steve said, shoving his phone into his back pocket. “It was my actions that caused you to leave the physical therapist. My callousness and my lack of coping skills that hurt you. I’ve never really dealt with the death of Thea. I loved her a great deal and I always will. There is something else that I was prepared for and that’s why I shut down. I’m so sorry, Kyra.” He gulped and shoved his hands into his pockets. “I was just on the phone with my Dad. He is trying to stop me from doing this, but once your father gets here, I’m handing in my resignation. I’m just too close to the situation. It’s for the best.”

“Steve, don’t,” I whispered, looking up at him. “Don’t leave. You’re an invaluable member of this team, of our family.”

“I won’t put your life, or the life of your family at risk, Kyra,” Steve said, smiling sadly.

“That was the smartest thing you’ve said since I’ve hired you,” Dad said coldly, glaring at Steve.

“Dad!” I barked. “Don’t.”

“Steve, come with me,” Ricky said sternly. “Mr. Edward, we’ll talk more once we get back to the house.”

“Make sure that he’s gone by the time we get back,” Dad snarled, narrowing his eyes at Ricky. Ricky didn’t respond, just nodded and escorted Steve out of the room. Once they were gone, Dad came over to me and sat down, his hands hovering over my body. “Kyra … principessa ...”

“Daddy, I’m fine,” I said. “Just a bump on the head, some scrapes on my back and a bum foot.”

“And it was Mackenzie in the car?” he asked, squeezing my hand. “Are you sure?”

“Definitely,” I nodded. “She looked crazed. I could hear her screaming over the car’s engine.”

“Steve said that the traffic cameras caught the whole thing on film,” Owen said. “He had spoken to one of the police officers on scene while he was waiting for the ambulance to show up.” He shifted uncomfortably, grimacing slightly from his seat. “There will be cops here at some point or you’ll have to talk to them at home.”

“What about Steve?” I asked. “Will they talk to him, too?” Dad scoffed. “Stop it, Daddy. He’s the one who got me out of the way of the car. My feet were planted on the ground. I couldn’t move.” I crossed my arms and huffed angrily. My head was throbbing and arguing with my father was not helping the situation.

“Kyra, it’s just that someone tried to run you over,” Dad whispered, his warm hands taking mine. “Steve should have kept you safe.”

“He did!” I yelled. “Ugh!” My hands flew to my head as it throbbed uncontrollably. Dad looked at Owen. My brother got up, finding Beth and Dr. Peters. I was administered some medication to dull the agony and I drifted off into a loopy wonderland. When I woke up next, it was when I was being moved into a private room since I was going to be admitted. My concussion and my loss consciousness still concerned Dr. Peters along with the horrific migraine I was suffering. Dad was in the room with me, speaking quietly on his cell phone. From what I could gather, he was talking to Mom. I shifted, groaning quietly and that caught my Dad’s attention.

“Bella, gorgeous, I have to go. Kyra’s awake. Yes, Ricky’s with the kids. Johnny is coming over
later on tonight with some clothes for me,” Dad hissed. “No, you don’t have to come home. Bella, the sooner you get this director business figured out, the sooner you’re back. I love you.” He slipped his phone into his pocket, sitting next to me. “Kyra, are you alright?”

“I’m tired and my head still hurts,” I answered. “Plus, I’m hungry.”

“Johnny is on the way. He’s bringing both of us some food,” Dad replied. “The kitchen is closed.”

“What time is it?”

“A little after nine at night,” Dad answered, brushing my hair away from my face. I pushed away, glaring at him. “Don’t, Kyra. Steve did the responsible thing by resigning.”

“He saved me,” I argued weakly. “Why can’t you see that?”

“He did save you, but …”

“But nothing, Dad. Look, Steve saved my life. He risked his own life and safety to push me out of the way of a very quickly moving car. If you can’t recognize that …” I choked out. “Don’t force him to go away. He was genuinely concerned about me. He would do anything in his power to protect us.”

“Kyra, Steve resigned. It was his decision to leave. I know you care for him, but I think that it’s for the best. Steve is going to stay with Ricky. I don’t trust him with my family any more, but his entire family is up here,” Dad explained. “We’ll just have to agree to disagree, Kyra. I love you and want you to be protected.”

“Mr. Edward,” called Johnny, holding an overnight bag and thermal bag, presumably with our food. “I can’t stay here, sir, but I will be in the waiting area. Call if you need anything.”

“I will. Thank you, Johnny,” Dad said, tossing the overnight bag onto the recliner in the room. Johnny left and Dad set up our dinner. It looked good, but my stomach was flipping. I pushed the table away, trying to get up. Dad saw my struggle and helped me to the bathroom, where I violently threw up. My stomach was empty, so I threw up bile. It was awful. Dad held back my hair and cooed softly, rubbing my shoulders. Falling back on my butt, I groaned. “Are you okay, principessa?”

“Can you see if the nurse or doctor can give me something for this nausea?” I whimpered, leaning my cheek against the cool porcelain of the toilet. Tears fell down my cheeks and all I wanted was my mom. Dad was amazing. I loved him, but something about Mom made me feel safe. She always knew what to do when I was sick.

“Let me get you back into bed, baby girl. Then, I’ll get the doctor,” he said, helping me to my feet. I wavered. Dad swept me in his arms and carried me back to the bed, settling me under the blankets. “Comfortable?” I nodded, sniffling quietly. “I’ll be right back, Kyra.”

Dad left. I whimpered quietly, hating that I was so weak and afraid. I hated that Steve was gone and it was my fault. I hated everything that was happening to my family. I wanted it to end. The nurse came in with my Dad, holding a syringe. She explained to me that it was something for my upset stomach. It would knock me out, which I welcomed. My brain was done for and all I wanted was to sleep. She shot it into my IV and within a few moments, I drifting back into the depths of unconsciousness.

xx STTD xx
EPOV

I watched my daughter sleep. She was in obvious pain, exemplified by the furrowed brows and expression of agony on her sleeping face. I was pissed off at everyone, namely Steve, for not stopping this from happening. Kyra should not have been allowed to go out on her own. All of this would be fixed once Jacob was caught, but that didn’t appear to be happening anytime soon.

The sun had come up and Johnny went back to the house. Ricky was on his way with some clothes for Kyra. Shortly after Johnny left, Bella had texted, saying that she was coming back. Rose was going to handle the director issue, explaining that family was more important than a movie. She and Oliver were on their way to the airport, hopefully catching the next flight back to Chicago. I sighed, rubbing my hands over my face and trying to make sense of the madness.

Was I really mad at Steve? He did save my daughter at the risk of his own pitiful little life. Granted, I definitely thought he had a thing for my oldest girl. He was eight years older than her and she was still a freaking teenager.

Was I mad at Kyra for running off?

No, idiot. You’re mad at the whole crazy thing surrounding all of it. Jacob is the root of all of this. He’s the fucktard who is ruining our lives. It’s not Steve’s fault or Kyra’s, it’s Jacob’s.

“Mr. Edward,” said the quiet voice of Ricky. I looked up, seeing my shattered bodyguard and friend. “How is she?”

“Her concussion really knocked her on her ass,” I said, looking at my sleeping child. “Plus, she’s got a sprained ankle and her back is all scraped up from being thrown onto the pavement.” The last part was growled out, my anger from Steve’s actions spilling over. I pinched my nose, trying to reign in my temper. “Did Steve speak with the police?”

“They were at the house when we came back from the hospital. Steve explained what had happened, giving a detailed description of the car, along with a partial plate,” Ricky said. “Look, Mr. Edward, Steve feels horribly about what happened.”

“I know he does,” I sighed, leaning back in the recliner. “I’m grateful that he saved my daughter, but …”

“He’ll stay with my wife in the city,” Ricky explained. “But, I think that you need as much protection as possible. Steve is still …”

“I don’t want him near my family. I know that he’d do anything for my family, for Kyra, but I simply don’t trust him,” I sighed. Kyra shifted on the hospital bed, moaning quietly. “Thank you for coming to talk to me, but my decision is final.”

“Okay,” Ricky said, clasping my shoulder. “I’ll go get you some breakfast and something bland for Miss Kyra.” I nodded, reaching over to my daughter’s hand. She stopped moving when I touched her, sighing contentedly. I sat by her side until the doctor came to rouse her. I stayed in the room as he performed several tests on my grumpy daughter. He said that she was cleared for release, but gave me a name of a neurologist if her headache and concussion symptoms persist along with a prescription for Tramadol for pain and an anti-nausea medication. Ricky came back with breakfast. Kyra picked at the bagel, but managed to get it down. However, her stomach was still upset.

When the doctor came with the discharge papers, Kyra asked us to leave so she could get dressed. A nurse stayed behind since she was so unsteady on her feet. A half hour later, Kyra was dressed in
some loose-fitting pajamas and one of my t-shirts. I rolled her out to the car and carefully helped her into the backseat. She was still a little loopy from the medication, asking me to sit with her. As soon as I got inside, she slumped with her head on my lap and was down for the count.

Arriving at the house, I saw Steve packing up the back of his mother’s car. I growled lowly, trying to keep my temper at bay. Kyra was still asleep. I sighed, brushing her hair away from her face and trying to pick her up. However, I was old and my back was barking.

“Mr. Edward, let me?” Steve asked. His brows were creased and he was standing nervously. “Kyra would have my head if something happened to you. I’ll carry her up to her room and then I’ll be out of your hair forever, sir.”

“You have a broken wrist,” I said, gesturing to the black brace around his hand.

“Just some strained tendons. That will support her legs,” he said. I grumbled, moving out the way as Steve easily lifted Kyra into his arms. She snuggled against him, her nose pressed to his neck. There was something strangely intimate in the way he was caring for her. Again, eight years apart and she’s a teenager. They better not have … He carried her inside, Masen helping with the doors.

Gently, he lay Kyra onto the bed. He pulled out an envelope, putting it on her nightstand. He stood up stiffly and brushed past me. I could see tears in his eyes. He hated leaving. He didn’t look back as he practically ran down the stairs and into the waiting car.

Kyra slept nearly the whole day. I also caught up on sleep, but got up when my cell phone rang at two in the afternoon. Bella was back in Chicago and on her way back to the house. I got up, checking on Kyra and the rest of my kids before doing some work from home for Whitlock.

A little after four, Bella came home and hugged everyone tightly. I hung back, my anxiety rolling off me in waves. Bella came over to me, brushing my hair back. I knew it was a wreck. My hands were buried in it because of the craziness. “How is she?” Bella asked, her voice quiet and lilting.

“Still sleeping,” I answered. “Steve carried her up to her room. He left her a note.”

“He cares for her,” Bella said, smiling secretively. “I know you’re mad at him and it was probably for the best that he left.” My wife kissed me softly, going up the stairs to check on our oldest girl. Kyra woke up when Bella came in the room, sobbing brokenly. Bella crawled into bed with her, cradling her against her shoulder. My wife gave me a smile and nodded with her chin. I mouthed that I loved her, leaving her to calm and soothe Kyra.

While they were upstairs, I made dinner and herded some calls from the police. After discussing it with the detectives who were assigned to the case, they’d come over after dinner to get Kyra’s statement and hopefully provide us with some more information about what had happened. I would love for them to tell us that Mackenzie was caught, but I knew that would be highly unlikely. She was like the Energizer Bunny; she kept going and going and going and going …

An hour or so later, Bella and Kyra came downstairs. Kyra was freshly showered and looked more alert. She leaned heavily on her mother. “Smells good, Dad,” she said quietly, her voice subdued.

“I made your favorite,” I smiled crookedly. She responded with a weak grin, falling onto the couch in the family room. I went back to the kitchen. Bella helped me, setting the table. “Did she read his letter?”

“Not yet,” Bella replied. “She wanted some time, but she’s taking this harder than her break up with Thomas.”
“Do you think she loves him?” I asked, arching a brow.

“She cares about him, but I don’t know if she loves him,” Bella answered. “I think she feels more betrayed by his departure. He was in charge of our safety and they had become friends. With time, she’ll be fine.”

“But, will we be fine? With this bullshit with Jacob and Mackenzie,” I growled, clenching my fists. “And I feel like the protection we have is not enough. Ricky, Johnny and Oliver are amazing, but Steve coordinated all of them. He was great at his job. I just felt that he let us down and I can’t trust him, Bella.”

“Nor do I expect you to, Edward,” Bella whispered, her fingers caressing my jaw. “Let’s enjoy dinner and discuss this with the police afterward.”

“Okay,” I said, enfolding her into a warm embrace. Bella always had a way to make things better. “I love you, gorgeous. More than you know.”

“As I love you, angel,” she whispered, rubbing my back. “Kids! Dinner!”

They all came barreling into the kitchen. Mia helped Kyra, settling her into the seat next to Bella. I put dinner onto the table and we dug into the chicken enchiladas, Spanish rice, chips and guacamole. Mia and Masen did the dishes and were almost done when the doorbell rang. Kyra jumped, her hand flying to her chest. Bella wrapped her arms around my daughter while I went to open the door. A pair of police officers and a detective were on our doorstep. I ushered them inside and sent my other children into the basement. Owen stayed with Kyra since he was there for the aftermath of the accident.

“Good evening. My name is Detective Turner and I’ve been assigned to your case,” the detective said. “Or rather, I’ve taken over your case.”

“Yeah, I thought we were working with Detective Sheridan,” Bella said, arching a brow. “She has all of the information regarding our case and the danger to my family.”

“Detective Sheridan is on leave. She’s pregnant and she was put on bed rest. The pregnancy has taken its toll on her,” Detective Turner explained. “So, I’m now in charge of your case. I’ve taken a statement from Steve Burgess and spoke briefly with your son, Owen. Miss Cullen, why don’t you tell me what happened yesterday?”

Kyra explained to Detective Turner what happened. She was very descriptive and it was scary how much clarity she retained despite the fact she was standing in front of a moving vehicle. After she told Detective Turner about her ordeal, she collapsed against Bella and curled up in a tight ball.

“Thank you for sharing that with me,” Detective Turner smiled sadly. “Now, we used the red-light cameras to track the car. It was dumped just outside of Glen Ellyn. We also saw that she got into another car, one driven by an older man. There was someone in the backseat, but we couldn’t get a clear picture of them, but from the build, we assume that that person is a man.” He took out a few pictures, showing Mackenzie clearly getting into a large truck being driven by a very disgruntled Jacob. A pair of legs, wearing jeans, were indicated in the pictures as well, but the face was obscured from view by the roof of the truck. “From Detective Sheridan’s notes, this man has been stalking you since September?”

“He’s my ex-boyfriend,” Bella said, her nose wrinkled in distaste. “We dated over twenty years ago. We broke up and he didn’t take it well. Ever since, with each success Edward and I had, he hurt some unsuspecting woman. However, the straw that broke the camel’s back was when his ex-wife
put up his son for adoption. He started with the phone calls, then texts, emails and pictures. With each passing day, his obsession with me and ending my family has grown exponentially. Now? He’s roped in one of Kyra’s former friends to hurt her and us.” Bella shot me a look.

“We may not like Mackenzie, but she got roped in with this mad man,” I snarled.

“Do you not want to press charges?” Detective Turner asked.

“No, we want to press charges,” Kyra snapped. “That bitch tried to run me over!”

“We’re going to press charges,” Bella soothed. “I’m just curious if she’s going to be tried as an adult?”

“She’s eighteen. She will be tried as an adult, Mrs. Cullen,” Detective Turner said, arching a brow. “She needs to be held accountable for her actions. Just because Mackenzie held a grudge about your daughter doesn’t mean she gets to get away with almost murdering her with a car.”

“What happens now?” Kyra sniffled, moving away from Bella and closer to me. From the angry glares, my daughter felt betrayed by her mother’s statement.

“We have a squad car stationed outside of your house. We also have an APB on the truck that Jacob was driving. Mackenzie’s credit cards, cell phone and home phone have all been flagged. Her mother was none-too-pleased when we searched her house, effectively kicking Mackenzie out of the house and disowning her. There is also a warrant for both of their arrests.”

“Good,” Kyra snorted, getting up and hobbling to the kitchen. She got a water bottle and took some ibuprofen. She sat down next to Owen, tossing her legs up onto her brother’s lap. He covered her legs with a blanket and rubbing her shoulders. “You talk this game about APBs and arrest warrants, but this has been going on for nearly nine months. It’s bullshit. This crap needs to end. We need our lives back. I want to go to college and enjoy myself without having some bodyguard trailing me. My parents want all of this over because my dad’s having panic attacks and my mom’s the target for this fucking psycho. This ends and this ends NOW!” She screamed, shooting up from her seat and stumbling away, crawling up the stairs. Her sobs broke my heart.

Detective Turner blinked a few times, shocked at Kyra’s outburst. “Uuuummm,” he stuttered out.

“Do you need anything else?” I asked, wanting to go upstairs to comfort my daughter. This bullshit needed to end for the sanity and safety of my family. For now, all I could do is provide love and devotion, but that seemed ill-equipped to help Kyra and everyone else cope. Detective Turner shook his head, getting up from his seat. Oliver showed him out while I went upstairs. Bella was behind me, twisting her hands nervously. We went into Kyra’s bedroom, where she was curled up in a ball on her bed. “Kyra?”

“Unless you’re here to tell me that Mackenzie and Jacob are decapitated and their heads are on a spike outside, leave me alone,” she said into her pillow.

“Descriptive,” I chuckled. Kyra looked up, glaring at me. “What? It was, Kyra.” I sat down on her bed, tentatively touching her arm. She jerked away, rolling to face the opposite wall. “Principessa, I know that you’re upset.”

“Upset doesn’t even scratch the surface of what I’m feeling, Dad,” she said, her voice tight and angry. “Really, though. I’d like some time to myself. My head is throbbing. All of this crying is not good for the concussion I’ve got.”

“Kyra, if you need to talk, though, we’re always here,” Bella said quietly. “We love you and we’re
worried, sweetheart.”

“I know. I love you, too,” she said gruffly. “But, I’d really like to go back to sleep.”

“You know where to find us, sweet girl,” I whispered, kissing my fingertips and pressing them to her temple. Kyra shuddered, a sob breaking out of her. I wanted to scoop her up, smothering her with kisses and love, but she needed time to process all that had happened. As much as I wanted to wave my fatherly magic wand to make it better, Kyra had to handle this on her own. We’d love her and support, but if she wanted time. She’d get it.

xx STTD xx

**KyraPOV**

I hung around the house for about a week. My mind couldn’t focus on anything because of the concussion. The headache lingered, finally tapering off by the weekend. I avoided my family. I loved them dearly, but I felt violated by the attack by Mackenzie, masterminded by Jacob. I felt betrayed by Steve’s disappearance, wanting him back. He was a good friend and I felt his absence most of all.

On Monday, I was able to go back to work, but I still secluded myself in my room, not interacting with my family. Dad was concerned, but Mom was beside herself with worry for me. Dad understood what I needed to do since he and I were the most alike when it came to coping with conflict. We’d stew and then explode, only to perseverate until we came up with some sort of solution.

*The only solution would be for Steve to come back. All would be perfect if that happened, but it’s not.*

*Or, if Jacob and his evil minions were caught and vanquished to hell.*

That wasn’t happening. As far as I knew, Steve was in the city with his mom while Ricky watched over my dad and Oliver and Johnny were at home with us. Mom hovered over me and Owen. Mia and Masen were visiting Aunt Ro and Uncle Tim, going to some camp in the city for fraternal twins. Ava and Lucas were also going as they had for several years.

Early the following week, Mom came into my room with Aunt Alice. From my mom’s grimace and my aunt’s look of excitement, they wanted to go shopping. “Kyra, you’re moving into your apartment in less than a month. You don’t have any furniture. As part of my graduation present for you, I want to design your apartment. You, me and your mom are going to shop for your new place,” Aunt Alice said, her hands clapping together rapidly.

“Is Gianna coming?” I asked. Mia was still in the city, enjoying the last couple days of her camp.

“Gianna still isn’t comfortable around me,” Aunt Alice said, her face falling. “She’s happy staying with my parents.” Aunt Alice frowned deeply, her hands twisting anxiously.

“Besides, Gianna isn’t into interior design, Kyra,” Mom said, wrapping her arm around Aunt Alice’s shoulders. Aunt Alice sniffled, wiping her tears from her cheeks. “You need to get out of the house, Kyra. You’ve been cooped up since your accident.”

“I trust you to find something that I like,” I shrugged, turning back to my computer, which had a multi-page letter that I was writing to Steve during my down time from work as Mom’s personal assistant.

“Alice, let me talk to her,” Mom said sternly. “Please have Oliver get the car ready.” Aunt Alice
nodded, leaving me in my room with my mom, whom I was still not happy with since she wanted a more lenient sentence for Mackenzie. “Kyra, I know that you are afraid.”

“My fear is the least of my worries, Mom,” I snorted. “I just don’t want to get up and go out. It’s not the same without Steve. It’s not safe for us out there with the lunatics running around with a bounty on our heads. Why can’t we go online and buy some things? Have them delivered the day after I move?”

“Kyra Marie Lillian Cullen, you listen to me,” Mom said, arching a brow. “I know that you’re scared. So am I. But, I refuse to let those maniacs rule my life. What happened to you was atrocious and Mackenzie, Jacob and their mystery accomplice deserve the harshest sentence possible. You can’t stay in here and let the world pass you by. We’re going to Art Van Furniture in Lombard. The showroom is massive. If you can’t find anything there, then we can go online to find you your furniture. Okay?”

“Sounds like a deal,” I shrugged. “I need to shower, though.”

“Take your time. We’ll leave when you’re ready, sweetheart.” Mom said, kissing my forehead. She left and I went to shower. It had been a few days and I was quite pungent, not in a good way. I took the effort to do my hair, put on makeup and dress in a cute little sundress. Slipping on a pair of flats, I went downstairs. I was anxious about leaving the house, but somewhat excited at looking at furniture for my new apartment. However, in the back of my mind, there was something brewing and I didn’t know what it was. “Are you ready, Kyra?”

Shaking off my sense of unease, I smiled. “Let’s get my apartment all fancified up,” I answered, plastering on a fake smile and feigning enthusiasm. *When will this drama end?*

*A/N: What do you think is going to happen? And what do you think of Kyra’s fascination with Steve? Does she have feelings for him or is it merely a high school crush? Up next will be in Bella’s point of view and well, you’ll have to wait and see.*

*Leave me some lovin! ;-)*
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Okay, I lied. I said we’d be going to Bella, but I think I may be doing a combo chapter with Bella AND Edward. Not to mention, have that conversation with Ricky (Jiminy). Plus, we’ve got some impending drama coming up. When will it be?!?!

Perhaps a lemon will be thrown in just for good measure? Perhaps? Maybe? If it fits. ;-)

Chapter Twenty-One: Rising Action

BPOV

“Okay, so we have the family room, entertainment center, kitchen, office and bathrooms. All you need is your bedroom and some cute patio furniture,” Alice listed off for Kyra. “Do you want a grill?”

My daughter had this dazed look on her face. With all we had bought, we could have paid for two years of her college tuition. Okay, not really, but it was a lot of money. Kyra, however, was done. Her head was hurting from her previous concussion and her ankle was swollen from the sprain. She was walking with a noticeable limp. “Alice, I think Kyra is on furniture overload. We can go later.”

“But, there’s this awesome set … “Alice whined, pointing the opposite direction of the door.

“Ali, no,” I said sternly, arching a brow. “Kyra is still recovering from her ordeal with Mackenzie.”

And the loss of Steve. “Another time, okay? Besides, aren’t you going to Esme and Marcus’s for dinner with Gianna and Adam?” It was neutral ground and her children didn’t feel threatened when she came over to her parents’ home. Nana and Papa’s house was safe.

Alice checked her watch. “Shit! I’ve got to go,” she said. She ran over to me, hugging me tightly. “Today was fun! Love you, Bella!” She danced over to Kyra, who was sitting on the couch we’d ordered for her condo. Alice gave her a hug, kissing her cheek before leaving us in the store with Oliver.

I knew my baby girl was struggling with everything that had happened to her and was currently happening to our family. She had nightmares, screaming for Steve, Edward or me. She hated Mackenzie and Jacob, wishing them to be swallowed up whole. My daughter was terrified of her own shadow and mourning the end of her friendship with the youngest bodyguard that worked for our family. She was definitely panicking about starting college. With all that was happening, it was a rite of passage that she was unprepared for. Her look of absolute terror was a clear indication of her feelings. “You okay, Kyra?” I sat down next to her, taking her hand and rubbing her arm gently.
“Aunt Alice spent more money than God,” Kyra whispered, her golden eyes wide with shock. “I mean, shouldn’t she be worried about that since everything is so up in the air with her and Uncle Jasper?”

“Alice is a successful fashion designer and wealthy in her own right, Kyra,” I chuckled, hugging my daughter to my side. “Besides, when we got your apartment, we all chose an aspect of your education we’d take care of. Obviously, your father and I would handle the tuition and lodging. Aunt Alice and Uncle Jasper were in agreement to help you furnish your new place. Aunt Ro and Nana are going to go shopping for clothing for you, along with incidentals for the place. You’re responsible for the bills like electricity, cable, phone, and groceries. Not to mention any spending money.”

“Dad did give me a credit card,” Kyra blushed, patting her purse.

“And it’s only for emergencies and necessities,” I reiterated. Kyra nodded. “Now, let’s go out for dinner. It’s been too long since we’ve had time to chat. With Owen’s accident, your dad’s panic attacks, the graduation ceremony and the craziness with Mackenzie, I want to see how you’re doing, Kyra.”

“Are you sure? What if they’re out there,” Kyra hissed, her eyes darting around the furniture showroom. Her hand tightened around mine as her breathing picked up.

“Miss Kyra, you are well-protected,” Oliver said deeply from his spot a few feet away. He gave her a warm smile, trying to put her at ease, but until all of this was done, she wouldn’t be. However, little did she know that we had a silent tail.

Steve may have put in his resignation, but he was still concerned about Kyra and our family. But his main concern was for my oldest daughter. His feelings for her ran deep. He was outside, making sure that no one was going to attack us. He was doing this because he couldn’t walk away. He had called me when Edward was at work one day, asking to meet to discuss a plan for our protection. Kyra was sleeping, struggling with nightmares.

“I’m sorry to disturb you, Miss Bella,” Steve said, twisting his hands nervously. “I know that if Mr. Edward would know that I was here, he’d kick my ass.”

“Probably, but I’m glad you came,” I smiled, leading him into the kitchen. “Coffee?”

“Yes, please,” he said, taking a proffered cup.

“Steve, I want to thank you for saving Kyra. I saw the video and you risked your own life to get her out of the way,” I said, making my own coffee. “How are you?”

“I’m fine. I got the stitches out yesterday and I have another week of wearing the brace,” he answered. “Did Kyra see my note?”

“She has, but hasn’t opened it as far as I know,” I replied. I looked directly into his steel blue eyes. “Do you have feelings for my daughter?”

“I shouldn’t, but I do, Miss Bella,” he whispered, his voice choked off. “That’s why I resigned.”

“You realize she’s much younger than you,” I chided.

“She is. But, you’re also younger than Mr. Edward,” he smirked.

“This is also true,” I giggled. “Why did you resign?”
“My feelings for Kyra have grown over the past few months. Since she and Thomas broke up, our friendship morphed into something more than friends. I tried to maintain a professional, detached distance, but I enjoyed our time together. What made it more confusing was when she and I spoke about my high school sweetheart, Thea. I realized that the feelings that I had for Kyra were stronger than what I felt for the girl who I gave everything to until the moment she died.”

“Thea died?”

“Leukemia. She was my first everything,” he blushed, giving me a sheepish, boyish look. I smiled reassuringly. “Anyhow, I never opened myself up to anyone since Thea, except for Kyra. So, I pushed her away and it was because of that action that caused her to be caught in downtown Wheaton, getting almost run over by Mackenzie.”

“Do you love her?” I pressed.

“Not yet, but I could see myself falling for her. Hard,” Steve snorted. “Look, I can’t just walk away from this. I’ve been a part of this family for almost a year. I want Jacob caught as badly as you do. I have to see it through. That monster deserves his punishment and I want to be a part of it. I don’t expect to be paid, but I have to make sure that you and your family are safe. I’ll be a silent ghost, trailing from behind. I’ll stay and guard the house at night. I just …”

“I understand, Steve. And you will get paid. I’ll pay you myself,” I said, rubbing his arm. He nodded, turning the cup on the granite counter top. “Steve, I know you care deeply for my daughter, possibly even love her.” He blushed a brilliant crimson. “Give her time. She needs to grow up some more before you can approach her. In many ways, she’s matured tremendously this past year, but she’s still a teenaged girl. You’re a good man and if you’re patient, I can see you as a member of this family.”

His blush deepened, his cheeks turning almost purple. “Miss Bella, let’s not get ahead of ourselves,” he sputtered, but his nerves gave away the fact that he really liked that idea. “So, how should we handle this covert op?”

I smiled deviously, speaking candidly with Steve for over an hour as we came up with a plan for him to still protect our family and be near Kyra without being near her.

As Oliver drove Kyra and me to small bistro in downtown Naperville, I saw Steve in his recently purchased black SUV. I waved at him. He just nodded, turning on his car and following us. Kyra picked at her meal, kind of opening up to me, but she was still wary of being out in public while Jacob and Mackenzie were still on the loose. I missed my carefree daughter, but she wouldn’t return until this nightmare was put to an end.

After dinner, Oliver drove us home and Kyra went upstairs. She said that she wanted to look for a bedroom set and sheets online. I knew she was hiding, but after the day she had today, it was deserved. Edward was in the family room, idly flipping channels. I crossed to his seat on the couch, curling up next to him. “So, what was the damage, gorgeous?”

“I think we bought a small country,” I snorted. “Your sister is deadly with a credit card.”

“Always has been,” Edward snickered, kissing my lips and holding me close to his body. “But, she is trying to make up for how shitty she’s been lately.”

“If that’s the case, Alice should be spoiling her own children. Not ours,” I deadpanned.
“They don’t want any of it. All they want is their parents back together and their mom to be normal again,” Edward sighed, leaning his cheek against my head. “How’s Kyra?”

“She’s in shell shock at the sheer amount of money that Alice spent and terrified to be out in public,” I grumbled. “Any news from Detective Turner?”

“Nope. The truck that Jacob drove was found abandoned in Lockport. It was dusted for prints, but it was wiped clean,” Edward explained. “I’m with Kyra and everyone else. I’m ready for this to be over. Jacob is proving himself to be a stubborn asshole, bringing down Mackenzie and that mystery person.”

“Well, nothing much has changed in twenty years,” I shrugged. “He always was a stubborn asshole who had one thing on his mind. Sex.”

“I’m shocked he didn’t try anything with you,” Edward snarled.

“Jacob knew that if he tried anything, I’d kick his ass,” I smirked, wrapping my arm around Edward’s waist. “He tried numerous times, but I kept pushing him away. The Jacob that I knew was horny, but not yet violent.”

“I beg to differ,” Edward said, holding me tighter against his body. “Did you forget what happened when we were at Karambas? Those bruises on your arms?” I grimaced, forgetting about those bruises. How could I forget those? It was the first night that Edward and I spent together as a couple. The first of many nights of sleeping together in each other arms.

“Okay, you’re right,” I said. We sat in the family room, watching some random reality TV show. “Where’s Owen? Normally, he’s plopped down on the recliner.”

“Adam and Lucas came over to spring him for the weekend. They’re staying at Rose and Tim’s, having a guy’s weekend,” Edward said, waggling his brows. I snorted against his chest, sitting up and smirking at him. “We have the house to ourselves.”

“No, we don’t,” I giggled. “Kyra?”

“Kyra, right now, is probably sleeping and will stay asleep until morning,” Edward said, moving his hand down my back and cupping my ass. “It’s been too long, gorgeous. I need you. With everything that’s been happening, I feel like we’ve lost us along the way.”

“In a way, we did, angel,” I sighed, moving to straddling his waist. “I almost feel guilty at the prospect of losing ourselves for a few hours.” My fingers glided up his arms, taking purchase in his thick hair. I missed him, though. We hadn’t had an opportunity to heal ourselves with our lovemaking. It was how we knew what we had was real, all-encompassing and worth it all.

“No guilt, gorgeous,” Edward said, his hands gliding along my back, pulling me closer to his chest. “Mia and Masen are doing the twin thing at Rose and Tim’s. Owen is out of the house with Adam and Lucas, again at Rose and Tim’s. Kyra is asleep. Besides, they know that we make love. Our children are living, breathing proof that their folks get it on.” His lips slid along the column of my neck, causing my panties to dampen.

Like Pavlov’s dog with that maneuver …

“Upstairs, my love. I do want to lose myself in you. I want to hear you moan my name breathlessly. I want to taste your sweet, soft skin. I want to bury my face between your thighs, drinking your succulent essence.”

“Fuck,” I panted, my hands tightening on his shirt.

“I eventually want to do that, too,” he chuckled darkly, patting my legs and helping me to stand. I wobbled, following Edward up the stairs to our bedroom. Once inside, he closed the door, locking it
and pressing me against it. Grasping my hands, he pushed them above my head as he stared into my eyes deeply. His golden hazel irises were nearly black with desire, only a sliver of color showing in the dim light of the room. His hand moved down my arms, cupping my face. Something clicked in his eyes and he looked dangerous, feral, needy. With a rough pass of his thumb, he forced my mouth open. “You have no idea how much I need you, Bella,” he rasped, his mouth covering mine and our lips crashing together. The entire length of his body was pressed to mine and I could feel how much he wanted me. I lifted my leg around his hips, grinding my center against him. He growled, picking me up easily and carrying me to the bed. “I’m in control, Mrs. Cullen,” he purred seductively.

“Really?” I retorted, raising an eye brow. The stormy, sexy look in his eyes made me want to fuck him into next week. He continued to stare at me as he walked slowly to the closet, reaching into our bag of tricks, our secret stash of sex toys. He pulled out a blindfold, some leather restraints and one of the vibrating butt plugs. Ooooh, Bella is going to feel amazing tonight. Edward sauntered back to me, holding out the blindfold. I licked my lips, nodding eagerly to have my eyes taken away. I loved to look into my husband’s eyes while we made love, but tonight wasn’t about that. This was about release, sensuality, erotic fucking and control.

Edward turned me around, placing the blindfold over my eyes. My back was against his torso. His hardness was caught between my ass cheeks. He rolled his hips, pressing himself further into me. I moaned, wanting the barrier of our clothing to be gone. As if he read my mind, he gathered my dress in his hands as his lips caressed my ear. “There will be no part of your skin that I won’t touch, Isabella. I want you to feel me forever, loving you, fucking you.”

“Yes,” I panted, raising my arms so I could thread my fingers into his hair. He cupped my chin, turning my face to his as he devoured my mouth. His other hand was moving to my panties, rubbing me through the lace. My hand fell to his, gripping his wrist and wanting his long fingers inside of my leaking, wanting pussy. Edward stopped his fingers, turning me around. He removed my dress, leaving me in my bra and panties, which were drenched with my desire. With a flick of his wrist, my bra loosened and he removed it from my body. Picking me up, he lay me on the bed. “Arms up, gorgeous,” he said, his voice gruff. I complied eagerly. He attached my arms to the headboard with the leather restraints. “Very nice. I’ve never seen a more beautiful thing than that.”

“What do you have planned?” I asked, smiling in the direction of his voice.

“You’ll see,” he sang, stepping away. I moaned as I heard him go down the stairs. That was too far away. A few moments later, Edward came back. I could hear a light tinkling sound. I furrowed my brows behind the blindfold, curious as to what Edward had brought upstairs. The bed dipped and Edward sat down on the mattress, spreading my legs so he could fit in the cradle of my hips. His fingers ran up and down my legs, causing me to shiver in anticipation. “Hmmmm, you’re so wet, my love. It’s coating the tops of your thighs.”

“That’s because you’re teasing me, Edward,” I whined, arching against the bed and spreading my legs further. I knew I was wet, leaking with desperate need.

“And the teasing will continue,” he purred. The tinkling sound returned and I squeaked when I felt a cold, wet sensation on my nipple. “Look at that. Your pretty pink nipple is standing at attention.” He leaned forward, his lips wrapped around my nipple, flicking it with his tongue. I pulled on my restraints, wanting, needing more. I felt him smile against my skin, running the ice cube over my other nipple.

“Edward,” I breathed. He laughed quietly, the ice cube being pressed down my midline of my body. He swirled it around my belly button and followed the same path with his tongue. His mouth moved to the waistband of my panties, inhaling deeply. With a low rumbling purr, he tugged on my panties
and removed them from my body, leaving me bare. Edward grabbed some more ice, running it along my hips. I squirmed uncomfortably, wanting his mouth, fingers, cock … anything.

“You are so anxious, my love,” Edward said. I heard some rustling and felt him move further down my body. His mouth took purchase on my inner thigh, sucking on the sensitive skin. I was writhing and squirming, desperately needing his lips on my pussy. As if he could read my mind, he ran his tongue the length of my slit.

“Oh, GOD!” I yelled, my hips bucking off the bed.

“Stay quiet, love,” Edward chuckled. “The house may be nearly empty, but Kyra is still here.” I nodded, biting my lip as he went back to tongue fucking my pussy. He was tasting me from the inside, bringing me higher than ever before. His tongue was magical but when he added his long-ass fingers I was thrown deeper into ecstasy. He curled his fingers inside of me. I rocked against his hand. With each thrust, a jolt of electricity sizzled through me. “You’re so close, Bella. I want to feel you when you come. Come for me, baby.”

“Yes, Edward,” I panted, raising my head to ‘look’ at him. I couldn’t since my eyes were covered by the blindfold, but I knew that if I could see him, he’d be looking up with me with complete desire as he feasted on me. I was panting, my orgasm building with each flick of his tongue. My legs were trembling, my heart was pounding and I was so, so close. I wanted desperately to plunge my hands into his hair, but they were tethered to the headboard. I arched my back as waves of pleasure washed over me. As I was lost in the throes of passion, I felt something cold at my ass. It was vibrating and Edward slipped inside of me, triggering another orgasm.

As I was trying to catch my breath, Edward moved to my side and pushed up my blindfold. His face was glistening from my abundant desire. His eyes were twinkling and he looked hungry for me. “I hope you’re ready for me, my love. But, I wanted to look into your eyes as I did this.”

“What?” I asked. He smirked as he slid inside of me. I gasped, feeling so incredibly full. Despite his cocky smirk, the love shone through his eyes. “Every time … I love it when you make love to me.”

“For the rest of our lives, gorgeous,” he breathed, moving sinuously in and out of me. His hands found mine, threading our fingers together. I hooked my legs around his hips, moving with him. His eyes captured mine as we shared the same body, reconnecting our souls. Feeling him inside me, it put my anxious mind at ease. This past year had been stressful to the point of illness and like my daughter, I wanted it to end. From the desperation in Edward’s movements, so did he. “Bella …”

“I know, baby,” I said, tightening my pussy around his hardness. He kissed me deeply, his hand snaking between us as he rubbed my clit. Pulling away, he tossed my legs above his shoulders as he pounded hard inside of me. The sounds of our grunts and moans of pleasure filled our room. I bit back a scream as another orgasm built inside of me, ready to explode from my body.

Edward was chanting my name, along with his undying love. Sweat glistened on his brow and his muscles in his chest were twitching with each pelvic thrust. His cock brushed against my sweet spot inside and I could feel myself fall closer to the edge. With a quiet yelp, my body tumbled over the precipice. Edward came down with me, his body wracked with spasms from his powerful orgasm. He thrust a few more times before he slipped out and collapsed on the bed next to me. We both were breathing heavily. Edward’s arm snaked around my waist and he nuzzled my neck. I hummed, but wriggled my arms. “Oops,” he chuckled, quickly releasing my hands and allowing me to fully snuggle against his sweaty body. “We soooo needed that.”

“Yes, we did,” I murmured, kissing his chest and up to his neck, sucking his ear between my teeth. He gently scratched my back, idly humming. We were just about asleep when Kyra screamed.
Edward jumped up, ready to go save her. “Get dressed, Edward. You’ll traumatize her more if she sees you naked!” I hissed.

He looked down, nodding and pulled on his jeans. I darted to the bathroom, wiping between my legs and dressing in a pair of Edward’s boxers and a t-shirt. When I got into Kyra’s bedroom, she was clinging to her father, sobbing hysterically. She had had nightmares ever since her accident, but never this bad. “It’s okay, principessa. You’re safe. Daddy’s got you.”

I sat down next to them, brushing out the knots in Kyra’s hair. She was still inconsolable, her nightmares still plaguing her mind. She was screaming that Jacob was going to kill me, break our family apart. Not if I have anything to say about that.

Kyra eventually calmed down, falling into a fitful sleep. Edward gave me a look and he got up from Kyra’s bed. “I’ll be back, gorgeous,” he whispered against my temple as he slipped out of the bedroom. I was confused why he left, but I shook it off, holding my daughter as she tossed and turned. I prayed that her nightmares didn’t become reality.

xx STTD xx

EPOV

I picked up my phone and dialed Oliver. He had the weekend off, spending time with his daughters, but he was now the head of my security team. Johnny was protecting the house and Ricky watched over me while I was work. However, that was not cutting it. My daughter was afraid to go out and it was now attacking her subconscious. This shit with Jacob needed to fucking come to an end. He needed to be thrown in jail along with his bitch Mackenzie and whoever was in the car with them from that traffic cam photo.

“Mr. Edward, what is it? Is everything okay?” Oliver asked, his voice panicked.

“For now, yes. But, I need you to come home by tomorrow,” I said curtly. “We need to come up with a plan to put an end to this crap with Jacob. The police are dragging their heels and my family is at odds with all that’s going on. We’ll meet in the apartment at eleven.”

“Understood, Mr. Edward. Do you want some more help? I have some contacts with former cops and ex-military,” Oliver said.

“Only people you can trust and no more than two,” I said, my voice cold and unwavering. “I don’t this to escalate to where we may be thrown in jail.”

“Not with my contacts,” Oliver chuckled darkly. “Former Black Ops. They know how to complete a job without as much as a sound. We’ll get it done, sir.”

“Thank you, Oliver. I’m sorry about calling you away from your family,” I frowned, leaning back in the chair.

“With my helping your family, I’ll get my family back,” Oliver said with conviction. “I know that when this is done, I’ll have my girls with me forever and their mother will no longer have any say in how they are raised. I’ll see you tomorrow, Mr. Edward. Call if anything changes.”

“I will,” I said, hanging up my phone. I sent a text to Johnny and Ricky. I toyed with the idea of contacting Steve, but decided not to do that. Instead, I went to the computer and did what I did best. I researched and found out as much as I could about Jacob and Mackenzie. I found out every single minute detail that they had posted on the web, Facebook, twitter, Instagram and any other digital detail I could get my paws on. I printed it all out, creating dossiers for Oliver, Johnny, Ricky and the
other two guys that Oliver was bringing in. By the time I was done, the sun was rising. I groaned, having gotten no sleep.

I dragged my body out of my office and first checked on Kyra. She was wrapped around her mother, her face in pain despite her being asleep. Bella was also troubled, idly rubbing Kyra’s shoulders as she slept. I kissed both of my girls before I went into the bathroom to shower. From our romp in the bedroom and the warmth of my office, I was sweaty and I knew I was ripe. Once I was clean, I dressed in some jeans and a t-shirt. I decided to surprise Bella and Kyra with some breakfast in bed. I made Kyra's favorite, blueberry waffles with bacon and fresh fruit. Kyra woke up when I came in with the tray of food. Her golden eyes were bleary and her face puffy from crying. “Daddy?”

“I’ve breakfast for you and Mom,” I said, sitting down on the edge of the bed. Bella stirred, groaning quietly. She threw a pillow over her head. I chuckled at her. Bella was not a morning person. Never had been. Probably never will be. I placed the tray over Kyra’s lap. Bella sat up, rubbing her face and swiped some fruit from the tray before walking to the bathroom, grumbling the entire way. “Any more nightmares?”

“Some, but not as bad as the first one,” Kyra said, cutting into her waffles. “I just want all of this to stop, Dad.”

“You’re not the only one,” I said, swiping a piece of bacon.

“Edward Anthony Masen Cullen, put that bacon down,” Bella chided. “You may be on cholesterol medication but it doesn’t give you a free pass to eat bacon.”

“It’s turkey bacon,” I smirked, stuffing the strip into my mouth. Bella rolled her eyes, climbing back into Kyra’s bed and digging into her breakfast. They finished their breakfast and Bella went to do the dishes. Kyra curled up on her bed, placing her cheek on her knees. “Are you okay, principessa?”

“No. I hate feeling like this, Dad. Out of control, afraid,” she whispered. “Owen is seeing a therapist for his accident. Maybe I should do the same?”

“I think that might help with the nightmares and your anxiety,” I said, taking her hand in mine. “I’ll talk to Owen’s therapist and see if he has an opening.”

“Can I talk to a girl?” Kyra asked, wrinkling her nose. “It’s not that I don’t trust a male therapist, but men, in general, want to fix things and I don’t want him to fix it. I want to talk it out. You know?”

“I know. I’ll call Owen’s therapist and ask for a female colleague that he would recommend,” I said, kissing her forehead. She yawned. “Why don’t you get some more sleep, Kyra?”

“All I do is sleep,” she grumbled.

“Yesterday was a big day with getting your furniture for your condo,” I said, pressing her back into her pillows. “And I’m certain the sleep you got last night was not restful.” Kyra shook her head. “I love you and everything will be okay.”

“Promise?” she asked, her eyes drooping.

Before I could answer, Kyra was back asleep. I kissed her forehead, walking downstairs to the kitchen. Bella had cleaned up the mess I’d made in the kitchen, drinking some coffee and reading the paper. She had dark circles under her eyes, looking adorably sleep rumpled. “Thank you for cleaning up, gorgeous,” I said, wrapping my arms around her waist, sidling up behind her and kissing her neck.
“You cooked us breakfast. It was the …” yawn, “… least I could do.”

“You should go upstairs and back to sleep, Bella. Kyra’s already snoozing,” I said, turning her and picking her up, placing her on the counter. She yawned again, putting her head on my shoulder. “Don’t fall asleep on me, silly girl.”


“We’re also in the kitchen,” I snorted.

“True,” she said, sitting back up and staring into my eyes. “When will this end, Edward?”

“I hope soon, my love,” I said, knowing that with the guys, we’d figure out how to end it and put Jacob and Mackenzie’s reign of terror to an end. “Come on. Let me tuck you in. I have some work to do for Whitlock Technologies before the rest of our brood come home from the city.”

“Kay,” she said. I helped her off the counter. Once we got upstairs, I flipped her over my shoulder and carried her to the bedroom. My wife squeaked, smacking my ass as I carried her into the bedroom. I flopped her onto the bed, kissing her sweetly. She didn’t want me to go, but once she dozed off, I extricated myself from her arms and grabbed the dossiers I had prepared for the guys.

Ricky, Johnny, Oliver and his two buddies, Barry and Harper, were all up in the apartment. I handed them the dossiers and explained what I needed done. Essentially, they needed to find Jacob and Mackenzie. Barry and Harper were former military and knew how to search for missing people with a lot less information than I was providing them. Ricky, Johnny and Oliver were still going to protect our family, but Barry and Harper were going to, hopefully, find the people who had made my life a living hell for ever a year. I wanted them to make them disappear, but instead I told them to just call the police. I didn’t want anyone in my family to go to jail. I also didn’t want to go to jail. I had my family I had to think of.

Putting Jacob and Mackenzie away was important, but my family would always come first. They threatened my family and they needed to pay. That payment would come in the form of jail time.

xx STTD xx

With a plan in place, things calmed down. I called Owen’s therapist, asking for someone for Kyra. I got a name, making an appointment for Thursday afternoon. Bella and Alice were taking Kyra to finish getting her furniture for the condo, along with Mia and Gianna. Oliver was going with them before they went to Legacy Clinical Services for Kyra’s first appointment with her therapist.

On Thursday morning, Bella was nursing her coffee and scowling. “What’s wrong, gorgeous?”

“Headache,” she answered, closing her eyes and looking up at me. “And I’m not ready to go deal with Alice and her shopping insanity. Unfortunately, it needs to be done. I only wish that Esme could have come with us. She is the only person I know that can reign her in when it comes to shopping.”

“What do you have left to get?”

“Kyra’s bedroom furniture, stuff for the patio and a kitchen set. The set we chose is too big, so we returned it,” Bella said. “Then, Kyra and I are going to Naperville for her appointment with Maureen.”

“What time is that?” I asked, taking a sip of Bella’s coffee.
“Originally, the appointment was scheduled for one, but I moved it back to four,” she said, taking her coffee back. “Make your own, Cullen.”

“I happen to like yours, Cullen,” I snickered, kissing her nose. She sighed, leaning her cheek against my shoulder. “Is it more than a headache, love?”

“I just feel off,” she shrugged. “Yes, I have a headache, but something in my gut is telling me that there’s something awful that’s going to happen. I don’t know. Maybe it’s my imagination running away with me.”

“Listen to your gut, Bella. If you don’t want to go, then don’t. We can buy the rest of Kyra’s furniture online,” I said, holding her to my body.

“We can’t have her go to the therapist online,” Bella quipped, her arms snaking around my body. “I’ll be fine. We’ll be fine. I promise you.”

“Call me, okay,” I said, cupping her chin and kissing her lips softly. She nodded, kissing me deeply before stepping back. “I love you, gorgeous.”

“I love you more than you know, Edward,” she said, grabbing her purse and calling up for Kyra. My daughter came downstairs, meeting up with her mother. I got a hug from both of them as they left the house with Oliver. I was at home with Ricky, Johnny and the rest of my children. Though, Johnny was taking Owen to physical therapy in an hour or so.

I went up to my office, checking on Masen. He was playing on the gaming console in his room. Max was snoring on his bed, snoring loudly. “You guys okay?” I asked.

“Fine, Dad,” Masen answered. “Though, can I go to the movies with some of my friends tonight? They’re going to see the newest Avengers flick.”

“I don’t see why not, but we’ll have to wait until your mom gets home. Owen is at physical therapy with Johnny and Ricky is here with us,” I explained.

“Cool,” Masen said, turning back to his game and growling at the screen.

“I’ll be in my office if you need anything. I’ll make us some lunch at one, okay?”

Masen waved at me dismissively, staring at the television screen. Max, though, his head popped up when I mentioned lunch. I rolled my eyes, going to the office to sign in to work remotely. I worked diligently, speaking with Charlie and Demitri using our video chat about several orders that had been placed. We also talked about Jasper’s absence, possibly making me the face of the company now since Jasper had been gone for so long. I didn’t want to oust my best friend, but the lack of his expertise and ways to sashay the clients had made the first two quarters look abysmal. Demitri had stepped in, but clients who had come to trust Jasper didn’t like working with Demitri. His style of handling clients was much more akin to a used-car salesman. I trusted the man with my life, but when he was putting on a pitch, there was something that was off-putting.

After much cajoling, I agreed to step in as Jasper. A lot of the clients were fine with me, but I was still an anxious, nervous mess when it came to meeting new clients, but I’d have to squash that fear. I finished the call, turning back to some emails that had been forwarded to me from Jasper’s account. I was finalizing an order on the phone for some of our new gaming consoles for a large toy store when Ricky came in, sitting down next to me. I finished the call, turning to him. “What’s up?”

“Mr. Edward, I’m concerned with what you’re doing with Barry and Harper,” he said, his brows furrowed. “I know you want this over, but is this most efficient way to do it?”
“The cops haven’t done anything,” I said, arching a brow. “Three times those lunatics have gotten close to my family. One where Jacob was tailing my daughter, the second when Jacob t-boned my son’s car and the last time when Mackenzie nearly ran over my daughter and your son. This shit needs to stop. My son can barely walk, my daughter is afraid of her own shadow and we’re all tired of putting our lives on hold because of those assholes.”

“I don’t want to see you get in trouble, Mr. Edward,” Ricky said.

“That’s why we’re going to let the police handle it. Once they’re found,” I said. “I just feel like the cops are sitting on their asses while Jacob, Mackenzie and that mystery person are out free. So, I took things into my own hands in looking for them. You haven’t seen your wife, your children or you crumble because of everything that had happened, Ricky.”

“I have seen my own son blame himself for what happened to Mr. Owen and Miss Kyra,” Ricky said stonily. “He also walked away from this job since you said you don’t trust him.”

“Well, if you were in my shoes, would you trust him?” I asked, my temper flaring. “I’m at my wit’s end, Ricky. My family is in danger and I’m trying my hardest to make it stop. Jacob wants my wife because he’s a mad man and he’s looped in a high school child because she’s pliable and desperate. If you’re upset because Steve quit, then, that’s something you need to take up with him. If you can’t handle the fact that I don’t trust him, then I don’t know what to say.”

“I guess we’re at an impasse, Mr. Edward,” Ricky sighed, scrubbing his face. “I respect you and I understand why you are so protective of your family. I also feel like you were too quick to judge my son in his actions. He nearly lost his life in saving Miss Kyra’s. He worked his ass off for you and your family, only to be turned away.”

“I didn’t fire him. Steve resigned,” I pointed out. “Now, I have to get back to work.” I turned around, dismissing Ricky though I felt like an asshole for how I was acting. Ricky was a friend and I respected him. I had been too hasty in my decision with Steve, but I couldn’t let him back into our lives. Could I?

Owen came back around two in the afternoon and went directly into his room, exhausted from his physical therapy session. Johnny poked his head into my office, saying that he was going to conference call Barry and Harper, hopefully finding out some new information. Or any information. Even Barry and Harper had a hard time trying to find Jacob and his little minions. They proved to be quite evasive.

Shortly after Owen returned, Bella called and said that they had gotten everything they needed and were going to pick up some late lunch before heading to Kyra’s appointment with Maureen. I told her I loved her and to be safe before turning back to my work. An hour later, my phone rang again. This time, it was Steve’s phone number.

What the hell?

“What do you want?” I growled.

“Mr. Edward, I’m sorry to disturb you, but I’m calling because I’ve been following Miss Bella and Miss Kyra since that day. Miss Bella has known about it,” he blurted out.

“Should I have you arrested for stalking?” I asked.

“No, please don’t. Reason being is that I’m following Jacob, Mackenzie and Casey in a white van. Somehow, they subdued Oliver and forced Miss Bella, Miss Kyra, Miss Alice and Miss Gianna into
the van. They’re on the highway, heading west toward Rockford,” Steve said, his voice trembling.

“What?!” I screamed, shooting up from my chair. “What highway? Did you call the cops?”

“I called the cops and they are moving to intercept them, but since we’re on the highway, it’s in the state police’s hands,” Steve explained. “Shit! They’re getting off the highway.”

“Where?” I demanded, my heart stammering.

“DeKalb, Mr. Edward,” Steve said. “I’ll stay on them for as long as I can. I’m sorry, sir.”

“Don’t be sorry, Steve. Just stay with them. Make sure that my family stays safe,” I sobbed. “I’ll get there as soon as I can.”

“I’ll try, Mr. Edward,” Steve vowed.

I hung up the phone, calling for all of my security team, including Barry and Harper. I also called the police, telling them what Steve told me and giving them Steve’s cell phone number so they could track him using the GPS device. I was an anxious mess, worried about what was going to happen to my wife, daughter, sister and niece. What was the endgame?

Whatever it was, it was happening now and I was going to save my family.

With Steve’s help.

A/N: What do you think will happen? Why did they go to DeKalb? Lots of unanswered questions, but we’re to that point. And sorry for the cliffie. I do have some pervy pic teasers on my tumblr (link for that is in my profile).

Up next will be the big moment. It’ll be in Bella and Alice’s point of view, maybe with a side of Kyra. Leave me some lovin … I need it, desperately, since RL is not being kind to me. All I want is a hug and for someone to ask how I’m doing and not vent about their crap. Is that so much to ask? Apparently, to my family, it is. Sorry about the rant, but I’m just feeling raw and empty. Hugs, prayers and love would be appreciated. Thank you!
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Up next will be the big moment. It’ll be in Bella and Alice’s point of view, maybe with a side of Kyra.

Chapter Twenty-Two: A Showdown in the Middle of a Cornfield

BPOV

“Alice, lunch is on me,” I said, reaching into my wallet. “You’ve done so much for Kyra in furnishing her entire condo. I can pay for a $200 meal.”

“I won’t argue about that,” Alice snickered, enjoying her dessert. We had split a massive piece of cheesecake at the restaurant, Cooper’s Hawk. Kyra picked at her dessert and honestly, her whole meal, nervous about meeting her therapist, Maureen, but for the most part had been animated and personable. She was still afraid of her own shadow, but put on a mask for Alice and Gianna, mainly Gianna. Alice’s daughter had enough on her plate than to know about my psycho ex-boyfriend and the fact that he was on the prowl to seriously maim me and my family. We had shielded her from that, thank you very much. “It’s a shame that Oliver didn’t want to join us. When do those guys eat?”

I rolled my eyes. “He’s in here, but at the bar. He didn’t want to intrude on our girly time,” I snickered, brushing Kyra’s hair back from her face. My daughter sighed, leaning into my hand as she plucked a raspberry off the plate and tossed it into her mouth. “We should probably get going, though. Kyra’s appointment is in downtown Naperville and you never know how traffic is going to be.”

“True,” Alice smirked. “Gianna, do you want to go shopping with me? Perhaps get some new clothes? Nana said that your clothes are getting too short because you’re growing so fast, my love. At this rate, you’re going to be taller than your dad.”

“Are you sure? I don’t want to bother you, Mom,” Gianna said quietly, her voice unsure.

“You’re never a bother, sweetie. I’m sorry that you ever felt that way. I never meant to hurt you like that,” Alice said quietly, trying to calm her daughter. “I love you and Adam. You two are my whole world. I will do everything in my power to make sure that you remember that.”

“I love you, too, Mom,” Gianna replied, hugging Alice and crying softly. As they talked quietly, I flagged down the server, paying our tab and sending a text to Oliver, saying we were ready to go. Normally, Oliver texted back, but he didn’t. I shrugged it off. He was probably in the bathroom. I shrugged it off and we gathered our doggie bags, heading to the front of the restaurant. I texted
Oliver again, but he didn’t respond. I scowled at my cell phone. What’s going on? Is he taking a dump?

“Mom, Gianna and I are going to go outside. It’s really cold in here,” Kyra said, her pale skin covered with goose bumps.

“Okay, sweetheart.” I watched as she stepped outside. Turning to Alice, “I’m going to try calling Oliver,” I said, stepping into the private dining room that was unoccupied. Gianna and Kyra stepped outside. Alice was waiting in the lobby of the restaurant, looking at the various wines they had for sale. She liked the Sangiovese she had with her lunch. I dialed Oliver’s number. Oliver’s phone rang, but he didn’t pick up. What the hell? Why won’t he answer? Something is up.

Alice walked over to me, carrying a bag with her wine. “Maybe he’s already outside,” Alice said. “Come on. If he’s not here, then I can drive you to Kyra’s appointment.”

“Something doesn’t seem right. Oliver is not the type to flake out on us,” I said, frowning deeply. I followed Alice out of the restaurant, tossing my phone into my purse and ran straight into a wall of a man. I looked up, seeing the man who had tormented us for over a year. Jacob was sneering at me, his hands wrapped around my arms, squeezing them tightly. I knew I’d bruise, just like the night that at Karambas. “Jacob …”

“Did you miss me?” he asked, his voice gruff.

“Let me go,” I growled, squirming in his hold. My heart was stammering in my chest and I grew nauseous. He smelled like smoke, body odor and corn chips. His face was scruffy and his hair was unwashed. What terrified me the most, though, was the crazed look in his eyes. His fingers tightened around my arms, causing me shout out.

“Nah. Now that I’ve got you, I’m never letting you out of my sight,” he purred, moving to the side so he could show me the van, his fingers still digging into my bicep. Inside, Kyra and Gianna were being held at gunpoint by Casey. Mackenzie was in the driver’s seat, glaring at me, but there was something about her eyes that shattered my heart. He broke the girl. “Get in the car and your daughter lives to breathe another day.” He ripped my purse from my arm and pushed me to the van. He scowled at Alice, taking her purse as well. We got inside the dingy white van and sat down next to our daughters. Jacob took out our cell phones from our purses, smashing them against the wall and throwing our bags into the garbage before getting into the van.

He had balls kidnapping us in broad daylight. “Drive, bitch.”

“Yes, Master Jacob,” Mackenzie said woodenly. The glare left her eyes and now they were effectively dead. My eyes widened as she peeled out of the parking lot, getting onto the highway.

I looked up at Casey. He was scowling at us, the gun pointed directly at Kyra. “You can put that down. Jacob said that we get to breathe for another day,” I snapped.

“Jacob did, but I have the gun,” he chuckled darkly, cocking the hammer. “You fucking rich bitch. You think you’re so special.”

“That’s because I am,” I laughed haughtily. “Why else would Jacob want me? Why I’m married to a CEO of a Fortune Five Hundred Company?”

“That! That’s why I couldn’t take it anymore. You and your fucking brats are so fucking entitled,” Casey snarled. “I ran into Jacob when I was running an inane errand for you or Edward. He told me how you broke his heart, leading him on and then dumping him for your geeky, awful husband.”
“And you believed him?” Alice asked.

“Yeah,” Casey snapped. “Jacob loves you, Bella. For whatever reason, he loves you and he’ll treat you good.”

“Right, kidnapping me in broad daylight, holding my daughter, sister, and niece at gun point, stalking my family for almost a year, taking away our freedoms,” I spat.

“Bullshit,” Casey snorted humorlessly. “You had as many freedoms as you wanted. You worked all of us to fucking bone. We all were at your beckoned call. We had to babysit your ungrateful children, chauffeur you to wherever you needed to go, put your mind at ease and molly coddle you. You and your loser husband are weak, insignificant and entitled. Your children are bratty, ungrateful and like you, entitled. Every day that I worked for you, I felt like I was going to hell and selling out for bowing to your will. I was so over your whining, your crying and your crap that I sought him out. It wasn’t that hard to find him. The cops were really stupid. He wasn’t that far from you, really.”

“Foreclosed houses are so easy to target,” Jacob chuckled, turning to look at me. “I’ve been living in the house in the corner since March. It was nice to live in such an elegant home, even if it had no electricity, water or furniture. The inside no longer looks as fancy as before since I had to eat and have heat somehow. Casey provided me with solid intelligence about your life, Isabella.”

“And I got to Oliver, too,” Casey snickered. He and Jacob pounded their fists.

“You didn’t,” I breathed. “He better be okay!”

“I didn’t kill him,” Casey said thoughtfully. “That would have been pretty obvious in the middle of a crowded restaurant. He’s just going to have one hell of a headache.”

“You had a silencer,” Jacob said, waggling his brows. “You could have killed him.”

“I may be involved in this, but I’m not a killer,” Casey said. “Bitch, do you have the address programmed into the GPS?”

“Yes, Master Casey,” she said quietly, her eyes trained on the road. “According to the map, we should be there in an hour.”

“Good. I’m glad my grandparents left us with a place to put this all at an end,” Casey said, eyeing the four of us. I wrapped my arms around Kyra, holding her to my body. She was trembling, crying almost hysterically. Alice was trying, in vain, to calm Gianna. “Shut them both up!”

“They wouldn’t be crying if you wouldn’t be taking us to some mystery location in the middle of Illinois or waving a damn gun in their faces,” I hissed, glaring at Casey.

“Casey, man, put the gun away. We won’t need it for a while,” Jacob said.

“What are you planning on doing to us?” Alice asked, holding Gianna close to her body. “You’ve got us. Are you going to kill us?”

“We haven’t decided yet,” Jacob said, shooting Alice a harsh glare. “Now, enough talking.” Jacob turned around and looked as we drove along the highway. Casey kept the gun out. He stared at us with such contempt as we rode in tense silence to wherever we were going.

“Mom, why are they doing this?” Kyra asked miserably. “Why couldn’t they just leave us alone?”

“I don’t know, sweetheart, but we’ll get out of this. I promise you,” I said, holding her tightly and...
rocking us back and forth. However, despite my assurances to my daughter, I didn’t know if we were going to get out of this. I caught Alice’s eyes, trying to mentally tell her that I was really, really anxious about this situation. My cell phone, which had a GPS tracking chip, had been destroyed. The chip that was on my necklace had been removed and I didn’t know about Kyra and Gianna, if they still had their cell phones. I didn’t see either girl’s bags. I had to assume that their phones were in the same shape as mine: in pieces. I looked at Casey, frowning. “Can’t you let Alice, Gianna and Kyra go? You don’t want them.”

“Collateral damage,” Casey sneered.

We drove for another hour before we got off the highway. I saw the sign for Dekalb, a suburb in the middle of cornfields and the home of Northern Illinois University. We drove to a storage facility, parking inside of a large unit. Casey smirked. “Get out.”

“Why are we here?” Alice asked.

“We’re waiting for another car. A colleague is bringing it,” Jacob said, hopping out and pulling Alice out by her arm. She tossed my sister-in-law into a corner along with Gianna. Alice let out a bark, cradling her arm. Casey went to grab me, but I backed away. Casey snarled, grabbing my hair and tossing me next to Alice. Kyra got out of the van of her own volition, running to me and glaring at the motley crew of monsters in front of us. Gone was the fearful Kyra and now, my daughter was pissed and was not going to stand for any of this. “What are you glaring at, princess? Upset that you’re on the disgusting floor? You broke a nail?”

“You are a douchebag,” she said, her eyes narrowed at Jacob.

“And you’re a bitch. Just like this one,” Jacob retorted, backhanding Mackenzie. She stumbled, falling against the open door of the van. She hit her head, blood gushing out of the shallow wound just above her temple and in her hairline. She blinked sleepily before she collapsed on the floor, unconscious and bleeding heavily.

“You touch my daughter, I will kill you myself,” I growled. “You harm one hair on her head …”

“You’ll do what? You weigh, what, a hundred pounds soaking wet?” Jacob scoffed. “You can’t hurt me.”

“I might not be able to, but you will get what’s coming to you, Jacob Black,” I said, holding Kyra.

“Unlikely,” Jacob shrugged. He looked at Casey. “Clean that up. You were the last to use her.” Casey scoffed, tucking the gun into his pants and bending down to pick up Mackenzie. He carried her to the far end of the storage unit, attending to her head wound. Jacob just watched the four of us, leering at the four of us creepily.

“We’re not animals in the zoo, Jacob,” I said. “Stop staring.”

“Fine,” he said, reaching into his pocket. He grabbed Gianna, tossing some cable ties around her wrists. Gianna whimpered as he tightened them, tossing her back on the floor. He did the same for Alice, Kyra and me. “Don’t go anywhere. I’m going to take a leak.” He stomped away, opening the door and left us in the dank, smelly and hot storage unit.

Casey was focused on Mackenzie in the corner. Alice shifted, nudging my leg with my foot. “What’s the plan?” she asked.

“I have no idea, Ali,” I hissed back. “This is one huge clusterfuck. I’m hoping that the contingency plan I had works out.”
“We can’t just sit here and do nothing,” Kyra said, glaring at the door that Jacob exited. “And what contingency plan?”

“Steve has been following us since he quit,” I said, blushing slightly. “He couldn’t just walk away. I’m praying that he followed us.”

“And that’s why you’re not that upset?” Alice questioned.

“Oh, I’m upset, but what is that going to do?” I snorted. “We just need to stay alive so we can be rescued by Steve and the cavalry.”

“Do you think that they’ll kill us, Aunt Bella?” Gianna asked, her voice quivering in fear.

“Not if I have anything to say about it,” I said, wanting to hug her but Jacob came stomping back inside, yelling on the phone. From what I heard, his ride had been detained because our kidnapping had made the news, causing the roads to be shut down surrounding the restaurant. Casey heard the commotion and walked over Jacob, taking the phone from him. He spoke quietly to the other person on the line and came to some sort of compromise.

“He’ll be here. By nightfall,” Casey explained. “I think we may have to go to plan B with our captives. We can’t risk them knowing where we’re at and making any noise.”

“Where are they going to go?” Jacob asked, his voice incredulous. “We’re not going to inject them with the sedative unless absolutely necessary. I want Isabella to be perfectly aware that I’m taking her away from her perfect life, geeky, loser husband and padded bank accounts. You’re never going home, Isabella. I’m your new daddy, princess.”

“Ugh, barf,” Kyra groaned, her nose wrinkled. “You can say that until one of your muscles explodes, but I will never call you ‘daddy.’”

“You ungrateful, little bitch,” Jacob snarled, going to hit her but got in way of the blow, taking his slap. My cheek stung from his hand, but no one was going to hit my baby. I fell onto my side, grunting. Casey walked over to Jacob, pulling him back. They were hissing as they moved back to the opposite side of the van. Kyra helped me back up and I leaned against the metal wall. It was blazing against my back, probably from the sun. My face was now moving into the throbbing phase of pain. That’s going to leave a mark.

“Are you okay, Bella?” Alice asked.

“I’ll be fine. I just couldn’t let him hit Kyra,” I explained, looking at my daughter. It was because of me that we were in this mess. I had to protect my family.

I don’t know how long we set in that stifling storage unit, but well after dark, we heard a car approach. Casey smirked as he checked his phone, alerting him to the new arrival. “He’s here.”

“Excellent. He’ll torch the van?” Jacob asked.

“Yep and meet us at my grandparent’s farm,” Casey said.

“Guys, before we go, can we go to the bathroom?” Alice asked, arching a brow.

“Piss in your pants,” Jacob snorted, walking to the door. He greeted another guy while Casey carried a still-unconscious Mackenzie out to the waiting vehicle. Jacob walked in with the new guy and I recognized him immediately. What is up with these turncoat security team members? Henry had worked with Edward prior to Johnny and Edward had fired him.
“So, you recognize me,” Henry said, his eyes twinkling with darkening delight.

AlicePOV

We were loaded up into another van. This one was far more decrepit than the first one. It smelled like something died in there and the seats had been removed. The floor was covered with black particles and it sounded like it was on its last leg. Gianna leaned heavily against me, whimpering quietly. When we were tossed into the van, Henry, Casey and Jacob were not gentle.

Henry took the white van we arrived in, driving it toward the highway. We went the opposite direction, heading north. After that, I didn’t know where we were going since Casey got the bug up his ass that he didn’t want us to see. He used some old sacks, covering our heads. The sacks smelled like fertilizer and dirt. All I wanted was a shower, a bathroom and some water.

And my twelve-hundred thread count sheets, my bed and air conditioning.

I really, really want air conditioning.

The heat coupled with my hot flashes were killing me. I felt like my body was on fire, burning from the inside out.

We turned onto a very uneven road. The dips and bumps made my stomach turn as we drove quickly before coming to an abrupt stop. As Jacob and Casey got out of the car, I heard them pick up Mackenzie who was still unconscious. Gianna whimpered, moving closer to me. I wanted to comfort my daughter, but my arms were bound behind my back and the cable ties were digging into my left wrist, which was getting more and more swollen by the minute.

“I wonder if they’re going to let us go pee?” Kyra grumbled. “I refuse to pee my pants. Gross.”

“We’ll ask again, Kyra,” Bella said. “Hopefully, they’re not complete monsters.”

I beg to differ.

Jacob, my impression of him, reminded me of this kid that went to high school with me and my brother. The steroids shrunk his nads and petrified his brain. All he knew was football and football. His nickname was Crash because he crashed into the opposing team, without any care to his own body. He barely passed his classes and couldn’t read to save his life. Edward, at one point, was assigned to tutor him in biology because he was failing. My brother couldn’t even help him because he had no idea about the concepts that were being taught. Crash thought biology was about the stars and the moon. When Edward explained that it was plants and animals, Crash pouted and felt sorry for the plants and animals. Edward further explained that they needed to dissect a fetal pig, Crash, well, crashed. He got so upset that the pig was going to die.

I digress. Suffice it to say, Crash failed that semester of biology and was ineligible for the state championship. Everyone blamed my brother because of it when it was Crash’s fault for being so clueless, pumping his body with steroids. The main difference between Crash and Jacob is that Crash had a heart. Jacob is a heartless prick who will pay ultimately for his crimes.

“Get out,” Jacob snarled.

“A little hard to do when we can’t see,” Bella snapped. The bags were removed and we stumbled out into the humid darkness. In front of us, there was an older looking farmhouse. The stench of manure hung in the air. In the distance, we heard the low rumble of thunder. We walked into the
farmhouse. There was no electricity and I heard the scurrying of mice in the walls and floors. I grimaced.

“Take the girls into the bedroom on the stop of the stairs. I’ll take Bella and the hag to the bedroom down here,” Jacob said, sneering at both Bella and me.

“Do not separate us,” I hissed.

“We wouldn’t want to traumatize the girls,” Jacob said, bowing condescendingly.

“I hope you’re not attached to your balls,” Bella said, smiling tightly. “You touch us, they will be ripped from your body and shoved down your mouth.” Jacob growled, going to hit Bella but I stepped in front of her and I got backhanded. I fell against Bella, who stumbled into a wall. Both of us fell onto the ground. Gianna and Kyra tried to get to us, but Casey stopped them, holding them by their waists.

“Get them out of here,” Jacob yelled. Casey dragged them up the stairs and we heard a scuffle before the door slammed. Once the girls were gone, Jacob picked up Bella by the shirt and growled in her face. “You will be mine, Isabella. Nothing will stop me.”

She reared back, spitting in his face. Jacob went to punch her, but Casey stopped him. “Don’t, man. You’ll shatter her skull. You don’t want to fuck a corpse, do you?”

Jacob struggled against Casey. With an angry growl, Jacob stepped back. “I’m going to go out for a smoke. Set them up in the bedroom after you let them use the bathroom.”

“I’m taking the first shift, Jake. You haven’t slept in nearly three days. Try and get some sleep. You’re getting sloppy,” Casey said, his eyes narrowing. Jacob grunted and stomped out of the house. Casey turned to us and led us to the dingy, cramped bathroom. He sliced the cable ties. “Go quickly. You can’t go anywhere. We’re at least fifty miles from the closest town. Besides, if you run, I’ll kill both of your kids.” He closed the door to the bathroom, flipping a lock and leaving us in the bathroom.

“Do you think he’s telling the truth?” Bella asked, trying to open the window in the bathroom.

“I don’t want to risk it,” I said, wriggling the door. “I hope that Steve is still out there.”

“I don’t know. What if he lost us because of the new van?” Bella responded, moving to go to the bathroom. I gave her privacy, checking my wrist. It was very swollen and it hurt something awful.

“Steve is a smart guy,” I reassured her as she finished up and shuffled out of the way so I could take my turn. It was a struggle with my wrist. Somehow, I managed to pee and not further injure my wrist. There was no toilet paper to wipe so that solved that problem. “Bella, we just have to sit tight. Pray that the cavalry is coming.”

“Every moment since Jacob opened that door, showing us the girls in the back of that van, I’ve prayed,” Bella murmured. I wrapped my arms around her and she quietly fell apart. Bella had been so strong throughout this whole ordeal. “I want to see my husband again.”

“You will,” I vowed. Lightening flashed in the window and the following thunder rattled the glass windows. Casey used that to unlock the door and drag us into a bedroom on the main floor. Thankfully, he didn’t retie our wrists, but he did lock the door, giving us the not-so-subtle threat from before. “Bells, try and get some sleep. I’ll stay awake.”

“No, we have to be alert,” Bella responded, yawning.
“And you have to be coherent to be alert,” I quipped, pushing her to the bed. Despite the disrepair of the house, the bed looked cool and inviting with clean white sheets and a soft quilt. I pushed her gently to the bed. She fell into it, curling around a pillow. Within seconds, her eyes were shut and after a few moments, she was sleeping. While she slept, I searched around the room for anything to use to pummel Jacob, Casey and Henry with. Those assholes were going down.

xx STTD xx

KyraPOV

I looked out the window from the bedroom we were forced into. The storm that was in the distance when we arrived had taken hold, raining heavily and lighting up the night sky with flashes of claws of lightening. Gianna was curled up on one of two tiny twin beds, sniffling quietly. On the other bed, Mackenzie was sleeping. Her face was bruised from her fall. Casey had haphazardly dressed the cut on her forehead, but it had bled through the gauze. As she slept, I also saw the damage that Jacob had inflicted on her. She was burnt, cut and beat up. She did not look like the girl I went to high school with. She looked broken, tormented and sick.

“I want to go home, Kyra,” Gianna whimpered.

“Me, too, Gianna,” I answered, keeping my eyes peeled on the yard. There was no lights in the house. Casey had lit a few candles in the bedroom, but it made the room get really hot and it smelled like a bakery, reminding me that I was starving. The fact that I didn’t eat lunch was hitting me. The yard lit up from the lightening and I saw something move behind the large tree. “Gianna, come here!”

“What?” Gianna grumbled, crossing over to the window.

“Do you see anything out in the yard?” I asked, pointing to the tree. “I thought I saw something out there.”

“We’re in the middle of nowhere. You probably saw some wild animal,” Gianna said, squinting her eyes. The yard lit up again with the flashes of lightening, but there was nothing to be seen. “There’s nothing there, Kyra. You’re imagining things.”

“I’m not,” I said, looking back out over the yard. “I could have sworn I saw something.”

“Kyra, just forget it. We’re going to die in this dingy, disgusting house,” Gianna growled, stomping to the other bed and plopped down. She turned away from me, mumbling under her breath. I knew she was bad mouthing my mother and the whole situation. I didn’t blame her. Even though it wasn’t my mom’s fault, the situation sucked.

“We’re not going to die,” I snapped petulantly. Gianna huffed, covering her head with a pillow. I stayed at the window, watching the storm and trying to figure out if I had seen something or if it was just my imagination. What wasn’t my imagination was a car driving down the road. The headlights were harsh against the darkness. I watched as the car stopped and another man got out. I recognized him as Henry, the security guard who was fired by my father. He walked to the front porch. I heard yelling through the house and the sound of a gun cocking. I held my breath, but the voices calmed. I pinched my nose, looking back out the window. I stayed there as the skies lightened with the lavender color of the dawn. The storm had abated, only raining lightly as the sun crept higher in the sky. I gasped when I saw something in the distance. “Gianna!” I hissed.

“What?” she snapped.
“Look!” I said, dragging her out of the bed and to the window. “LOOK!”

In the far end of an overgrown field, I saw a handful of vans, police vehicles and an ambulance. They would not be visible on the first floor, but from my perch in the bedroom on the second floor, they were seen. It wasn’t clear, but it gave me hope that we would get out of this.

“Does this open?” Gianna asked, frantically clawing at the window. “We can get there!”

“Stop it! Those animals are still holding our moms,” I said, pulling her away. “We have to stay quiet and not alert them to what’s going over there.”

“But …” Gianna cried.

“No, buts,” I said, hugging her close. “We’ll get out of here. I promise.”

xx STTD xx

BPOV

“Bella, wake up!” Alice hissed, shaking me. I blinked my eyes and looked up at my sister-in-law. She was frantic. “Henry’s back. I think they’re going to do something.”

“Why do you say that?” I asked, rubbing my face and getting up from the bed. It was a dreary early morning. I could smell the rain and feel it in my bones. From the way Alice was moving, she was also feeling it.

“I heard a gun and yelling,” she replied. “I think there is something brewing.”

“Hopefully, it’ll be an end to this nightmare,” I scowled. “Did you get any sleep?”

“One of the side effects of my anti-depressants is insomnia. I have to take a mild sedative to go to sleep at night. If I don’t, I’m awake,” Alice said, giving me a sheepish grin. “Jacob, Casey and Henry have been talking in the kitchen. Apparently, Henry saw something when he drove up around four this morning.”

“Perhaps the police are gathering,” I smiled, running to the window but unable to see anything but deserted cornfields and overgrown grass. “Damn it.”

“I know. You can’t see a fucking thing,” Alice said. “I want to know if our saviors are there or they are being overly paranoid.”

The door rattled and we both gasped. Alice and I moved to the corner, away from the door as it slammed open. Jacob was glaring at both of us. “Which one of you has a GPS tracking chip?” he growled, stalking over to us and attempting to frisk us.

“Keep your meaty hands off me,” Alice snapped, pushing his hands away. “You smashed our cell phones. Those were the only things that had GPS on it. We do not have GPS chips on our bodies. Do you think we’re like dogs? Having tracking chips imbedded under our skin?”

“How else did the police find us?” Jacob hissed. “This place has been deserted for nearly fifteen years. No one has been out here since Casey’s grandparent’s died.”

“Possibly someone followed you or Henry?” I suggested, arching a brow but it caused my face to scream in pain. I knew my cheek was black and blue from Jacob’s blow.

“Unlikely,” Jacob retorted, stalking over to us and his skin turning an unnatural shade of puce. I
pushed Alice behind me, wanting to protect her. Jacob reached for me but was abruptly stopped by Casey and Henry burst into the room.

“Jake, we’ve got movement in the fields. We need to get them into the storm cellar,” Henry snarled.

“Let my daughter and niece go,” I pleaded. “They have nothing to do with this. Please?”

“Shut up.” Jacob roared, pushing me against the window and causing my head to smack against the glass. I heard it crack, but not shatter. I saw stars and my head began throbbing. I slid down the wall. Alice crouched in front of me, screaming at Jacob, but I couldn’t understand her. My brain was not firing on all cylinders. I felt myself being picked up and dragged away from the wall. My vision blurred and I felt like I was under water. I shook my head, trying to clear it.

We were moving through the house and toward the front door. Henry was dragging down Gianna and Kyra from upstairs. “Mom!” Kyra screamed, trying to squirm out of Henry’s grasp. I tried to reach her, but my hands felt like they were moving through mud. The humid air hit us as we got out onto the front patio. The sounds of shot guns cocking caught my attention and I looked around, hazily seeing several police pointing their guns at the men.

“Jacob Black, let her go and no one will get hurt,” screamed one of the police.

“NO! She’s mine,” he hissed, moving my body so I was a shield between him and the police. “You can’t have her.”

Henry let go of Kyra and Gianna. They took off and ran toward one of the police officers. He took them away from the house. Henry walked away, his hands raised and surrendering. “You fucking traitor!” Casey screeched. “Did you lead them here?”

“No, I didn’t, but in a way, I’m glad they’re here,” Henry retorted. “This has gone on long enough.” Another cop handcuffed Henry, leading him away from the house. Casey roared in anger, raising the gun that was tucked in his pants. He shot off two rounds at Henry, getting him in the back. Henry collapsed and was dragged away. Most of the police officers trained their guns on Casey. A handful of police kept their shotguns on Jacob.

“It’s over, Jacob,” said an older cop, moving closer to us.

“It’s not,” Jacob growled, tightening his arm around me and dragging me off the porch. He took out a gun from his belt and held it under my chin. I cried, afraid that I was never going to see my family, my husband. “Shut up, you bitch. If I can’t have you, no one can.” He moved us across the overgrown yard.

A pair of cops got Casey from the porch after using the taser on him. Alice got up and tried walk away, but she looked at me. She moved toward me. I shook my head, but Alice kept inching closer. Jacob growled, seeing Alice as she crept toward us. “Stay away,” Jacob yelled.

“Let her go, Jacob. She’s a mother. She doesn’t belong to you,” Alice said quietly. “She’s her own person. You broke up and you accepted that.”

“No, I didn’t. I never stopped wanting her. Her children should have been my children,” Jacob answered, his voice deadly calm. He let me go, pushing me onto the ground. “Now, I have nothing! I want to see you when I kill you, you bitch. I used to love you but now, I hate you. You ruined my fucking life, you worthless piece of shit!” He cocked the gun and prepared to shoot. Alice ran and put herself between me and Jacob. The gun went off and I screamed. Several shotgun blasts rang through the early morning air, catching Jacob in the chest and he collapsed onto the ground.
“Bella …” Alice wheezed. I looked down at her. Blood soaked through the shoulder of her blouse. I whimpered, pressing my hand to the wound. I was surrounded by the cops and pulled away. I tried to get back to Alice, but they swept her up and carried her across the field, loading her into the ambulance.

xx STTD xx

After talking with the police, we were driven to the hospital in Rockford where Alice was being stabilized before she was transported to Edward Hospital in Naperville. From what I understood, the bullet went through her body but had caused significant damage to her lung and shattered her shoulder blade. She needed to have surgery to repair the shoulder and a chest tube to reinflate her lung.

I was a zombie, trying to keep it together for my daughter and niece. I saw three people be shot today. One of which was killed. Alice and Henry were both alive. Alice, though, was a bit more stable than Henry. According to the police, Henry would be a paraplegic since one of the bullets lodged near his spinal cord. The most shocking thing was the fact that Jacob was now dead. He was shot eight times, one hitting the center of his forehead, after he had shot at me.

You’re going to need therapy for a long time, Cullen.

“Bella!” I heard as I walked into the hospital. I looked up and saw my husband. He sprinted toward me, enfolding me, Kyra and Gianna into his arms. I bit back sobs as he held us closely. “Thank God!”

“Daddy,” Kyra sniffled, snuggling up to her father.

“Gianna!” called Jasper. My niece squirmed out of our hold and ran into her father’s arms. He crushed her to his chest, sobbing into her matted blonde curls.

“He flew with me to the hospital,” Edward said, kissing my forehead and tightening his hold on me.

“Flew?” I asked.

“We took the newly-acquired Whitlock Technologies helicopter,” Edward blushed. “It’s a prototype for the police force with enhanced radar, night-vision …”

“You just wanted a new toy,” I quipped.

“I wanted to get to my family,” he whispered, running his fingers along my bruised cheek. “A car was going to take too long.” He kissed me gingerly, sighing contentedly. “Come on. We’ve got to fly home. Jasper and Gianna will go with the MedEvac helicopter.”

“All I want is to shower and to sleep in my own bed,” Kyra said. I smiled, kissing her cheek. Thankfully, she had not seen any of the carnage from the showdown in the cornfield. Neither did Gianna. They were traumatized enough without having seen Henry, Alice and Jacob being shot at.

“You’re not the only one,” I sighed. Edward hugged us close, walking us to the roof of the parking garage. It had been cleared of every car and sitting in the center of the parking lot was a sleek, black helicopter with the Whitlock Technologies logo on the tail. Leaning against the helicopter was Steve and Ricky. Kyra took off when she saw Steve and threw her arms around his neck. He eagerly responded, lifting her off the ground and hugging her tightly. Edward stiffened, wanting to break them apart. “Don’t. It was because of him that we’re okay.”

“You’re right,” Edward grumbled, tightening his hold around my waist. “Though, that doesn’t mean
I have to like it.”

A/N: Ding, dong, the dog is dead! Jacob is no more, though he did get the last word in. Asshole. Anyhow, we’ve got about four or five chapters left of the story before the epilogue. We have to deal with some of the aftermath, which will be another combo chapter (BPOV and EPOV). That will be happening next. We also have the premier of The Charmed Ones, including some Edward and Bella bonding time. So, yeah … we’re getting close to the end.

I have a few pictures with this chapter. They will be posted on my blog and tumblr (links for both of those are in my profile). You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation and on twitter: tufano79.

Finally, thank you all of you who have provided prayers for my mom and my family. Things, unfortunately, have taken a turn for the worse. She is in tremendous pain and is very, very weak. I’m thinking that the end is probably coming soon, honestly. Ideally, I’d like for her to miraculously to recover, but it’s highly doubtful at this point in time. Continued prayers would be appreciated. Thank you so much!
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

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Chapter Twenty-Three: A New Normal

BPOV

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“You’re right,” Edward grumbled, tightening his hold around my waist. “Though, that doesn’t mean I have to like it.”

We all clambered into the helicopter. Steve, as it would seem, was also a licensed pilot. We took off and flew back to our home in Wheaton. Well, a parking lot that had been cleared for landing before
Steve flew the helicopter back to the city. Edward drove us back to the house. Owen, Mia and Masen were all waiting in the front lawn with a huge banner across garage welcoming us home. Johnny was with them, a look of relief on his face. We got out of the car and were immediately swarmed by our family. Kyra welcomed it, but I felt stifled and afraid. Edward must have recognized how I felt since I stiffened in his arms. He gently pulled us away.

“Why don’t we give Kyra and your mother some breathing room?” he suggested, holding me close to his strong body. “They went through a harrowing ordeal and probably want to get some rest.”

A chorus of ‘okay’ and ‘I love you’s’ resounded in the yard as Edward led us up the stairs. Kyra went to her bathroom. Edward guided me to our bedroom and into our bathroom. He turned on the shower, letting the water warm up as he gently removed my clothes along with his. I picked them up, tossing them into the garbage can. The smell from the house, sulfur from the gun and Jacob’s disgusting scent were buried deep in the fabric of my clothing. I could never wash it out. I would never wear those clothes again. Why save them?

Edward helped me into the shower stall. I shuddered at how hot it was, but welcomed it. Since I was taken yesterday afternoon, I felt so dirty. I wanted to boil Jacob’s grimy paws off my skin. He hadn’t really touched me inappropriately – sexually, thank God - but he wasn’t my husband. The way Jacob looked at me, leered at me, violated me. It made me feel used, tainted, dirty, and unfaithful. I wrapped my arms around Edward’s waist, trying to get closer to him. Tears filled my eyes and I felt sick, but Edward’s quiet strength was there. He will always be there. Edward adores you. My husband, ever aware of my needs, enfolded me tighter into his embrace.

“Bella, you can talk to me,” Edward whispered, his fingers combing through my wet hair. “What happened?”

I shook my head, not wanting to relive what had happened. Not so soon after I had experienced it. It was too raw. However, even Edward asking what had happened had caused my stomach to clench and my heart to race. Nausea rolled through my body. It took all of my control to not throw up in the shower. Edward, however, tightened his hold of me in his arms, swaying us under the gentle stream of the water. I quietly fell apart in his embrace. I didn’t want my kids to see how upset I was. I didn’t even want Edward to know what I was feeling.

It was a dark, dark place. A place where I was filled with fear and hatred of my ex-boyfriend who was obsessed with me. Fucking dog. I hated him. He should have suffered when he died. He deserved it, for all of the hell he caused us.

I’m so going to need so much therapy.

That’s putting it mildly.

My cries morphed from tiny sniffs to full-blown sobs. I clawed at my husband’s chest, hating how empty and scared I felt. “Bella, you’re safe, my love,” Edward cooed, supporting me with his love and strength. He gently lowered us to the ground of the shower stall. I pressed my cheek against his chest, feeling the steady thrum of his heart. He pulled me into his lap and rocked me like a child. I took a few breaths when I heard Edward’s velvety smooth voice, “Jacob will never come to get you again. I’m so sorry he found you and hurt you. I love you and I wish I could make this all go away.”

“Just hold me, Edward,” I croaked, my face pressed to his bare chest, kissing just above his heart.

“I’m never letting you go,” he murmured. His voice was strained and I knew he was holding back his emotions, keeping them at bay while I lost it. After my crying jag, Edward stood up and carefully and lovingly washed every inch of my body. I wanted to do it, but I was so weak and exhausted.
from what I had endured. Once clean, Edward turned off the water and dried me off. Dressing me in a pair of yoga pants and one of his hoodies, he moved me to the bed after he had taken the time to blow dry my hair. My head was throbbing from the noise and my face was on fire from Jacob’s blow to my cheek. “Do you want an ice pack for your bruise on your face?” he asked.

I nodded. He quickly pulled on some clothes, darting out of the room. I crawled underneath the clean, fresh sheets on our king-sized bed. Edward came back with an ice pack and something to eat on a tray, along with a bottle of water. “Eat something, gorgeous,” he said softly.

“Yeah, I’m beautiful,” I said sarcastically. The food didn’t look appetizing so I just pushed it away after I grabbed the icepack and curled away from my husband, crying softly.

“Isabella Marie Cullen, you listen to me,” Edward said sternly, moving so he was in front of me. He crouched on the floor, brushing a tendril of hair that had fallen out of my messy bun. His fingers were soft and gentle as they caressed my skin. “You are the most gorgeous creature I’d ever laid eyes on.” I pointed to my cheek. “That will go away, love. Though, I want to kick Jacob’s ass for doing that to you.”

“You can’t. He’s dead,” I said woodenly. I closed my eyes, a few tears dripping down my cheeks. Edward tenderly wiped them away, kissing my nose. “Bella, you’re exhausted, emotionally drained and in pain. I know that the doctor’s checked you out and you have a mild concussion. Eat some food, take your medicine and get some sleep,” he urged, helping me back up and placing the tray over my legs.

“I can’t sleep,” I said, looking at the sandwich and handful of chips on the plate, along with a tiny pill on the tray. “I’m worried about Alice, Gianna, Kyra, Oliver … Shit! Oliver! Is he alright?”

“Oliver is okay. He is being treated at Central Dupage Hospital because of the attack that Casey did to him. He was pretty beat up, but he is expected to make a full recovery,” Edward explained, pulling off a corner of the sandwich and holding it up for me. “Eat, Isabella.”

I rolled my eyes, taking the sandwich from his hand and chewing on it, not really tasting it. Swallowing the food, I looked back at Edward. “What happened to Oliver?”

“He’s got a nasty concussion and several stitches in his scalp. He also has a few fractured ribs, a broken wrist and sprained ankle. He was admitted to the hospital because the doctors needed to perform surgery on his wrist to set it correctly. The break was quite extensive, almost smashed from what they told me,” Edward said, his face pulled into a deep pout. “He’ll be released in a few days and will be staying with us while he recovers. He has no other family besides his twin daughters. They are too young to take care of him.”

“That’s fine. I want to love up on him, since he was almost killed for protecting me,” I said, my voice taking on a hard edge. I looked at my meal, not wanting to eat. “Edward, I can’t handle this. I just want to sleep.”

“One more bite and then you can take your pain pills,” Edward bargained. I took a bite of the sandwich, forcing it down my gullet and downing the medication that was sitting on the tray with a gulp of water. “I’m going to bring this downstairs, check on Kyra and then come back to be with you, okay?”

“Yeah,” I said sleepily. He picked up the tray, placing it on the floor and kissing my lips before walking out of the bedroom. My eyelids drooped, exhaustion washing over me. I faintly remembered Edward slipping into bed behind me, kissing my neck. He said something, but my drug-addled brain
couldn’t comprehend it. I just snuggled into his arms and let the medications take me away, even if for a few hours.

xx STTD xx

EPOV

I watched her sleep. Though, she was not having a restful sleep. She tossed and turned, almost fighting in her sleep. I got punched a few times as she battled her mental and subconscious demons. She was crying and sobbing, reliving the moment of her tormentor’s death. I held my wife tightly until Kyra poked her head in our bedroom. She looked just as bedraggled as my wife. I wanted to clone myself to comfort both of my girls, but Kyra needed me. I kissed Bella’s neck before I got up, walking to check on my daughter.

“Daddy,” she said, falling into my arms. She cried softly, her fingers gripping my t-shirt. I moved us into her bedroom and sat us down on her rumpled bed. Kyra’s cries were heartbreaking. I hated Jacob even more than before. He’d made my little girl cry and broke my wife’s spirit.

What a fucking douche nozzle. I hope he’s burning in hell. Asshole.

I tightened my hug around Kyra, kissing her hair. “Shhhhh,” I soothed. “It’s okay, my sweet girl.”

“I keep having nightmares when I close my eyes. I know that we didn’t deal with what Mom and Aunt Alice dealt with, but I keep seeing Jacob, Casey and Henry’s faces and they’re torturing us. It’s awful!” she sniffled, pressing her cheek to my chest. I felt her tears soak my t-shirt. “I know that the nightmare is over, but why can’t I stop thinking about what happened.”

“You went through a tremendous ordeal. It will take a great deal of time before you feel safe, before you don’t feel like you’ve got someone watching you. Whatever you need, I will do everything in my power to ensure that you get it. For now, you just need to let us love you and protect you,” I said into her

“I’m afraid, Dad. What if I can’t go away to school?” she asked.

“If you need to defer enrollment for a year, I will support you, principessa. You need to do what you think is the best. However, don’t make any decisions now. Everything is too raw now.”

“You’re right, Daddy,” she said, stepping back from the bed and pinching her nose. She took a few deep breaths, smoothing out her messy curls. With a sad smile, she turned to me, “I’m going to go downstairs and eat something. I haven’t eaten since yesterday morning. And is there any way that you can call the therapist and reschedule my appointment?”

“I’ve already called her. She’s coming here, sweetheart. She’ll be here tomorrow,” I said, kissing her forehead. “Now, I think Nana and Papa are here. I can smell Nana’s chocolate chip cookies.”

“Ooooh, that sounds perfect,” Kyra snickered, hugging me once more before scurrying out of my arms. “Love you, Daddy.”

She went down the stairs and I heard her sweet voice greeting her grandparents. I went back into the bedroom, checking on Bella. She wasn’t in the bed and I heard sniffling in the bathroom. I knocked on the door, not wanting to disrupt her if she was going to the bathroom. I heard a quiet ‘come in.’ Ducking inside, I checked on my beautiful but tortured soul mate. “Gorgeous,” I cooed, sitting down on the floor with her. She was curled up in a tiny ball, her body trembling with her sobs. She didn’t waste any time and she crawled into my lap, her body forming to mine. I knew that her recovery would be long and tedious. I would be with her, every step of the way, but she needed my
assurances that I wasn’t going anywhere. I’d gladly give them to her. If it meant that I got to hold my wife, I would do this until the day I take my last breath.

Kissing her forehead and cupping her face, I looked into her chocolate colored orbs. “Did you get some rest?”

“Yeah,” she said, her voice sounding small and lost.

“Come on, then. Let’s go downstairs and spend time with our children. My parents are here and are going to stay for a few days,” I explained.

“They don’t have to do that,” Bella said, a little petulantly. “We can …”

“No, love. They want to take care of us. Charlie will be here tomorrow, after he picks up your mom from the airport with Phil,” I said, kissing her soft lips. “We need family at times like this.”

“My mom’s coming?” Bella asked.

“We sent a Whitlock jet when we got back from the farmhouse,” I said, running my fingers through her tangled hair that had fallen out of the bun from before she took her nap.

“Where was it?” she pressed, her brow furrowed in confusion. “The farmhouse? We were blindfolded for that portion of the journey. It was very disconcerting.”

“It was outside of Rockford on the outskirts of Poplar Grove,” I replied. I leaned my cheek against her hair, pulling her closer to my body. “The hospital we were in was in Rockford.”

“Have you heard about Alice?” Bella murmured, her body calming down.

“No yet, but I’ll call Jasper once we get downstairs,” I answered. I gently cupped her chin, looking deep into her eyes. “The nightmare is over, gorgeous. I know that we will have to endure some hurdles, but Jacob will never hurt you again.”

“I know. It’s just surreal,” she said, getting up off my lap. She helped me off the floor before she tossed her luscious brown hair into a messy bun. “It’ll take time, Edward – a great deal of time – for me to feel okay. Jacob hurt us, hurt me. He abducted us and invaded our safe little bubble. Granted, we hadn’t been safe for as long as he was around, stalking us for the past year, but I never, ever expected him to kidnap us.” She turned to me, falling into my arms. I swayed us slowly. “I heard you say that Kyra’s counselor is coming tomorrow.”

“She is,” I said.

“For all of us?” Bella asked.

“For you and her. For Kyra alone. For you alone. For us as a family. We will get through this, gorgeous. I promise you,” I vowed, a few tears slipping out of my eyes. “I love you, Bella. I’m sorry that I couldn’t protect you.”

“Don’t blame yourself, Edward. Don’t. You were not the mad man who haunted us for over a year,” she hissed, smacking my arm. “And you did protect us. Please, don’t blame yourself. I love you so much and I don’t want you to feel like you are at fault. Jacob was … is! He’s the one who did this to us. Not you. Never you.”

“I guess we all will be enjoying those counseling sessions,” I said, tilting her head back and kissing her soft lips. “Come on love, let’s go downstairs. Perhaps being with our family will put our minds at
“Lead the way, angel,” she said, smiling softly as she kissed me again.

xx STTD xx

BPOV

It had been a week since our ordeal at the farmhouse. Alice had been released and was back at home with Jasper, Adam and Gianna. Jasper was doting on her relentlessly, afraid that she was going to disappear. The damage to her arm was quite extensive, shattering her shoulder blade and nearly going through her heart. One centimeter to the left and her heart would have been obliterated. Alice could have died. That made me sick and incredibly guilty. Upon hearing about the extent of the damage, Jasper knew that he couldn’t go through with the divorce from Alice. He dropped it, moved all of her stuff back into their home and was taking the rest of his time off caring for her and for his daughter, who was emotionally scarred from the ordeal.

Hell, we all were.

And do you blame us?

Kyra was probably the most resilient. She had one emotional outburst, but she quickly bounced back after she met with her counselor. She told my daughter to write in a journal and she had taken to that, since she already kept a journal. She told me to do the same, but I couldn’t get into it since I was still in denial of what happened.

Denial was the wrong word. I was more in shock that Jacob had gotten that close. Close enough to rip us away from our families. Close enough to incapacitate Oliver, causing significant damage to him and possibly jeopardizing his future in security. Though, Edward would probably give him a job at Whitlock Technologies. He could work with Demitri. Oliver did have a college degree in finance, but found his work in security to be rewarding and kept him in shape. Now, with the possibility of getting sole custody of his daughters, Oliver wanted a job that was a little safer. The attack from Casey had unintentionally been a blessing in disguise, forcing him to look for other work. Though, he was not going to be working for several months as he rehabbed his wrist.

I was sitting in the family room, working on the final edit for the last movie in the Charmed series. Edward told me to just relax, but I needed to work. It kept my mind occupied, distracted from the shock and guilt from our abduction. My mom also helped. She was spoiling me rotten. At least, she was attempting to. “Bellini, you need to eat,” Mom said, putting a tray of food on the cocktail table. “You’re wasting away.”

“Let me try and get this dialogue right. It’s not flowing,” I said, my fingers flying over the keyboard. Mom shut the lid of my laptop, pulling it out of my grip and glaring at me. “Mom!”

“No, now,” she said, putting the laptop on the recliner and placing the tray on my lap. “The first movie is not even out yet. The editing for the final movie can wait.” She sat down next to me, spearing some food on the fork and bringing it up to my mouth. “Open wide.”

“Mom, I’m forty-four. I can feed myself,” I said, taking the utensil from her hand.

“Could have fooled me,” she smirked. “Bella, you’ve lost so much weight since you’ve returned from your ordeal.”

“I’m not hungry,” I shrugged. “I can’t really taste the food, Mom.”
“Doesn’t matter. You need to eat to get better,” she chided, pointing to the plate. “Do I need to make your favorite?”

“No, Mom. Ewww. I do not want deep fried bananas with tartar sauce,” I shuddered. “And that’s never been my favorite.”

“I know that,” Mom winked. “Eat up, Bellini. Afterward, we’re going to go for a walk. You need to get out of the house. Doctor’s orders.”

“What doctor?” I quipped.

“Doctor Dwyer, Mom MD,” Mom snickered, pointing to my plate. “Eat! I’m going to check on my other patient, Oliver. The poor man is helpless with that cast. If you don’t have at least half of that meal gone by the time I get back, I’m force feeding you.”

“Okay, okay. I’m eating,” I said, picking up the fork and tentatively chewing on a bite. Mom smiled, moving toward the entrance to the apartment with another tray for Oliver. I forced the food down my throat. I felt strangely lost today since Edward had to go into work. He didn’t want to, but the company wasn’t going to run itself and with Jasper being on medical leave, Edward had to step up to attend six meetings with potential clients and work with Demetri on the budget.

Shockingly, I ate most of my lunch. I was putting the plates away when Rosalie breezed in. “Thank God you’re out of those God-forsaken pajamas,” she said dramatically. “I know you’re in a funk, but fuck Bella!”

“It’s been only a few days, Rose,” I deadpanned, grabbing a water bottle and tossing one to her. She wrinkled her nose “My psycho ex-boyfriend freaking abducted me. I think I’m allowed to be in a funk.”

“Bells, we all knew that Jacob was cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs, but nothing like this,” Rose said, taking my hand. “Now, he’s gone and will never hurt you. The cops in that bumfuck town in northern Illinois made sure of that. All of that hunting must have paid off. They got him dead in the middle of the eyes. I only wish I could have been there to slice off his balls and stuff them down his throat. Fucking mongrel.”

I bit my lip, trying not to laugh. Rose really had a way of mincing words. This is why she’s a writer. Rose looked at me, smirking and her eyes twinkling. “You can laugh, Bella. It won’t kill ya.”

“I know,” I snickered, a small giggle escaping my lips. “I’ve needed you, Rose. You could always get me out of whatever cloud of doom I was hovering in.”

“That’s why Edward called me,” she said, kissing my good cheek. “Now, shower and get dressed. I’m glad you’re out of the pajamas, but where we’re going, jeans are not really appropriate. I’ll put on some makeup for your cheek. We have to go shopping for a dress for the premier of The Charmed Ones. You and your family are still coming.”


“Tough shit. You are. You can’t let the dog dictate your life,” Rose said gently, her eyes softening. “He’s gone. Say it with me. The dog is gone.”

“The dog is gone,” I repeated.

“I don’t believe you,” Rose said, her perfectly groomed brow arching cheekily. “Say it again. The Dog. Is. Gone.”
I glared at my best friend. “The dog is gone,” I growled. Rose prompted me to say it again and I did, repeating it over and over again until I was panting heavily. Jacob was gone. Never would he torment me, my family or my friends. He was lying in some Podunk town’s morgue, with bullet holes in his body. He was dead. Dead.

“Good. Now, get your smelly ass upstairs so we can find you a gorgeous gown for the premier,” Rose said, giving me a knowing smile.

“I do not smell,” I argued.

“Sorry to say, but you do. I love you, but get your stanky butt up the damn stairs,” Rose laughed. I rolled my eyes, going upstairs. I took a quick shower. I put on a summer dress and was trying to make sense of my hair when Rose came upstairs with Kyra. My daughter curled my hair while Rose deftly covered my cheek with makeup. Once she was done, I went downstairs. Esme was downstairs along with …

“Alice!” I smiled, rushing over to her. Gently, I hugged her and tears spilled down my cheeks. “Oh, Alice! I’m so sorry.”

“Bella, don’t apologize,” she said quietly, her voice serene. “This was not your fault.” She pulled back, cupping my cheek. “Don’t cry. Please? I’m fine. I’ll be fine. I have some physical therapy to look forward to, but I will okay.” Alice gave me a smirk. “Now, we have to worry about you. Rose told me that you don’t have a gown for the premier. I can’t exactly make you one, so I got conditional release from my warden to help you shop for one.”

“Though, no more than two hours,” Esme smirked. “Alice needs to be back for her afternoon nap.”

“Mom, I’m not a baby,” Alice whined.

“With the whining, could have fooled me,” Rose teased, ruffling Alice’s chic bob. Alice scowled at her, causing Rose to guffaw. I giggled, hiding behind my hand.

“Don’t shoot the messenger, Mary Alice Whitlock. Jasper is just concerned,” Esme said quietly.

“I know, I know,” Alice said, shifting her arm in her sling. “Let’s go before Jasper changes his mind and drags me back home.”

Rose, my mom and I got into the car and drove to a boutique in Naperville, with Ava, Mia and Kyra in our SUV. Esme was driving Alice in her SUV. Alice took over as soon as we walked in, telling the attendant what she pictured for us for the premier. Rose was going to wear a gold/platinum beaded strapless dress while I was going to be in a navy blue sheath dress with lace and simple beading. The dresses were high end, couture and perfect for the premier. After we found our dresses, Alice left with Esme. Rose and I then focused on finding dresses for Kyra, Ava and Mia. Kyra was going to be a bit more mature with a long, purple dress while Ava and Mia went with shorter dresses. Ava’s dress was a glittery gold while Mia stayed in the same color family as Kyra. We bought all of the dresses, deciding to get the accessories in California. Rose wanted to treat all of us to some funky, but expensive jewelry to wear for the premier.

Rose suggested that we go out to eat after our successful excursion but Kyra blanched. Her face was as white as a sheet. She ran to the back of the store, her sister and cousin on her trail. “What did I say?” Rose asked, surprised at Kyra’s abrupt departure.

“Kyra and I were out with Alice and Gianna when we were abducted. We’re fine as long as we’re not inside of a restaurant,” I explained. “Kyra’s therapist said that the fear would wane over time, but
for now, we’re avoiding restaurants and staying close to home.”

“Shit. I’m so sorry, Bella,” Rose whispered, moving to go to the restroom.

“Give them a few moments,” I said. “Mia has been the one who can get Kyra out of her anxiety attack. They’ve gotten really, really close. Mia has taken on a role of Kyra’s protector when Steve isn’t around.”

“Hot bodyguard is allowed back in the house?” Rose asked, waggling her brows.

“It was Steve who prevented further pain and strife for us,” I explained. “He was following us and he stayed with us every step of the way, getting the cops to surround the farmhouse. Steve and Kyra are close.”

“I bet SGD loves that,” Rose said flatly.

“He hates it. Steve is too old for Kyra and it’s not appropriate,” I quoted, deepening my voice to sound like Edward. “He’s threatening to go to the police if anything happens that is more than a hug. In less than two weeks, Kyra will be eighteen and he can’t pull that stuff.”

“You approve of her possible relationship with Steve,” Rose asked, her brow arching.

“I think that he cares for her. He hasn’t really dated since high school. His girlfriend died of leukemia and he kind of shut off his heart, only opening it up for my daughter,” I said, smiling softly. “Now, do I condone them screwing around and making me a grandmother? No. I want my daughter to get her college education and begin her career before children come into the realm of possibility.” I looked and I saw Mia supporting Kyra. “Do you want to go home, my sweet girls?”

Kyra looked up at me, her golden eyes filled with determination. “No. Let’s go out.”

“Are you sure?” I asked.

“I refuse to let that horrific man control anymore of our lives, Mom,” Kyra practically growled. “I’m not saying that we should go and have a twelve course meal, but I do want to go out with you and Aunt Rose.”

“How about we start small?” Rose suggested. “Tango? You can’t go wrong with tapas and sangria.”

“Kyra can’t drink sangria, Rosalie,” I snickered.

“We can,” Mom snorted. “Kyra, I’ll give you a sip of mine.”

“Mom!” I chastised. My mom shrugged, guiding Kyra and the girls out of the store. Rose and I followed, walking to the nearby tapas restaurant and getting at table outside since it was a beautiful summer evening. We spent the time talking about the premier and the plans preceding the premier. We were leaving in a week, spending time in a rented home in the Brentwood neighborhood. We also talked a little bit about Kyra’s condo, which she was planning on moving into upon our return to Chicago after the premier.

Kyra had mentioned to Edward that she wanted to take the year off, but after thinking about it, she decided to not let her fears stop her from starting her college experience. Kyra did suggest that she take a lighter load than most freshmen. After discussing it with her advisor, explaining her situation, her advisor agreed, but it meant that she’d probably go for five years. Kyra panicked slightly at the prospect of going for five years, but we had more than enough money to pay for her tuition to Northwestern University.
Rose paid for our meals and we drove back home. The ordeal must have taken a lot out of Kyra since she conked out against Mom’s shoulder. My mother held her tightly, giving me a warm smile. We arrived back at the house. Edward was home and was so happy to see us. When he saw his sleeping daughter, he maneuvered her into his arms, carrying her up to her bedroom. Mom got out, whipping out her phone to talk to her husband. Rose got out of the car since she had to drive back to the city. “Your plane tickets are going to be couriered over sometime this week, along with the keys to house in Brentwood and an itinerary for the week you’re in Los Angeles. I’ve already arranged for a couple of makeup artists for the day of the premier for you and the girls. Tell your husband to get a new tuxedo, as well as ones for the boys. How’s Owen doing?”

“He’s down to a cane, but he can’t stand for very long,” I explained. I frowned, remembering what had caused my son’s injuries. Jacob and his lackey, Mackenzie, t-boning his car with theirs. Though the frown quickly turned to sympathy. Mackenzie had been abused since she ran into Jacob and her accident with the door caused an intracranial bleed. She was in a persistent vegetative state and would never wake up. Her mother refused to pull the plug, praying for a miracle, but there was no chance that she’d recover.

“You okay, Bella?” Rose asked.


“That bitch got what she deserved. She made your daughter’s life hell, caused Owen’s accident and had a hand in your abduction. I’m not sorry that she got her brain scrambled,” Rose said, crossing her arms over her chest. “Don’t waste anytime pitying the girl.” Rose hugged me. “Call me if there’s anything missing from the package you’re receiving from the movie studio. I love you, Bellini!”

“Love you, too, Rose,” I said, hugging her back. “Drive safe and text me when you get home, okay?”

“Yes, Mom,” Rose laughed, getting back into her car and waving as she backed out of the driveway.

I walked into the house, seeing Oliver sitting at the kitchen table. He was trying to type on Edward’s laptop using one hand. “Hey, Oliver. What are you doing?” I asked.

“Filling out an application for Whitlock Technologies. Though, it’s only a formality,” he responded, his nose wrinkled. “I hate not being able to type.”

“Let me help you,” I said, putting my leftovers into the fridge. I sat down next to Oliver, filling out the application for him. Edward came down as we were finishing. “You are evil, making Oliver fill out the application on his own, Edward.”

“I can’t do it, love,” he answered, pointing to some disclaimer on the bottom of the screen. “I know that we will hire Oliver, but I can’t read his answers to the questions. I did help him with the personal information, but the questions had to be completed by him or in your case, you.”

“Is she hired, Mr. Edward?” Oliver quipped. Edward arched a brow, undoubtedly because of Oliver’s faux pas in calling my husband ‘Mr. Edward.’ “Sorry. Um, Edward.”

Giving Oliver a crooked smile, “My wife would go bat shit crazy at Whitlock Technologies,” Edward snorted.

“I can barely turn on a computer,” I snickered. Edward sat down next to me, taking my hand and kissing my palm, laughing quietly. “Okay, I know a little more than that, but I’m not the most tech savvy. I wouldn’t go completely bat shit crazy, but I know my strengths and that’s to defer to my
hubby when it comes to Whitlock Technologies or anything technological.”

“I’m kind of surprised that you want to offer me a position at your company, Edward,” Oliver said, smiling shyly. “I’m kind of like your wife. I don’t know much about technology.”

“You may not know about technology, but you do know numbers. My brother, Demetri, is our chief financial officer, but I would like to start an educational aspect to Whitlock Technologies. I want to donate and create educational tools for all students. I want to provide educational grants for teachers in districts that are in need. That’s where you come in, Oliver. You, along with Demetri and me, will help us choose the grant winners and provide them with technology or money to make their teaching easier.”

“That sounds amazing, Edward,” I breathed. “When did you come up with this?”

“It was actually Demetri who suggested it, based off a conversation from Alex, but he didn’t have the personnel to do it. Your first client will be the Cullen Children’s Foundation. We want to upgrade our educational resources in all of the centers,” Edward answered, grinning widely at Oliver. “You’d start after the first of the year.”

“Wait, I’m hired?” Oliver asked.

“Was there any doubt?” Edward chuckled.

“What about an interview? What if Demetri doesn’t like me?” Oliver pressed, furrowing his brows.

“And is that nepotism? I don’t want you to get in trouble for hiring me without a complete interview.”

“Oliver, breathe,” Edward laughed, rubbing Oliver’s shoulder. “It’s not nepotism if we’re not related. Secondly, all of the department heads are on board with the educational program and Demetri was the one to suggest you. He contacted your advisor from your undergrad and she gave you a glowing recommendation, explaining that you had previous experience in this area.”

“Yeah. I interned for the Meemic Foundation before it went belly up,” Oliver said. “I enjoyed the work, but I wanted to do something different. I was hired by Ricky just before he retired and I’ve been working for him ever since. Are you sure it’s alright? I mean, don’t you want me to interview with Demetri or Mr. Jasper?”

“Jasper is taking a step back from the company until Alice is fully healed. He said that he would probably be away from Whitlock for about a year. I’m stepping into the CEO position and while I’m not comfortable with it …” Edward said, blushing slightly.

“Why?” Oliver asked.

“Because I’m inherently shy, Oliver. I really don’t like meeting new people or putting myself out there. I’m certain Ricky told you about how Bella and I met,” Edward laughed. “She was my first and only girlfriend. I knew from the moment I spoke to her, that she was the one for me.”

“That’s so sweet,” Oliver cooed.

“I think so. I married my best friend, first and only love,” I replied, moving to sit in Edward’s lap. He wrapped his arms around me, kissing my neck softly. “And don’t worry about Whitlock. You’re not the first person who worked for us that went over to work in the company.”

“Matthew was shot when we last worked with Ricky. He was my personal bodyguard and he was attacked my brother. He works with Bella’s dad in the police/criminal investigative division,”
Edward explained, his fingers moving underneath my skirt of my dress. He idly traced circles above my knee and moved more up my thigh. I stopped his hand, giving him a stern look. “If you want to meet with Demetri and have a formal interview, I’m more than willing to oblige, but you are hired as far as I’m concerned. Okay?”

“I’d like to still meet with Demetri, but it can be once you get back from California,” Oliver answered. “I’m going to make myself a sandwich and then plop myself down in front of the television. The White Sox are on tonight.”

“Ugh,” Edward groaned, wrinkling his nose. “Why couldn’t you be a Cubs fan?”

“Born and raised in the south side,” Oliver laughed, walking to the garage to get to the apartment. “Thank you so much, Edward and Bella. You two are amazing people and I couldn’t have wished for better bosses and such good friends.” He gave us a sweet smile and a wave before going upstairs.

“Edward, you are such a good man,” I whispered, turning to look at my sweet, but sexy husband. “I love you so much.”

“I love you, too,” Edward replied, rewarding me with his signature crooked grin. “And why am I such a good man?”

“Because you have such a wonderful heart and I’m so lucky to be married to you, baby,” I whispered, brushing his thick hair away from his forehead. I leaned forward, kissing his lips softly. He let out the most delicious groan/growl. He tried to deepen the kiss but Masen, Owen and Max came lumbering in from the backyard. Max ran over to me, placing his furry head on my knee and whimpering for a treat. “You are such a stinker, Max. No treats. I’m all out.”

“He goes to you, Mom, because you spoil him,” Masen laughed, grabbing a water bottle from the fridge.

“Well, sorry, bub. Nothing today,” I said, shifting on Edward’s lap. “Oh, Edward, you need to take the boys shopping for tuxedos for the premier. We’re leaving in a week.”

“We’ll go this weekend,” Edward said.

“I want a cane that matches my tux,” Owen said, nibbling on some string cheese. “Be all swag.” He brushed his shoulders and puffed out his chest. “Tasha thinks I’m sexy and swag.”

“What the hell is swag?” Edward chortled.

“Hell if I know,” Owen answered, shrugging. “I’m going to call Tasha. She’s going on vacation tomorrow. I won’t see her for almost two weeks with her vacation and our trip out to Los Angeles.” Owen grabbed another string cheese and limped up to his room. Masen said that he was going to take Max for a walk, meeting up with a friend of his at the park. Edward reminded him of his curfew and Masen was out the door.

Edward helped me to the family room and we turned on the television after he had eaten my leftovers. He turned on some mindless reality show, wrapping me in his arms. “So, did you get your outfit for the premier?” Edward asked, his fingers gliding along my arm. “Will I have to hire security to keep pervs from ogling my sexy, fuckhot wife?”

“I’m safe, but Rose’s dress is quite sexy,” I giggled. “I think she’s entitled to be sexy since it is her book that is being brought to the silver screen.”

“Will I be ogling my sexy, fuckhot wife?” Edward asked, his voice gruff with need.
“When are you not ogling me?” I deadpanned, looking up at his handsome, chiseled face. He barked out a laugh, picking me up and cradling me in his arms. Since I was taken, Edward had been very clingy and I didn’t blame him. In fact, I welcomed it. I loved feeling his strong arms around me. It grounded me, reminding me that I was safe and that Jacob was gone. If only he’d disappear from my nightmares. Ugh! I snuggled against his chest, nuzzling his jaw with my nose and inhaling his clean, fresh scent. “Rose said that a courier will be coming with our tickets, the keys to the house and itinerary sometime next week.”

“I think the timing of this trip is perfect. We need to get away,” Edward said, his lips caressing my jaw. “This whole thing has been harrowing on you, Kyra and the entire family.” He took my face in his hands, staring into my eyes. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine, Edward,” I said, kissing his pink lips.

He traced my cheek, glowering at the bruise that probably was apparent since the makeup faded away. His fingers moved to the dark circles under my eyes from the lack of sleep I’ve not been getting. I kissed his jaw, placing my head on his shoulder. He sighed, obviously frustrated with my response but he stayed quiet about it. My eyelids drooped and I found myself drifting off. Just before I fell asleep, I prayed that no nightmares would surface because I didn’t want Edward to worry.

Just like usual, my dreams were garbled. Then, Jacob’s face appeared and he began his nightly torture. My dreams were much more brutal, bloody and painful than reality. Jacob got his way and stole me from my husband, doing unthinkable things to my body. He made Edward watch as he …

“No,” I whimpered, squirming away from him. Jacob wouldn’t let me go. He ran his hands over me, hurting me with each pass of his paws. “Don’t touch me.” Jacob laughed at me, grabbing my hair and tearing my clothes away. I started panicking, backing away from him until I reached a wall.

“Bella,” Jacob snarled, backhanding me and throwing me across the room. “You’re mine.”

“No! No! NO!” I screamed, trying to stop him from … “Please! Don’t.”

“Bella,” Jacob repeated, his arms wrapping around me. “Bella! Bella!”

I gasped, my eyes opening as I found myself on the ground with Edward holding me tightly. His eyes were filled with tears. I felt like I was drowning, moving my arms through cement. “Bella, love, you’re safe,” Edward sobbed, brushing my hair away. “I’m so sorry that I wasn’t there to protect you. I’m here now and I will always be here.”

“Edward?” I choked out, looking up at him. With shaky hands I reached up to touch him, to make sure he was real. “Edward, is it you? Are you real? He didn’t …?” I shuddered and clutched my chest.

“Bella, I’m here baby. I’m real,” he said, his voice breaking as he pressed my hand to his chest above his frantically beating heart. “Bella …” His eyes closed and the tears that were threatening to fall, spilled onto his cheeks. “Bella, please forgive me.”

I sat up and wrapped my arms around him. We both cried on the floor of the family room as some inane dance show played in the background. I gripped Edward’s shirt, leaning my cheek against his shoulder. “I need help, Edward. These nightmares …”

“Whatever you need, Bella,” Edward vowed. “More therapy, medication, my unending devotion.”

“I already have the last one,” I laughed, sniffing loudly.
“That you do,” he said, taking my face in his hands. I jumped, remembering my all-too-vivid nightmare. “Bella … I’ll never hurt you. I’m so s …”

“Don’t apologize. It’s my own brain that is running away from me,” I said, placing my hands over his. “But, I think I need to meet with a psychiatrist in addition to more therapy. I didn’t think that this would have hit me so hard. I know he’s dead. I saw him die. But, my mind can’t help …”

“I’ll make a few calls tomorrow. I’m staying home to take care of you. I’ll telecommute,” Edward said firmly. “I want my love to feel better. I hate seeing you like this, Bella. I feel so helpless. What can I do?”

“Just hold me and tell me that I’m not crazy,” I laughed humorlessly.

“You’re not crazy,” Edward soothed, tightening his embrace around me. “You’re just dealing with the aftermath of a traumatic ordeal.”

“We’ve had way too many of those, Edward,” I deadpanned, tucking my head under his chin.

“I think, hopefully, that this is the last one,” Edward murmured. “But, we have to adjust to this new normal for a while.”

“New normal?” I questioned.

“Yeah, love. In time, our lives will get back to what we were used to previously, but until then, we have this new normal we have to contend with. No body guards, extra freedoms, unexplained fears and frightening nightmares,” he said. “No matter what, though, I’ll be by your side, Bella. I love you. More than you can possibly ever understand, but I love you.”

“I love you, too,” I muttered, my eyes brimming with unshed tears. “Did I hurt you?”

“You got a few kidney shots, but I’m okay, Bella. Let’s just worry about you for now. Alright?” He caressed my cheek, smiling crookedly. The concern in his eyes was abundant, along with the love. “Now, let’s go upstairs and get into bed. I think I know the thing to stop these nightmares.”

“What’s that?” I asked as I felt myself being lifted off the floor. “Edward! Stop! You’ll hurt yourself!”

“I’m perfectly fine,” he answered, giving me a cheeky grin. He carried me up the stairs and into our bedroom, placing me on the bed.

“What’s this miracle nightmare cure?” I asked as he locked our door. “Are you planning on screwing it out of me?”

“I’m perfectly fine,” he explained, giving me a cheeky grin. He carried me up the stairs and into our bedroom, placing me on the bed.

“What’s this miracle nightmare cure?” I asked as he locked our door. “Are you planning on screwing it out of me?”

“As much as I would love to be with you, make love to you and cherish your body, I don’t think that it would be appropriate,” he explained. “Though, I think if we sleep together, naked, it might help?” He gave me a sheepishly innocent expression. “Skin-on-skin contact?”

“Oddly enough, that sounds pretty perfect,” I said. “I want to feel your body all around me. Protecting me from my demons.”

“Helping us adjust to our new normal,” he said, grinning boyishly. Together, we removed our clothes and tangled into the bed, not knowing where one ended and the other began. Edward hummed quietly until I drifted back asleep. For the first time since our abduction, I didn’t have one nightmare.
Naked Edward is now my new dream catcher.

A/N: So, what did you think? Good? Bad? Indifferent? We had some questions answered - what did happen to Oliver and Mackenzie? What happened to Alice? How is Bella and Edward faring with this whole thing? We also have some more things to wrap up as well. Now, up next will be an all Edward chapter and it will be leading up to their trip to Los Angeles along with a couple of days in Los Angeles for the Charmed Ones premier.

No pictures with this chapter, but there will be a ton with the next chapter. You can find the pictures on my blog and tumblr (links for both are on my profile). You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation and twitter: tufano79. Leave me some.

Also, thank you for your prayers and sweet words regarding my mom. Unfortunately, on May 27th, she passed away early in the morning. She was in a great deal of pain at the end and it was torturous to see her suffer so. She is with her family and I know I’ll see her again soon. Hugs to all of you and thank you for sticking with me.
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

We also have some more things to wrap up as well. Now, up next will be an all Edward chapter and it will be leading up to their trip to Los Angeles along with a couple of days in Los Angeles for the Charmed Ones premier.

Chapter Twenty-Four: Changing and Healing

EPOV

“Dad?” came the sweet voice of my oldest daughter. She came into my office, wearing some sort of beach cover up thing. I saved the work, turning to my daughter. “What are you working on?”

“Finalizing orders and checking on our numbers for this quarter,” I explained, closing my laptop. “What’s up, principessa?”

“Um, Aunt Rose called to see if all of us want to go to the beach,” Kyra replied. “Steve said he’d drive us down to the city since I’m not comfortable driving in Chicago.” I growled lowly when she mentioned Steve. He was a good guy, saved my family, but he was still a twenty-five year old man lusting over my teenage daughter. I mean, she was jailbait. “Dad, stop snarling.”

“Kyra, he’s so much older than you,” I said, arching a brow over my reading glasses, trying to keep my temper in check.

“Um, Aunt Rose called to see if all of us want to go to the beach,” Kyra replied. “Steve said he’d drive us down to the city since I’m not comfortable driving in Chicago.” I growled lowly when she mentioned Steve. He was a good guy, saved my family, but he was still a twenty-five year old man lusting over my teenage daughter. I mean, she was jailbait. “Dad, stop snarling.”

“Kyra, he’s so much older than you,” I said, arching a brow over my reading glasses, trying to keep my temper in check.

“You’re older than Mom,” Kyra argued. I shot her a glare. Kyra just smirked crookedly, crossing her arms over her chest. “Besides, we’re just friends. That’s all. Don’t get your boxers in a wad.” I cleared my throat, hardening my stare. Kyra blushed, biting her lip. Twisting her hands, she looked up at me, “I’m sorry, Dad. But don’t worry, please? I like Steve but not like that. We’re friends. Friends. That’s all.”

I pinched my nose, taking a cleansing breath. Friends, my ass, but I’ve got to chill out. Deep breaths, Cullen. In through your nose and out through your mouth. Opening my eyes, I looked back at my daughter. “Don’t forget that we all need to pack for our trip to Los Angeles, Kyra. Have you started?” I asked. My daughter nodded as the rest of my children came down stairs, also dressed to go to the beach.

In reality, having them go out was probably for the best. Bella’s sleep schedule was now erratic. Sometimes I could keep the nightmares away and other times, she fought me, tooth and nail, all night long. Last night was the latter. She was currently up in our bedroom, sleeping, thanks to a tranquilizer. We also had an appointment at a psychiatrist’s office to get her evaluated in the late
evening today. “Okay, you all can go. Do you have things packed to stay overnight?”

“We got them, Daddy,” Mia responded, patting her bag. “Aunt Rose said for us to bring stuff to stay over. We’re going to Navy Pier for dinner.”

I put my laptop on the table, walking to the kitchen. Pulling out my wallet, I handed Kyra all of the cash I had inside. “Have fun tonight and call before you go to bed, okay?”

“Thanks, Daddy,” Kyra said, kissing my cheek before handing out the money to her siblings, dividing it evenly among them. “I love you.”

“I love you guys more,” I said, hugging all of them before they clambered out into Steve’s newly purchased Jeep. “Buckle up and be safe.” Kyra waved before turning to Steve as he helped into the passenger seat. His ears were red as he smiled sweetly at my daughter. “Friends, my ass,” I repeated out loud as I closed the door, watching them as they drove away from the house. I went back to the kitchen to make some breakfast for my slumbering wife. I made her favorites, but much smaller portions. She was still not eating a lot since she was a nervous anxious mess. Her appetite was coming back, but not as quickly as I would have liked. Renee threatened to force feed her banana concoction, but that sent Bella into a minor panic attack. Renee decided to spend the day with Esme, buying things for Kyra’s condo and spoiling her oldest grandchild.

Walking upstairs with Bella’s breakfast, I found her tangled in our bedding and drooling on my pillow. Max, who had snuck into our room, was curled around her and growled lowly when I entered. “Relax, dog. I won’t hurt her. I’m the good guy, remember?” Max’s tail thumped the bed as he moved closer to Bella. “I know you’re worried about her, Max. I am, too.” Max whimpered, putting his head on Bella’s leg. “Hopefully we’ll figure something out tonight, bub.” I handed him a piece of bacon. He chomped on it happily, snuggling back to Bella’s side.

I put the tray of food on the dresser, climbing into bed with my wife. Max watched as I caressed her cheek. His golden brown eyes watched me, almost with concern as carefully roused the love of my life. “Gorgeous,” I cooed, tracing her delicately beautiful features. “My Bella, please, open your eyes for me.”

Bella let out a little groan, pressing her face into my pillow. I rubbed her back gently and continued to wake her up. After a few moments, her eyes opened, squinting at me. “What time is it?” she asked, her voice raspy and deep from her slumber. Max’s tail thumped as he put his head on her thigh. She ran her fingers over his fuzzy head. “You protecting me from my nightmares, Max?” He panted, almost smiling at her question. “I’m so groggy, Edward.”

“It’s because you took a tranquilizer around four,” I said, helping her sit up and cradling her to my chest. She snuggled in my arms, quiet and tense. “How bad last night?”

“He succeeded,” she spat, her tiny fist clenching my shirt and her body shuddering. I didn’t need the specifics, but with that one statement, her mind had twisted what happened to her into something dark and violent, violating her in the most sadistic of ways. “Why can’t I move past this, Edward? I don’t want to keep reliving and imagining what could have happened if the cops hadn’t arrived!”

“Bella, for the better part of the past year, Jacob has been torturing us. He wormed his way into our lives and caused this massive upheaval. Despite our best efforts, he still managed to get his hands on you, Alice, Kyra and Gianna. He was ruthless. He broke an innocent girl and convinced two former employees that you were meant for him. What’s worse is that he was once someone you cared for and seeing him so changed impacted you,” I said, kissing her forehead.

“Do you hate me?” Bella asked, her voice tiny.
“What? Never! Bella, I could never hate you,” I growled, gently cupping her cheek and forcing her to look up at me. “Why would you think that?”

“I don’t know. It’s just that my insecurities are coming back. I feel so worthless. Jacob knew what I went through when I was a kid and he …” she muttered, tugging her face from mine and laying back on my chest. Her body shook with silent sobs and her tears soaked my shirt. “I just want to feel normal! Why can’t I get past this like Kyra?”

“Baby,” I whispered, tightening my arms around her. “Children are resilient. Besides, they didn’t endure all that you did. It’s understandable that it will take time. I promise you, though, that I will always be with you. I love you and I will do everything in my power to make you feel better.” She nodded, tightening her arms around my waist. “Now, I have some breakfast for you and then we have an appointment.”

“For what?” she asked.

“A psychiatrist. The counseling is helping, but perhaps there’s something more that they can do to help with your anxiety attacks,” I said. “And the nightmares?”

“You think I’m crazy,” she said flatly.

“No, I think you need help. I’m worried about you and concerned that I am not able to help you. You remember Alice and her issues when she began her ‘change’? I think it’s similar with you, but instead of dealing with menopause, you’re coping with this traumatic event,” I said softly. “I will be here for whatever you need, but you need help.”

Bella sighed, shuddering as she sat up. Her face was puffy and red from her crying jag. “You’re right,” she whispered. “But you don’t think I’m crazy?”

“Never. Just in pain and in need of extra assistance,” I said. “I’ve made you breakfast and then I’ll help you shower.”

“I am capable of washing myself,” she said, a smile playing on her lips.

“I know, but I want to be close to you,” I replied, getting up to retrieve the tray. She nibbled on her food, giving most of her bacon to Max. I finished what she couldn’t eat. I helped her to the bathroom and we took a shared shower, despite the fact that I had already taken one when I woke up at six. Bella was very guarded while showered, but most of it was due to her nightmare. I loved up on her, assuring her that I was never going to leave and promising to help her every step of the way. Once we were clean, Bella asked if she could have a few moments to herself to get ready. I kissed her temple, going into the bedroom to dry off and put on some clothes. After making the bed, I went downstairs to do the dishes.

I worked on my laptop, drafting a plan for the educational grant portion of Whitlock Technologies. It would be Oliver’s baby, but the type-A guy in me felt the need to get the ball rolling. I had completed all of my previous work. I spent an hour doing some preliminary research and creating a folder on our server to store the links, paperwork and miscellaneous information. After that, I did some work for the Foundation, approving several requests for repairs to the buildings, requisitions for new equipment and submissions for a few new sites in the Pacific Northwest and the island of Maui.

Maybe Bella and I could go to Maui and visit my cousin, Irina, her wife, Kelly and, their son, Kyle. A vacation is exactly what the doctor ordered, damn it.

Bella came downstairs. She looked more alert. Her eyes were still wary and her posture guarded, but
she was up and moving. And she didn’t kick me in the balls for considering a shrink. She sat down next to me, looking at my laptop. “Oooh, Maui. We should go,” she said, looking at my email.

“I’ll give them my approval to begin construction. We can personally attend that opening and have another honeymoon,” I said, kissing her forehead. She nodded, sliding her arms around my waist. “Perhaps we can visit Irina, Kelly and Kyle?”

“Oh! You haven’t heard. Kyle is now living in San Diego with his fiancée,” Bella smiled. “He completed his residency and is working as a pediatric orthopedic surgeon in Rady Children’s Hospital.”

“When is the wedding?” I asked, smiling and remembering my cousin. We had met him for the first time when we went to Maui shortly after Bella moved to Chicago. Kyle was a lot like me, in the fact that he was teased and socially awkward. He was geeky, nerdy and bullied for having two moms. We bonded over the teasing and he looked at me like a father-figure, despite having a close relationship with his birth father. He stayed in close touch, but the emails and phone calls tapered off when he completed his undergrad at Stanford, continuing on to get his medical degree from the same school.

“Not until next summer, according to Kelly,” Bella answered. “Kyle’s fiancée, Ainsley, has one more year of her residency. She has an offer from Rady Children’s Hospital to work in their oncology department. Her attending physician that she worked under at the hospital loved her work and she’s going to be working there as well as have privileges at Scripps Mercy Hospital.”

“Well, I still think it would be nice to have a vacation that coincides with the opening of the Foundation in Maui. After the year we’ve had, I think we deserve it,” I said, pulling her chair closer. Bella shook her head, leaning it on my shoulder.

“Where are our children?” Bella asked after a few moments. “It’s awfully quiet in here. Either they’re up to no good or they’re gone.”

“Rose invited them to go to the beach. Steve drove them to the city and they’re spending the night with her and Tim,” I explained. Bella’s lips turned down and tears formed in her eyes. “Are you upset? I’m sorry. I can call them …”

“No, I’m fine,” she said, wiping on her cheeks. “I wish I could have said goodbye.” She sniffled a little bit, getting up from her seat. She swiped a tissue, blowing her nose and taking a few deep breaths. “I’m assuming I’m this emotional because of what happened, but I … I … I don’t know.”

I dialed Kyra’s number and she picked up immediately. I handed the phone to Bella, who left me in the kitchen. I heard her speaking quietly on the phone. I finished my work on my laptop before logging off. Bella came back, clutching my cell phone tightly in her hands. She walked directly to me and sat down on my lap. Her arms snaked around my neck and she shuddered against me. My heart shattered at seeing my wife so upset. She was so strong, but this ordeal had cut her to the quick. “It’ll be okay, my love. I’m here,” I whispered, repeating it over and over again.

I knew we would be okay, but it would take time.

Hopefully.

xx STTD xx

“Edward, thanks for meeting up with me,” Jasper said as we sat down in a booth at a local diner. “I needed some time away from my wife. Alice is not a fan of her physical therapist. The words that
come out of her mouth during the sessions would make a sailor blush. Not that I blame her. The strengthening and range of motion exercises are brutal. I know she needs to do them so she can get the full use of her arm back, but I hate to see her in so much pain.”

“Hey, it’s no big deal,” I said, looking at the menu and giving my best friend a soft, understanding smile. Alice’s recovery was physical. Bella’s was psychological. “Bella is meeting with her counselor and she wanted some time to herself. She usually does after her appointments.”

“How’s Bella doing?” Jasper asked, his eyes softening.

“It was bad the first night after her appointment with the psychiatrist, but since she was put on some anti-anxiety medications, things have settled down. Dr. Romano wanted to put her on some anti-depressants, but Bella was adamant on not being put on those medications,” I explained. “A lot of what Bella’s dealing with is the guilt for what happened to Alice, Gianna and Kyra. She’s doing so much better, but she has moments where she’s very upset. It’s mainly at night, with the nightmares.”

“Alice has those, too. But, she pops a few pain pills and she slips into a coma-like state,” Jasper snorted. “But, Alice is already on anti-anxiety meds and anti-depressants from her own psychiatrist.”

He looked at the menu. “What’s good here?”

“I don’t know. This place opened while Bella had me on my boiled chicken diet,” I snickered. “Anything on this menu looks delicious and highly unhealthy.” The waitress came and we ordered coffee and some cheesy omelets with sausage, bacon, biscuits and a smidgen of fruit. “Now, what’s up, Jasmine?”

He chuckled, giving me a smirk. “I haven’t heard that in forever. I’ve missed it, Edwina.”

“I can imagine,” I said, arching a brow. “You were very elusive on the phone, Jas. Is everything okay?”

“Everything is fine. Honestly, everything is great,” Jasper answered. “But, I think that I may cash in my chips with the company. I love what I do with Whitlock, but I think that I need to spend time on healing my family. I know that I’m taking a year off, but with everything that has happened with me and Alice, I …”

“I understand why you want to take some time, but don’t make any decisions. Not yet,” I murmured. “I lived with Alice for my entire life and I couldn’t handle her despite her constant support and love when I was growing up. She’s even worse when she’s not at her best.”

“Don’t I know that,” Jasper muttered. “I just feel like I’ve abandoned my family.” He tugged on his graying hair, giving me a pitiful pout. “You and I both have enough to retire and live comfortably until we are three hundred years old.”

“That’s not the point. Please, don’t make any rash decisions. I will support you in whatever you decide, but everything is just too raw. I told the same thing to Kyra about college,” I explained. Jasper arched a brow over his steaming cup of coffee. “Kyra was freaking out the first day after they returned from their ordeal. She was afraid about going away to school. Now, she’s excited to go.”

“Children are much more resilient than us old farts,” Jasper snickered. “Gianna is over the kidnapping, but she still is hesitant about her mother. She probably will continue to be. Despite Alice’s efforts during the kidnapping, Gianna will not trust her.” Jasper looked up at me. “I’ll take your advice, Edward. However, I believe that I will be retiring.”

“It won’t be the same without you,” I responded sadly.
“I still have a year and I could come back, kicking your ass with all of my new ideas,” Jasper snorted. “Now, tell me about this movie premier that you and Bella are going to in a couple of days.”

“Well, the premier is not for a week and a half. We’re flying out there so Bella and Rose can finalize any details before the red carpet. They also have some interviews and meetings for the upcoming movies as well. The second week, after the premier, the kids are going back to Chicago. Renee, Charlie, and my parents are going to help Kyra pack up before she moves in while I’m flying Bella down to Cabo San Lucas for a vacation. She doesn’t know that part.”

“How private is the locale in Cabo?” Jasper asked, waggling his brows.

“On a hill, completely separate from the other villas,” I smirked. “It’s secluded, quiet and absolutely beautiful. From the rental agent I spoke to, we’re the only couple staying in the vicinity. All of the food is included and we could roam around the property naked for all we care.”

“I am not jiggly, asshole,” I snarled, throwing a paper napkin at him. “I still have the outline of my six pack, thank you very much. If anyone is jiggly, it’s you.” Jasper flipped me off as our meals arrived.

“I think you and Bella will enjoy your trip to Cabo. You both need it, honestly. I’m glad that you’re taking her away from all of this shit,” Jasper said, his mouth full of omelet. “Have the cops from the Podunk town called with any more questions?”

“Yes. Jacob is still dead. Henry and Casey are being held without any sort of bail. They are being charged with a litany of felonies, of which they are pleading guilty and they will stay in jail for the rest of their natural lives,” I shrugged.

“They’re not fighting the charges?” Jasper asked.

“They aren’t,” I shrugged. “Henry had the most to lose, too. He had a young wife and children. Now, he won’t ever see them again because of all of the crap with Jacob. She’s divorcing him and suing for full custody. And Casey? Well, he’s a douchebag. A douchebag who knows that he lost.”

“I’m glad that they are not forcing Bella and everyone to go through the headache of a trial in Bumfuck,” Jasper snorted humorlessly.

“Me, too,” I sighed, digging into my own breakfast. We sat and talked idly about the goings-on at Whitlock. He fully supported my decision to ‘hire’ Oliver as the head of the educational grant division. We also discussed some other staffing decisions, like promoting Eric, my faithful assistant. He had received numerous raises, but his title never changed. Eric had worked for me since he graduated from college. He deserved to be more than my administrative assistant. Upon further discussion, we decided to make him senior vice president of marketing and social media, since he was already doing that anyway. In addition to that, he’d be getting a larger raise and his own office. I’d have to hire another assistant, but this was long overdue. Eric deserved it.

Jasper was paying the bill when my phone chirped. My dress is ready to be picked up from the
boutique for the premier. I’m taking the girls with me and going for a ride. Um, Steve is coming with me since I had to take an anxiety pill. We’ll be home for dinner. Love you ~ Bella

Can’t Kyra and Mia pick it up? ~ Edward

I need to try it on to make sure that it fits. I promise, by dinner, if not sooner ~ Bella

Okay, okay. Be safe and I love you more than my own life ~ Edward

I love you more than that, Edward. You are … my everything ~ Bella

“Hey! No pervy texting in presence!” Jasper laughed, sitting next to me.

“I’m not pervy texting,” I hissed, stuffing my phone in my pocket. “Bella and the girls are going to pick up their dresses for the premier. Which means, I need to pick up the boy’s tuxedos.”

“Come on. We can get those and then go hit a few buckets at the driving range,” Jasper said.

“Golf? Since when do you golf?” I asked.

“Since I made the decision to not divorce your sister. Smacking the hell out of a ball is quite therapeutic,” Jasper laughed, dragging me out of the diner.

xx STTD xx

“I am going fucking crazy, Edward,” Bella said, her hands flying to her hair. “I don’t know what to pack. I mean, I have our dress clothes, but for all of the other shit. I’m so lost. Why did I wait until the last minute?”

“You didn’t wait to the last minute, gorgeous. You just unpacked, packed, unpacked, packed and then unpacked,” I quipped. She shot me a glare. “Deep breaths, baby. We have a couple of days before you start your marathon days of interviews and meetings. If you need to go shopping on Rodeo Drive, it can be easily arranged.”

“Edward, I have more clothes than God. I don’t need to go shopping,” she said, sitting down on the bed and taking a few deep breaths. “I just don’t know what to wear.”

“How many days of meetings do you have?” I asked, helping her up and walking her to the closet.

“Um, three,” she answered. “One day is a press junket and I have to look good. Rose gave me very explicit instructions that I don’t look like a bum.” I growled lowly. “Edward, lately, my attire has been a bit slackerlicious. My best look lately has been my pajamas and your oversized t-shirts. Sexy, huh?”

“Bella, you could wear a burlap sack and look beautiful,” I said, wrapping my arm around her waist. She poked me in the side with her elbow. “But, we won’t do that. Let’s start with picking out the clothes for your obligations for the studio, okay? Do you want pants or a dress?” I led her into our walk-in closet. I idly flipped through her clothes as I waited for her response.

“Let’s go with a dress or a skirt,” she said.

“Long or short?” I pressed, looking through her clothes. She bit her lip, shrugging indecisively. I looked back at her. Narrowing my eyes, I went back to the closet, searching for a skirt that I’d seen in our closet but she never wore since she thought it was too sexy for a mother of four. I found it behind some other sexy dresses that my sister purchased for my wife. I have to make sure that those
come with us to Cabo. Shaking my head, I pulled it out, beaming widely. “I think this would be perfect for the interview at the press junket.”

“Edward, it’s too tight,” she whined. She ran her finger down the seam of the black leather skirt with a white and red floral pattern on it. “Besides, we’re going to be in Los Angeles. In summer time. It’s going to be too hot.”

“It’s light weight, Bella. Besides, I think if you wear this, you’d look hot,” I growled, my eyes appraising my sexy wife. She blushed, taking the skirt from my hand and holding it up to her slender body. I found a black halter neck blouse and a red jacket. Bella gave me a wary look. I smiled crookedly and she sighed, taking the outfit and putting it on the bed. Then, I pulled a pair of dove grey dress pants and a deep purple top. I carried them out of the closet. Bella smiled and wrapped her arms around my waist. “Do you think you can pick one more outfit?”

“Yeah,” she said, nodding against my chest. “You also need to pack, Edward.”

“My needs for this trip are significantly different than yours. Let’s get your clothes packed and then I’ll pack mine, love,” I said. I needed to pack my clothes for the trip to Los Angeles and somehow pack for our secret to Cabo. I knew that Bella had to take Kyra to her counselor’s appointment tomorrow morning before we left in the evening. I could pack my two bags then.

Bella and I worked on packing her belongings. I also calmed her down since she was an anxious, nervous mess. After she fell asleep, I checked on my children. Kyra, Mia and Masen were in the basement watching a movie. Owen was asleep since he had physical therapy earlier in the day. His P/T was stepping up, building up more muscle and endurance. As a result, Owen crashed after his sessions.

“Hey, Daddy,” Mia smiled, her feet in her brother’s lap. “Are you and Mom all packed?”

“Mom is, but I still have to pack,” I said, sitting down next to Kyra. My oldest daughter snuggled to my side and kissed my cheek. I hugged her. “Guys, I want to let you all in on a little secret. Okay, huge secret.”

“What’s up, Dad?” Masen asked, his fingers running down Max’s back. The dog’s tail thumped on the couch.

“After the premier, you guys are going back with Aunt Rose and Uncle Tim while your mom and I are going on a vacation in Cabo San Lucas,” I said.

“Good. You both deserve it,” Kyra said, patting my stomach. “I’m a little jealous because Cabo is beautiful, but I think you and mom need time alone.” Kyra gave me a secretive smile. I rolled my eyes. “Are we staying with Aunt Rose and Uncle Tim?”

“No. They’re just flying back with you. Nana and Papa are going to be here with you along with Oliver,” I answered. “Grandma Renee and Grandpa Charlie are also going to help you pack up, Kyra, to move into your condo.”


I bit my tongue, but it would probably be beneficial to have some muscle. Heaven knows that Steve had more than enough. I wasn’t getting any younger and Oliver was out of commission until after the first of the year. “I suppose,” I answered, giving her an exaggerated sigh. Kyra laughed, smacking my stomach. “Okay, I’m going to go to bed. Kyra, you have an appointment tomorrow. Your mom is taking you so I can pack and make sure the rest of these knuckleheads are ready to go for our flight
“Good night, Dad,” Masen smiled. Mia grinned crawling over to me and snuggling on the other side of me. I kissed Mia’s forehead, hugging both of my girls. I watched the movie they had on for a few moments before I went upstairs to go to bed. I slipped in behind Bella and almost immediately, she curled against my side. I nuzzled her hair, allowing my eyes to droop and falling into a deep sleep.

I got up with Bella’s alarm the next morning. I made breakfast for my family. Bella left after that, taking Kyra to Naperville for her counseling session. I nagged my other children to start packing as I grabbed two suitcases. One suitcase was for Los Angeles, filled with more business-like attire. The other suitcase was for Cabo. I grabbed clothes for both Bella and me, much more casual and sexy. I also packed some toys from our private stash. I wanted to completely bliss my wife out with relaxing, cuddling, canoodling and various stages of undress. I sent Rose a text, informing her that our smexy-time bag was packed. She responded that Tim was going to swing by to pick up the bag on his way back from his office in downtown Naperville. He had to meet with a few potential clients before going on this trip with his wife, supporting her newest venture and her already successful movie.

The newspapers had already given the movie a favorable review and the commercials on the television piqued my interest. I was excited to see the movie, even if it was geared for teenagers and young adults.

“I’m going to work on my exercises in the basement. I know that I got this slick-looking tuxedo and an awesome cane, but I’d like to lose it.” He turned and limped away, heading downstairs.

“Owen is getting pretty beefy,” Tim chuckled.

“He’s taking his exercises and physical therapy pretty seriously. He hates being laid up. He won’t be able to participate in physical education for the next year due to the severity of his leg injury. So, he is doing as much as he can, working out his arms and upper body until he truly begin making any sort of headway with his legs,” I explained. “Thanks for taking the bag.”

“Hey, no problem,” Tim replied. “Anyhow, I have to take this and head back to Chicago. Rose is
about to kick my ass since I haven’t even begun to pack. We’ll meet you at the airport since we’re all on the same chartered flight.” Tim picked up the bag. I led him outside, helping him load it up into his truck. He smacked my shoulder before getting into his car, driving off.

A few hours later, Bella came back with Kyra. Both of them were whirling dervishes, stressing about the trip. Like mother, like daughter. Somehow, I managed to calm them both down. Though, their anxiety proved to me how much we needed to get away, as a family and as a couple. We ate an early dinner before loading up our bags into the Range Rover. Johnny was going to drive us to Chicago Executive Airport while Oliver was going to house sit, taking care of Max. Mia was suctioned to my side, absolutely panicking about flying. I tried to keep her calm as we ate dinner, but she wouldn’t be calm until we were on the ground in Los Angeles.

“Okay, does everyone have their chargers for their tablets, phones and e-books?” Bella asked, holding a small clipboard. We were getting ready to go. The kids nodded. Bella looked at me, arching a brow.

“Yes, love. They’re packed in our carryon,” I chuckled.

“Owen and Kyra, do you both have your driver’s licenses?” Bella pressed. Both of them, held up their wallets. “Mia, Masen, your school IDs?”

“Bella, we’re good,” I said, taking the clipboard from her hands. I tossed it onto the couch, taking her face into my hands. I stared into her eyes, gently caressing her cheeks with my thumbs. “I know that you’re freaking out and you want to control everything right now, but it’s going to be fine. Let’s have fun and roll with the punches.”

“Dad’s right,” Kyra whispered, putting her arm around Bella’s shoulder. Bella looked at our oldest daughter. My fingers glided down Bella’s arm, threading our hands together.

“Okay, okay,” Bella said, leaning her head against Kyra. She gave me a warm smile, squeezing my hand. “We’re going to have fun.”

“Yes, we are,” I responded, grinning crookedly.

Six hours later, we landed in at Van Nuys Airport in San Fernando Valley. Mia practically ran out of the plane, kissing the ground. Kyra teased her which earned her a smack from her younger sister. Rose, Tim, Ava and Lucas got into one limo, driving to their rental property in the Hollywood Hills, one of the houses that the head of the movie studio owned. We clambered into another limo, heading to our rental property in Brentwood.

“Dad, is this place on the beach?” Masen asked.

“No, but it’s got an awesome pool,” I answered, pulling up the property on my phone. “We can all go for a swim once we get there.”

“You can see the ocean from the balcony, Mase!” Mia squealed, pulling my phone out of my hand. “Dad, can we go to the beach tomorrow?”

“We’ll see. Let’s just get to the house and unpacked,” I chuckled.

“Perhaps you can watch your dad surf?” Bella snickered.

“Dad, you know how to surf?” Kyra asked, her golden eyes wide with shock. “Your coolness points have definitely gone through the roof.”
“I’ve surfed, but I’m not very good,” I laughed. “Kelly taught me but I haven’t been on a surfboard in nearly fifteen years. Your mom has surfed, too.”

“But, I suck,” Bella giggled. “I was tossed from the board and lost consciousness. If we go to the beach, I will happily just lay there in the sun, read my book and relax.”

“I’ll be with you, Mom,” Owen said, his nose wrinkled. “The athletic people can surf. I don’t want to run the risk of reinjuring my leg.”

The partition of the limo rolled down. “Mrs. Cullen, we’re here. The community is gated and you need to show your ID to gain access,” said the driver.

Bella rolled down the window and handed her driver’s license to the overweight guard who looked like a pudgy Colonel Sanders. He passed her back the driver’s license and a large packet. The limo drove through the gate. Bella tore into the packet, her eyes wide. “Wow! Look at this! We’ve got several sets of keys for the house and access to three cars.”

“Oooh, can I drive one?” Kyra asked, plucking the keys to a Jaguar.

“No. According to this contract, you have to be over twenty-five,” Bella said, handing Kyra a letter. Kyra pouted as Bella swiped the keys from her. Bella read another letter.

“What’s that?” I asked.

“A more detailed itinerary. We have three days before I start with the press junket on Wednesday. The premier is on Thursday and planning meetings for the next movie will happen on Friday. Filming will begin next month,” Bella said, idly flipping through the paperwork.

“Mrs. Cullen, Mr. Cullen, we’re here,” the driver said. He parked the car. I opened the door. The house was massive, elegant and contemporary. We lugged our bags inside after Bella unlocked the door. Despite its sleek appearance, the house was warm and homey. I gave the driver a tip and he left.

“LOOK AT THIS POOL!” Masen bellowed. “It’s HUGE!” We went out to the patio. Masen was taking off his shoes, dipping his toes in the water. “And heated!!!”

“You know what’s missing?” Bella asked, her eyes twinkling.

“What, Mom?” Kyra asked, her eyes sharing the same twinkle as her mother.

“You know what’s missing?” Bella asked, her eyes twinkling.

“What, Mom?” Kyra asked, her eyes sharing the same twinkle as her mother.

“Your dad!” Bella laughed. Both Kyra and Bella charged me. Somehow, I tossed my phone to Owen just before my daughter and wife threw me into the pool. I grabbed both of them and all three of us fell into the warm water. We broke the surface, laughing happily. Masen jumped in, his legs tucked underneath and splashing us all. Mia followed closely behind and Owen was taking pictures with my cell phone.

“Owen, put the phone down and get into the damn pool!” Kyra laughed, hopping onto my back.

“I’m good,” Owen snickered.

“No, you’re not,” I said. I hopped out of the pool. Owen put the phone down and I carefully guided him to the edge.

“Dad, I’m fully dressed,” Owen argued.
“So, are we,” I snorted. Owen barked out a laugh as we fell into the water. We played for an hour, fully dressed in this posh, fancy pool, but what I paid the most attention to was my wife. The light was back in her eyes as she giggled in the pool. I snuck up behind my wife, wrapping my arms around her waist. I kissed her neck. “I’ve missed your laugh, gorgeous.”

“I’ve missed laughing, angel,” she said. Turning, her arms snaked up my neck. Her brown eyes were sparkling beautifully. “I know that I’ve been …”

“You don’t have to say anything, love,” I whispered, cupping her cheek. “You take all of the time you need, but I’m glad that you’re laughing and having fun.”

“And I intend to do so a lot more often,” she said, kissing my lips softly. Then, she laughed, pushing my head under the water. I playfully attacked her, being rewarded with a girlish squeal. With that sound, I just knew that we were going to be fine. The nightmare of Jacob hopefully would become a distant memory of the past and we are going to be perfectly fine.

A/N: Pictures of the house, the plane, and the outfits that Edward helped pick it out are on my blog and tumblr. Links for those are on my profile. You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation and also on twitter: tufano79. Up next will be some family time at the beach, girly bonding time with Bella, Rose and the girls, the press junket, movie premier and Bella’s reaction to Cabo.

Leave me some lovin!’
Chapter 25

They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Up next will be some family time at the beach, girly bonding time with Bella, Rose and the girls, the press junket, movie premier and Bella’s reaction to Cabo.

Chapter Twenty-Five: City of Lights

BPOV

“We obviously didn’t think this through,” I snickered, trying to dry myself before we went inside. I plucked at my dress, wrinkling my nose. “I don’t want to track all of this water inside. This house is amazing and too nice for us to ruin the floors with the chlorinated water.”

“Mom, stop being such a party pooper,” Mia giggled. “This was too much fun.”

“It was a lot of fun,” I said, sitting down on the chaise lounge next to my husband. I wasn’t going to dry out any time soon. I needed to toss all of our clothes into the washer. Edward wrapped his arms around my waist, nuzzling my neck. “I think the most fun was when we pushed your dad into the pool.” Edward growled lowly. I pinched his hand, giggling quietly.

“Yeah, that was oodles of fun,” Edward chuckled against my neck. “I personally enjoyed tossing Owen in the pool.”

“You just liked watching me doggy paddle, Dad. I’m an awesome swimmer,” Owen snorted. He really wasn’t, but it was because he was afraid of the water as a child. “This pool is awesome, though. So much warmer than our pool at home.”

“It’s on a cliff, facing the sun for a majority of the day. Plus, the temperature doesn’t really get below freezing,” Edward replied, moving me to sit between his legs. “So, are we going to the beach tomorrow?”

“Let’s sleep in a little bit, but that sounds awesome. I can’t wait to see Dad surf!” Kyra said. Edward rolled his eyes. “Mom, do you think we’re dry enough to go claim our rooms?”

“I think so,” I replied. “Make sure you hang up your clothes from your luggage in the closets.” The kids all got up, walking inside. I could see them dribbling from their clothes and I knew that I’d probably have to scour the floors before I went to bed. I didn’t want the owner of the house to think that we were slobs, ruining the very expensive wood floors.

“I can’t believe you pushed me into the pool,” Edward growled playfully, once the kids were inside.
He gently tickled my sides. I squirmed until he embraced me, his lips finding the sensitive spot behind my ear. I melted against his chest as he smoothly asked, “What made you do that?”

“Because I could,” I laughed. “For the first time in a couple of weeks, I feel free and I …” I trailed off, leaning my head against his shoulder.

“I understand, gorgeous,” he whispered, his lips finding my temple. “You just wanted to let loose. I’ve missed hearing you laugh.”

“I’ve missed laughing,” I sighed. “I’m sorry about being just a mess the past couple of weeks.”

“Bella, you have no reason to apologize. I’d be concerned if you were bouncing back like normal after what you saw, what you experienced. The man who stalked our family for over a year captured you and …” he murmured.

“I know what happened. I know that it won’t get better overnight, but I’m feeling much better,” I smiled, kissing his soft, sweet lips. “I think being away from home helps, too. The constant reminders, you know?”

“I do know,” he smiled crookedly, tightening his arms around me. “It’s the reason why I didn’t open the Naperville foundation location. Reminders of what happened with Emmett, Matthew and Alex. Now, you’re shivering and I think your lips are turning blue. Why don’t we go upstairs so I can warm you up?” His lips trailed down my neck and his hand moved to cup my breast.

“Behave,” I said breathily, getting up from the seat. “Our children are upstairs and I know for certain that one of them is staring down at us. Mia has the bedroom overlooking the pool. I don’t want to scar my youngest daughter with the vision of your pasty white ass.” Edward huffed out a breath, his smile carnal. I laughed, darting inside and my husband followed me, throwing me over his shoulder. I shrieked, laughing as he carried me up the stairs.

We took a shower together and then Edward got our bags from the foyer. He dropped something off in Kyra’s room before he came back with our luggage. We worked together, hanging up our clothes in the massive closet. “That is pitiful,” I chuckled when I saw how little it filled the closet.

“We can try and fill it,” Edward said, running his hand through his damp hair, leaning against the doorjamb. I shook my head, my fingers trailing down his bare torso. He slid his arms around my body and he kissed me deeply, nearly bending me in half. I moaned, clutching his shoulders. He straightened up, bending down, and picking me up. I wrapped my legs around his waist. He moved so I was pinned between the wall and the muscular body of my horny husband. A timid knock broke us apart. Edward looked at me, his eyes nearly black with need. “Soon, gorgeous. I promise, very soon.” He put me down, walking to the bathroom. He adjusted his erection and I walked to the door on unsteady legs. Opening it, I saw Mia on the other side. “What’s up, sweetie?”

“I looked up some nearby beaches and the best spot to surf is Venice Beach,” Mia said, walking into our bedroom. She handed me her tablet, showing me the pictures of Venice Beach. “And here’s a surfboard rental shop. They also provide lessons. I want to take lessons, Mom. I want to surf!”

“Okay, Mia,” I laughed. “Why don’t you go to bed? I’m exhausted from our long trip and pool party.”

“That’s because you’re old, Mom,” Mia sang, rolling her eyes.

“If your mom is old than I must be decrepit,” Edward said, pulling on his t-shirt.
“Dad,” Mia scoffed. “So, you’re cool with us surfing tomorrow?”

“I’m cool with it, but if you want to go, you have to go to bed. It’s after twelve here and our bodies think it’s two in the morning,” Edward said, ruffling Mia’s drying hair.

“Okay, okay,” Mia sighed dramatically. She kissed Edward’s cheek and hugged me tightly. “See you both in the morning. Love you!”

She skipped out of the bedroom, closing the door. Edward took my hand, guiding me to the bed. I was half-asleep and I eagerly crawled into the crisp white sheets. My husband curled around me. “I love you so much, gorgeous,” he whispered in the darkness.

“I love you, too,” I replied, my eyelids drooping. His lips caressed my neck and I slipped into blissful sleep, safe in the arms of my husband.

xx STTD xx

We all slept in late. Everyone except Mia. When Edward and I strolled downstairs at around nine, Mia was glaring at us, tapping her wrist. “The best waves come first thing in the morning,” she said, her brows shooting to her hairline.

“Can’t we eat first?” Edward chuckled, making some coffee while I rooted around the fridge to make breakfast. Kyra, Masen and Owen ambled down as I put some bacon on and the coffee machine finished percolating. Mia was vibrating with anticipation, pleading with both me and her father to hurry up. “Mia, you need to breathe. You are acting like Aunt Alice on Christmas morning.”

“I’m just really excited to go!” Mia laughed.

“Go put on your bathing suit and slather on the sunscreen,” I said, just to get her out of my hair. “All of you. By the time you’re done, breakfast will be ready and we can go shortly after we finish up. Okay?” Mia was out of her chair in a moment, dragging a half-asleep Kyra with her. Masen sluggishly followed while Owen stayed in the kitchen, his face pulled into a scowl. “What’s wrong, Owen?”

“I just don’t want to go to the beach,” he said sullenly, shrugging his shoulders. “It’s not like I can surf because of my leg and the idea of roasting does not sound all that appealing. Can I just stay here?”

“How about we take two cars?” Edward suggested. “That way if you get bored or sunburnt, one of us can drive you back. I don’t want you to stay here all by yourself.”

“Me neither,” I agreed, arching a brow at my oldest son. “Go put on your swimsuit and come with us.”

Owen sighed, running his hands through his hair. “Fine. But, I don’t know how long I’m going to want to be there,” he whispered. “I’ll try.” He pushed away from the counter, trudging up the stairs.

“I think tomorrow, we need to do something that would appeal to Owen,” I said, putting the bacon onto a plate with paper towels on it to soak up the grease. “It seems only fair.”

“I agree,” Edward nodded, handing me a cup of coffee that was doctored to my preference. “I’d probably be more interested in Owen’s day than surfing.”

“Well, you’re the only one who can even remotely surf. I refuse to get back on a surfboard,” I shuddered. “The concussion and possible drowning I suffered nearly twenty years ago really stuck
“with me.” Edward frowned, remembering my first and only foray surfing. “Do you want scrambled or fried?”

“Scrambled is easier and I’ve been craving some cheesy scrambled eggs,” Edward smirked. “I’ll cut up some fruit and try and figure out how to work this insane toaster oven.”

I kissed his jaw, beginning making breakfast. A half hour later, my children came down, wearing their swimsuits and cover-ups. Kyra and Masen set the table and we ate a very filling breakfast. Mia and Owen did the dishes while Kyra and Masen loaded up the Land Rover SUV. Edward and I changed into our swimsuits, covering our pale skin with strong SPF. I twisted my hair up into a messy bun. Edward tossed a couple of towels into my huge beach bag, along with books, sunglasses, his wallet, extra sunscreen and flip flops.

Almost forty-five minutes later, we arrived at the beach and parked near a quiet corner of Venice Beach. Lugging our bags, we trudged to spot on the beach, nearby a surf shop where we could rent boards, wetsuits and any other surfing gear. We set up our towels before Mia, Edward and Masen went to the surf shot. Kyra said she’d go later and Owen settled into read his book, his leg covered by a towel.

Mia, Edward and Masen walked back to the towels, wearing a wetsuits with two guys, who looked to be Steve’s age. “Mom, this is Kai and Sean. They’re going to give us surfing lessons,” Mia said, looking dreamily up at Kai. Kyra snorted out a laugh behind her magazine. Her sister kicked some sand toward her, scowling at her not-so-subtle dig. “Dad’s even going to try it.”

“Make sure you have 911 on speed dial,” Edward deadpanned, pulling up his wetsuit.

“Don’t drown,” I said, smirking lightly.

“I’ll try not to,” Edward snarled amusedly.

“Mom, can you take pictures?” Masen asked. “I want to show off to my friends at school that I surfed in the Pacific Ocean. Those waves look gnarly!”

“You’re catching onto the lingo, little man,” said Sean, ruffling Masen’s hair. His voice reminded me of the movie Bill and Ted’s Excellent Adventure, one of the guys from that movie, Keanu Reeves. “Let’s catch some waves!” Sean picked up his board, sauntering easily on the sand. Masen tried to mimic his walk, but was failing miserably since the board was so big, dwarfing my son. Mia was taken under Kai’s wing and Edward begrudgingly followed.

“You sure you don’t want to go?” I asked Kyra and Owen.

“I want to work on my tan,” Kyra said, laying back in the towel and adjusting her modest bikini.

“Owen?” I pressed. He shrugged, putting in his ear buds and taking out a thick book. I removed my cover-up, walking to the water with Masen’s camera. Kai was doing a majority of the teaching while Sean was helping with the demonstrating on the beach. After a half hour, Kai and Edward swam out, waiting for some waves to come in. Mia and Masen were watching with rapt attention, but from Mia’s anxious bouncing on her toes, she was ready to go out there.

Kai and Edward got about three hundred feet out, sitting on their boards. I could see both of them looking back, gauging the distance of the incoming surf. I could see a wave coming in and they lay down on their bellies, paddling back to the shore. Mia was clapping excitedly while Masen looked a little pale, nervous for his dad, or to go out in the water. Kai and Edward stopped paddling, jumping to a crouch. Kai expertly took off, navigating the wave like a pro. Edward wobbled a little bit, but
stayed upright as he rode the wave back to shore. Mia squealed excitedly, running up to her father and throwing her arms around him once he was safely back on the beach.

I stayed nearby for about an hour, watching as Mia and Masen struggled to stay upright on the board. Masen, because he was bigger and stronger than his sister, stood up first. Mia struggled, mainly because she kept getting pushed off the board since she was so little. She also struggled with her hair. She kept inhaling it. I eventually helped her, braiding it tightly and tucking it into her wetsuit. After my magic touch, Mia finally got up and was able to ride a wave to shore.

Trudging back to the towels, I settled in and allows myself to relax. Kyra was on her stomach, snoozing quietly while Owen was playing on his tablet, his ear buds still in his ears. Edward came back, his wetsuit was hanging down over his hips, displaying his muscular and still-sexy torso. He looked so fucking hot for a fifty year old. Nummy. He leaned his surf board against a nearby palm tree and plopped down, putting his sun glasses on his face. “I’m way too old for this shit,” he huffed, out of breath.

“You looked like you were having fun, angel,” I said, brushing his knotted hair away from his face.

“It’s fun while you’re out there, but I’m so going to feel this tonight,” he grimaced, rolling his head. I heard his neck crackle. I made a face. “I’m fine, gorgeous. I’m just done. For now. Do you want to try it, Kyra? Kai and Sean have a wetsuit in the shop for you. You can use my board.”

“That sounds awesome,” Kyra replied. She quickly whipped her hair into a braid, twisting it up and darting to the shop. She came back a few moments later, wearing a bright pink wet suit. She picked up her father’s surf board, running to the shore to get her lesson.

“Owen, what do you want to do tomorrow?” Edward asked, shimmying out of his wet suit and laying down on his stomach. “Today was all about Mia and Masen, but we want to make sure that you have fun while we’re here in Los Angeles.”

Owen tugged out his ear buds, tossing his tablet onto the towel. “Griffith Park and Griffith Observatory would be nice. And the La Brea Tar Pits? Perhaps the Los Angeles Zoo?”

“Keep in mind that you can’t walk that far,” I chided. “How about we do the observatory and park tomorrow? If you feel up to it, then the La Brea Tar Pits? We can go to the zoo with Rose, Tim, Ava and Lucas the day after tomorrow.”

“I’d like that,” Owen replied, smiling crookedly. “I think I’m going to laugh at my siblings while they attempt to ‘hang ten.’ Thank you for …” He blushed, tossing a hat on. “I love you.” He stiffly got up and walked uneasily to the shore with his own camera.

“You are getting pink, gorgeous,” Edward said, poking my shoulder. I looked down, frowning at my pale skin.

“I should have worn a different bathing suit. I forgot my dress is strapless. Kind of,” I shrugged, untying the halter of my tankini. “Can you tie this behind my back?”

“I’d rather you go topless,” Edward smirked, waggling his brows.

“Public beach and our children are right over there. Besides, who would want to see my old, decrepit looking tits anyway,” I snorted as Edward tied my top below my shoulder blades.

“I want to see your perfect breasts as often as possible. What crack are you smoking saying that they are decrepit?” Edward scoffed, kissing my neck as he massaged some more sunblock onto my skin. Edward’s hand quickly slipped around me, squeezing my breasts. I swatted his hands away,
laughing. “What? You deny me?”

“Again, public beach and our children are surfing less than five hundred feet away,” I said in a snarky tone. “Are you that horny?”

“My sexy wife is wearing a gorgeous blue tankini and is smiling like she doesn’t have a care in the world. Of course I’m horny,” Edward laughed, laying on his back, putting his head in my lap. “I’ve missed this. It seems like forever since we’ve gone out without any sort of protection or worries about something exploding in our faces. This premier – this trip – is exactly what the doctor ordered. Yes, it’s a working vacation, but I will gladly take it since I get to see you with a beautiful expression on your face, the anxiety of what happened gone from our minds.”

“Well, it’s not gone. Just pushed back until we get back home;” I said, playing with his hair. “I’m far from better, but I’m slowly getting used to … I don’t know. I’m talking out of my ass.”

Edward grabbed my hand from his hair and kissed my wrist. “Bella, I know that it will be a struggle for a while, but let’s just have fun. Enjoy our freedom and the time spent with our children. I like all of the security guys, except for Steve …”

“He saved my ass, Edward,” I chided.

“He wants to bone our oldest daughter,” he grumped.

“So? Kyra’s legally an adult and if she wants to date him, then I’m not going to stop her. Need I remind you that you are five years older than me?” I argued.

“We met when we were older,” he muttered, sitting up and swiping a water bottle from the bag, chugging it down.

“Edward, angel, you have to trust Kyra and Steve to make their own decisions,” I whispered, running my fingers down his muscular back. “It’s not like they’re going to jump into bed right away. From the conversations I’ve had with Steve, he respects our daughter and doesn’t want to hurt her. Just let nature take its course. You didn’t hate Thomas.”

“Until he dumped her on her prom night,” Edward snorted, his jaw clenched. “And I did hate Thomas. He was a teenage male who was dating my daughter. I have to hate them based on principle.”

“Are you going to be this much of a pain in the ass when Mia starts dating?” I deadpanned.

“Probably. No boy is good enough for my girls,” he harrumphed. “Just like any girl who breaks our son’s hearts will not be allowed near our house.”

I rolled my eyes. “Edward, you are too funny,” I snickered. “Honestly, I think that Owen and Tasha have mated for life.”

“Owen isn’t a virgin?” Edward hissed, his golden eyes wide behind his sunglasses.

“Shut up. He’s still a virgin, but he worships the ground Tasha walks on.” I whisper-yelled, smacking Edward’s arm. “Owen is so much like you, it’s scary. One look at me and we were destined for eternity. Owen looks at Tasha like you look at me, minus the horny, smarmy smile. He adores her.”

“I do not have a horny, smarmy smile,” he said, raising a sexy brow.
“Yes. You do,” I giggled. “Especially when you’re horny.”

“And that’s a bad thing?” he questioned, kissing my lips softly. He leaned his forehead against mine, his fingers slinking underneath my tankini. I giggled, squirming out of his hold. “You are playing hard to get, gorgeous.”

“Stop thinking with your little head,” I chuckled. “Kids are coming back and I don’t think they want to see you feeling up my boob.”

“Damn cockblockers,” Edward sighed, kissing my neck and laying on his stomach. I popped his ass as our children ambled back, laughing and talking. Even Owen was excitedly contributing to the conversation.

“Mom, Kai and Sean are taking us out to lunch,” Kyra said, shimmying out of the wetsuit to put on her cover-up. “There’s this nice Mexican restaurant about a mile up the beach.”

“Do you need some money?” Edward asked, reaching into our bag to get his wallet.

“No, we’re good,” Kyra said, slipping her purse over her head. “Do you want anything? Kai said that the shrimp tacos are to die for.”

“That would be great, Kyra,” I smiled. “Thank you, sweetheart.”

They left and about an hour later, we enjoyed some of the most delicious shrimp tacos ever. An hour after that, we got into the car and drove back to our rental home. Everyone took showers and the people who surfed crashed. Owen and I made dinner and planned our day at Griffith Park, Griffith Observatory and La Brea Tar Pits. Owen seemed genuinely excited to go. I’d always wanted to go to Griffith Park, but never had time in the numerous business trip out to Los Angeles with Rose. It was all work and no play. Besides, my bodyguards wouldn’t have let me go. Too many hiding places.

After much cajoling, we got our sleepy family up and fed from dinner. My children were fine, perhaps a little sore, but Edward looked like he had been run over by a truck. He was limping and groaning with each movement. I felt for my husband. Despite being in stellar shape for his age, he wasn’t as young as he used to be and it showed in his gimpy form. When we finished dinner, I sent Edward to the hot tub to loosen up while everyone else settled in the entertainment room to watch one of the numerous movies that were on the shelves of the house.

I checked on my husband. He was groaning in the hot tub, sitting right on top of a jet. “What can I do for you, baby?” I asked, sitting on the edge.

“Get a gun and shoot me. No one should feel this bad. Absolutely no one,” he groaned, shifting uncomfortably.

“Well, stay in there for another fifteen minutes and then come upstairs to our room. I’ll massage you,” I said, squeezing his shoulder gently.

“I don’t think that’ll help,” he winced. “I’m in too much pain to really enjoy it. I think I may just take some ibuprofen and go to bed. I’ll be walking like an old man tomorrow.”

“We’ll take it easy on you and Owen, angel,” I said, smiling sympathetically at him. “Despite your soreness, you looked great out there and you totally scored ‘coolness’ points with your children.”

“Those points are worthless,” he grumped. “What I wouldn’t give to not have my entire body be in excruciating pain?” He looked up at me, grinning crookedly. “But, it got you to smile, so that means
“No, being with you made me smile. Watching you ride the waves just made me want to jump your bones,” I giggled.

“Please don’t,” he whined. “I want to be able to enjoy sliding inside of you, but right now, anything other than just floating here makes me want to cry.”

“Mr. Horny isn’t horny,” I quipped. Edward scowled at me, splashing some water toward me. “I like getting wet …”

“You suck, Bella,” he snarled, his eyes twinkling with mirth as he pouted adorably. He moaned as he heaved his body out of the hot tub. “Shower and bed.”

“Take your meds, too. I’d like you to be able to walk tomorrow. I don’t want to rent a wheelchair, Grandpa,” I smirked. Edward growled, wrapping his wet arms around me and tickling my sides. I squealed as I squirmed in his soaking wet hold. Somehow, we landed on the ground with Edward hovering over me. I was still laughing, but Edward’s gaze softened. “What?”

“I love you,” he murmured, kissing me gently and then deepening it. I moaned, my hands moving up his back, tangling into his damp hair. His tongue slid into my mouth, dancing with mine. My leg was moving up to hitch over his hip when the door opened from the entertainment room.

“Gross, Dad! Stop humping my mother on the patio,” Kyra laughed.

Edward looked up, narrowing his eyes at Kyra. “Don’t make me throw you into the pool, Kyra Marie,” he threatened. He got up clumsily, still in obvious pain. He helped me, moving me so I was in front of him, blocking his erection from our daughter. “Did you want something?”

“Um, yeah,” Kyra snickered. “Aunt Rose is on the phone. She wants to talk to Mom about going shopping for our jewelry for the premier.”

“Tell her I’ll call her back in a little bit. I need to change,” I said, elbowing my husband. He snorted a laugh. “Also, ask your siblings what time they want to go out tomorrow?”

“Around eleven, they said,” Kyra said as she tossed her father a towel. “Mia and Masen are already in bed and Owen is planning our day down to the last minute. I’m going to head upstairs, too.” She smirked, wagging her brows. “Good night.” She slipped inside of the doorway, closing it quietly.

Edward dried off and we went inside. Kyra had shut off all of the lights, save for one light next to Owen. He was rapidly tapping on his tablet. “Don’t stay up too late and be mindful of your limitations, Owen,” I chided.

“Kay,” he said absentmindedly, waving his hand. “Love you.”

Edward and I went upstairs. He went to take another shower while I went to call Rose. “Bellini!” she sang. “We need to get jewelry for the premier. I have an appointment tomorrow at some high-end jewelry boutique to choose our baubles. My treat.”

“What time?” I asked. “We have plans to go to Griffith Park and La Brea Tar Pits at eleven with the kids.”

“Oh, no big deal. Our appointment is at nine. You can come and choose the jewelry for the girls since you know what they’re wearing,” Rose said.
“The girls are not getting some fancy, expensive jewelry, Rosalie,” I chided.

“No, they aren’t. We are. I worked with the owner of the shop to get some really good knock-off shit. Bellini, don’t worry. The girls will be spoiled, but with fake jewels,” Rose snickered. “How was surfing?”

“Watching it was amazing,” I answered, taking off my clothes and changing into my pajamas. “Edward and the kids went. My poor husband is walking like an old geezer.”

“He is an old geezer,” Rose laughed. “But, he loves you unconditionally. Anyhow, I’ll be over around 8:30 and we’ll get our diamonds, sapphires and platinum. We’ll be dripping in jewels.”


“Love you, too, Bellini. Give my love to SGG,” she snickered.

“SGG?”

“Sexy, Geeky Geezer!” she guffawed, hanging up.

Oh, hell no!

xx STTD xx

The next morning, I got up to run my errands with Rose. Edward barely moved, groaning as I slipped out from his arms. I put a bottle of water and some ibuprofen onto the nightstand before I went downstairs to meet Rosalie. Shortly before half past eight, the phone rang and it was the gatehouse, informing me that Rose was here. I gave them the go ahead to let her in and I made sure I had everything I needed in my purse. Just as I was about to walk out the door, Kyra came downstairs, dressed and ready to go. “Can I come with? Please?”

“I figured you’d want to sleep,” I chuckled.

“I tried to, but I felt better when I got up and moved around,” Kyra replied, rolling her neck. “Ava also sent me a text, saying she was coming with Aunt Ro, too.” I nodded, hugging my daughter and we went outside. Rose’s car pulled up and it was insanely ostentatious. “Holy shit! What is this?”

“A Bentley,” Rose replied, popping out of the driver’s seat. “It’s my present to myself for this premier. What do you think?”

“It’s very sparkly,” I snickered.

“The paint has crushed diamonds in it,” Rose cooed, leaning her cheek on her car, gently caressing the hood. “So pretty …”

“Rose, stop molesting your vehicle. We’ve got an appointment to make,” I barked.

Rose looked up, scowling at me as she gave me the bird. I responded in kind as I got into the front seat and Kyra got in the back, sitting next to Ava. We buckled up and Rose took off toward Beverly Hills, specifically, Rodeo Drive. She pulled up to a very funky looking jewelry store, Bling and Baubles. Despite its tacky name, the jewelry inside was very expensive, well-made and unique. Rose ended up getting canary diamonds while I got sapphires and a color change stone that I couldn’t recognize if you showed it to me. The girls all got one item for their outfits that was high-end as a present from Rosalie and the rest was some amazing costume jewelry.
After we got our jewelry, we went out for breakfast and I invited Rose and her family to join us to go to the zoo. Rose started to say no, but Ava convinced her to go. We finished our breakfast and Rose drove us back to our rental. “Don’t forget, we have an early day on Wednesday. I have a stylist coming to do your hair and makeup for the press junket and on Thursday, before the premier, the same stylist will come to do the same for all of you. And Friday…” she trailed off, smiling impishly.

“We go home,” I smiled as I got out of the car with Kyra, leaning against the open passenger window.

“Hmmm, you’ll see,” she sang. “Have fun today and we’ll meet you at the zoo by twelve tomorrow. Love you, Bellini.” I shot up, confused at her first statement. She took off, cackling as she waved her hand wildly.

“What the hell does that mean?” I asked, my brows furrowed.

“Don’t overthink it, Mom. Aunt Ro is being Aunt Ro. She’s probably getting high off that new car smell,” Kyra snickered, guiding me back to the house. “Let’s go check on the walking wounded.”

Inside, Owen was reading his tablet as Mia and Masen were eating a late breakfast and Edward was limping pitifully. “Are we all okay?” I asked.

“We’re fine, but Dad pulled a groin muscle,” Masen said, his voice sickly sweet.

“I had a surfboard jam right into my stuff,” Edward grumped. “It didn’t hurt so badly yesterday, but I’m bruised and battered today. Tim told me to ice it and it should be fine.” He carried a bag of peas and he sat down on the couch, placing the bag onto his crotch.

He was fine, but we left about an hour and half later, much to Owen’s chagrin. I did inspect Edward’s groin injury and it wasn’t that bad. His stuff wasn’t harmed, but he did have a nasty bruise on his inner thigh. He didn’t let that stop him. We went to Griffith Park, taking pictures and acting like the tourists we were. We ate lunch before we went to the observatory and then drove to La Brea Tar Pits. Owen was in his element, randomly chattering about his childhood passion, all things dinosaur and prehistoric. Masen enjoyed the observatory, asking a million questions about space. Mia was bored, begging to go back to Venice Beach for another chance to go surfing. Kyra just teased her about wanting to see Kai.

That turned into a fight and we eventually had to go home. Mia slammed her door, screaming that she hated Kyra and Kyra said that she wished she was an only child. Owen shrugged, mumbling that he was going to call Tasha after he worked out a little bit and Masen wanted to go for a swim.

“How’s your leg?” I asked, hopping up onto the counter.

“Eh,” Edward shrugged. “Should we check on the girls?”

“Eh,” I responded, shrugging. “Siblings will squabble. How many fights did you have with Alice?”

“Too many to count. If they haven’t made up by tomorrow morning, we’ll sit them down,” Edward sighed, grabbing a beer from the fridge. I cleared my throat, pointing to the beer and Edward grabbed one for me, too. “Did you get the jewelry you wanted?”

“Yes, it’s gorgeous,” I breathed. “This place, Bling and Baubles, had some really unique items.”

“Perhaps I can take you back there so I can by you some bling and baubles,” Edward growled lowly, slipping between my legs.
“I have more than enough bling, SGG,” I giggled.

“SGG? What the hell is that?” he asked, arching a brow, sipping from his beer.

“Sexy, Geeky Geezer,” I laughed. “Rose came up with it.”

“You better not have said that, Isabella Marie Cullen,” Edward said quietly. “I am not a geezer. I still have all of my hair. I don’t use a cane and I do not wear a diaper.”

“Your hair is grayish. You probably should have used a cane today and no, you don’t wear a diaper. You go commando,” I smirked.

“Today, yes. My boxer briefs cut right into my bruise,” he whined, pulling at his shorts. “I liked SGD so much better. It is much more apt.”

“Just wait until you’re a grandpa. Then, it’ll be SGGD. Sexy Geek Grand Daddy,” I snickered. Edward rolled his eyes. “I’m sorry. I don’t mean to tease you.”

“As long as you attach the adjective ‘sexy’ to my name, I’m perfectly content,” he said. “Okay, I think I need to ice my groin again and then go to bed. Normally, traveling doesn’t affect me this much but the jet lag is really hitting me. It’s what? Nine at night and I’m ready for bed!”

“I’m tired, too. Dealing with Rose and her cryptic conversations today, boggled my mind,” I said, finishing my beer and tossing it into the recycling bin.

“Cryptic conversations?” Edward asked, raising an inquisitive brow.

“Kyra chocked it up to her being high off that new car smell. Did you know that Rose bought a Bentley SUV with diamond paint?” I asked. “I mentioned that we were going home on Friday, but she waved it off.”

“We’re taking a different flight on Friday. Don’t forget that you and Rose have that interview Friday morning,” Edward said, helping me off the counter. “Remember?” He handed me the updated itinerary.

“Oh, right. Never mind,” I said, shaking my head. I got the bag of peas and dragged Edward upstairs. I knew that something was off and that Edward was in on it. Or Rose was in on whatever Edward had planned. I should be upset, but I shook it off. Whatever was up their sleeves was probably for the best. Go with the flow, Cullen.

The next day, we spent it at the zoo. It was not as fun as I had hoped. Rose spent most of the day on the phone, talking with the movie studio and Mia and Kyra were still not talking to each other despite the conversation we had with both of them prior to leaving. Mia was suctioned to my side and Kyra spent the day with Ava, ignoring her little sister. After the zoo, we went to Santa Monica Pier and separated for a couple of hours. Mia, Masen and Lucas went one way while Kyra, Ava and Owen went another. Rose, Tim, Edward and I decided just relax on the pier, after I confiscated Rose’s phone. I wanted to throw it into the damn Pacific Ocean.

The guys went to get us some fast food to eat when I sat down next to my best friend. “Why are you turning into that woman that you hate? The woman with the phone attached to her face and not interacting with the humans around her?” I asked.

“I’m nervous,” she whispered. “I mean, what if everyone hates the movie. I know it’s not my problem, but the movie is based off my books. I want this to be successful.”
“Rose, it’s already successful. The studio is already producing all three movies,” I soothed.

“Um, four. They decided that the third movie is too beastly. They’re going to cut it in half, roughly. You left an excellent spot to split it. There will be some rewrites, but nothing too taxing. You can do that in your sleep,” Rose said, smiling contritely.

“That actually works for me. The middle part was a bit lacking and I couldn’t get the ending to mesh. Perhaps the extra movie will mean extra money for special effects,” I beamed. “It’ll make the ending finally sparkle. Seriously, though, why are you so anxious?”

“I just want this to be successful. I’ve been a New York Times Best-Selling Author too many times to count, but this is the first time that one of my books has made it from paper to the big screen. Yes, there was that one movie studio who tried to buy the rights for my first set of novels, but that fell through and it hit me hard. You knew how long it took me to get my next book out after that.”

“Rose, go with the flow, sweetie,” I said, rubbing her arms. “It’ll all work out. It won’t win Academy Awards …”

“They used some new digital effects. It may be a possibility,” Rose whimpered.

“Rose!” I barked.

“Okay, okay,” she breathed. “I’m so happy that you’re going to be with me for the interviews.”

“We’re a package, Rosalie,” I said, hugging her. “Where you go, I go.”

“Is that a promise?” she asked, a carnal smile spreading over her face. “I’ve always wanted to know how Edward was as a lover.”

“No, Rose,” I said flatly. “You’re happily married to Tim. You know that handsome man who is carrying a tray full of greasy goodness?”

“No threesomes?” she asked, pouting pitifully.

“Fuck no,” I snorted. “Ask my husband. He’ll agree.”

When the guys came back, with cheeseburgers, fries, and beer, Rose sidled up to my hubby. “Edward, honey, I have a question for you. Your wife said that wherever I go, she goes. Does that include sexy, naked fun time?” She blinked her eyes, smiling sexily.

“This coming from the woman who called me SGG,” Edward snorted, rolling his shoulder.

“No, Rose,” I said flatly. “You’re happily married to Tim. You know that handsome man who is carrying a tray full of greasy goodness?”

“No threesomes?” she asked, pouting pitifully.

“Fuck no,” I snorted. “Ask my husband. He’ll agree.”

“I’m not flirting. I’m merely asking if Bella and I get to share everything,” Rose clarified.

“That would be a no, Rose,” Edward answered, taking a huge bite of his cheeseburger. “I love you like a sister and that would be a little too weird for us to … um … you know. Bella is my only and yeah, you called me a geezer!”

“That’s your argument?” Rose scoffed.
“Yep, and I’m sticking to it. Pass the beer, Tim?”

Tim handed Edward a bottle of beer. Rose wrinkled her nose until Tim waved a cheeseburger in her face. She huffed, taking the proffered food and scarfed it. “That was the weirdest conversation I’ve ever had with anyone,” I snorted.


“Says the man who is limping,” Rose retorted dryly.

“Groin injury,” Edward sang. “You want to see?”

“Edward, don’t be tempting Rose with your cock,” I said, arching a brow. “The bruise is very close to it and she might get jealous.”

“Okay, enough!” Tim laughed. He gestured to Lucas, Mia and Masen who were walking back with Kyra, Owen and Ava directly behind them. “We are the weirdest family ever.”

“This is true,” Rose nodded, slugging back some of her beer.

“And you’re just now figuring this out?” Edward asked.

Press junket day was the equivalent of hell on earth.

Just saying.

I had to get up at the ass crack of dawn to get my hair and makeup done. All while trying to keep Kyra and Mia from maiming each other. Mia was still miffed at Kyra’s teasing of her liking Kai and Kyra just wouldn’t relent. I was about to jab my eye with a mascara wand when Edward dragged both of them out of the house to have them get over their problems.

Once my hair and makeup was done, I was driven to the movie studio for a press conference first, which started at nine. It lasted nearly an hour and not once was I asked a question. Most of them were geared to the actors, directors or Rose. I was just there. Exhausted and bored out of my mind.

After the press conference and some brunch, we were all sent off to separate rooms. Rose made me take off my red jacket, wanting me to look sexier for our individual interviews. However, I was glad that I did since the lights we were sitting under were freaking hot and I was sweating something fierce.

By the end of the day, my throat was sore from talking so much. While I hadn’t didn’t talk much during the press conference, I was inundated with questions in the interviews. Rose hyped up all of my hard work and she said that I stayed as close to the book as possible. The interviewers asked me numerous questions on how I could keep the detail of the book but not make the movie boring. From the initial screenings, the movie was a good combination of romance, action, magic and plot.

Rose tried to convince me to go out after the press junket, but I was too tired. A limo drove me back to the rental. As soon as I was in the house, I kicked off my heels. “Oh, thank God,” I breathed. “I hate heels.”

“Mom!” squealed Mia. “You’re home!”

“I’m home,” I chuckled. Mia hugged me. “Did you and Kyra make up?”
“Yeah. Dad took us back to the beach,” Mia explained. “Kyra and I talked. She apologized for being such a witch. I apologized for being so sensitive. Kai is so much older than me, but he was cute. Kyra was just missing being in a relationship and so she took it out on me.”

“Is she missing Thomas?” I asked, walking to the kitchen. Kyra, Masen and Owen were in the pool while Edward was relaxing on a chaise lounge. “Why aren’t you out in the pool?”

“I just got out. After Kyra and I talked it out, we spent the morning surfing. I’m a little waterlogged,” Mia snickered. “And it’s not Thomas she’s missing.”

“Oh,” I responded.

“How was the press thingy?” Mia asked, sitting on the kitchen counter.

“Long and I’m exhausted. I never want to talk again,” I snorted, pouring myself a glass of wine. “I’m so glad to be home and out of those death traps.” I limped out onto the patio. Mia hopped down from the counter, following me outside. Edward smiled crookedly, opening his arms for me. I fell into them, relaxing immediately once I was safely surrounded by his strength. I didn’t realize how stressed I was until I just melted into his arms. “I’ll be so happy once this is done.”

“The premier and the meeting on Friday, then you’re done,” Edward said, kissing my neck. “You look amazing, Bella. I did a fabulous job picking the outfit.”

“Thanks, angel,” I murmured, curling up in his lap. We spent a few hours on the patio. I eventually dozed off. Edward tried to carry me up to our bedroom, but he was still sore from surfing. I stayed awake long enough to take off my clothes and into one of Edward’s t-shirts. I slept long and hard until my husband woke me up with breakfast in bed.

“It’s your big day, gorgeous,” Edward cooed. “Did you sleep well?”

“I never realized that I was so tired. The press junket took a lot out of me,” I replied, my voice raspy. “And a lot out of my voice.”

“That’s why I made you some tea,” Edward said, pushing a steaming mug of herbal tea toward me. “Rose called. The hair stylists and makeup artists are coming at three. She told me to take the boys to get haircuts and even went so far as setting up appointments at some fancy-schmancy salon for all of us.”

“Rose wants all of us to look our best,” I said, sipping my tea. I huffed out a breath. “I’m nervous about tonight.”

“Don’t be. Tonight’s easy. We just need to smile pretty for the cameras, watch a movie in some dress clothes and then go to a party afterward,” Edward said, leaning on his elbow. “Then, you have the meeting tomorrow and then …”

“Home,” I breathed.

Edward placed his warm hand on my leg. “Not home, gorgeous.” I looked up at him, confused by his statement. “Bella, with all that happened, we need some time away.”

“That’s what this is,” I giggled, tucking into my pancakes.

“No, this is a working vacation. With everything that happened, I want to spoil you,” he whispered, his hand running up and down my leg. “So, we leave on Friday on a private jet to Cabo San Lucas. We’re spending a week in paradise, reconnecting and healing. I know that it’s not ideal timing, but
you need it. I need it. We need it.”

“You’re right,” I murmured, blushing and staring into his gorgeous golden eyes. “But, I don’t have my passport.”

“That problem is solved,” he breathed. “I have our passports and a bag packed in Kyra’s bedroom. You’re not mad?”

“Quite the opposite,” I smiled. “I’ve never been to Cabo San Lucas.”

“I went when I was in high school. It was the summer before my sophomore year. My parents took us. It was one final family vacation before Emmett went away to college. It was beautiful,” Edward said, his voice wistful. He shook his head. “I hated that vacation. Emmett was particularly nasty that trip. The only thing I remembered about the trip was how gorgeous the locale was. Granted, that was nearly thirty years ago, but I don’t think it changed all that much. Besides, the pictures of the house I’m renting are to die for.”

“And it’s pretty safe to assume that we’re not going to leave said ‘to-die for’ house,” I snickered.

“Nope. I’m spoiling you rotten and keeping you in my arms for seven straight days. In various stages of undress,” he purred, his eyes darkening with need.

“Behave,” I chided breathily. “I’m going to finish eating my breakfast and then shower. I feel gross from yesterday. The lights were really hot and I feel nasty.”

“Well, while you’re finishing up breakfast, I’m going to shower,” Edward grinned. “Thank you for letting me spoil you in taking you to paradise.” He crawled up the bed, kissing me sweetly.

“Hmmmm, syrupy.”

“Shocking, since I’m eating pancakes,” I giggled against his mouth. He growled playfully, sliding his tongue between my lips. I pushed him back. He smirked as he slinked off the bed, taking off his clothes. I moaned as he wiggled his ass before ducking into the bathroom. I finished my breakfast and carried the tray down to the kitchen. The kids were watching a movie. They waved at me, barely taking their eyes away from the television screen. I chuckled as I washed my dishes. Edward came down, his hair damp. “Good shower?”

“Excellent. Guys, we’ve got to go. We have an appointment to get our haircut,” Edward barked. “Aunt Ro even got us an appointment to get a straight edge shave, Owen.”

“Really? I’ve always wanted one of those,” Owen said, hopping up from the couch but grumbling when his leg gave him a twinge of pain. “Crap.”

“Can I get one?” Masen asked. “I’m growing some facial hair.”

“Not enough to shave, Mase,” Edward said, ruffling Masen’s hair. “You will get facial hair soon enough. Your old man and brother have five o’clock shadow at nine in the morning.” Masen frowned. “Come on, boys. Get your shoes on. We have to go Mêche or Michie or whatever it’s called.”

The boys got their shoes on, ambling out to the garage. I asked Mia and Kyra to let in the stylists when they came to the house. Edward had let me sleep late and it was just before one in the afternoon. I went upstairs to shower. By the time I was done, the kitchen had been transformed into a miniature salon. Mia was already seated, getting her hair curled. Kyra was flipping through a magazine, trying to figure out what she wanted. A petite red headed woman approached me and led me to one of the chairs.
I was in the midst of getting my hair curled when the guys came back. Edward’s hair was expertly styled, looking sexy and artfully disheveled. Masen’s hair was shorter, somewhat messy, mimicking Edward’s hairstyle. Owen surprised me the most. It was still long and shaggy. Edward rolled his eyes, pointing to Owen. “Don’t ask,” he mouthed. “We’re going to get ready. The limo should be here in an hour or so.”

The stylist working on my hair cursed and she began curling my hair faster. Edward snickered under his breath as he went up the stairs. I grumbled since he had it so easy. All he had to do was change into his tuxedo and he’d be ready to go. The stylist needed to finish my hair, do my makeup and then I had to change into my dress. Somehow, the stylist managed to finish my hair and put on my makeup within a half hour. I went to pay the stylist, but Rose had paid for everything. I did tip them and they started to clean up.

Darting up the stairs, I changed into my dress, as did the girls. By the time the limo arrived, we were dressed and down in the foyer. Edward looked at me like I was something to eat. I blushed as I took Edward’s hand, threading our fingers together. “You are a vision, Bella,” he whispered, kissing my knuckles. “You are going to be on the best dressed lists, my sexy wife.”

“So will you,” I breathed, my eyes traveling up and down his lean form.

“Enough with the seduction,” Kyra giggled, tucking her hair behind her ear. She was beautiful in her dress. She looked older than her eighteen years. Edward’s eyes softened. “Dad, what’s up?”

“Nothing, principessa,” he said, snaking his arm around my waist. “You just look so grown up. My baby girl is all grown up.” He looked at Mia, too. She was cute in her purple cocktail dress. “You both look so beautiful.”

“Not feeling the love, Dad,” Owen scoffed, leaning against his cane.

“You look like a punk,” Edward laughed. “Why didn’t you cut your hair?”

“Because I like my hair longer. It took forever to grow back after that scalp laceration,” Owen replied. “I just got it cleaned up.”

“Owen, you look very handsome. So do you, Masen,” I smiled. “We have to go. I can feel my phone vibrate in my purse. Rose is probably concerned that we’re skipping out on the premier.” Edward offered me his arm and we walked outside, clambering into the waiting limo. We drove through Los Angeles to the Kodak Theater. As we meandered through the streets of Los Angeles, getting closer to the theater, we saw a tent city that had been erected surrounding the theater.

“Wow! Look at all of these people,” Mia breathed, her eyes wide. “I can’t believe that all of these fans are here to see The Charmed Ones.”

“Aunt Ro wrote an amazing book,” I smiled, secretly shocked at the amount of people on the streets. Movie posters, copies of the books, and handmade posters littered through the crowd. Even through the windows of the limo, the volume of the fans was deafening. The limo slowed and the driver informed us that we were going to be getting out soon. We rode slowly to the entrance of the red carpet that really was purple. The limo stopped and my heart began to stammer. Edward threaded his fingers with mine. “I’m so nervous. What if I fall?”

“You won’t. I’ll keep you up,” he smiled, kissing my temple.

“Rosalie and her family are going out first. Then, you will enter next,” the driver explained.

The crowd roared. I looked out the window as Rose waved, smiling at the crowd. Tim was standing
next to her, his arm firmly placed around her waist. With a nod from our driver, the door opened. Edward slid out, helping me onto the purple carpet. Once I was steady, he did the same for our daughters before he sidled up to me. We smiled as cameras flashed. We stood together as a family for about twenty minutes before I was separated to do some more interviews. Forty-five minutes later, I was inside of the movie theater. Rosalie hugged me, squealing quietly. “This was so awesome, Bella. Everyone is saying nothing but good things.”

“Was there any doubt?” I giggled, threading my arm with hers. “Where are we sitting?”

“We have a booth for our families,” Rose said, leading me to a set of stairs.

The assistant director was waiting for us. We walked up the stairs. Edward and my kids were settled in the lush seats in the booth. I sat down next to my husband, threading our fingers together. The director and the lead actors introduced the movie and the lights dimmed. Edward leaned over and kissed me, murmuring, “I love you and I’m so proud of you, gorgeous.”

“I love you, too,” I whispered back, kissing his soft pouty lips. “But, I can’t wait until we’re in Cabo.”

“Me neither,” he purred, his eyes dark with lust. “Me neither.”

A/N: Lots of stuff happened. Lots and lots. As a result, there are lots and lots of pictures. You can find those pictures on my blog and tumblr (links for both of those are on my profile). You can also access them on Facebook page: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation. I’m also on twitter: tufano79.

Up next will be the last part of the premier, the after-party, and then citrusy times in Cabo. I’m not gonna lie, this next chapter will be lemony. Pure smexy times. Leave me some lovin! ;-}
Chapter 26

They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Up next will be the last part of the premier, the after-party, and then citrusy times in Cabo. I’m not gonna lie, this next chapter will be lemony. Pure smexy times.

Chapter Twenty-Six: Cabo San Lucas

EPOV

“Why can’t we go to the party?” Ava asked, pouting pitifully.

“Because it’s not for children,” Rose replied as we walked through the bowels of the theater to our waiting limo. “You’re going to hang out at Aunt Bella and Uncle Edward’s rental. The pool is much bigger there. The limo is going to stop at our house so you can get your swimsuits and something to sleep in.” She stopped Ava, hugging her tightly. She whispered in her ear and Ava nodded. “I love you, sweet girl.”

“Love you, too, Mom,” Ava said.

Bella leaned back against me, whispering into my ear. “Why do we have to go to the party? I’d rather get a head start on our vacation.”

Fuck. Me.

Ever since I told my wife about our surprise trip to Cabo San Lucas, she’d been incredibly flirty and needy and affectionate. She hadn’t stopped touching me all night. In fact, as we watched the movie, her fingers traced my crotch. I had hardened instantly and her wandering fingers brought me so close to release. I had to stop her, lacing our hands together. She gave me a sexy smirk, her eyes twinkling. I picked up her hand, kissing her palm. “Behave,” I whispered.

“I don’t want to,” she giggled breathlessly. Rose cleared her throat. We both looked at her. She shook her head, wagging her finger. She was chiding our behavior. I, at least, looked abashed but Bella untangled her fingers from mine and cupped my hardness. I blushed and pulled her hand away from my junk.

“Bella!” I hissed.

“I don’t want to,” she giggled breathlessly. Rose cleared her throat. We both looked at her. She shook her head, wagging her finger. She was chiding our behavior. I, at least, looked abashed but Bella untangled her fingers from mine and cupped my hardness. I blushed and pulled her hand away from my junk.

“Bella!” I hissed.

“Okay, okay,” she pouted, getting up from her seat and sitting on my lap. I sighed, wrapping my arms around her waist and turned my attention back to the movie. She snuggled in my arms, her fingers toying with the hair at the nape of my neck. She wiggled on my lap, pressing her ass into me.
I growled lowly. “I’m sorry.”

“No, you’re not,” I snickered.

“Dad, you’re spacing out,” Masen said, knocking me with shoulder. “You okay?”

“Sorry. Just remembering the movie,” I said, pinching Bella’s ass. My wife squealed, giving me an adorable scowl. “You guys better behave while we’re out.”

“We will, Dad,” Kyra said. “I can’t wait to take down my hair. The stylist used so many hair pins to keep it up.”

“Well, it looks cute, Kyra,” Ava said, weaving her arm through Kyra’s.

We pushed through the back door. With hugs and kisses, the kids got into the limo that drove us to the premier. We got into the other limo, driving across town to the house of the director for the premier party. Originally, it was scheduled at some chic bar, but the hype of the film caused the production team to make a last minute change. The home allowed the production team privacy and protection from the crazy fans. It was in a gated community in Los Feliz.

“I don’t think we’re going to stay long,” Rose said as she sipped some champagne. “We need to make an appearance. We have that meeting tomorrow morning for the second film and discussing how we’re splitting up the final two movies.”

“Good, the sooner we can go home, the sooner we can …” Bella trailed off, arching a sexy brow at me.


“I am not,” Bella scoffed.

“Sure,” Rose sang, downing her champagne. “The sooner you get to Cabo, the sooner the unrelieved sexual tension can dissipate. When was the last time you fucking each other?”

Bella and I glared at Rose. She just smiled, jutting out her chin defiantly. “What? Bella practically gave you a hand job during the climax of the movie, Edward.”

“Oh, for the love …” I groaned.

“Rose, I think your brain to mouth filter has disappeared,” Tim snorted. “Have some more champagne.”

“Thanks! Don’t mind if I do,” Rose grinned, pouring herself another glass of champagne. “You want some?”

Bella picked up a champagne flute, holding it out in front of her. Rose filled her glass and they clinked glasses, giggling like school girls. Tim tossed me a beer. Rose, thankfully, stayed quiet about our sex lives for the rest of the drive. Instead, she gushed about how excited she was about the premier and how thrilled she was at how the movie turned out. She prattled on and on until we pulled up to a Spanish style home. It was lit up in the colors of the movie, purple and red. The sound of music pumped through the air and I knew right away that the party was too hip for me.

Despite the tattoos, confident swagger and crooked smirk, I was still highly uneasy meeting new people. My insecurities came roaring to the foreground in situations like this party.
“Edward, you look like you’re going to puke,” Tim whispered.

“Sorry. Just the party is freaking me out,” I sighed.

“Edward, have a shot. You’re not driving,” Rose said, handing me a shot of tequila. I took it, downing it quickly. I pointed to the glass again. Rose filled it. I finished it and groaned as it burned down my throat. I felt the tequila take hold. I was much more comfortable. The nerves I was feeling dissipated. “Let’s have some fun, kids. Free delicious food, top shelf liquor and good tunes.”

The driver opened the door, helping Rose and Bella out of the limo. We walked into the lavish house, which had been decked out with purple, hot pink and red drapery, up-lighting and some lush looking furniture. Through the house, in the backyard, on top of the pool, there was a clear dance floor and a DJ spinning some music. I definitely felt my age at this party. Almost all of the people at the party were half my age. Even the lead trio of actresses were as old as Kyra. However, we made the most of it. Bella and I ate some fancy-looking quiches, drinking the themed alcoholic beverage, a Charmedsickle, a variation of the creamsickle. We sipped our drinks, going outside and settling onto a red settee, watching the cast practically hump each other on the dance floor.

“Do you remember when we were like that?” Bella asked, sliding onto my lap.

“We were never like that,” I deadpanned. “We at least danced as opposed to imitating fornication.”

“I’d rather be fornicating,” she purred, loosening my tie. She unbuttoned the top few buttons of my shirt, toying with my chest hair. Her lips traced my jaw as her fingers stealthily unbuttoned more of my shirt. “Do you want to find a corner and have some public sex?”

I kissed her, pulling her hand from my shirt. “I want to. Fuck, I so want to, but we’re not going to.”

“Come on, baby,” she murmured, her lips wrapping around my earlobe. I growled, my hands tightening around her waist. As she kissed, nibbling on my neck, I searched for someplace for us to duck away. She had teased me all throughout the movie and now her breathy pleas, I was about ready to burst. I found a cabana on the far end of the yard.

“Not one word, Isabella,” I growled, cupping her face and staring into her dilated eyes. “Get up.” She gave me a carnal, sexy smile as she stood up. I threaded my fingers with hers, guiding her to the cabana. There was no one inside, but the white tent was set up with a large couch. The lights cast us in an eerie glow. I ran my thumb along her bottom lip. “No sounds, Isabella. None.” She bit her lip, nodding eagerly. “And clothes stay on.”

I dipped my head, running my tongue along the length of her neck. She moaned, her fingers threading in my hair. My arms snaked around her waist, pressing her slender body against me. Her body was warm, willing and wanting. I gathered the skirt of her chiffon dress, pulling it up. When I felt her bare ass, I growled. “No panties?”

“A thong,” she breathed, dragging my right hand around to the front of her body, encouraging me to cup her sex. Her skimpy panties were drenched. I didn’t waste any time, sliding my fingers into her panties and circling her clit. “Fuck.”

“No talking,” I chided, easing two fingers into her tight, wet heat. She whimpered, holding up her dress and watching as my fingers moved easily inside. “Do you like seeing my fingers inside of you?”

“Yes,” she whimpered. She shimmied her panties down, giving me more room to maneuver. I curled my fingers inside of her, my thumb circling her clit. She rolled her hips, putting her slender leg up on
the table, opening up further. I kissed her soft lips, pressing my fingers in her. I was lost in the feeling
of her. Her arousal dripped down my hand and I wanted to bury my face between her legs. I wanted
to taste her sweetness. But, at a Hollywood party, that probably wasn’t very kosher or couth. She
nibbled on my lip, her fingers tightening in my hair. Her hips were rocking uncontrollably as my
fingers were being squeezed by her pussy. Her body quaked as her release zipped through her. I held
her up as her body lagged against me. “Edward,” she panted.

“So fucking beautiful,” I breathed, turning her around so she was kneeling on the couch. “This is
going to be hard and fast, Isabella.”

“Fuck me,” she growled quietly, wiggling her ass. I unzipped my tuxedo pants and slid them down.
Stroking my cock, I coated it with her abundant wetness. She looked back at me, her eyes blazing
with need. With a grunt, I slammed my body in hers, causing the couch to move. She was clenched
around me, her fingers digging into the red fabric of the couch. I gripped her hips and began moving
my body slowly, swiveling my pelvis so I could feel every inch of her body. I moved faster,
squeezing her pale skin. Bella was whimpering, her body working in concert with mine. “Angel …
please?”

“Hmmm, you don’t have to beg,” I whispered, my hips moving faster. The music was deep and
throbbing like what I was feeling inside of my sexy wife. My movements were smooth and
conversely frantic. It had been too long since we’d made love. I felt somewhat badly that the first
time we were together, we were fucking in a cabana at some Hollywood director’s after-party. But,
the feeling of being inside of her calmed me and helped my healing with Bella’s abduction. My
gorgeous wife, looked back at me, her dark eyes pleading and wanting. I snarled lowly, thrusting
harder inside of her. My cock twitched, growing deep within her and I knew that I was close. I
reached around her belly, finding her clit and rubbing it to bring her closer to orgasm. She bucked
against me, her pussy pulsating all around me. “Fuck, fuck, fuck,” I hissed into her curled hair as my
own orgasm caused my knees to buckle from the sheer power of it.

I twisted both of us so I was seated on the couch and Bella was on my lap. I was still inside of her,
softening and the evidence of our coupling was dribbling down my length and onto the couch. She
curled up against me, panting quietly. “That was exactly what the doctor ordered,” she said, kissing
my lips.

“Mmmhhmmmm,” I said lowly, nuzzling her neck. “I’m sorry that it was in a cabana and not a
bed.”

“I loved the cabana. It was hot,” she said, picking up a towel from a stack on the table. She got up,
hastily wiping between her legs and adjusting her dress. “But, we probably should head back out
there. I know that Rose is probably getting antsy and is about to spill the beans that we got it on in
here.”

“Hand me the towel,” I said. She tossed it to me and I wiped off my cock, tucking it back into my
tuxedo pants. Standing up, I buttoned my shirt and wiped off my face since it was hot in the cabana.
I knew I was sweaty. I poked my head out of the cabana. No one was nearby and Rose was
chattering to the director of the movie on the opposite side of the pool.

I pulled Bella close to me and tried to walk nonchalantly back to our spot on another garish red
couch. I kissed Bella’s head, getting some more drinks for us. Rose stopped me as I slid behind her.
Her lips pressed to my ear. “You are so busted, SGG.”

“Shut up,” I hissed, glaring at her playfully. “I’m not a geezer. I’ve got a well-sated wife as proof.”

“Who would have known?” she laughed, hugging me. “Go back to your woman, Edward. She’s
probably starting to think you’ve abandoned her.” Rose kissed my cheek and I weaved through the writhing bodies to get back to the love of my life.

I handed Bella the glass of champagne. She just sighed contentedly, holding the glass but not drinking it. We were lost in our bubble, watching the party. Bella just idly traced patterns on my arm, leaning her head on my shoulder. I held her tightly, allowing us to heal just a little more. We talked to anyone who came over to us, but Bella refused to get off my lap. Thankfully, there were no members of the press at the party, just studio big-wigs, actors, and directors. However, a lot of the studio talking-heads were approaching Bella for offers of writing other screenplays. She said she’d consider it though she didn’t seem all that interested, but gave out her card with her email on it.

Rose walked over to us, Tim following close behind. “Horn dogs, let’s go,” she quipped.

“She knows?” Bella asked, smacking my chest.

“Bella, it was a little hard to not know,” Rose snickered.

“Rose, stop picking on Bella,” Tim said, kissing his wife’s neck. “Even if they did, it’s not our business. But, you’re drunker than a skunk. You guys ready? I texted the limo driver.”

“Yeah,” Bella said, hiding her red-hot face into my shoulder. “Our little rendezvous better not be in US Weekly, Edward. I would die. You know?”

“No one knows,” Rose said, pulling Bella off my lap. They walked away as Rose put her mind at ease.

“Do you think anyone knows?” I hissed, following my wife and her best friend. “I mean, it would kill Bella if anyone …”

“Relax, Edward. Rose is being a shit,” Tim reassured me. “Besides, I wish I could have snuck Rose away. She looks so unbelievably sexy.”

“Boys! The limo’s here!” Rose barked. She pulled on Tim’s arm, pushing him into the waiting limo. I helped Bella inside and settled next to her. Bella put her head on my shoulder as we drove to our rental. “I’ll see you tomorrow, Bellini. I’ll pick you up at nine. The meetings should be done by noon and you’ll be in the air for Cabo by three. You’ll have more opportunities to have naked fun time with your Geezer boy.”

“Rose,” I growled.

“Okay, okay. You’re not a geezer. The fact that you boffed your wife in a cabana at an elite Hollywood premier party proves to me that you are soooooooooooo not a geezer,” Rose said, kissing my cheek. “Love to you both.”

“What about your kids?” Bella asked.

“Tim and I will pick them up when we take you to the airport tomorrow, sweetie,” Rose said, hugging my wife. We got out of the limo, waving as they drove off.

“They are so fucking tonight,” Bella snickered.

“Well, it seems fair. We ‘boffed’ at the party. They’re ‘boffing’ at home,” I explained, helping her inside. I could hear some noise from the family room. We walked inside, seeing all of our kids, including our niece and nephew, sleeping on the massive sectional. “Awww, they’re cute.”
“And slobs,” Bella grumbled, looking at the chips, dips, pop cans and dishes all over the floor.

“I’ll make them clean it up while you’re at your meeting,” I said, guiding her away from the family room and up to our bedroom. “Do you want to shower?”

“Probably, since I want to sleep in as late as possible tomorrow. I’m not going to wash my hair, but I want to clean up since I’m a little sticky,” she said, smiling timidly. “Can you help me with my dress?”

“Can we have more naked fun time?” I purred, unzipping her dress.

“Tempting, but I’d rather save up our naked fun time when we don’t have six children sleeping in squalor in the family room,” Bella answered, shimmying out of her dress. I groaned when I saw her, her dewy skin just begging to be touched. “Don’t. Stop staring at me like I’m a steak.” She slid off her panties, walking to the bathroom. She stopped at the doorway, grinning seductively. “Coming?”

Fuck. Yes.

xx STTD xx

Bella was up and out early, grouchy as ever. Our innocent shower turned into me feasting on her until the water turned cold. I needed that taste since I was denied at the party. Then, after our shower, Bella wanted to return the favor, which she did. She teased me, her tongue and fingers bringing me to the brink before I exploded in her mouth. By the time we went to sleep, it was about two in the morning. I went back to sleep for a few hours, getting up when my alarm went off. I took another shower so I could tame the mess on my head. Going to bed and having the most amazing blow job from the sexiest woman on the planet did not bode well for my already messy mop.

The kids were still asleep when I ambled down the stairs. I woke them up with a blare of an air horn I found in the garage. Kyra scowled at me as I blared it again, chuckling as they scrambled to get up. I made them clean the family room before I sent them to shower and get dressed. While they got ready, I made a huge breakfast for them.

After breakfast, I told my children to start packing to go home and I cleaned our bedroom, packing our first bag to go home with Kyra. Then, I checked the second bag, making sure we had our passports and smexy fun time goodies. I verified our flight, a private jet that was taking us to paradise, dragging our luggage into the kitchen. I wanted to be there now. I checked my watch, seeing that Bella should be done with her meetings, heading back to the house.

The door of the house opened and Rose’s voice carried over the wood flooring. “Bella, why are you being such a pain in the ass? The studio loved your work so much that they want you to write five more screenplays,” Rose said, following my stressed wife into the kitchen. “Isabella Marie Cullen! Why are you squashing them down?”

“Because! With writing your screenplays, I haven’t had a chance to do my real job, to promote the foundation and to be there for my children,” Bella said, putting her bag down on the kitchen table.

“Think about it,” Rose said, stepping in front of my wife, glaring at her. “I know you said you think about it, but truly do that. And you don’t have to crank them out in a month or anything. You’ve got a year.”

“A year to read five separate books and turning them into something that I’m proud of,” Bella argued. She pinched her nose, sighing deeply. “I’ll think about it. But, now? I want to enjoy the week in Cabo with my husband.”
“I can respect that,” Rose murmured, smiling sympathetically. “I know that’s it’s a big deal and I know that you’re reeling from …”

“Among other things,” Bella said, hugging Rosalie. “Love you, Rose.”

“Love you, too, Bellini,” Rose replied. She gave me a smirk. “Geezer.”

“Don’t make me hurt you,” I growled. “And we clearly established that I’m not a geezer. Get over it.”

“I know,” Rose retorted, pinching my cheeks. “Where are my kids?” I jerked my thumb to the family room. She bellowed, barking at them to get their asses in gear.

“What’s this about more screenplays?” I asked, enfolding my wife into my arms. She sighed, pressing her cheek against my chest. “Bella?”

“Can we talk about it later?” she asked.

“Anything you need, gorgeous,” I replied. “Are you ready to go to Cabo?”

“Yeah. When can we leave?” she whispered, looking up at me with a soft look in her eyes.

“Soon, baby,” I murmured, kissing her soft lips.

“Okay, I’m taking my children home,” Rose said, ruffling Lucas’s hair. “We’ll be back with a limo to take you to the airport. See you in an hour or so.” They left and we went around the house, cleaning up our messes in the rental. The kids finished packing and were speaking excitedly about the success of the movie. Kyra and Owen were reading reviews from various websites, happily sharing the fact that they were at the premier of Facebook, Instatwitter or whatever it was called.

Rose came back in an hour with another limo. Bella packed up the keys in the envelope and we drove out of the posh neighborhood, dropping off the envelope at the front gate. We drove to Van Nuys Airport where the Gulfstream G650 I hired to fly us to Cabo was located. With hugs, kisses and reminders to behave for their grandparents, Bella and I got onto the plane. The flight attendant gave us the lowdown of the plane and checked our passports. With a smile, she darted into the cockpit and the engines roared to life. The flight attendant came back. “We’ve got a two and half our flight. Once we reach cruising altitude, I will serve some light lunch. We have a cheese and antipasto tray with some white wine for you. Enjoy your flight.”

“The cheese and antipasto tray sounds great, but sleep sounds better,” Bella murmured, leaning on my shoulder. “The meetings were tiresome, the studio executives were relentless about the screenplays and I was barely coherent because of the hangover I had along with the exhaustion from our late night explorations.”

“They say that orgasms are the cure for hangovers,” I replied, giving her my signature crooked smirk. “I can help you some more?”

“Not now,” she sighed. “I love how you make me feel, angel, but my brain and body are just spent.”

“Well, the second best cure for hangovers is more alcohol,” I snickered, wrapping my arms around her tiny body. I noticed the flight attendant settle into her seat and the engines roared. We were pressed into the seats and the plane took off. The plane leveled off and the flight attendant set up our lunch. I lovingly fed my wife and she giggled. We sipped the wine and Bella eventually drifted off on my shoulder.
I gently ran my fingers up and down her spine, looking at her flawless beauty. In the twenty years we’d been together, she’d only gotten more gorgeous. Her hair was soft and curly, the most beautiful shade of cocoa with some honey golden tones mixed in. Her pale skin was flawless and creamy, blushing with the faintest color of pink roses. Her body, while still slender, had changed the most from having children. Her breasts were fuller, more than a handful, her hips were slightly wider, giving her the most beautiful curves. Bella complained that she was pudgy since her stomach was no longer flat, but rounded. I loved every inch of her sexy body. That body was a result of three pregnancies and a whole lot of love. I adored my wife, lumps, bumps and all.

“Mr. Cullen?” came the soft voice of the flight attendant. I looked up at her. She was smiling sweetly. “We’re getting ready to land. I need you to put the seat up.”

“Thank you,” I whispered, adjusting my seat. Bella barely moved, her head moving to my lap. I idly ran my fingers through her silken locks. I looked out the window as the ground quickly approached the plane. With a slight bump, we were on the ground in Cabo San Lucas. The landing caused Bella to stir. She sat up, confused and discombobulated. She wiped her face, still befuddled. “We’re here, gorgeous girl. You okay?”

“I’m fine. I’m just a little …” she said, tossing her curled hair up into a messy bun. She looked out the window, smiling wistfully. “It’s so beautiful.”

“The villa we’re staying in is even more beautiful,” I breathed. “And secluded.”

“So, clothing not required?” Bella asked, her eyes twinkling.

“Exactly,” I growled, kissing Bella’s soft, sweet mouth. The plane stopped and the flight attendant opened the doors. A customs agent came in, swiping our passports and allowing us into Mexico. We got off the plane, gathered our bags and got into the waiting SUV to drive us to the rental villa.

“Holy shit, that’s a fucking mansion,” Bella breathed as we parked in the circular drive. “Edward, we surely don’t need all of this space.”

“We don’t, but I want us to have the best,” I explained. The SUV parked and the driver helped us to unload our bags. I gave him a tip while he handed me the keys to the house and to another SUV parked in the garage. The driver left and we were standing in the foyer. “Do you want to explore?”

“I want to …” she said, biting her lip. She reached the hem of her shirt, tossing it from her body. “I want to grab some towels and go skinny dipping with my hubby.”

“Learning from experience, Bella?” I laughed. “You don’t want to ruin these floors either?”

She just giggled, unhooking her bra and tossing it onto the couch. I groaned as she squeezed her breasts together. I found some towels in a downstairs closet, removing my own shirt. “Edward, you’re slacking,” she sang, her pants in the middle of family room. She was standing by the window, leaning casually in nothing but a pair of lacy gray panties. “Hurry up, Edward. I need you.” She rolled her body, pushing her panties over her hips. With another breathy giggle, she turned around and opened the door to the patio. I slipped off my sandals, pushing my shorts over my hips. I followed my wife outside. She was untangling her long brown curls. I slid my arms around her waist, kissing her neck. “Now, you’re on tap with me, Edward.” She turned in my arms. I bent down, brushing my lips with hers and losing myself in the warmth of her naked body against me and soft moans coming from her mouth. Abruptly, she pulled back and turned, diving into the pool. She swam the length, her head poking out from the other side. “Are you coming? I want to feel you inside me, Edward. It’s been too long.”
I blinked a few times, diving in, following my wife. I wiped my face when I resurfaced, pinning her against the wall of the extraordinarily warm pool. I ran my hands down her body, reveling in her softness. She stared up at me, her eyes black with extreme passion. Her hands moved up my shoulders, wrapping her legs around my hips. I kissed her lips, easily sliding my tongue into her sweet mouth. My hands cupped her ass as rolled my hips, my hardness brushing against her warmth.

“So hard, Edward,” she cooed, taking my earlobe into her mouth. “Do you want me?”

“Fuck, always, Bella,” I purred, sliding my hardness along her pussy. Despite being in the pool, I could feel how aroused she was. I pressed my mouth to hers as I grasped my cock, sliding it inside of her warmth. She gasped, her legs tightening around me as I filled her to the hilt. I cupped her breast and slowly pulled out, only to slide back inside. “So good, gorgeous.”

“I love you,” she breathed, her pussy clenching around me. “This is the perfect way to start our vacation.”

“I agree. Being inside of you is the most wonderful thing in the planet,” I murmured before kissing her again. I eased in and out of her once more, reveling in her tightness. Her fingers dug into my shoulders. She began meeting me, thrust for thrust. Her breasts were bouncing out of the water, glistening in the late afternoon sunlight. I ran my thumb over pebbled nipple, roughly grabbing her breast. “God, I fucking need you, Bella.”

“You have me, baby,” she growled, her fingers tangling in my wet hair and pulling my head back. She bit down on my neck, sucking on the sensitive skin. I increased the power behind my thrusts. Bella grunted, arching off the edge of the pool. I could feel her pulsate around me, the wetness inside coating my cock, allowing me move easily. “Edward. I’m … fuck!”

“Me, too, baby,” I panted, tightening my hold on her leg and slamming harder, ever so harder inside. “Oh, God. Bella, you feel so fucking good.”

“Yes,” she breathed, her hand cupping her breast. I increased the power behind my thrusts. Bella grunted, arching off the edge of the pool. I kept pumping in her until I softened and slipped out of her. Bella’s leg fell off my shoulder and I pulled us into the pool. She crawled up my body, holding onto me tightly as she kissed any skin she could reach. “Hmm, we can’t do that with our kids around.”

“Um, no,” I laughed, moving us further into the pool, into deeper waters. “Though, us jumping into the pool is becoming a habit, Bella.”

“I like this habit,” she laughed, pressing her mouth to mine. “This place is gorgeous, Edward. I can’t believe you’ve rented this for us for the week.”

“We deserved it, Bella. With everything that happened, we needed to get away and just be Edward and Bella,” I shrugged, holding her tightly. “It’s not that I don’t love our children.”
“I understand and I’m grateful for this,” she smiled, burying her nose into my neck. “I love you, angel. So much.”

“As I love you, gorgeous,” I murmured, running my fingers through her tangled hair.

We stayed in the pool until the sun dipped below the horizon. When we got out, I carried her to the kitchen and searched in the fridge for something to eat. Settling on sandwiches, I made us a quick dinner and shared a bottle of Dos Equis with some lime. Bella eventually put on some lacy sexy thing after I carried the suitcase into the bedroom, not wanting to wear just a towel. I did notice that she refused to put on panties, which made me happy. I also put on a pair of shorts and we settled in the family room to watch a movie. We barely lasted an hour before our eyes started to droop. We woke up briefly when my cell phone rang, announcing that our children were safely back in Illinois. We said our goodnights and promptly went to bed.

*Easy access, I’m telling you.*

XX STTD XX

I awoke the next morning to sweet, wet kisses down my torso. I moaned, not wanting to open my eyes. Bella’s tongue traced my nipple causing me to see what she was doing. Our blankets had been pushed off and both of our naked forms were bathed in warm sunlight of the rising sun. Bella’s mouth was moving closer to my arousal. Her fingers were gliding over my skin, which was covered in a light sheen of sweat since we’d left the window open last night. She gave me a feral smile as she nibbled across my hips. My cock was standing at attention, leaking with release. Her dainty fingers teased my hardness, gently circling the head of my needy arousal. “Bella,” I choked out, my voice deep from sleep.

“Hmmm,” she responded, licking her lips eagerly. She pressed a soft kiss to the head of my cock. I panted out a breath, watching my beautiful wife. With a wink, she ran her tongue up and down the length of my shaft, soaking it in her saliva. Her tiny hand wrapped around the base of my hardness and she plunged her mouth over me.

“Fuck!” I barked, my head falling back onto the white, fluffy pillows. Bella responded with a throaty chuckle around me, slowly moving up my length, her hand following her mouth. *Shit, this woman is a goddess. I cannot … fuck … More.* My mind was incoherent as Bella sank her mouth down. My fingers were fisting the sheets, not wanting to hurt my wife since her mouth felt so fucking good. Bella dragged her teeth along the underside of my shaft, swirling her tongue in the slit of my cock. I whimpered, watching her with rapt attention. Her hand gently pumped my erection as she took one of my balls into her mouth, sucking it between her lips. She twisted her hand around me, cupping the head of my arousal.

Bella released my balls and kissed up my length, teasing the top of me. Her eyes were black, hooded and lust-filled. Her fingernails ran up and down my belly before she grasped the base of my erection, swallowing me as far as she could. Her eyes closed and she moaned around me, the vibrations shivering through my body. I reached out for her, caressing her breast that was just out of my reach. Her eyes opened and she released me with a pop. “It’s all about you, Edward,” she whispered, her hand twisting around me. “I want to taste you, feel you come down my throat.”

“You can still do that,” I said, trying to guide her body closer to me. “I want my own taste, Bella.”

“All in good time,” she purred, lapping the pearl of arousal that had seeped out of me.

“Then answer me this – are you wet?” I asked, staring down at her. “Put your fingers between your legs and feel your pussy. Is it dripping from sucking my cock?” Bella sat up on her knees, sliding her
hand down her body and cupping her sex. She gasped quietly, circling her hand over her bare pussy. With a low whimper, she removed her hand from her body and showed me her glistening fingers. “Does my love need her own release?”

Bella bit her lip, leaning back down over my cock and sucking it into her sweet, wet mouth. I pouted when she denied me my chance to pleasure her like she was pleasuring me, but, she did move closer. Her ass was within reach and I gently squeezed her supple skin before sliding my fingers inside. *Fuck. Me. Drenched is an understatement.* I moved her closer and she finally relented, her knees on either side of my head. I licked my lips, staring at her soaked pussy. Bella’s mouth was working me over, bringing me closer to the edge and backing away, teasing me so I could have a huge orgasm.

I ran my nose along the seam of her thigh, relishing in her sweet, tangy scent. My hands wrapped around her thighs and I pulled her down so I could bury my tongue between her lower lips. Slowly, I circled her clit with the tip of my tongue. Bella’s head was bobbing, matching the speed of my languid licking. With each pass of her mouth, I swiped a delectable circle on her. She took every inch of me in her mouth while I feasted on her essence. Its flavor exploding on my tongue, causing me to become harder and more aroused. Being surrounded by her and her scent, it made my cock ache with sweet release.

Reaching around her legs, I spread her pussy lips so I could dip my tongue inside of her. She whimpered, her legs quivering with anticipation. I didn’t make her wait long, coiling my tongue deep within her sweetness. I released one of her legs, sliding my fingers inside along with my tongue. I eagerly sucked on her before removing my finger and toying with her ass. She let me go, widening her legs and giving me more access. *My baby wants to play.* Her hand was twisting my cock as she looked back at me, her eyes pleading for more. Who was I to deny my horny, desperate wife?

A horny, desperate husband who was currently devouring his wife’s succulent pussy.

When I dipped my finger back inside of her pussy to gather more of her sweet nectar, she turned back to my cock and began bobbing with more determination. I moved my mouth, sucking on her clit as I slid one of my fingers into her ass. Her guttural groan encouraged me and I added another soon after. Her hips were rocking over me, needing more friction. I flicked her bundle of nerves and carefully thrust my fingers inside of her ass. My tongue was coated with her arousal and I was in sensory overload from her scent, her pussy, her mouth – *everything.* Bella’s hands were gripping my cock while she nibbled gently on my balls, bringing me closer to orgasm. I growled against her, which earned me renewed arousal from my wife. Her movements, both over me and on my cock, were growing jerkier and frantic. I completely understood.

“Harder, Edward,” Bella begged, her hips rolling beautifully over me. I smiled against her lower lips, sucking on her sweetness harder and thrusting my hand deep inside of her ass. *Oh, what I wouldn’t give for it to be my cock. It’s been too long since we’ve done that.* My cock was so hard, I thought it was going to explode. Bella’s whimpers and her mouth consuming me were my kryptonite. I needed to come. I wanted to come and come with my girl, filling her mouth with my cum.

Like a bolt of lightning, Bella’s body quaked and the undiluted perfection of my wife coated my tongue, mouth and face. Her ass clenched around me as her pussy throbbed with an intense orgasm. Feeling her lose it caused me to have my own ‘out-of-body’ experience. My cock twitched, pumping out my seed into my wife’s eager, willing mouth. We stayed connected until my cock softened. She had licked me clean as I did the same for her. Rolling off me, Bella moved so she was perched on my chest. Her face was flushed, her hair was a haystack and she was smiling smugly. “We so need to do that again soon.”

“I agree, but my recovery time is not as fast as it used to be,” I chuckled, cupping her breasts. “And
perhaps we can do some other things.” My hand glided down her pale skin, moving to her ass and circling her rosette.

“I definitely want that,” she breathed, her eyes becoming hooded and licking her lips. She leaned forward, pressing her lips to mine and moaning when she tasted herself on my mouth. “Now, as much as I love your spunk, it’s not necessarily the breakfast of champions.”

“You said the opposite when we were dating,” I snickered, moving her off my body and tucking her into my arms. “I’ll make you the most delicious breakfast, Bella. I promise. Just a few more hours of sleep, though.”

“Hmmm, I agree,” she said, placing her head on my chest. Within a few moments, we were both asleep and stayed that way until early afternoon. We took a shared shower before we went downstairs to look for something to eat. We were dressed in our swimwear, wanting to lay out by the pool after eating some breakfast. Bella whipped up some eggs, toast and fresh fruit. I was grateful that the caretaker of the house had filled the fridge and pantry with food. I knew I did not want to go out to buy groceries. After I did the dishes, we put on some sunscreen and settled onto the chaise lounges on the lanai.

“What do you want to do while we’re here?” I asked, keeping my eyes closed behind my sunglasses.

“This sounds perfect,” Bella sighed, untying her bikini top and sweeping her hair off her back. I groaned. She just giggled, smiling wryly. “I don’t want tan lines.”

“Why don’t you just take off the rest?” I teased. Bella flipped me off, clipping her hair away from her neck. “Seriously, though. Do you want to just hang out here?”

“I don’t know much about Cabo,” she said, shifting on the chaise lounge. “You’ve been here before. What do you want to do? Besides me.” She balled up her bikini top, tossing it toward me.

“Um … uh …,” I stammered, momentarily stupid because she was topless.

“Edward, your tongue was in my twat earlier this morning and your finger was in my ass. They’re tits. You’ve seen them,” she snorted, rolling onto her back and allowing her breasts to … Fuck, she’s so beautiful. “Cullen! Focus! Cabo, plans, go!”

“Um, I think staying close to the house might be perfect, but I’d like to take you to Land’s End. It’s gorgeous, really. It’s the one positive thing about the trip that I remembered when I came with my family,” I said. “But, I don’t want to go with a huge crowd.”

“I know you’ll probably come up with something,” Bella said, covering her face with a towel. And I knew what I had to do. This trip was going to be about us reconnecting as a couple. Almost all of our time will be spent at the house. I really liked seeing a nearly-naked Bella on a daily basis. For our trip to Land’s End, I’d have to arrange for some sort of private tour, maybe a tent so we could spend the night? Bella was never a fan of camping, but surely she’d make an exception with what I had planned.

“I’ll be right back,” I blurted, hopping up off the chaise to make all of the arrangements. If they were possible.

Dude, you’re loaded. With money, anything is possible.

xx STTD xx

After several phone calls, a hefty endowment to a local marina and conversations with members of
the local Cabo San Lucas government, my plan was in motion. I arranged for a lavish tent to be set up on the beach of Land’s End along with a fire pit, food and a telescope since it was a prime spot to go stargazing. We’d be dropped off at sundown and would be picked up at dawn. It was planned for the weekend, Friday night into Saturday morning. We’d be leaving on Sunday, heading back to reality.

*Can’t we just stay here?*

No, you can’t, moron. Kyra is packing up as we speak to go away to college. My daughter is moving out.

I shook off my inner-voice, ignoring it. I couldn’t focus on Kyra’s moving out and making sure that Bella was well-loved at the same time. I was grilling some steaks as Bella set the table outside overlooking the Pacific while she spoke to our children on the phone. We’d been in Cabo for several days and as promised, we were in various stages of undress. Tonight was the first night since we’d gotten here that we were in actual clothing. Bella was in a sexy dress, showing off her golden tan and I was wearing a pair of linen pants and a loose button-down shirt. Personally, I wished I could have been shirtless since I had fallen asleep out in the mid-day sun yesterday. I was quite sunburnt.

“I’m glad that you are doing so much better, Owen,” Bella said, handing me a beer. “No more cane and you’ve been released to do some light running! That’s amazing.” She thrust another beer under my nose. “Open, please,” she mouthed. I opened the bottle, handing it to her, kissing her upturned mouth. “You went to Kyra’s condo today, too?”

I flipped the steaks, checking on the corn on the cob that was roasting on the top grate of the grill. I saw that they were nearly done and placed it on the small platter I had next to me. “The walls are painted? Did Kyra give the thumbs up, I assume?” Bella laughed. “Good. It’ll make us moving her in much easier. And don’t think that you’re getting out of it, bub. Your physical therapist just gave you the seal of approval. You want to talk to your dad?”

I didn’t hear the response, but the phone was passed to me and I knew the answer. “Hey, Owen,” I said, handing Bella the tongs.

“Did you hear? My P/T is being cut down and I’m getting stronger,” Owen said happily.

“That’s awesome, Owen. I bet you’re happy that you’re getting your mobility back,” I responded, sipping my beer. “I guess that means that I can have you mow the lawn?”

“I’m not quite there yet, Dad,” Owen snickered. “We went to the city and checked out Kyra’s condo. It’s a sweet place. Is she going to have a roommate?”

“That’s up to her,” I answered. “The condo is paid for in full, which you’ll receive once you start college. Anyhow, how does it look?”

“I’m jealous. Kyra is going to be the envy of all her classmates or the go-to for all the parties,” Owen snickered.


“Kyra is out with some friends, Khaleesi and that lot. Mia is hanging out with Gianna and Masen is walking Max,” Owen explained. There was a few moments of quiet. I heard Owen mumbling to himself. “Um, Dad?”

“Why do you sound guilty?” I asked, a shiver running down my spine.
“Um, I’m not! I mean, um, well?” he stammered. “I kind of want some condoms.”

“Say again?” I growled.

“Damn it,” he hissed. “I kind of want some condoms.”

“You better still be a virgin, Owen,” I snapped, walking away and around the corner so my wife didn’t hear my conversation with my oldest son. “And that I’m not going to be a fucking grandfather.”

“No! Look, Tasha and I, we love each other. A lot. I’m not saying that we’re going to jump into bed right away, but I want to be prepared for when we do,” Owen stuttered out.

“And you waited until I’m in fucking Mexico to ask,” I snarled.

“I was just going to talk to Oliver and Steve, but they told me to talk to you. It was your decision and you should guide me,” Owen muttered.

“Well, they’re right. And I’m not guiding you from Cabo San Lucas. When I get back, we’ll talk about this. In. Detail. That includes pictures – NOT PORN! You will understand the ramifications of having sex and what happens if one of those condoms breaks and the hell it will unleash if it does. You understand?”

“Yes, sir,” Owen squeaked. “Are you mad?”

I pinched my nose and took a deep breath. Was I mad? “No, Owen, I’m not mad. I’m just in shock. It seems like yesterday that I was changing your diaper and now, you’re asking about condoms. My poor brain can’t process this. I am thankful that you are responsible enough to ask about them, but cut me some slack, okay?”


“I love you, too. And don’t tell your mother. She’d lock you in your room until you’re thirty if she found out that you were asking about condoms,” I said.

“Got it. Have fun and I’ll see you in a couple of days,” Owen said.

We hung up and I checked on Bella. She was putting the steaks, corn and Greek salad onto the set table. “This smells delicious, Edward,” Bella smiled. “Did you have a nice chat with Owen?”

“It was great.” Not. “Do you want a fresh beer or some of that sangria you made?”

“Ooh, the sangria sounds perfect,” Bella cooed. She got up from her seat.

“I’ll get it, gorgeous,” I said, kissing her curled hair. I went into the kitchen, grabbing the pitcher of fresh sangria that Bella had concocted while I was working on the marinade for the steaks. Swiping some wine glasses, I carried it out and poured us each a healthy serving. “I can’t believe our daughter is getting ready to go away to college.”

“Me, neither. I feel so old,” Bella said, cutting into her steak. “We do not look like we have a kid that goes to college.”

“You don’t. Me? The hair gives it away,” I said, running my hand through my graying strands.

“You could dye it?” Bella laughed.
“No. I refuse to do that. I’m grateful I still have all of my hair. I do not want to run the risk of losing it by dying it,” I said flatly. “Besides, it’s all in how you cut it.”

“Well, according to Rose, both of us are on the best dressed lists for the premier. You have a new following, too. Hashtag SGG is trending on twitter and Instagram,” Bella bellowed.

“I hate you,” I grumbled, glaring at my hysterically laughing wife.

“No, you don’t,” she said, wiping her face. “You love me.”

“Ohay, I love you. Rose? Not so much. She’s the one who started that whole SGG thing anyway. I’m not an old geezer. I think I’ve proven to you time and time again that despite the fact I’m fifty, I can still make you scream,” I growled, staring at Bella.

“Hmmm, indeed you do,” Bella purred. “Shockingly, I’m not that hungry anymore.”

“Me, neither,” I replied, grinning crookedly, full of promise of all things naughty.

“And I’m not wearing any panties.”

“Yes!”

Edward, where are we going?” Bella asked as we drove to the marina. “I was looking forward to spending one of our last nights in Cabo making love to my husband.”

“We’ve been doing that every night and every morning since we’ve gotten here, Bella,” I chided, pulling into a parking spot.

“So? The freedom of being with you whenever we want is so … freeing!” she breathed. “Why are we here? Are we going to be making love on a boat? You can’t drive a boat.”

“I’m not driving the boat. I’ve hired a very capable crew to drive us to where I’ve set up our surprise,” I said, picking up the bag of towels, pajamas, and sexual goodies. I led us to a sail boat, shaking hands with the captain. He quickly prattled on about my plan in Spanish and I agreed, thanking him. Bella didn’t understand him. She had taken Spanish in high school, but all of the knowledge had left her brain. She was blissfully ignorant to my plan. The captain helped Bella on deck and took the bag from me so I could settle aboard. Once we had the life jackets on, he turned on the engines and we were off to Land’s End. The first mate poured us some champagne and offered us some snacks, but I refused. I was feeling seasick since it brought back memories of our snorkeling trip to Molokai off the coast of Maui.

The trip to Land’s End was not that long. We arrived on the beach with our ornately decorated tent just as the sun reached the horizon, beginning its dance to dip below the ocean. The captain handed us a large cooler, a sound dock and a satellite phone since we were out of range of any cell tower. With a wink and a few words in Spanish, he loaded up the sailboat and they left us on the beach of Land’s End.

“Where are they going?” Bella asked, looking at me.

“Back to shore. We’re on the beach, alone, all night and into the morning,” I smiled, carrying the cooler and placing it next to our tent. Inside, there were a ton of pillows, gauzy fabric and lanterns. The tent looked more like a harem than anything. Perfect for my seduction of my sexy wife. I wanted to her to scream my name in the darkness as she felt the love I had for her.
“So, we’re here. All night?” Bella questioned, a perfectly arched brow raised in confusion.

“Yes. This was the one place I wanted you to see,” I replied, walking over to her, enfolding her in my arms. “I used our wealth for completely selfish purposes and got us here for twelve hours, uninterrupted and all alone.” I cupped her ass underneath her flimsy cover-up. “We don’t even need to be dressed, baby.”

“You know, going back home and having to be fully clothed is going to be an adjustment, Edward,” she said, pressing her ass into my hands. “But, I’ll keep this on for now. What’s in the cooler?”

“Our dinner, a bottle of wine, some beer and water,” I answered. “I think there’s dessert, too, but I didn’t ask for it.”

“And the bag?” Bella asked, her fingers tracing my nipples over my shirt.

“Some clothes and other goodies,” I growled.

“Like lube?” she purred, her lips finding my jaw and sucking on it sensually.

“Y-y-yes,” I stuttered as her hands slipped under my t-shirt, massaging the muscles in my back. “A blindfold, handcuffs and a vibrator, too. I tried to find the butt plug, but I don’t think I packed it.” Bella didn’t reply, only taking my right hand and sliding it into her bikini bottoms. Nestled between her cheeks was the jeweled butt plug that we had ordered on a whim. I bit back a growl, massaging the tender skin around it, toy ing with it slightly. “Dirty, kinky girl.”

“You’re one to talk,” she said, pulling away and tugging her cover-up back over her bottom. She went into the tent, snuggling on some of the pillows. I grinned at her before turning to the fire pit that had been left with enough firewood for the night. I set it up, but didn’t light it. Bella had took it upon herself to dig around in the cooler. While I was fixing the fire pit, she had laid out our meal. “This all looks delicious, Edward.”

“It does,” I said, sitting down across from her. “I told them to pack whatever they felt was appropriate for a picnic on the beach at sunset.” She nodded, moving so she was in my lap. We shared tasty morsels, feeding each other and drinking directly from the wine bottle as the sun dipped further beneath the horizon. Just before the sun winked away, I lit the fire pit and turned on half of the lanterns. It bathed the tent and my wife in an ethereal glow, flickering with the flames. She had removed her cover up, revealing her red bikini. “You look like sin.”

“So do you,” she said, eyeing me hungrily as I removed my t-shirt. I was wearing a pair of black swim trunks with flames licking up the side of the right leg. She crawled over to me, straddling my waist and brushing my hair off my forehead. Bella’s eyes were dilated and burning with desire. “You’ve set up this elaborate seduction. You’ve barely scratched the surface. That tease you gave me when you caressed your present was barely enough, Edward. What are you going to do with me?”

“First,” I purred, untying the strings of her bikini top. With a flick of my wrist, I removed it, palming her breasts. “I’m going to taste your sweet pussy, devouring you until you are screaming, panting for more. I want you so fucking wet, Bella. I don’t want to use this.” I held up a small bottle of lube. I continued staring into her blackened orbs as she panted heavily. “Do you want to know what I’ll do next?”

“Yes,” she breathed, arching her back, pressing her breasts further into my hands. I roughly rubbed my thumbs over her pebbled pink nipples. “Fuck, tell me, Edward. What will you do next after you lick my pussy?”
“After I enjoy your sweet, succulent pussy, I’m going to make love to you,” I explained, sliding down her bikini bottoms. “I’m going to make love to your pussy and then claim your ass. It’s been far too long.”

“I want my own taste,” she pouted adorably.

“Later. Now, it’s all about you,” I murmured, laying her back against the colorful pillows. Her legs were wrapped around my waist as I crushed my mouth against hers. When she moaned, I eased my tongue inside and tasted her sweetness. Bella’s hands found my hair, but I pushed her hands above her head. Sitting back on my haunches, I found the handcuffs. “I want to touch you, Bella. Keep your hands there.” I clasped the handcuffs around her dainty wrists. She huffed out a breath, looking at me with desperation. I smiled slowly, carnally, gazing at the gorgeous women at my disposal. With my fingertips, I traced down her arms.

“Edward!” she giggled, trying to pull them down, but since I’d tethered her to the support of the tent, she was stuck. “That tickles.”

“Sorry,” I said, with no trace of apology in my voice. Bella scowled at me until my hands found her breasts. When I twisted her pretty pink nipples, her eyes rolled back into her head and she arched off the pillows. Her skin was a light golden brown and the tan made her look longer, leaner. Her skin felt like velvet under my hands. I glided them down her lithe body, spreading her legs to see how this affecting her. Between her slender thighs, her sex was swollen and glistening with evidence of her abundant arousal. I ran my hand along the seam of her thighs, teasing her.

“Edward,” her voice moaned, sounding drastically different from her earlier chastisement. It was breathy, wanton and a touch desperate. “Touch me.”

“I am touching you,” I said, massaging her thighs.

“No, touch me,” she pleaded, her hips bucking up.

“Here?” I asked, tracing nonsensical circles along her belly, just above her small thatch of brown curls. She whimpered, rolling her body. Her pussy was growing more and more aroused, leaking with her succulent juices. I spread her legs wider, running a single finger down each side of her thighs. “Here?”

“Touch my pussy,” she pleaded, her eyes frantic. “Please?”

“Like this?” I cooed, taking my pointer finger and running it the length of her dripping slit. She jerked, her hips pushing off the pillows as I continued to touch her. “Do you want more?”

“Hmmmm, yes. Please. More,” she said, her voice barely above a needy whisper.

I gave her a crooked smirk before looking down at where my finger teased her. It was drenched, dripping onto the pillows. Her sweet scent of arousal wafting all around me. It made my cock stand at attention underneath my swim trunks. I pressed two fingers within her, biting back a guttural moan at how wet she felt. She gasped, her legs jerking. I curled my fingers inside of her as I lay on my stomach. With my other hand, I held her hips down, spreading her lower lips. I revealed her erect clit, twitching with anticipation. I kept curling my fingers as I wrapped my lips around her sensitive bundle. Bella let out a stream of curses as I licked her clit with a flat, insistent tongue. Despite my restraining arm, she was rolling her hips in concert with my tongue and fingers deep inside her. I could feel the butt plug against my knuckles through the thin membrane that separated her pussy from her ass.
“Fuck! Fuck! Edward! Oh, my GOD!” she shrieked as she tried to quell her impending orgasm. “Don’t stop. Please, don’t fucking stop. Just like that, baby.” Her screams urged me on and I increased the speed of my tongue, tasting more of her sweetness. My fingers plunged deep inside, soaked from her delectable juices. I could feel her pussy throb around my fingers. “Edward!” she screamed, looking down at me with a crazed expression. “I’m going to … SHIT!”

Her body clenched around me as streams of her release poured out of her and her hips jerked uncontrollably. I kept my mouth on her vibrating clit, tasting her directly from the source as her orgasm crashed over her in a torrent of pleasure. I stayed between her legs until her breathing evened out and she collapsed onto the pillows in a boneless heap. As she lay there, panting heavily, I removed my swim trunks and grabbed the lube, though I didn't believe we were going to need it. I also removed the jeweled butt plug so I could easily slide inside of her without stopping.

I crawled up Bella’s body and released her hands from the handcuffs, tossing them toward the bag. She lowered her arms, smiling up at me dreamily. “You have the most amazing tongue, Edward,” she purred. “Gimme some.” Her hand cupped my neck and pulled me down, kissing me squarely on the mouth. She tasted her essence on my lips, sliding her tongue into my mouth, groaning, almost growling, lowly. I lost myself in our kiss, rocking my hips with hers and coating my cock with her renewed arousal. “Make love to me, Edward. Make me yours.”

I smiled against her mouth, pulling back as I grasped my erection. “You are quite mistaken, Mrs. Cullen. I’m yours,” I whispered as I slid into her pussy. Almost immediately, Bella’s sex pulsated around me. She was so turned on from my dessert of her juices that she was on the cusp of a second orgasm. I moaned, slowly rocking my hips and pushing further inside. “I’ll always be yours, Bella.”

“Yes, mine,” she said, gripping my hair possessively. “Fuck, Edward, you feel so fucking good.” I smirked, jerking my hips forward so I could surprise her. She gasped, her fingers tangling in my damp hair. Our eyes were trained on each other as we shared one body. “More,” she whispered.

“More?” I verified. She nodded, rolling her hips. I slid out of her pussy and lifted her gently. I spread the globes of her bottom, pushing the head of my cock past the rosette of her ass. She whimpered, grasping at my shoulders as I slowly pushed all of the way inside until my balls pressed against the softness of her skin. I kept my eyes on hers. “Are you okay?”

“Better than okay,” she breathed, her fingers reaching down her body as she began playing with her pussy.

“Oh, no. I want to give you all your pleasure,” I snarled gently, rolling her on her side and keeping us connected. Draping her leg over my thigh, I began to slowly pump my hips. I cupped her breast with one hand and the other slid three fingers inside of her pussy. I kissed my wife as I moved deep within her, feeling my cock against my fingers as I fucked her pussy with my hand. Bella was squirming, lost in all of the sensations of what I was doing to her. I tried to go slowly so I could relish this moment, Bella’s pussy squeezing my fingers and her ass so tight around my cock.

Bella pulled back and she gave me a coy smile. I rolled onto my back, bracing my hands on her hips. Bella wanted more. She wanted it rough and she wanted to take it. She leaned back, rocking on my cock and soon she was bouncing heartily. The speed of her movements and the warmth of her dripping arousal made my hardness twitch. It would not be long before I was going to be screaming in ecstasy. Bella was grunting with each bounce and I was right there with her. My hands moved to cup her tits, squeezing her nipples. She threw her head back, rolling her hips for a few moments before she went back to riding me like a bucking Bronco. “Edward, I’m going to come,” she panted.

I stopped her movements and guided her off me. “On your hands and knees,” I growled. She eagerly complied, but I smacked her ass. I eased back into her and after giving her a few moments to adjust
to my size, I let loose. The sound of our skin slapping and our frenetic breathing filled the tent. Bella was pressing into me. “That’s it, baby. Fuck my cock.”

“Edward,” she panted, her eyes pleading. “I’m … oh, shit! I’m coming!”

I growled as her pussy gushed out her release onto me and dripping onto the pillows. Feeling her lose it caused me to explode with an animalistic roar, filling her with my release. I stayed inside of her until my cock softened and I collapsed on the pillows next to her. I’m fucking exhausted.

“We can’t do that when we’re home,” Bella giggled, moving to lay across my chest.

“Um, no,” I snickered, pressing a sloppy kiss to her forehead. “We’d make them die of embarrassment. As far as they know, we don’t have sex.”

“How were they conceived? Immaculate conception?” Bella laughed.

“In their teenage brains? Yes,” I nodded, caressing my fingers down her sweaty cheek. “Want to clean up in the ocean?”

“Yeah,” she nodded, getting up and helping me to my feet. We walked into the surf, hastily washing off residual sweat and remnants of our orgasms. We did play in the water, only to get riled up again and we made love in the Pacific Ocean before going back into the tent to go to sleep. Though, sleep didn’t come. I spent a portion of the night pointing out various constellations and just held my beautiful wife. We stayed in each other’s arms until the sun began to make its appearance. Our time on Land’s End was coming to a close and we had one more day before we had to face reality.

We got dressed in fresh swimsuits and got on the sailboat when it arrived. Behind them was a larger boat to take apart the tent. Bella sighed as we floated away from our idyllic location of sexual fantasies and happiness. Back on shore, I drove us to the house and we took a quick shower, washing off the Pacific. We fell into bed, naked and exhausted, falling asleep within moments.

We slept until the following morning. Packing up our belongings, there was a feeling of sadness. It didn’t help that it was raining and drizzly. Another chapter was closing and we had to go back home. Granted, what waited for us was easy compared to the previous year, but it was a huge change nonetheless.

When the limo arrived, we loaded up the car and drove to the small private airfield where a Whitlock jet was waiting for us. Yes, it was technically not kosher to use the company plane for private purposes, but I was the damn owner of the company. On the flight, Bella was curled up against me and idly playing with the necklace that I wore around my neck. “Did you have a good time, gorgeous?” I asked, leaning my cheek against her soft hair.

“I’m walking a little funny, but I had an amazing time,” she answered, kissing my chin. “Thank you for arranging all of this. It’s exactly what we needed, Edward. After the hellish year we had, Jacob’s insane stalking, my abduction and Alice’s issues, we needed a vacation like this. Though, I don’t want to know how much this all cost.”

“It was worth it,” I said, tightening my arms around her. “Seeing you smile and seeing you heal. That’s priceless.”

“Edward, I’m so lucky to have you,” she whispered, her eyes filling with tears. “Not many men would have stuck around.”

“Bella, you said when we were on Land’s End. I’m yours. As you’re mine. I love you and that will never, ever change,” I vowed, kissing her lips and wiping her tears away.
“I love you, too,” she sighed, snuggling closer. “Too bad we’re flying home to move our oldest child into a condo to go to college.”

“Don’t remind me,” I grumbled as I wrinkled my nose about that prospect and the reality of talking to my oldest son about condoms.

Back to reality, indeed.

A/N: Okay, this was a freaking beast. Dang. Lots of stuff happened, mainly pervy, citrusy stuff. Our favorite couple needed it, though. With everything that was happening, they needed to remember how it all started. Their passion, their connection and their love. Lots of pervy pictures with this one. Check ‘em on my tumblr. Pictures of the house, Land’s End, the tent, and the after party are on my blog. Links for both of those are on my profile. You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation and twitter: tufano79.

Up next will be a combo chapter, Edward/Bella, moving in Kyra into college, talking to Owen about condoms and adjusting to life without a ton of security guards protecting them. Also, an update on Alice, Jasper and their family, as well. We’ll probably have this chapter, a Kyra chapter after this and then an epilogue. Then, SGG and Nerdella have had their story told. Leave me some lovin! I’d appreciate it! MWAH!
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Up next will be a combo chapter, Edward/Bella, moving in Kyra into college, talking to Owen about condoms and adjusting to life without a ton of security guards protecting them. Also, an update on Alice, Jasper and their family, as well.

Chapter Twenty-Seven: Moving Day and Difficult Conversations

BPOV

“Mom? Do we have any other boxes?” Kyra asked, leaning against the doorjamb.

“Did you check in the garage?” I replied, looking up from the book I was reading. One of the books that the studio wanted to be adapted into a movie. It was a werewolf story. It wasn’t nearly as interesting as Rose’s trilogy, but I could see it becoming into something interesting.

“I did, but the only boxes that I see are old shoeboxes from Owen’s shopping spree at Nike,” Kyra replied, wrinkling her nose. “Anywhere else?”

“What do you need the boxes for?” I asked.

“Toiletries and stuff for the bathroom,” she said, sitting next to me.

“I think that we have some plastic tubs in the basement,” I said, getting up from the couch. We went downstairs, finding the four tubs I knew we had. “How is the packing, Kyra?”

“All I have left is my closet. Dad, Masen and Owen are picking up the wardrobe boxes from Aunt Alice and Uncle Jasper’s,” Kyra said, putting the tubs on her bed. She put her body lotions and body sprays into the tub. “Can you believe that I’m moving into my own place tomorrow?”

“All I have left is my closet. Dad, Masen and Owen are picking up the wardrobe boxes from Aunt Alice and Uncle Jasper’s,” Kyra said, putting the tubs on her bed. She put her body lotions and body sprays into the tub. “Can you believe that I’m moving into my own place tomorrow?”

“I can’t,” I said, loading the towels, shower curtains and various soft items. “It seems like yesterday you were a baby and now, you’re eighteen and starting college.” I put her childhood blanket on top, tears brimming in my eyes. Don’t cry. Keep it together. Your baby girl is going away to college in Evanston, not Siberia. “Have you chosen your classes for the fall semester?”

“Yeah. I have eight classes chosen, but I only have to take five. I wanted to have some backups if the classes are filled. The options I have are English Comp, English Lit, Biology, Statistics, Research Methods in Psychology, Chemistry, Calculus, and Philosophy. All of them are prerequisites for other classes I want to take for second semester. I’m really excited to get into my psychology courses. The AP Psychology class I took in high school was so interesting.”
“You got credit for that class, right?” I asked.

“Yeah. According to the letter I received from my advisor, I tested out of PSYCH 110, Introduction to Psychology. I am able to take statistics first semester along with the research class, they go hand in hand, and then social psychology and developmental psychology second semester,” Kyra said.

“Do you know what type of psychology you want to study?”

“Clinical, counseling mostly,” Kyra smiled, putting the tub on the floor. “I want to continue my studies, getting my Doctorate of Psychology. I think I can really help people, Mom. Especially, with kids. Bullied kids. Seeing what happened to Mackenzie and how she turned on me. I want to know why kids bully and prey on the weak. I want to know how to help the kids who are teased relentlessly. I want to help! Would you and Dad consider having me as a consultant for the Foundation?”

“Get your degree first, Kyra,” I laughed, hugging her tightly. “But, I have no doubt that you’d be a valuable asset to the Foundation, Dr. Cullen.” Her responding grin was beaming. I took her face in my hands, so proud of my baby girl. I knew that she saw my worry in my eyes because she hugged me, rubbing my back.

“Mom, I’m not disappearing. I’m still in Illinois,” she laughed, kissing my cheek. She pulled back when she heard the rumble of the garage door opener. She smirked in excitement. “Finally, I can pack my clothes!” She skipped out of the room, meeting her father and brothers downstairs. Coming back into her bedroom with her brothers in tow, she smiled at me. “Can you help, Mom? You always know how to fill these things and not get the clothes wrinkled.”

“I’d be happy to,” I said, tucking her hair back behind her ears. We spent a few hours loading up her clothes while Edward, Masen and Owen took the boxes she had packed, loading them into the U-Haul we’d rented. On the moving day, Oliver, Steve and Johnny were going to help us carry the boxes into her condo. Owen was still a bit gimpy. Masen is going through a clumsy phase, bumping into things and breaking more fragile items than we could count. I think it’s due to an impending growth spurt. His feet have nearly doubled in size and he hasn’t grown into them yet. Edward was capable, but he wasn’t getting any younger. I didn’t want him to injure himself as he moved in Kyra’s belongings.

That left our former security guys and they were more than willing to help. We were a part of their family just like they were a part of ours. But, they were starting new ventures.

The guys who spent the better part of the last year protecting us were getting settled into their new positions, new jobs. Johnny was working with the Foundation. Despite his beefy exterior and job in security, Johnny was a trained teacher. He was providing tutoring for all of the local Foundation buildings along with self-defense classes. Oliver was starting his job at Whitlock after the first of the year. He’d already moved into a condo in Trump Tower with the paycheck and a signing bonus from Edward. Steve was doing volunteer work with the Foundation, helping with Johnny’s self-defense classes and planning his next step. He didn’t want to work as a security guard anymore. Ricky gave Steve some suggestions and he was currently weighing them. From overheard conversations, Steve was considering going back to school. He was just waiting on some test results.

It was weird not to have them around the house, twenty-four/seven. It was nice to have our lives back, but like I said, weird. Almost empty. What was even weirder was going out without any sort of protection. The first time I ran some errands, I called up to the apartment, expecting an answer, but they weren’t there anymore. I kind of liked having Steve, Johnny or Oliver with me when I went grocery shopping. Tall men in a grocery store were invaluable for a shorty like me. Though, the grocery bill has gone down considerably.
After her clothes were packed in the wardrobe boxes and a majority of her room was packed in the U-Haul, we had one final family dinner. I made Kyra’s favorite and we sat down at the kitchen table. I held back tears as I tried to remember this moment. Our last family dinner.

*Okay, Bella. You’re being too over-dramatic.*

Fuck it, I was still emotional.

My baby girl was leaving the nest. I wasn’t ready. Yes, we had ensured her safety with a condo in a safe neighborhood with a doorman and an extra security system, but it wasn’t at home. She wasn’t going to be with us, under our roof. Kyra was going to make all of her own decisions and be held accountable for them. Our daughter was almost a grown up.

*Legally, she is a grown up.*

“Gorgeous, you’re going to break all of our dishes,” Edward chided as he backed me away from the sink. We’d finished our dinner and our kids were outside playing in the pool. I was trying to not focus on the fact that Kyra was moving out. “Sweet girl, she’s going to be okay.”

“She might be, but I’m not,” I hissed, wiping my hands on a towel. I grimaced at the carnage my overactive imagination caused. Three broken dishes and one broken glass. “I’m sorry about …”

“Don’t worry about it, gorgeous,” Edward soothed, pulling me into his arms. “I know that you’re struggling with Kyra moving out, but she’s ready for this.” He cupped my cheeks, looking into my eyes. “Go outside with them. I’ll finish up in here.”

“Okay,” I whispered, a few tears escaping. He leaned down, kissing them away before brushing his lips with mine. He hugged me once more before sending me outside with a glass of wine. The sounds of splashing and laughter wafted over me. I sat down at the table, watching my children play. Kyra and Mia were splashing my sons. Max was barking from the edge of the pool, terrified of the water, but desperate to save his master. Soon, the tables turned and Owen and Masen were chasing their sisters. Max was determined to be a part of the fun. He launched himself into the pool, jumping near Masen and paddling frantically. Edward ran out, holding up us phone as we watched Max finally get his bearings, crawling onto one of the floating chaise lounges. Once settled, Max smiled his doggy smile and wagged his tail. Edward sat next to me, his own crooked grin infectious. “What is it with pools?”

“Chlorinated water, bringing families together,” he snorted, ending the video and pulling me onto his lap.

“In more ways than one,” I snickered, remembering our debauchery in the pool in Cabo.

“Hey now!” he chided. “This is a family show. No teasing your horny husband.”

“When are you not horny?” I asked, ruffling his hair.

“Um, never. Especially with you around,” he quipped, kissing just behind my ear.

“Mom! Dad! Come in the pool!” called Mia.

“Not tonight, sweetie,” Edward replied. “You guys have fun, okay?” Mia nodded, swimming over to her twin and plunging his head under the water.

“Why don’t you want to go into the pool?” I asked.
“Because the last time we were in the pool, I fucked you into oblivion. I don’t want my body to go into autopilot and scare my children with my huge boner for my sexy wife,” Edward deadpanned. “Besides, it’s too cold to be in the pool. Yes, the water’s heated but the air is chilly.” I nodded, agreeing with him. Compared to the humid, warm air of Cabo, the weather in Chicago was downright frigid. Edward held me on his lap, his lips idly pressed to my neck and his arms tight around my waist. Just after the sun dipped below the horizon, the kids got out of the pool. Max refused to leave his perch on the floating chaise. However, Edward managed to wrangle him off the chaise. Owen and Masen chased him around the yard to dry him off.

Once Max was deemed dry enough to enter the house, we all went inside. Kyra and Mia went to shower while Owen and Masen decided to work out in the basement. Edward reminded them of our early departure to drive up to Evanston and we went to our bedroom. Edward guided me to the overstuffed chair in the corner and settled me into his lap. “Is this your preferred way to hold me, now?” I asked, draping my arms over his shoulders.

“I love holding you and having you on my lap makes it even better,” he smirked, pulling me closer to his chest. “How are you, gorgeous? Are you okay? Will you be okay with Kyra moving out?”

“I’m fine, really. It just hit me while we were having dinner. I know that all of our children will be moving out, but it doesn’t seem real, you know?” I said, narrowing my eyes, remembering everything. “It felt like yesterday that I gave birth to Kyra in Italy while we were at your mother’s wedding to Marcus.”

“It seems that way with all of our kids, but this is not a bad thing, Bella,” Edward soothed, holding me tightly. “We should be proud of our principessa. She’s grown so much since the beginning of the school year. If she was still acting like the spoiled brat from earlier this year, I was going to lock her in her room until she was thirty. But, she’s really stepped up. I’m proud of her and I have no doubt that she will be successful in college.”

“Am I being too much?” I asked breathily.

“A little,” Edward laughed, holding his fingers apart a few centimeters. “Come on, gorgeous girl. Let’s take a shower.” He helped me up, guiding me into the bathroom. He took me out of my clothes and kissed me softly on my face, neck and shoulders while the water warmed up. Our shower was innocent, just quiet time to soothe my fraying nerves. Edward did take care of me, washing my hair and massaging body wash into my skin. Afterward, he brushed my hair and helped me blow dry it before we went to bed. I couldn’t really sleep since I was so anxious. Were all parents this riddled with anxiety when their children left home?

_Probably not. But, they also didn’t experience what you dealt with the previous year._

I must have drifted off because I was woken up by the most obnoxious blaring of the alarm. Edward kissed my lips and dragged me up. We got dressed and checked on all of our kids. Kyra was in the foyer, making sure that all of her bags were all there. “Mom, are these bags are going in the U-Haul or the car?”

“The car,” I answered. “Do you have your computer?”

“My laptop is packed and everything is in here,” Kyra smiled, holding up the messenger bag. “Aunt Alice called me and she said that all of the furniture is all set up and looks beautiful.”

“When did the furniture arrive?” Edward asked. “I thought it was coming while we were up in there.”
“She said that there was a mix up and the furniture arrived yesterday. Aunt Alice said that she was up there any way for an appointment with a specialist for her arm,” Kyra explained.

“What’s wrong with her arm?” I pressed.

“Nothing. It was a plastic surgeon to help with the scarring,” Kyra said. “Come on! We’ve got to go!” Outside, Oliver, Johnny and Steve were checking the U-Haul. Owen was loading up the bags into Kyra’s Volvo and Mia and Masen were checking the bags in the back of the Range Rover.

“Wan, you’re coming with me!” Kyra barked.

They both got into Kyra’s Volvo, backing out of the driveway. They waited until Edward was behind her and the U-Haul was behind us. Edward used the Bluetooth to call Kyra. “Make sure that you don’t drive fast, Kyra. The U-Haul doesn’t have the speed that you do, principessa,” Edward chided.

“I know, I know,” she giggled. “Love you, Daddy!” She hung up the phone, pulling away from the curb. Our caravan moved toward the highway, getting onto it and driving the hour and half to Evanston, in front of the sleek condo building. Kyra got out of her car, vibrating with excitement as she stared at the building. “Where do we go?”

“We have to go to the service elevator,” Edward said from the driver’s seat, pointing to rear of the building. “They’re expecting us. Follow me, alright?” We drove to the back of the condo. There was an older gentleman waiting for us. He explained how to work the elevator and left us to unload all of Kyra’s stuff. I rode up with Kyra with first load of stuff with Johnny. We took it off, carrying all we could to the door. Kyra stood in front of the door, clutching her key to her chest.

“Are you going to open it?” Johnny asked, humor evident in his voice. Kyra giggled, pushing the keys into the door and opening the door and stepping into large condo we’d purchased for our daughter. It was gorgeous, sleek and a perfect combination of boho chic and contemporary lines. It was the perfect place for my daughter. She would definitely be the favorite of her classmates with all of the room she had in the condo, but she’d be safe.

Four trips to the cars and all of her belongings were unloaded. Mia, Kyra and I worked in her bedroom and bathroom, organizing her space. Edward worked with Oliver and Owen to set up her computer in the loft upstairs before they were going to attack television, cable and entertainment system. Masen worked with Steve and Johnny to unpack the books in the book nook. After we finished in the bedroom, Kyra and I went to work in the kitchen. Once the boys were done, they helped with the kitchen and Kyra went with her father to go shopping for a few necessities that we hadn’t picked up yet.

“This place is freaking awesome, Mom,” Mia said as she put the silverware into a drawer. “When all go off to college, will we get a place like this?”

“You will,” I answered. “But, you aren’t going to college for a long time. Let’s get you through middle school, first. We need to go shopping for school supplies and new clothes.”

“Ugh, I’m not ready to go back. This summer has not been long enough. I can’t believe that I go back in three weeks,” she grumbled, rolling her eyes.

“You love school!” I laughed.

“I do, but I’m not ready,” she sighed. “I am excited about volleyball. I was talking to one of the girls on my team and she said that I might be a candidate for captain.”
“That’s awesome, Mia. I’m so glad that you are not clumsy like me,” I snickered. “You got your father’s athleticism.”

“Dad’s not *that* athletic,” Mia chided.

“He’s more athletic than me,” I argued. “Do you need to do some sort of training?”

“I’m going to start running with Dad and Owen next week,” Mia said, moving to organize the plates and serving dishes in the kitchen. “Mia said that he might join us, but he hates sweating.” Mia bit her lip, turning to face me. “Mom?”

“What, baby?” I replied. I looked at her. She was blushing, her face the color of a tomato. “Mia, what is it?”

“Mom, what do I do when I like someone?” she asked. “There’s someone that I really, really like but I don’t know if they like me. You like me, like me. You know?”

“Well, you are very young, Mia. You’re not allowed to date until you’re in high school,” I explained. She nodded, wringing her hands. “But, if you want to start a relationship, the best way to do it is to build a friendship. Your father and I were friends before we were a relationship.”

“We are friends, Mom,” Mia whispered.

“What’s his name?” I asked, running my fingers through her chocolate hair.

“Um, *her* name is Sammi,” Mia choked out, her eyes clamping shut. A few tears fell onto her cheeks and she buried her head into her hands. Her crying was becoming a bit more haggard.

I hugged her tightly. “Shhhhh, it’s okay, baby,” I soothed. “Don’t cry, Mia.”

“I’m crying because I’m afraid,” she sobbed. “I’m not normal! You must hate me. Sammi is going to think I’m a freak. I like girls! I think boys are gross.”

“You’re dad will be happy,” I chuckled. Mia pulled back and rolled her eyes. I wiped her cheeks, cupping her face. “And I could never hate you. Mia, I love you. No matter what. I doesn’t matter who you love. You could love a two headed, polka dotted elephant. I’d still love you. Your father will still love you. In regards to Sammi, you need to tread lightly. I think that perhaps you can talk to Uncle Alex and Uncle Demetri. They understand what you’re going through, but they both liked boys.”

“Do you think it’s a phase?” Mia questioned.

“If it’s a phase, then it’s a phase. If it’s not, we’ll support you, sweetheart,” I vowed, smiling softly at my youngest daughter. “We’ll always support you. We’ll always love you.” I hugged her again, rocking us back and forth. The door opened and Kyra walked in with Edward with a ton of bags in a cart.

“Everything okay?” Edward asked, his brows furrowed when he saw his daughter’s puffy face and red-rimmed eyes. I mouthed to Edward that I would tell him later. He arched a brow, pursing his lips. “Well, we spent way too much money at Mariano’s but we have food, plastic containers, garbage bags, laundry detergent …”

“Don’t forget the stuff that I got from the security guys, Dad,” Kyra chuckled. “I got laundry detergent from them, too.”
“You do know how to do laundry, right?” Owen teased as he sat down heavily on one of the bar stools in the kitchen. Kyra scowled at her brother, tossing a sponge from the top of the bag she was near at him. “Just asking. Does she have a laundry room?” Edward opened a door just off the entrance of the condo, showing him the moderately sized laundry room with a set of sleek, stackable washer and dryer. “Cool.”

“What do we have left to do?” Masen asked, sipping from a water bottle.

“Put away the groceries and then take Kyra out for a late lunch so she can get settled into her place,” Edward replied. “You have some sort of orientation next week, right?”

“Yeah. Meeting on campus for a couple of days to meet with other freshman and to choose my classes. The full orientation won’t start for another couple of weeks,” Kyra said. She worked quickly in putting her food away, her barren shelves and empty fridge filled with goodies. After that, Kyra changed into a pair of jeans and grabbed her purse. We went to a nearby bar and grill, celebrating Kyra’s first apartment and the momentous occasion of moving out of the house. I was happy for my daughter, seeing her laughing and free. She was no longer a child. She was a young woman. Kyra still had growing to do, but she was well on her way.

We finished our meal and packed up the family. Owen, Mia and Masen were unfazed by their goodbye to their sister. Johnny ruffled Kyra’s hair and gave her his cell phone number if any stupid boys needed any roughing up for being, well, stupid. Oliver did the same, but reiterated that he lived in the city if there were any pressing issues. Steve, he was the most intimate. As far as I knew, he was up in the air with his decision on what to do with his career, so he was staying in the corporate apartment with his parents. I knew he had feelings for my daughter. Steve caressed her cheek before hugging her tightly. He whispered in her ear and she nodded against his shoulder. He squeezed her hand before he got into the U-Haul with the other guys. They pulled away, driving the truck back to the rental facility in Wheaton, after dropping off Oliver and Steve.

Edward and I hugged Kyra. “You call us if you need anything. We’ll come. Day or night,” Edward whispered against Kyra’s hair.

“I’ll be fine, but thank you, Daddy,” she replied, kissing his cheek. “I will have fun in college, but my main focus is to learn. That’s my job. I want to make you both proud of me.”

“We are proud of you, Kyra,” I sniffled, hugging her tightly. “I love you, so much, sweetheart.”

“I love you, too, Mommy,” she murmured, tightening her hold on me. She pulled back, tears brimming in her golden eyes. “I’ll be okay and so will you. Safe neighborhood, extra secure condo and pepper spray from Grandpa Charlie.” I barked out a laugh as a few tears splashed onto my cheeks. “Go! I’m going to crash since I barely slept last night and my body is exhausted. Call me when you get home. Okay?”

“We will. Don’t have a party on your first night,” Edward teased.

“Who do I know, Dad?” she giggled, wrapping her arms around his waist. “Drive safe. Love you, both.” She went inside, waving before she slipped through the front door and road up to her condo. Edward guided me to the car, kissing my temple and murmuring to me to keep it together for the rest of our children. I straightened my shoulders, putting on a brave face. The mood of the car was pensive, but not somber. I think Kyra’s siblings had to come to grips with the fact that she was now away at college, just like Edward and I had to adjust to not having all of our kids under one roof.

Back at the house, Owen coaxed his younger siblings into the basement to watch a movie while Edward and I went onto the back porch to discuss why Mia was crying. To say he was shocked was
an understatement, but he was like me, willing to support Mia in whatever she decided to do. He would never turn his back on his children, no matter who they loved. After an emotional day, Edward helped me upstairs and we made love. We were both weary and sad, but this was how we healed each other. As we lay together, curled up in a naked heap, I knew that we’d be okay.

Time – and sex – heals all. With a dash of love, too. Okay, a lot of love.

xx STTD xx

EPOV

Kyra had been out of the house for a week. She’d taken to college like a fish to water. Granted, it was just orientation and course selection, but from her nightly phone calls, we could tell that she was doing well. She’d already made friends who had moved into the dorms for sports. Bella was a little sad, but she bounced back, throwing herself into her work for the Foundation and reading the novels she needed to adapt for several movies.

I also worked steadily since I’d taken so much time off for whatever reason or another the past year. Whitlock Technologies normally introduced something new, technologically speaking, ever year. I hadn’t done that this year. Last year, it was the medical tricorder. Now? I had nothing and I was afraid that my weakness was going to be our downfall. I was sitting in my office in the city, trying to brainstorm something new.

I was coming up blank.

Damn. It.

Staring at my blank computer screen, I clawed at my hair. I was so focused on trying to come up with something, I didn’t hear my door open. “Older!” chirped my twin.

“Younger,” I replied miserably.

“Why do you sound like someone ran over your dog?” she snickered, sitting down across from me. Her arm was strapped to her chest in a sling, but the rest of her was immaculately coiffed.

“Seriously? What’s up?”

“I’m struggling with my ‘break-through’ for Whitlock,” I grumbled, locking my computer. “Every year, it’s something. You know?”

“You don’t have to, Edward,” Alice said, her eyes softening in understanding. I shook my head, leaning back in my seat. “Now, I was wondering? Would you come with me to the doctor? Jasper is at the dentist with Gianna. I’m not supposed to drive.”

“How did you get down here?” I asked, arching a brow.

“Train and then hopped a cab. Besides, it’s been too long since I’ve hung out with my awesome older brother,” she smirked. “Take a break. You’ll figure out your techie break-through. I have no doubt.”

“Where’s your doctor’s office?” I questioned, stuffing my pockets with my keys, wallet and cell phone.

“Northwestern Memorial. I went to see a plastic surgeon. The doctors in Podunk used embroidery floss to suture my wounds and they were fucking ugly,” she said, wrinkling her nose. “I went to a plastic surgeon to clean it up. I’m getting the sutures from that procedure removed today. Then, I can
start rehabbing my arm to get full function back.”

“Alistair, I’m going out to lunch with my sister. I’ll be back in a couple of hours. If there are huge, pressing issues, call me on my cell phone,” I said to my new assistant. Alistair was hand-picked by Eric to take over his old job and we’d meshed well. Not as well as Eric, but I trusted him.

“Sure thing, Mr. Cullen. Have a nice lunch and I’ll see you when you get back,” Alistair smiled. “Oh, and I’ll have the quarterly reports finished for you, along with a few bids for some the law enforcement tech and requests for educational grants.”

“Word travels fast,” I laughed.

“It does when you have me and Eric putting together your PR packets,” Alistair retorted, puffing out his chest proudly. “The educational technology department is quickly becoming one of the fastest growing in the company. It hasn’t even started yet. The little tease that we posted about educational funding and grant applications has inundated our servers with requests. It’s really quite amazing, Mr. Cullen. Anyhow, enough of that. I’ll see you when you get back.”

I nodded, waving at my assistant and helping my sister into my car. I was in a daze, Alistair’s comment dancing through my head. The educational technology department is quickly becoming one of the fastest growing in the company … Fastest growing … Educational technology?

“My break-through,” I smiled. I drove us to her doctor’s office and we were immediately ushered back to an examination room. Alice removed her sling. I helped her into a loose fitting gown, her arm cradled in her lap. “How’s Jasper? How are you two?”

“Good, really. We’re going to couple’s counseling along with family counseling and I’m continuing to see my psychiatrist. We’re slowly healing, but everything is good. Gianna is starting to trust me more and Adam is talking to me,” Alice chuckled.

“Alice, were you upset when you moved Adam into the dorms?” I asked.

“Of course. I may not have given birth to him, but Adam is my son. I was a snot-sobbing, hysterical mess as Jasper drove us back home. I wasn’t ready to have my baby boy live on his own in one of the dorms with all of those foul, nasty boys. There was an unpleasant stench in those hallways, Edward. Unwashed male scent lingers,” she shuddered. “My fastidious child was disgusted, really. This year, we got him an apartment. He can be as anal as he wants. Thankfully, his roommate was as clean as Adam and they are sharing all of the costs of the apartment.”

“Did you decorate it like Kyra’s?” I asked.

“I offered, but Adam said that not every child has the wealth that we have. He wanted to get his own furnishings. Adam worked and saved up some money. He got some nice things from Goodwill and the Salvation Army. What he couldn’t afford, we bought, explaining that it was the money from the room and board part of his tuition,” Alice said, shrugging slightly. “Is Bella a mess with Kyra?”

“A little. I think the whole thing with Jacob and Kyra leaving has shaken her to the core. She says she’s fine, but she has nightmares. She didn’t have them while we were in Los Angeles or Cabo, but they’ve come back with a vengeance once we came back.” I bit my lip, a habit I picked up from my wife, blushing slightly. “I did something, Ali.”

“Do I even want to know what sexual debauchery you two endured?” Alice shuddered.
“What? No! I love you, Younger, but you will never know about my sex life. Yes, I have a sex life. A healthy one, at that, but no! That’s wrong,” I growled.

“Okay, good. I don’t want to know if Bella straps on some sort of dildo …” Alice teased.

“Don’t make me hurt you,” I snarled. She held up her hands, snickering quietly. “There are some boundaries that I will not cross. Ewwww!”

“Just sayin’. You two are pretty freaky-deaky-kinky,” she giggled. “Now, what did you do, besides each other?”

“I bought the house in Los Angeles,” I blurted. “From what I understand, Bella is going to be doing a great deal of more work for the movie studio and The Charmed movies are a huge hit.”

“Gianna has seen the first one at least ten times,” Alice said, her eyes wide. “She’s reread the books and is now infatuated with the fanfiction. She’s even trying her hand at writing her own.”

“Wow,” I chuckled. “We may have another writer on our hands.” Alice nodded, obviously proud of her daughter. “But, with all of the traveling back and forth to Los Angeles, it gets expensive staying at hotels, even if it’s on the studio’s dime. Also, hotels are so impersonal. I’d rather Bella stay at the house. She enjoyed it and it was on the market, only being used as a rental to pay for the realtor’s fees. I bought it, everything included, so we could have a home on the west coast while she worked on the movie scripts.”

“You know, Bella is going to rip you a new one, Edward,” Alice chided. She pursed her lips, shaking her head. “Nah, she isn’t. She’ll welcome it. I’m certain of it. She hates staying in hotels out there as much as you hate her staying in hotels.”

“Random, Younger,” I snickered. She nodded, grinning crookedly. The door opened and a nurse came in along with a chic-looking plastic surgeon. They checked Alice’s incision and removed her stitches. I hadn’t seen her initial injury but the repair was virtually undetectable on her pale skin. The doctor explained that if there was any pain at the incision to come back immediately, but that everything looked good. With a printout for Alice’s physical therapy, we left and went to lunch, after we picked up my principessa to join us.

My sister is a sneaky little devil, but I couldn’t love her more because of it.

After lunch, we dropped Kyra off. Alice sneakily – or so she thought - slipped Kyra some cash. My daughter graciously accepted it, hugging her and going up to her condo. I drove Alice back to the train station, hugging my sister for visiting me. I raced back to the office, my mind going a mile a minute, thinking of what I could use as my huge technological achievement. But, I had to make sure that nothing like I was thinking of was on the market or was patented by another company.

I breezed past Alistair, giving him a hasty wave. I locked my door and listed the technological ideas I had regarding education. I brainstormed a list of ten things, only to have about eight of them squashed because they were already being utilized all throughout the country. Crap. The remaining two had not been created and I didn’t see any indication that they were being used. Unfortunately, it was two of my more labor-intensive ventures when it came to an invention. One was a board that the teacher could manipulate with her finger. A smart board, as it were. They could write on it with specialized styluses, interact with different games, create interactive lessons and really enhance the modern classroom. The second idea was similar to the first, except it would be connected to all of the students’ desks. They could also interact with the teacher and her very tech-savvy lesson.

Wrinkling my nose, I decided to lump them both together and began working on schematics and
programming for this venture. I worked until Alistair poked his head in and said he was going home to spend time with his wife, Roxanne and their two kids, Liam and Siobhan. I gave him a smile, telling him I’d see him tomorrow. I saved my work to my tablet, encrypting it so no one could get to it. I packed up my belongings and drove home, getting back to the house just before dinner. Bella was not happy with me since I had cut it pretty close to dinner and that I had visited Kyra without her, but I made promises that I would make it up to her.

With my tongue.

After we ate, I did the dishes and put the food away. I had barely eaten my food since I was still full from my lunch with my sister and daughter. As I was finished with the dishes, Owen came up to me, his eyes wide and his posture tense. “Um, Dad?” he whispered. “Can we talk?”

“We can,” I whispered back. “Why are we whispering?” He blushed when he mouthed ‘condoms.’ Oh, for the love … “If you can’t say them without blushing, you sure as hell don’t need them, Owen.”

“Dad! Please?” he pouted. “And Mom is right outside with Masen and Max. I don’t want her to know, you know?”

“Ugh, fine. We’ll go for a walk,” I said. “Go put some sneakers on.” Owen darted off and came back in a flash. I barely had any time to grab a water bottle and tell Bella that we were going out. “I’m going to let your mom know that we’re going for a walk. I’ll meet you out front, okay?” I told my beautiful wife that I was taking a walk with my son, having a father/son chat. Bella arched her brow. I just kissed her and said we’d be back. Out front, I met up with my son and we walked away from the house, toward the park that was around the corner. We settled on one of the picnic tables, both sitting on top of the table as the sun began to set. “Okay, so talk.”

“No preamble?” Owen asked, laughing nervously. “No yelling?”

“I’m not going to yell at you. I am grateful that you want to be careful, but I’m still hesitant as to why you need them. You said that you and Tasha are not sexually active,” I said, my own ears flaming. I could fuck my wife a million ways, but talking about sex to my own child? It made me want to crawl into a hole. “How close are you?”

“Ugh, Dad! I’m not going to tell you that!” Owen shuddered. I arched a brow. “Crap. We’ve fooled around and stuff. I’ve touched her boobs and she’s made me come in my pants.”

“Have you returned the favor?” I asked. Owen’s face flamed. He shook his head, mumbling that he didn’t know how. I went onto explain that like men, women got aroused as well. I told him about how they got wet in order to make sex less painful. I gave him some tips and how to bring a woman to pleasure and what not to do. “I’m telling you this because I’d rather you hear it from me than watch porn or hear from your friends who only see women as objects. Porn paints an unrealistic picture of sex and teenage boys only worry about getting themselves off. Nothing is more gratifying than seeing the woman you love feel the pleasure that you give her. But, you can’t push. If Tasha isn’t ready, then, she isn’t ready. If you aren’t ready …”

“I’m not,” he muttered, his jaw tensing. “I just thought that … I don’t know. I really don’t.”

“Owen, like I said, I’m grateful that you were responsible enough to talk to me. When you’re ready for sex, it will be the most amazing thing,” I said, smiling crookedly.

“How old were you?” he pressed.
“I was older. Your mom was my first and only, Owen. I was thirty-one,” I shrugged. “But, I didn’t make love to your mother until I was absolutely sure that I wanted to. Sure, we fooled around. A lot …”

“I don’t want to know that,” he groaned, burying his head in his hands.

“It’s gross to think of your parents having sex. Imagine when you are picturing your own kids,” I snickered, ruffling Owen’s hair. He groaned louder, his face turning an unnatural shade of puce.

“Now, I’m going to help you out. We’ll get some condoms for you since you survived this conversation. Just because I bought them for you, doesn’t mean I want you to use them. Too young, waaaaaaay too young to be a grandfather. Comprende?”

“Are you going to tell Mom?” Owen asked, his nose wrinkled.

“Probably. I know that we had this conversation with Kyra. In fact, I think that Aunt Rose gave her a stash of condoms, too,” I snorted.

I remembered that conversation. It was just after she and Thomas started dating. Rose came cover with a bag. It was pink, frilly and covered with curling ribbon. She handed it to Kyra. My daughter turned the most obnoxious shade of neon pink. Rose smirked. “Use them and your father won’t have an aneurysm before he’s fifty. No glove, no love.” I’m not sure if Kyra still has those condoms, but she got the idea.

“Would you rather your mother find the condoms and assume the worst?” I pressed, draping my arm over his shoulder. He shook his head. “Well, don’t stress, Owen. I’ll talk to your mother, but if she has questions, you have to answer them. Okay?”

“Okay. Are we going now?”

“Nope. I don’t have my wallet and where are we going to find condoms in a park at sunset?” I teased. Owen rolled his eyes, shoving off the table. I followed suit and we walked back to the house. Owen thanked me, heading up to his bedroom. I checked on my wife, who was still outside with Mia and Masen as they swam in the pool. I kissed her forehead, sitting down next to her. “You okay, gorgeous?”

“I’m good,” she answered. “How was the father/son chat?”

“I’ll tell you later. If you don’t mind, I’d like to do some work for this idea I’ve got brewing,” I said, looking at her expectantly.

“Don’t stay up too late. You have a promise to fulfill,” she quipped, sipping her beer.

“And I am looking forward to fulfilling said promise,” I growled, kissing her briefly but passionately. “Love you, angel. So much.”

“Love you more,” she breathed, waving her hand in front of her face. “We’re going to have fun tonight.”

“Damn straight,” I laughed, slipping back inside. I worked on my plans for a few hours until I heard my children’s laughter as they went to bed. I saved my work, uploading it to the server and encrypting it again. I put my tablet into my work bag, going to my bedroom where I was greeted by a half-naked Bella. I barely closed the door before Bella commanded me to follow through on my promise. Which I did.

Three times. AND with more than just my tongue.
My wife is not an unsatisfied woman. You know?

As we lay in a naked tangled heap, I was running my fingers along Bella’s spine. She was draped across me, boneless and completed blissed out. “What did you and Owen talk about?” she asked, sitting up to look at me. “Planning global domination?”

“Psssh, I wish,” I laughed. I kissed her lips before answering. “Owen, well, while we were on our trip to Cabo …”

“The Mexican Sexcapades?” she giggled.

“Yeah,” I snorted. “Anyhow, while we were there, Owen asked me a favor.”

“What was it, angel?”

“He asked if I could buy him condoms,” I said, trying to keep my voice even.

“What?” Bella growled.

“Now, before you get all ‘Mama Bear’ on him. You have applaud his integrity in asking for protection. Would you rather be a grandmother at the age of forty-five?” I asked. She hissed, giving me a hard stare. “Look, honestly, I don’t think he and Tasha are going to use them. Not any time soon. He is clueless when it comes to sex and very embarrassed about talking about it. I did talk to him about the dos and don’ts, as well as how to use protection. He just wants it as a precaution. I’m going to buy them for him and I told him that I was going to talk to you about it. I’d rather you hear it from me than find the condom box in his room and for you to jump to conclusions. You know?”

“You’re right,” she huffed. “How did you get so smart?”

“I married you,” I answered, cupping her chin and forcing her to look at me. “And we didn’t have clueless kids.”

“No, we didn’t,” she said, moving closer to kiss my lips. Her tongue traced my mouth and I eagerly granted her access. “Hmmmm, how about we don’t practice what we preach, Edward. Let’s have some unprotected, dirty sex?”

“I love the way you think, Mrs. Cullen,” I growled, claiming her mouth again.

A/N: Aaaaaaaaaaaand fade to black … I figured after the lemony goodness from the last chapter, you didn’t need any more. *Wicked grin* If you’d like me to continue the lemon in the next chapter, let me know. Leave a review.

Anyhow, I have some pictures for this. You can see Kyra’s new digs. I would have loved to have the condo they bought her for my college experience. Damn. They are on my blog and tumblr (links for that are on my profile). You can also access the blog/tumblr from Facebook Group: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation. I’m also on twitter: tufano79.

Up next will be the continued lemon (if you want it), Bella’s conversation with Owen about the condoms, and Kyra’s first few weeks at school. We’re getting close to the end. We have this chapter and possibly one more before the epilogue. Leave me some lovin! I appreciate lovin! ;- )
They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

Up next will be the continued lemon (if you want it), Bella’s conversation with Owen about the condoms, and Kyra’s first few weeks at school. It will be a combo chapter, Bella and Kyra. We’re getting close to the end. We have this chapter and possibly one more before the epilogue.

Chapter Twenty-Eight: Northwestern University

EPOV

As we lay in a naked tangled heap, I was running my fingers along Bella’s spine. She was draped across me, boneless and completely blissed out. “What did you and Owen talk about?” she asked, sitting up to look at me. “Planning global domination?”

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“What was it, angel?”

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“I married you,” I answered, cupping her chin and forcing her to look at me. “And we didn’t have clueless kids.”
“No, we didn’t,” she said, moving closer to kiss my lips. Her tongue traced my mouth and I eagerly granted her access. “Hmmm, how about we don’t practice what we preach, Edward. Let’s have some unprotected, dirty sex?”

“I love the way you think, Mrs. Cullen,” I growled, claiming her mouth again.

BPOV

His hands glided down my naked body, caressing, kneading and massaging. My leg hitched over his body, opening myself for him. His fingers moved from my torso to between my legs. “Hmmm, so wet,” he growled, circling his fingers over my clit. “But, I want to taste you. Taste us.”

“Yes, Edward,” I moaned as he kissed down my body. His tongue traced my nipples while his hand teased my pussy. I was writhing, needing more of him. He smiled against my skin, sliding further down my body until he was between my legs. He spread them far, displaying my needy pussy.

“Please, Edward. Lick my clit, taste me.”

“My dirty wife,” he purred, his nose running along the seam of my leg. He pressed open mouthed kisses to my thigh, moving ever closer to my dripping folds. With a rumbling growl, he slid his tongue along the length of my pussy. I gasped, my hands reaching for his disheveled hair. He rolled his tongue inside me, tasting my arousal. “Fuck, Bella. Tasting us together is so fucking addicting. I should lick your pussy after every time we make love.”

“Shit,” I moaned, widening my legs and pressing my sex further into his face. He eagerly continued to run his tongue along the length of my folds. His tongue felt amazing inside me, bringing me closer to my own release. He swirled the tip of his tongue on my clit as he pushed two fingers into me. I gasped, rocking my hips in concert with his slow, steady rhythm. His other hand gently squeezed my breasts while the orgasm built in my body. I could see our reflection in the mirror on the dresser and it didn’t look like us. My movements were sinuous, sexy and sensual while Edward looked so strong as he made love to me with his tongue. I watched us and seeing our bodies dance together like this made me aroused, my essence was pouring out of me and onto Edward’s face and our sheets.

“Edward! God, harder!”

He snarled against my sex, his arm moving faster inside of me and his tongue flicking my clit. My head fell back as my body tightened in anticipation. I was so close, despite the previous orgasms Edward had given me. I was about to come unraveled with everything he was doing with me. Every inch of my skin was tingling as my orgasm reached its peak, shattering me. I held back a scream as torrents of pleasure washed over me, crashing with each shuddering pulse of my pussy. I collapsed onto the bed, panting heavily. Edward crawled over me and he kissed me deeply, his tongue plundering in my mouth.

“Fuck, I’ll never tire of tasting your sweet pussy,” he snarled, rolling us so I was perched on his lap. His hands were everywhere, palming my breasts, kneading my ass and gripping my hips, rolling my body over his. I reached behind me, feeling his cock. He was hard again, which surprised me. We had just made love less than twenty minutes ago. “Don’t be so shocked, Bella. Tasting you, tasting us made me want to bury myself inside of you again.”

“Do you want me to fuck you?” I purred, slowly stroking his arousal. He didn’t respond verbally. His lips crashed against mine as he lifted me, moving my body so I was hovering over his leaking, needy cock. I gave him a wink, moving so I was facing the other way. I wanted to watch us fuck.

“Look in the mirror, Edward.”

He sat up and groaned as he saw our reflection. I grasped his hardness, guiding it deep inside me. I groaned, my hands moving to my breasts, cupping them. I rolled my body like a snake as I took him
into me, my muscles clenching to his erection. “Fuck, Bella,” he breathed, his hands splayed on my back as I leaned against them. “Seeing your pussy filled with me …”

“I know,” I purred, reaching my hand between my legs and circling my clit. He growled. “Do you like it when I touch myself?”

“I want to see you fuck yourself with your fingers while I fuck your ass,” he commanded. I slid off him, eager to comply. He grabbed some lube and liberally smeared it on his hardness. I leaned forward as he gently pushed his arousal past my rosette and into my asshole. My body was quivering with need until he was fully seated inside. He encouraged me to lean back and his hips began to thrust slowly, fucking me, filling me. I moaned as his hands found my dripping folds. With my right hand, I slid three fingers inside and curled them in concert with Edward’s strokes. My left hand was circling my clit that was twitching and pulsing from the sensations that I was feeling. Nothing was more perfect than having my husband take me like this. He was loving, strong and commanding as he took what he wanted and I willingly gave. I was drenched from our lovemaking. My juices leaked freely down my arm as I fucked my pussy. Edward was watching us in the mirror, his hands cupping my breasts and providing leverage for our bedroom Olympics.

Edward maneuvered us since he said he was having back spasms. I was on my hands and knees and he took me from behind, grunting as he filled every inch of me. I circled my clit, not really able to slide my fingers inside of me. I was dripping onto the bed, I was so aroused. Another orgasm was building within me. I thought I was going to jump out of my skin.

“Oh, fuck,” he groaned, his hands gripping my hips. “Bella, please, please say you’re close. You’re so fucking tight and I’m going to come.” Hearing his desperation, my nipples tightened and my own orgasm warmed me from head to toe. My body was shaking with the power of my climax, causing me to lose all control of everything. I buried my face into the bedspread as I screamed with my release. Edward’s hands tightened around me as he filled me with his own explosion. With a groan, we both collapsed on the bed, my husband was curled to my side and breathing heavily.

“I think we’re going to have to change the sheets, Edward,” I giggled. “This was a little, um, messy.”

“But so worth it,” he said breathlessly, brushing my hair from my face. “I like having dirty, unprotected sex with you, gorgeous.”

“Hmmm, me too,” I murmured, moving so I was able to kiss him. “Come on. Let’s take a quick shower, change the sheets and go to bed. You’ve got work tomorrow.”

“I’m working from home,” he snickered. He got up on shaky limbs. Once he got his bearings, he scooped me up, carrying me to the bathroom. We took a quick shower and then worked to strip the bed since our lovemaking was more than messy. But it was the best kind of lovemaking, really.

xx STTD xx

Early the next week, I took my children shopping for school, buying school supplies and new clothes since all of them had a growth spurt since the beginning of summer. Alice was joining me since she had to do the same with Gianna. She still wasn’t cleared to drive yet from her physical therapist. We started with the school supplies first at Target. I handed out the required lists to my kids, telling them to get what they needed.

Alice and I were wandering around the school supply section. “I heard that the premier was awesome and your trip to Cabo was hot,” Alice giggled.

“Both correct,” I snickered. “The premier was a welcome trip, spending time with Rose and
celebrating her success with the movie. But, the trip to Cabo was exactly what the doctor ordered for me and my husband. Edward and I spent some quality time reconnecting as a couple, talking, making love and just relaxing. This past year has been torturous with Jacob’s shenanigans, the extra protection and no offense, your issues.”

“None taken. I was a fruitcake,” Alice snorted. “I’m so much better now with the right medication and therapy sessions. I was a fool to not listen to you. Looking back to my behavior, I want to kick my own ass.”

“Hindsight is usually twenty-twenty,” I shrugged. “I’m just glad that my best friend is back. I’ve missed you, Alice. We had so much fun.”

“We still can,” she smiled, hugging me awkwardly since her arm was still strapped to her body. “Perhaps, the next time you fly out to Los Angeles with Rose, I can join you. When’s your next trip?”

“Beginning of November,” I answered, a grin on my face. “You can stay at the new house we have in Los Angeles. We’re planning the premier for the next movie, Forever Charmed. In addition, I have to give them the final draft for the second half of Charmed Endings and the first draft for that werewolf movie.”

“You are a Hollywood gem, Bellini,” Alice smirked. “How is it going?”

“Well, the final draft for Charmed Endings is done. Rose is reading it to verify that it holds the integrity of her book, but she loved what I did with the first three movies. I still want her to give me a thumbs up,” I said. “I have that relationship with the author, I may as well use it. The author for the werewolf story is an author from my former publishing company, but they were hired after I quit. I noticed Tia, my former boss’s, fingerprints all over the manuscript. The story was well told with the perfect mix of action, romance, sex and drama. The studio said that they would probably have it be rated R. I get to write sex scenes.”

“What’s the next story you’re going to attack after the werewolf one?” Alice asked as Gianna dumped her school supplies into the cart.

“Um, I think the circus story next. That one is really romantic and it’s a period piece,” I said wistfully. “I’ve read that story before and I thought it would translate into a movie well.”

“Mom, Owen and I are going to pick up some new boxers, undershirts and socks,” Masen said as he put his school supplies in our cart. “I also want to pick up some workout clothes, too. It’s better to get them here since we’re here.”

“Okay. Send your brother over here before you sneak away, Mase,” I said. He nodded and Owen came over, his arms filled with his school supplies, dumping them into the shopping cart. I gave Owen my best ‘Mom’ face. “I know you and your dad talked about that. Do not sneak off and buy them with your little brother. I don’t want him to get any ideas or that we condone that behavior.”

“Mom,” Owen whined, his eyes wide behind his glasses. “That’s all sorts of weird. Ew!”

“Promise me, Owen,” I growled, pointing at him. He nodded, his face bright red. “Out loud, Owen.”

“I promise, Mom. I swear,” he choked out, his voice cracking. “Can I go now?” I nodded, arching a brow as he skulked away, embarrassed at my line of questioning.

“I’m lost,” Alice said. “What are you talking about?”
I led Alice away from Mia and Gianna, who were still looking at the school supplies, figuring out which folder they liked better from the Charmed movie. “Okay, so while we were on vacation in Cabo, Owen asked Edward about condoms.”


“From what Edward told me, no. Owen couldn’t get through the conversation without turning bright red. He also didn’t know how to please a girl,” I said, smirking slightly. “However, the fact that my oldest son is talking about condoms is freaking me out. He’s thinking about having sex.”

“It could be worse. He could be having sex and knocking up a girl,” Alice muttered, her nose wrinkled. “You are too young to be a grandma.”

“Shit,” I groaned.

“And I noticed that you weren’t stressing about Kyra and sex,” Alice said.

“I know that Kyra’s protected. Well, from pregnancy at least. When she started her period, they were wonky. I put her on birth control to help normalize them when she was a sophomore in high school. However, she asked if she could go on the Depo shot before she went away to college. I took her to our gynecologist and she had her first shot once we got back from Cabo. Thankfully, our doctor has privileges at Northwestern and she can get her shot up at her Evanston office,” I said, wrinkling my nose. “Also, she’s not in a relationship.”

“But, she is in college with freedoms that she never had before,” Alice explained. “And don’t forget about Steve.”

“What about Steve?” I asked, pushing the cart behind Mia and Gianna. “Steve is not Kyra’s boyfriend. He has feelings for her but he’s not …” I trailed off, thinking the worst. Steve was unemployed and my daughter had two extra rooms. “You don’t think that Steve would do that?”

“No! Steve is a good man. But, it could happen. You never know,” Alice said wryly.

“Don’t say that, Mary Alice,” I growled. She just gave me a sardonic little smirk.

We finished our school shopping, getting some casual clothes for the beginning of the school year from Target and a nearby Kohl’s. Alice suggested we take the kids to Oak Brook Mall closer to the beginning of the school year to pick up more fall outfits. The apparel that was out was still more summery. I agreed and I dropped off Gianna and Alice at their house. When we got home, Mia and Masen went to their respective rooms. Owen was trying to sneak out to visit Tasha. I heard him talking on the phone. “Hold it!” I barked.

“Tash, I’ve got to go. My mom needs to talk to me,” he said. “Yeah, we’ll go to the movies with Felix and Maureen. I’ll pick you up in about an hour, okay? Love you, too.” He ended his call, his face a bright flaming red. “Mom?”

“You love her?” I asked, arching a brow.

“Yeah,” Owen whispered, biting his lip and looking so adorably flustered. His face was so red and his mannerisms were all Edward. He knew he was on the spot and it showed. “She said she loved me when we were ‘dancing’ at prom. Things are great with us and I do love her. A lot.”

“So much that you’re talking to your dad about condoms?” I smirked, leading him into the living room. His face flamed brighter. “Look, I know your dad gave you the third degree and I’m here to
reiterate those points. It’s responsible for you to talk to your father about practicing safe sex, but are you ready?”

“I don’t know. Things are getting heated and I just want to be sure. You know? And you have to understand that I won’t push Tasha into something that she’s not ready for, nor is she going to push me,” Owen explained. “I honestly don’t think that we’re going to have sex any time soon, but I’d rather err on the side of caution than be unprepared or rely on her to do it. I think she takes those pills like Kyra did to regulate her girly thing.”

“Her period,” I deadpanned. He so sounds much like Edward. If I wasn’t his mother and I wasn’t stressed out about becoming a grandma, I’d find this quite humorous.

“I know. Dad said the same thing. I have a box, bought with Dad’s help, but I don’t foresee us using it. Not yet, at least. I promise to be careful and show Tasha that I love her.” He bit his lip, his eyes anxious to go. “I’m running really late, Mom. Please?”

“With what car are you planning on picking up Tasha?” I asked, giving him a wry little smile.

“Your beast?” he smirked.

“Ugh, you’re a pain in my ass, Owen,” I grumbled, tossing him my keys. “Make good choices and be back by midnight, with your virginity intact! I don’t want to smell sex in my car. Gross.”

“Yeah, eww. Besides, I want that moment to be special. Not in the backseat of my mother’s Range Rover. Talk about weird,” he said, hugging me tightly before running off to take his girlfriend out on a date.

I went to make dinner, some fish, rice, veggies and a light salad. As I was cooking, our house phone rang. It was Kyra. “Hello!” I sang. “How are you doing, sweet girl?”

“I’m good, Mom. Look, I’m making dinner for a couple of my new friends and I need your help. How long do I cook the chicken parmesan in the oven?” she asked.

“How much are you making?” I responded.

“Um, eight chicken breasts. And they’re huge,” she laughed. “One website says an hour and another says less than that.”

“Well, I precook the breasts, after I’ve breaded them, in a frying pan. I brown them, putting them into an oven safe cooking dish. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees and after you’ve browned the breaded breasts, cover them with the sauce and mozzarella cheese, cooking them for fifteen to twenty minutes,” I explained. “What are you making as a side?”

“Pasta and some broccoli,” Kyra answered. “Along with a salad. My friend, Rex, is bringing that. He’s a soccer player and very particular what he likes in his salad.”


“You okay, Mom?” Kyra asked.

“I’m fine,” I said, waving my hand. “Just having an emotional mom moment.”

“Emotional like you’re upset that I’m not there?” she whispered.
“No. Nothing like that,” I said. Emotional in the fact that you have a friend named Rex, who’s a soccer player. Could you be sleeping with Rex? “I’ll be fine, Kyra. I love you, principessa.”

“I love you, too, Mom. I’ll try and come out before classes start in earnest, okay?” she said.

“Okay,” I smiled. We hung up and tried to not let my mind run away with me. My daughter was an adult. It was her life and her decisions. She was no longer living under my roof. It was her prerogative to make friends with whomever she chose. Male or female.

But, Rex? What kind of name is Rex?

xx STTD xx

KyraPOV

“Ugh, this statistics course is kicking my ass,” I said to my friend, Rex. “I hate math. Math hates me. Why do I need to take statistics and calculus?”

“I don’t know, Kyra,” he replied, rolling the r of my name. “I’m not the one who is a psych major. I’m an art history major and all I have to do is look at pretty paintings all day.” He shifted his bag over his toned body. “After soccer practice, though. We have an away game at University of Illinois down in Champagne. The guys give me such shit for being an art history major.”

“Not many gay men are on the varsity soccer team, Rex,” I said, nudging him with my shoulder.

“This is true and why I’m single, Kyra,” he grumbled. “So, rain check on dinner? I’ll take you to this delicious little Indian place when I get back from the children of the corn.”

“Sounds good. Melissa, Amber, Hannah, Jason, and one of my classmates from statistics, Peter, are coming for dinner tonight. I’ll save you some,” I said, hugging him. “Kick some cornfield ass.”

“Later, K,” Rex sang as he ran toward his dorm. I walked to my car and drove to my condo. I was so grateful that it was the weekend. My classes were hard, but I loved every moment of them. Well, except statistics. It was sad. My dad had to come and tutor me a couple times a week for the first three weeks of the course, but he explained it in ways that made sense to me. Once I got it with the help of my father, it clicked, but I still struggled with the concepts. It took me longer to do the math and the problems, but they were usually correct. The professor, though, was frustrated with the amount of time I took to complete my work. I had had a test today and almost all of my classmates finished within a half hour of receiving the test. I took the entire time, plus five extra minutes after some cajoling with my professor. I was confident in my work and I knew I did well on the test.

It didn’t negate the fact that I hated statistics and all things math.

Once I was back at my condo, I checked on my meat loaf. That was the meal of the week. My friends hated the dining hall. They were all from my orientation weekend and people that I’d met from wandering around on campus before classes started. When they found out that I owned my own place, the begged if they could pay me for a home-cooked meal once a week. I eagerly obliged since I loved cooking and I’d rather cook for more than just me.

Though, Rex was a constant companion since his roommate was a homophobe and an asshole. I offered him one of my numerous rooms, but he said that part of the stipulation for his scholarship was that he stayed on campus, living in one of the dorms. That didn’t stop him from being a frequent overnight guest, though. Usually when his douchebag roommate was having one of his many orgies. The guy was a tool.
As I was working on making mashed potatoes, I heard a quiet knock on the door. I checked out the peephole, seeing Steve standing on my doorstep. “Hey, you,” I said, throwing up the door. “This is a surprise.” He hugged me and I led him into my comfy condo. “Did Hank let you in?”

“Yeah. He recognized me from when you moved in,” he chuckled. “I was bored and I didn’t want to be a third wheel with my parents on their date to some musical. I figured I’d swing by, see how you were doing?”

“I’m good. I’m working on dinner. Some of my friends are coming over for meatloaf. I have more than enough,” I said, gesturing to the massive loaf of beef in the fridge. “Six pounds of beef, pork and other goodies.”


“It does. I can only make this when Senna isn’t coming. She’s not allowed to eat pork or something,” I shrugged. “Do you want something to drink? I have pop, iced tea, water, a few beers, some wine?”

“You have beer? Wine? You’re eighteen,” Steve teased.

“My friend, Rex, is twenty-one and he keeps his alcohol in my fridge since his roommate is an asshole. Rex wouldn’t mind if you one or two,” I said. “And the wine I use for cooking. I don’t like the taste of it, really.”

“I think I’ll stick with pop,” Steve said, swiping a coke from the fridge and helping himself to a glass. This was not the first time that Steve came over randomly. I liked that he did and our friendship had blossomed since I’d moved out of my parents’ place. “You understanding statistics?” He held up my book and I wrinkled my nose. “No?”

“I get it. Dad helped me a lot, but I hate math. I don’t understand why I have to take such advanced math if I want to shrink someone’s head,” I said, tossing a potato into a pot of water. Steve picked up one of the many potatoes that I had, peeling it, helping me. “Thanks.”

“No prob. Since I’m mooching and randomly showing up on your doorstep, the least I can do is help you cook,” Steve said, his lips raising in a sweet smile. “How are your other classes?”

“They’re okay. Typical gen ed stuff,” I shrugged. “The English Lit class I’m taking is covering all of the books I’d read when I was in AP English. All I have to do is rework some of my papers and the assignments are essentially done. It makes my life very easy. How about you? Have you figured out what you’re going to do with your life?”

“Well, I’m waiting for some test results,” Steve said. “Your parents paid me really well to watch over your family. I have all of that money saved and I think I may go back to school. I’m just trying to figure out where. The tests results will help me decide, but it won’t be for another year since obviously this school year has already started.”

“What are you going to go back to school for?” I asked, trying to heave the pot off the counter.

“Let me get that. It would suck if you tripped and spilled all of this onto the ground,” Steve said, picking it up easily and putting it onto the stove. “Anyhow, I’m thinking about going to school to my law degree. Become a lawyer. I also spoke with your dad and the foundation needs some additional lawyers. I’d want to work with the Cullen Children’s Foundation, become an advocate for kids and families. I don’t know.”

“I think that sounds awesome, Steve,” I smiled. “Though, you’d have to voluntarily be in touch with my dad. He’s still not your biggest fan.”
“I beg to differ, Kyra,” Steve said, leaning back against the counter casually. “He wrote me this amazing letter of recommendation for my application to law school. I was flummoxed when I read it, surprised at all of the positive things he said about me. Despite our differences and the whole thing with Owen, we’ve really grown to respect each other. Will he be my best friend? Probably not, but I respect him as much as I respect my father. He’s a good man and you’re lucky to have him, Kyra.”

“I am. I didn’t see it earlier, but he made me work for everything and he taught me so much,” I murmured. “My mom, too. She brings out my dad’s silly side.”

“I’ve never seen that,” Steve guffawed. “He’s always so serious. You know?”

“He was serious this year because of what happened with Jacob,” I shuddered. Steve noticed my reaction and he hugged me gently. I eagerly accepted his warm, protective embrace. He smelled so good, like cologne, fresh pine and something sweet that was just Steve.

“I’m sorry that he got you, K,” he whispered.

“But, he’s dead,” I said. “He won’t ever torture anyone in my family again. You helped put him away.”

“I only did my own stalking,” he snorted humorlessly, releasing me and sliding onto the counter. “Thankfully, we got you back safe and sound with only minor injuries.”

“My mom had the most psychological trauma,” I cringed. “She still has nightmares.”

“Do you?”

“Do I what?” I asked, my brows furrowed.

“Have nightmares?” Steve asked, his head cocked to the side.

“At first, I did. We went to the family counseling and that helped,” I said. “Every so often I see a shadow or hear a voice that reminds me of Jacob, but I know that he’s dead and can’t terrorize my family anymore. Thanks, in part, to you.” He gazed into my eyes, his icy blue orbs staring intently. My cheeks flamed as he held my gaze. Unconsciously, I moved close to him and his fingers threaded with mine. Our bubble was burst when my phone rang on the counter. “Holy shit!” I squeaked.

Steve chuckled, sliding off the counter, handing me my phone. “I’m going to go to the bathroom, Kyra.”

“Kay,” I said, clutching my phone to my chest. I watched as he padded to the bathroom. My phone stopped ringing, only to start ringing again. “Okay, okay! Hello?”

“Miss Cullen? You have four guests down here,” Hank said. “Can I send them up?”

“Um, yeah. Thanks, Hank,” I said, waving my hand in front of my face, trying to calm down from that intense moment. I walked to door, leaving it open for my friends. As I waited for them, I put the meatloaf into the oven and started the water for the mashed potatoes. I also found some vegetables and started chopping up stuff for the salad. My friends came into my condo and they immediately made themselves comfortable. Amber helped me in the kitchen and Jason flirted with me, but he reminded me too much of my brother, Owen, for me to even consider him as a boyfriend.

_Incest is NOT best. Gross._

Steve was quiet when he came out of the bathroom. He also helped me with dinner, hovering close
to me. Amber was totally ogling him, throwing herself at him. Steve deftly dodged her overt flirtations. I didn’t like Amber’s actions, but I kept my anger at bay. Steve and I weren’t dating. We were friends, bordering on something more, but he wasn’t mine.

Though, when I did imagine having my forever man, he did closely resemble Steve.

Mia and I, when we were kids, talked about our ‘forever’ men. The man who was like our father, the prince charming who would steal our hearts and love us forever. Over the years, our forever men changed. When we first started talking, I was saying that it would be Dad and then Mia got all pissy, saying that Dad was her forever man. Now? I’m certain that Mia’s forever man is now a forever woman, but I’m not sure. I’ve tried to talk to my sister, but she clammed up when I did approach her.

After dinner, Melissa and Hannah helped with the dishes while I sent Steve and Jason to get dessert, taking money from the food jar on my counter. I didn’t have time to get dessert, or bake anything. There was a nearby bakery that had delicious cookies and Italian treats like cannoli, tiramisu and pizzelles. When they guys came back, we had dessert and watched a movie on my huge plasma screen television, a gift from Uncle Tim. All of my friends were scattered on the couches. I sat on the floor, near the huge overstuffed chair where Steve was seated. He smiled sweetly. “I don’t bite.”

I got up from the floor and sat next to him, curled up almost on his lap. By the time the movie was done, my legs were draped over his and my head was on his shoulder.

xx STTD xx

Over the next few months, Steve would show up when I had group dinners. He also would come and take me out to eat on the weekends. He also worked out with me, getting me to run along the lakeshore. I had packed on the freshman fifteen with all of the dinners I’d cooked. At our dinners or morning workouts, we talked about everything and nothing, laughing the entire time.

Rex adored him, trying to convert to be gay, but Steve said that his heart belonged to another. I frowned at that, thinking of his girlfriend, Thea, who had passed away when they were in high school. He’d never feel that way about me. He was older, much more mature and he knew what he wanted in life. A teenage girl fawning over him was not in the cards.

The first semester ended. Thankfully, I got all A’s. I went home for Christmas break, spoiled by my parents, siblings and family. Second semester continued along the same vein, but Amber stopped coming around since she was pissed that I was taking her man. Steve had politely asked her to lay off the flirty behavior since he was interested in someone else. He liked her as a friend, but nothing else. The next thing I knew, Amber was sleeping with Rex’s douchebag roommate and got pregnant, quitting school after spring break.

All too quickly, the school year ended and I was relaxing for a couple of weeks before I started my summer school classes, trying to knock off my general education requirements. I was working on a paper for one of my English courses, since I’d decided to minor in English for my mom. I had just finished my thesis when I heard that same timid, sweet knock. I saved my progress, locking down my computer and padding to the doorway. Steve was standing there, a shy grin on his face. “Hey, stranger,” I said, hugging him. “Long time no see.”

“I helped my parents move back down to Florida,” he explained, walking into my condo. “I also had interviews for law schools.”

“Really?” I smirked, sitting down on the couch. “What school are you going to learn the inner workings of the law, Counselor? And when do you start?”
“Well, a lot of it was based on my LSAT scores. I took them in the fall and I was not happy with my results. I took them again just after the first of the year and they improved tremendously. With the improved test scores in hand, I applied all over the place, but I was offered a position at Yale University, Harvard University and Columbia University, all full-ride scholarships.”

“Oh,” I said, my stomach dropping to my toes. “Congratulations. Those are all amazing schools, but nothing local?”

“I was put on a wait list for Loyola and University of Chicago,” Steve frowned. “I was hoping to stay local, but unfortunately that’s not the case.” He picked up my hand, idly tracing his thumb over my knuckles. “I wanted to stay local, Kyra. For you,” he whispered.

“What do you mean?” I asked, loving the soft feeling of his hand.

He blew out a breath, staring into my eyes, just as deeply as he did that one night in my kitchen. He moved closer, his other hand brushing my hair away from my face. “I think it’s better that I demonstrate,” he murmured. He leaned forward, his eyes locked on mine. With a silent question, he asked. My heart was stammering against my ribs, wanting desperately to feel this, feel him. I nodded and he closed his eyes, his mouth tenderly covering my own. His lips were soft, sweet and so gentle as he brushed his mouth over mine. His hand tangled into my hair and pulled me closer to his hard body. My fingers threaded into his short blond locks, lost in the feeling of his sweet mouth moving against mine. He moved me so was on his lap, straddling his thighs. I moaned quietly and he used the opportunity to slide his tongue between my lips, dancing and twisting inside of my mouth. We kissed heavily for a few moments until we broke apart to breathe.

Damn it.

“Kyra,” he said breathlessly, his hands tracing my face and sliding down my body, holding me close. “I’m in love with you. I’ve been in love with you for over a year, but I couldn’t tell you. Unfortunately, your father’s voice and angry stomping around stopped me from saying anything.”

“I’ll kick his ass,” I grumbled, trying to get off Steve’s lap.

“Stop squirming, woman,” Steve laughed, his warm hands cupping my face. “His arguments were valid. But, your mom supported me on my feelings. She came down with my parents since your grandmother purchased a house on the coast of Jacksonville. She was checking it out and we flew out and back together. Your parents have a significant gap in their ages and she knows how you feel. How I feel. Like I said, I’m in love with you, Kyra. I love you.” He chuckled, kissing me sweetly. “I’m an idiot for not telling you sooner, but I love you.”

“You’re not an idiot,” I whispered, pressing my forehead to his. “A little slow.”

“Hey now, I got accepted to Ivy League law schools,” he laughed, his lips tracing my jaw. Shit, that feels so good. I love his scruff. “But, yeah, I’ll agree with slow. I’ve wasted so much time.”

“Did you? We did everything a couple did except kiss and make out and sex,” I laughed. “Our relationship was a relationship.”

“But the kissing and the making out and the sex are fun,” he quipped, his fingers tracing my features. “And it’s not just sex for me, Kyra. It’s making love because when we do take that step, we will make love.” He kissed me tenderly, commanding my mouth and making me melt against his body. I rolled my body over his hardness – because it was a little hard to miss – wanting desperately to get closer to him. “It’s not happening now, Kyra.”
“When do you leave?” I asked, biting my lip.

“I’m leaving at the beginning of August,” he said. “Two weeks. Your parents helped me find an affordable house to rent and I’m staying there until I’m done with my law degree.”

“Where?” I whispered.

“Yale. They gave me the most and were the most impressed with my scores, resume and undergraduate degree,” he answered. “I already have a clerkship with an attorney’s office, too.”

“So, we have two weeks to be together,” I sniffled. “That’s it?”

“I hope not,” he said. “Yes, we’ll have two weeks together, but after the three years that it takes me to finish my degree and the three years for yours, we’ll be together. Plus, we have the phone, email, Skype. I can visit you on breaks and vice versa. I can’t just walk away from you, Kyra. I don’t want to. I feel like I’m leaving half of my soul here in Chicago with you.”

“We can do that,” I smiled, throwing my arms around his neck. Steve returned my embrace, crushing me to his chest. “What’s on tap for tonight?” I asked, kissing his neck.

“Well, Sweetness,” he began, “I would like to take you out for your birthday since it’s this weekend. I know you have plans with your friends and family up here the day of your birthday, but I want to celebrate it. Just the two of us.”

“I’d love that. I do have to finish this paper, though,” I said, grimacing. “It’s due tomorrow.”

“How much do you have to do?” Steve asked, arching his brow.

“Just the conclusion, proofread and then final edits,” I explained. “An hour tops.”

“Oh, kay,” he said, kissing me sweetly and moving back onto the couch. “I’ll just up to your desktop and make arrangements for our date tonight. Dress comfortably.”

“Kay,” I said as I watched him jog up to the loft. Focus, Cullen. I picked up my laptop, working on the rest of my paper. I managed to conclude it, tying it all together with ease. I ran spell check, reread it and edited it before I submitted it to my professor, using the online submission application. I called up to Steve, saying I was going to get ready. He told me to wear comfortable shoes. I decided to wear a cute dress and a pair of ballet slippers. I braided my hair, letting it hang over my one shoulder. Steve was waiting for me in the kitchen, holding the most beautiful bouquet of flowers. “Wow, they’re beautiful!”

“They match your vibrant personality,” he said, dipping gallantly as he presented me with my flowers.

“Let me put them into a vase,” I murmured, taking them from him. I struggled to reach the vase since it was above my fridge. Steve saw me struggle and he easily grabbed for me, his long, lean body was pressed to me. He handed it to me, smiling smugly. “Thanks.”

“You’re welcome, sweetness,” he said, kissing my nose. “You look gorgeous.” I blushed, ducking out of his arms and filling the vase, placing the flowers inside. “Shall we?” he asked, offering me his arm. I nodded and we went down to his car, which was parked in one of my visitor spaces.

Expertly, he drove us to Chicago, parking at Navy Pier. I’d been here numerous times with my family but never with a significant other, a boyfriend. Is Garrett my boyfriend? He helped me out of the car, threading our fingers together and we walked onto the pier. We idly strolled inside until we
reached Harry Caray’s. “Is this okay?” Steve asked, his cheeks pinking up. “I called ahead and got us on the list. I wasn’t sure what you wanted … Shit, I’m so out of practice. We can go somewhere else.”

I stopped his nervous babbling by kissing his mouth. “Steve, it’s perfect,” I soothed. He visibly relaxed, hugging me to his side. We went into the restaurant and Steve checked us in. We barely had to wait before we were seated on the patio. It was a little quieter outside than the tavern inside and we were seated in the corner, closest to the pier. As we sat on the patio, Steve told me about his plans at Yale and the classes he signed up for. He also asked about my sophomore year of college, asking what I had on tap for this year. Like always, our conversations are light and easy, nothing forced about them. Steve was sweet, humble, and intelligent and had this dry, sarcastic humor that only I saw. He was very reserved around my family, for obvious reasons.

My dad scared the shit out of Steve.

Which I find to be incredibly ironic. My father was the nicest man I’d ever known, but he can be intimidating. He and Uncle Jasper created a Fortune 100 company from nothing, becoming the biggest technological company on the planet, bigger than Apple. My father was driven, ambitious, funny and loving. He loves his children and worships the ground my mom walks on. But, he’s not scary.

We finished our meals, complete with a skillet sundae that had a sparkler for a candle. Steve laughed as the servers sang to me, sounding like dying cows. I thanked them and we split the dessert. “You didn’t sing?” I asked, quirking a brow.

“You don’t want me to sing. What they did sounds like classical music to the barking that is my voice,” he chuckled, humming as he swallowed some of the ice cream. “My talents are elsewhere.”

“Like what?” I asked.

“You’re going to laugh,” he said, his face turning red.

“I won’t. I promise,” I vowed.

“I like to dance. Swing dancing, line dancing, just dancing …” he shrugged. “My mom encouraged me to try it out. In high school, I took a dance aerobics class with Thea before she got really sick. I was the only guy, but I loved it.”

“I think there’s some dancing at the end of the pier. We should go,” I said, smiling brightly. Steve nodded, waving down the server and paying for our meals. We walked to the end of the pier and sure enough, there was line dancing going on. I wasn’t as familiar with line dancing, but Steve seemed familiar with the music. We watched for a few moments. I caught the gist of the steps, dragging Steve out to the dance floor. We didn’t leave it until fireworks started go off over the lake. I never saw Steve laugh so much. When we weren’t dancing, his hands were always touching me, keeping me close. As the fireworks went off, he held me in his arms, swaying gently.

After the fireworks, Steve drove me back to my condo since I had class the next day at nine. I invited him in, wanting to see if he would spend the night. He leaned in, kissing me softly, but the fire escalating quickly. With a nibble to my bottom lip, he pulled back. “I’m going to do right by you, Kyra Cullen. I want to treat you right. And that does not include sleeping together on our first date. I’m an innocent young lad!”

“I didn’t mean …” I rambled. “I’m not ready for sex!” Shit, that was really loud.
“Me neither, sweetness,” he said, sneaking into my foyer. He closed my door, snickering quietly. “Your neighbor was waggling his brows, thinking you’re going to get some. Perv.” He looked at me, smiling softly. “Besides, I don’t want to spend two weeks with you, make love and then drive to Connecticut, pining for you.”

“Have you been reading my mother’s romance novels?” I teased.

“Shut it,” he smirked, idly playing with the end of my braid. “Call me old fashioned but I want to woo you, make you feel like a princess and give you everything, Kyra. I mean it when I said that I loved you. I do. So much. You’re my closest friend and you have so much in you that I admire, cherish and adore. I want to be sure before we take that step.”

“I understand,” I said, trying to understand his reasoning. I did but I didn’t. I was confused. “I think.”

“Let’s not worry about that now,” he said, kissing my forehead. “We’ve got two weeks before I go out to New Haven. I plan on spending as much time with you as you’ll let me, Kyra. I want to make it count, but no adult sleepovers. Not yet.”

“Okay,” I smiled. “Thank you for dinner and for the fun time line dancing. You’re really good. I’m shocked at how good you are.”

“I had the most beautiful partner,” he said, leaning down and cupping my face. Tenderly, he brushed his lips with mine, making my skin ignite in flames. Damn, could he kiss. My panties are about to explode!

We made out in my foyer for a few more minutes. “Call me when you’re done with your class, Kyra. I love you,” he whispered. With another sweet kiss, he was gone.

“Love you, too,” I said dreamily to the door.

The two weeks flew by. Steve was with me when I wasn’t in class. He did end up spending the night since we had had a movie marathon. He wanted to introduce me to the wonders of Star Trek. My dad had tried, but I thought it was lame, but Steve added some awesome commentary, explaining the vision that the creator had. We watched the original movies and by the time we got through all of them, it was well after three. He decided to stay in the guest room, though I did try to entice him to my bed. Unsuccessfully, mind you.

The night before he was due to leave for New Haven, I made him dinner. I made his favorite, vegetarian lasagna, with salad and cheesecake. Though, I bought the cheesecake since I couldn’t make it. It always ended up crumbling or tasting weird. After we ate, we settled on the couch. “I feel weird. Shouldn’t you be packing or something?” I asked.

“My car is ready to go and I shipped everything I needed to my apartment. Oliver let me crash at his place the past couple of weeks. My landlady said she’d sign for it and have her grandsons bring it into the house,” Steve said, shrugging slightly. “I’m renting out this bungalow from this woman who reminded me of my grandma. I got a good deal with the rent. All I have to do is maintain the lawn, shovel the driveway when it snows and pay for my own electric and cable bill, which she set up. So, I just write her a check for that. I don’t really have much beside my clothes and my laptop, which your dad upgraded for free. He saw my dinosaur and he said that if I was going to be a lawyer, I had to have a computer that had WIFI.”

“I’m happy that you’re getting your law degree, but I don’t want you to go,” I grumbled.

“I’m still on those waiting lists. If something opened up, I’d take it in a minute, sweetness,” Steve said, taking me into his arms. “It’s not like I’m moving to Timbuktu. Just Connecticut.”
“When do you leave?” I asked, an emptiness taking hold in my chest.

“Around ten,” he murmured, tightening his arms around me. “I’ll call you along the way and once I get settled, Kyra. This won’t change us. You know my history. I closed myself off for so long because of what happened with Thea, but I want so much more. With you. I’m not going to let a thousand miles and a law degree stop that.” He picked up my right hand and he grabbed something from his pocket. He slid a ring down my finger. I’d seen it before. “This is my promise to you that you’re it for me.”

“It’s beautiful,” I murmured, holding up my hand. “I’ve seen this before.”

“It’s your mom’s. She gave it to me, much to your dad’s chagrin,” Steve snickered. “She gave it to me to give to you because she knew that we were meant to be. She’s working on your dad. He tolerates me, now. He still thinks I’m too old.”

“My dad is five, almost six years older than my mom. You’re seven years older than me?”

“Just about,” Steve said, running his finger over my ring. “I also want you to know that I’m committed to this, Kyra. I know you’re young and if you aren’t ready …”

I turned in his arms, moving so I was on his lap. “I’m ready. You are such a wonderful man, Steve. I can’t imagine my life without you,” I murmured, wrapping my arms around his neck. I buried my nose into his shoulder, inhaling his clean, masculine scent. “I love you so much, Steve. I’m just not ready to let you go.”

He moaned, his arms banding around my waist and pulling me flush to his body. His lips found my shoulder and he kissed up my neck. We made out fervently, pawing and holding each other, afraid that other was going to disappear. His kisses were sweet, pleading and amazing. I whimpered as he lay me onto the couch, his lips trailing down my neck and across my collarbone. Up until this point, Steve had been very chaste with his kisses, with some tongue. Now, he was tasting my skin and his hands were hovering over my body. I could feel how aroused he was and I wanted more. Not yet. Don’t let your teenage hormones ruin this, Kyra. Steve must have wanted more, too. His large, warm hands trailed down my arms and he gently cupped my breast. I arched up into his hand, my fingers tightening in his sandy blond hair. We continued kissing, making out heatedly for over an hour. Steve sat up, his lips swollen and his eyes rheumy. “I need to calm down, sweetness. You are entirely too sexy for words.”

“I am?” I asked, arching a brow.

“Baby, you have no idea,” he said, pulling me up and nuzzling my neck, his arms holding me close to his hot body. “I just want to hold you for a moment before I go.”

“Stay,” I whispered against his shoulder. “With me. We don’t have to do anything more than this. But, stay. I want one adult sleepover so I can have something to look forward to. You are my boyfriend, after all. Right?”

“I’m more than that,” he chuckled, his cheeks pink. He cupped my face, staring into my eyes. “I’ll stay. I may shave off a little time leaving from here.”

“You will?” I asked, smiling crookedly.

He beamed, kissing me softly. “I’m just going to run down to get something to sleep in from my bags.” He grabbed my keys and went down to the garage. He was back before I knew it and tossed a small duffel bag onto the ground next to the door. We spent the rest of the evening just talking.
laughing and relishing our last few hours together.

Around midnight, I start to doze off. Steve teased me for snoring. I smacked him, heading to my bedroom to get ready for bed. Steve used the guest bathroom. When I was done, I opened the door to my bedroom, very nervous. Steve walked in, wearing a pair of shorts and a V-neck t-shirt. “Is there a side you prefer?” I asked, my voice sounding squeaky.

“I’ll probably just end up cuddling with you,” he said, giving me his sweet, timid smile. He walked over to me, picking up my right hand. “It’s beautiful on your hand, Kyra. And I meant what I said about this being a promise to you. You’re the one for me. I’ve never been more sure about anything in my life. I spent so long fighting my feelings.”

“Don’t fight them anymore,” I whispered.

“I’m not,” he said, sweeping me into his arms. “I love you and you love me. That’s all that matters.” He lay me on the bed and turned off the lights before crawling into bed with me. I was stiff and unsure how to do anything. Steve noticed my trepidation, pulling me into his arms. I put my head on his chest, listening to the steady thrum of his heart. “This is just the beginning, Kyra. Just wait and see,” he whispered in the darkness. “I love you, sweetness.”

“I love you, too,” I said, kissing his lips before snuggling back in his arms. My eyes eventually drooped shut and I fell asleep, safe in Steve’s arms. I slept hard until the alarm went off. Steve was curled around me, his face still chiseled and handsome, looking years younger in slumber. I got up out of bed, wanting to cuddle with him but also wanting to send him off with a full meal. I made some blueberry waffles with raspberry syrup, whipped cream cheese and bacon. Steve woke up, padding into the kitchen. His face was marred with pillow creases and he was yawning. “I made breakfast,” I said, trying to sound chipper, but I knew it fell flat.

“As delicious as this smells, I missed my cuddly, warm, sweet girlfriend,” Steve said, wrapping his arms around me and holding me close. He kissed my shoulder. I leaned against him, wanting to freeze this moment. “I thought I could do this. I thought I could just get in the car and drive away,” he whispered. “I don’t know if I can, Kyra.”

I turned in his arms, taking his face in my hands. “You’ve said that it’s just Connecticut. We can do this. I’ll miss you like crazy because we finally stopped dancing around our feelings,” I laughed.

“I’m an idiot,” he grumbled.

“No, you’re not. I don’t think I was ready for this last year,” I said. “This sweet, loving, amazing intimacy that we have. It reminds me of my parents. They are so sweet and love each other so much. In fact, you’re like a clone of my dad, except you’ve got a ton of muscles and you didn’t need to have corrective laser eye surgery.”

“I beg to differ. I had Lasik when I was twenty-one,” Steve countered, kissing my nose. “I was as blind as a bat. I made my mom throw out all of those pictures when I wore glasses.” He brushed my hair off my shoulders and stared into my eyes. “You’re wiser than your years, Kyra Cullen. I promise you, I’ll be out for Christmas. Perhaps, you could come out to New Haven for spring break?”

“We’ll make it work,” I said, snaking my arms around his neck. Steve easily lifted me up and set me on the counter. I wrapped my legs around his waist and held onto him with all of my might. “It will work because we love each other.”

“I love hearing you say that,” he murmured. “I was so afraid that you didn’t feel the same. Last night
was the first time you said it back.”

“You just left to quickly for you to hear it, but I said it,” I teased. “Now, let’s get some food in you. I think my siblings can hear your stomach in Wheaton.”

“I am hungry,” he laughed, rubbing his belly. “And you do cook so well.”

“I get it from my mom,” I shrugged. We ate breakfast, taking turns in feeding each other. Steve kissed a dollop of whipped cream that was on my face and that ended up being a pretty intense make out session. He eventually pulled himself away and said he was going to take a cold shower before he set off to Yale University. I giggled, which earned me a playful glower before he slipped into the guest bathroom. I quickly did the dishes and took my own shower, changing into a long floral skirt and a tight tank top. After Steve left, I had an appointment with my advisor about a possible internship opportunity.

Steve finished his shower and he propped his duffel by the door. He was dressed casually in a pair of shorts and a loose Northwestern t-shirt. I giggled at that. “I have to support my girl,” he said, plucking at the charcoal gray cotton. “When I get to Yale, I’ll send you a hoodie.”

“Make sure you spray some of your cologne on there,” I said, wrapping my arms around his waist. “You always smell so good.”

“I promise, sweetness,” he murmured, hugging me tightly. “Think of it this way, I’ll see you in thirteen weeks.”

“That doesn’t help, Steve,” I deadpanned, pressing my ear to his chest.

“Okay, okay,” he chuckled, tipping my chin up. “But, I will see you and we will stay in contact. I love you and I want it all with you. I had the most amazing dream last night. You were the star.”

“Do I want to know?” I snickered, smiling seductively.

“I’d rather show you, baby,” he whispered. “But not now. Not enough time to do with you all that I want.” His voice deepened to a husky growl. “I love you and I’ll call you when I stop for the night. I’m hoping to get to Cleveland today and then New Haven by tomorrow.”


“Why would I look at them when I’m holding my dream girl?” he asked, kissing me sweetly. “I’m yours, Kyra. This ring is my promise to you.”

“I should give you something,” I frowned. “My own promise. God, I suck as a girlfriend.”

“You don’t, sweetness,” he chuckled. “Knowing that you are wearing my ring that represents my love; that alone is a promise enough for me.” I pursed my lips, not happy that he didn’t have something of mine. “Don’t pout, baby. I do have to go, though.”

“Call me if you get tired,” I said, tears brimming in my eyes. “I’ll miss you.”

“I already miss you,” he whispered. “Don’t cry, though. This is temporary. I love you.”

“I love you, too,” I sniffled, throwing my arms around his neck. He gently lifted me in his arms, squeezing me so tightly. With a shuddered sob, he let me down and stared at me. His own eyes were filled with tears. “Drive safe. Be safe.”
“I promise,” he said, kissing me once more before ducking out of the door. I watched out the window as he tossed his bag into the backseat of his car. He looked up at me, kissing his fingers and then holding up the sign language symbol for ‘I love you.’ I responded in kind as he drove away.

Steve was everything I could have ever hoped for. He was my dream and my future. That brought me solace, happiness and joy. Thirteen weeks … I can do that. With a determined smile, I grabbed my bag and slung it over my body to go to my meeting with my advisor. I sent Steve a text before I left.

_I love you and I can’t wait until we get to reenact your dream you had last night. Heaven knows, you’re mine ~ Kyra xoxo_

_A/N: So, we’re wrapping things up. And a number of you called it with Kyra and Steve. They were destined to be together. I always planned it this way. Now, I’ve got some pictures on my blog for this chapter (one of which you might recognize from A Nerd Story of Love, the ring Edward gave Bella on Rufus, the lion). Links for that are on my profile. You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation or twitter: tufano79._

_We’ve gone one more real chapter and it’s going to be a transitional chapter, wrapping things up and bringing us back to the beginning. We’re also going to hear from a new voice: STEVE! After this last chapter, it will be an epilogue and the story of SGD (or as Rose calls him now, SGG) and Nerdella is coming to an end. I hope you enjoyed it. Leave me some lovin if you did!_
Chapter 29

They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

We’ve gone one more real chapter and it’s going to be a transitional chapter, wrapping things up and bringing us back to the beginning. We’re also going to hear from a new voice: STEVE! After this last chapter, it will be an epilogue and the story of SGD (or as Rose calls him now, SGG) and Nerdella is coming to an end.

So, this is going to be a blast from the past. Kind of how Edward and Bella first got together: email, texts and phone calls. But instead of Edward and Bella, we have a set of new lovebirds: Kyra and Steve. With the emails, bolded font will be Steve and italics will be Kyra. Normal font will be conversations on the phone and face-to-face. Make sense? It will once we get going. This chapter will be different, but I think you’ll like it.

Chapter Twenty-Nine: Love Bytes

To: kyracullen (at) gmail (dot) com ~ Kyra

From: sburgess (at) gmail (dot) com ~ Steven

Date: August 1st, 2032 at 11:14 am

Re: Missing you

Dearest Kyra,

I’m just outside of Chicago, filling up my gas tank. I forgot to do it before I left. I just wanted to send you a quick note saying that I miss you tremendously and I’ve only been gone for an hour. (Yes, traffic sucked that bad). I created a ‘Kyra’ playlist to keep me occupied as I drive through Indiana, Ohio and everywhere in between. It’s songs that remind me of you, of our relationship, beginning with a scared teenaged girl to a confident, beautiful woman.

I love you more than words can express.

Unfortunately, my gas tank is filled and I have a lot road to cover before I stop for the day.
Also, I can’t do math (which is one of the many reasons why I couldn’t help you with calc, sweetness). We’ve got twenty-one weeks until we see each other, if I can’t make it for Thanksgiving. That’s a 147 days and counting.

Ugh, I’m trying to come over Thanksgiving.

I love you and I’ll call you when I stop for lunch.

Always,

Steve

xx STTD xx

To: sburgess (at) gmail (dot) com ~ Steven
From: kyracullen (at) gmail (dot) com ~ Kyra
Date: August 1st, 2032 at 5:45 pm
Re: Re: Missing You

Dear Steve,

I just got your email. I’m sorry I didn’t respond sooner. I had a meeting with my advisor about an internship for the fall. I was shocked when my advisor told me that I got it, beating out several upper classmen! So, GO ME! I’ll be working in a DCFS group home, counseling (under the guidance of my advisor) the kids that live there, helping them cope with the struggles of their lives and seeing the positives despite the shitty hand they’ve been dealt. With my schedule, it’s going to be tight, but so rewarding.

I spent the afternoon in the library, reading about adolescent psychology and rearranging my schedule so I can get adolescent psych into my courses this fall. I’m on the waiting list. I’m hoping that I can get it! If not, I’m enrolled in the class in the spring semester.

I also got good news about my class I took over the summer. I got an A. I’m still rocking a 4.0 GPA. Rex, my friend who is on the soccer team, keeps calling me a nerd, but I’m not here to party. I’m here to get a quality education. You know? My parents are not doling out a shit ton of money for me to flunk out.

I’m going to let you go. I don’t want you reading this email while you’re on the road. Don’t text and drive. It can wait. Thank you, AT&T. I wanted to let you know that I slipped something in your bag before you left. It’s not a promise ring like you gave me, but it is a reminder of me. AND, I pilfered one of your shirts. It’s not the same as you hugging me, but it’ll have to do.

One more thing before I let you go … What should I tell my parents? I mean, my mom knows since you gave me her ring. But my Dad? Do you think that he’ll be cool with us dating?

Sorry to be an annoying, younger, obnoxious girlfriend.

I love you and drive safe! Call me when you get settled in your motel room in Cleveland.

Love,

Kyra xx
To: Kyra

From: Steven

Date: August 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 2032 at 6:18 pm

Re: Made it!

Dearest Kyra,

I love you, but I’m so flying back to Chicago when I come to visit. The drive kicked my butt! Though, talking to you while I was driving through Pennsylvania was an added bonus. You have such a beautiful speaking voice, so sweet, rich and calming. I needed it since I was driving through construction and people are dumb. Who tries to pass a truck on the shoulder, when there is no shoulder? A dumb person. Just Saying.

I told you this when we talked, but I want to reiterate it. Congratulations on getting that internship. It sounds incredibly challenging but so rewarding in the long run. You should be proud in getting it. I am! I’m confident that you will make a difference in those kids’ lives. Because you’re you. And some of the boys may get a crush on my girl. Let me know if I have to knock some heads together. I may not be employed as your security guard anymore, but your safety and protection are my number one priority. Even if I have to rearrange some adolescent boy’s face. Got it?

Don’t stress about Rex moving in. I’m okay with it. I know he’s gay. His hand has been on my ass more times than I can count. I know that he likes my goodies more than your goodies. I’m sorry that he was a victim of a hate crime. His roommate should be thrown in jail for what he did to him. He had no right in defacing Rex’s property with those words. All because he brought back a guy? That’s crap. I’d talk to Rex and try to convince him to press charges. And you are an amazing friend in letting him live with you. I know your dad must be thrilled. *Insert sarcasm here.*

And maybe Rex is right, too. About you enjoying college life. I’m speaking from experience. I was very closed off when I went to college initially. All of it was due to my grief in losing Thea and the other part was I was just shy. If I had to do it again, I’d put myself out there. Have fun. There’s no harm in going to parties or having a good time with your friends. Just be safe when you do.

Kyra, don’t worry about your dad or your family. We have a huge ally in Bella, your mom. She was the one who gave me the ring to give to you. She’ll get your dad to love me. And you are not annoying or obnoxious. Don’t put yourself down, woman!

I’ve got a meeting with my advisor tomorrow at nine and then I’m heading to the attorney’s office where I’m doing my clerkship so I can get my ID badge and be fingerprinted. I’ll be out of communication most of the day. My classes start on the seventeenth and I have a fall ‘reading’ week around Halloween and finals just before Thanksgiving. How would you feel about me coming out for Halloween? That’s significantly closer than Christmas and Thanksgiving!
Let me know what you think, sweetness.

I’ve got tackle these boxes and get my life in order before I dive headlong into torts, briefs and a ton of reading. I love you and I’ll give you a call if I don’t collapse from unpacking.

Always,

Steve xx

PS ~ I found your gift. The lamb looks a little threadbare and well-loved. Thank you for thinking of me. She’s going to be snuggled next to me while I have dreams about my dream girl.

PPS ~ I’ll post pictures of my bungalow, as requested from our phone call, once I get unpacked. It’s got a refugee motif going on right now with boxes strewn everywhere. Love you to, sweetness.

xx STTD xx

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To: Steven

From: Kyra

Date: August 4th, 2032 at 8:04 am

Re: Halloween

Steve,

You better fly your butt out here for Halloween! I can host a party here! That would be so much fun! However, only if you’re able to get away. I don’t you to fall behind because of me. However, if you’re willing, I’d love for you to come out. I miss you so much.

You’ll be happy to know that I convinced Rex to press charges. He went to the police, showing them the pictures of the vandalism and the threats from his roommate. As far as I know, the roommate was arrested for vandalism, harassment, battery, menacing and committing a hate crime. Rex doesn’t know if there’s going to be a trial or anything, or if this is his first time offense. Regardless, the dude is in HUGE trouble.

And Rex is still going to get his scholarship and a hefty pay out for the whole ordeal while he’s living with me. He already staked claim in the glamor bedroom, squealing about the mirrors on the walls. He’s moving in this weekend, after some soccer camp. My parents want me to charge him rent, but I don’t know how to broach that. You know? He already chips in about three hundred bucks a month to help pay for food since he’s always over at my place. I don’t have a rent or mortgage on my condo. The expenses include groceries, assessments, electrical, and cable. Should we split them, 50/50? 33/67? I don’t know.

Oh, FYI ~ I will be out of town next week. My parents are going to Los Angeles for a little, you know, along with another Charmed movie premier and meetings for my mom with her screen plays. I have to stay at my house with my younger siblings. They’re only going to be gone for a week, but I need make sure that Mia and Masen don’t burn down the house and stuff. They come back the weekend before I start my sophomore year, though, with credits, I’m almost a junior.

Owen is already away at school at Indiana University. I keep believe my younger brother is in
And his girlfriend is going there, too. My parents got Owen an apartment off campus, similar to my digs, but his is a rental. He knows he’s not going to be staying there after he graduates. He wants to get his masters in conducting at Yale College of Music, possibly his doctorate. He got a full-ride to Indiana University and is the only freshman who got a spot in the top orchestra at the school.

You better send me pictures of your new digs. I can’t wait to see it. Also, how do you feel about spending the New Year in New Haven? After Christmas, I can fly back with you to New Haven? Classes don’t start for me until the second week in January. I don’t want to presume, but I figured I’d suggest it.

Anyhow, I’ve got to go grocery shopping and run some other errands today. I love you and I’ll talk to you soon.

Love,

Kyra xx

xx STTD xx

KyraPOV

The next two weeks were spent in a blur of reading about adolescent psychology, taking care of Mia and Masen, and balancing my time with Steve. While I was there, Mia did pull me aside and told me about her life and her feelings. She explained that she was sexually attracted to women, girls. She thought that guys were gross, except for Dad. She asked for advice about how to handle it and I just told her to be herself. When someone special came along, she’d know when the time was right.

Mia’s problem? Her gaydar was off.

I suggested she talk to Uncle Alex and Uncle Demetri. However, she wasn’t ready to come out to them. Mom knew and I’m certain that Dad knew, too. My brothers? Blissfully ignorant.

Once my parents got home from their trip to Los Angeles, I packed my bags to drive back to school. My dad, looking very tan and lean, plopped down on my childhood bed, a bag next to him. “So …” he said deeply, arching a brow.

“What?” I asked. “Did I do something wrong? Mia and Masen have all of their school supplies for high school, the house is still standing, and I got Max a haircut.”

“Kyra,” he sighed, scrubbing his face.

“Dad,” I mimicked.

“Dad,” I grumbled. “You’re going to make me say it,” he grumbled. “You and Steve? You’re a thing now?”

“A thing?” I snorted.

“Yes, a thing,” he repeated dryly. “Your mother told me about his romantic gesture of two weeks before he drove off to New Haven. I pray that you’re still a virgin.”

“Dad, that’s none of your business,” I snapped. My father growled at me, giving me a terse glare. “Besides, Steve is old fashioned. He wants to wait. To be sure. But, yes, we’re in a relationship. He loves me, Dad and I love him.”
“You’re awfully young, Kyra,” Dad said, leaning forward on his knees. “I don’t want you to swoon and fall in love with him because he …”

“Because he was my friend for over two years? Because he respects me? Because he respects you?” I asked, trying to keep my temper in check. “Dad, I love him because he’s a good man who risked life and limb to protect me and Mom. I love him because he’s silly, funny and so smart. I love him because he reminds me of you.”

“What?” Dad asked, his golden eyes moving to capture mine.

“Steve is you, personified. Only twenty-four years younger,” I giggled. “He’s geeky, funny, sweet, charming and … There aren’t enough words to describe him, Dad. And do I need to remind you about the age difference between you and Mom?”

“Yeah, yeah. Your mother reminds me daily that she’s still in her forties while I’m in fifties. You weren’t screaming that while we were on vacation, Isabella Cullen!” he grumped.

“Don’t make me kick your ass, Edward Anthony,” Mom screamed back. “I know your weak spots!”

“Ugh, the fact that you are still even thinking about sex squicks me out,” I groaned, shuddering violently.

“I hate to burst your bubble, Kyra. Your mother and I have sex. Lots and lots of sex,” he smirked crookedly. “There is no part of this house that hasn’t been christened by my naked ass.”


He sighed, reaching to the bag. “Look, Steve may be me reincarnated in a muscular façade. Shit, I wish I had his muscles when I was his age. I resembled a twig. A skinny, bare twig. Damn it. Anyhow, I trust you and I trust him, despite my teasing. I know you’re starting your sophomore year of college and that you’re in a committed relationship with Steve. I just want you to be safe,” he said. He handed me a bag. Opening it, I saw a box of condoms. I wrinkled my nose. “I’m still too young to be a grandpa. Do I look like a grandpa?”

“You’ve got grey hair,” I said, ruffling his thick mane of silvery hair. “But, no, you don’t. Besides, I’m like Mom. I get the shot. I’m going to the clinic tomorrow after my first class.”

“The shot protects you from pregnancy. Those protect you from icky boy cooties,” Dad shuddered.

“Dad,” I sighed.

“Just take them, Kyra,” he said, his face falling slightly. I stuffed the bag into my luggage and I looked up, seeing my dad staring forlornly at my bedspread. A few tears fell onto his cheeks and I felt my own eyes fill with tears. “I’m not your guy anymore, Kyra. You’ve got someone else.”

“Daddy,” I whispered, wrapping my arms around his neck. My father enfolded me in a warm, strong embrace. For someone who is in their fifties, my dad is freakishly strong. “Steve and I love each other, but you’re my dad. You’ll always be my dad, my hero and my first love. All other guys need to compare with you because a girl’s father is her first love. It could be worse. I could still be dating Thomas.”

“That kid was lucky I didn’t use his nuts as golf balls,” Dad chuckled darkly. “Dumping my girl on prom.”
“Day after prom,” I snickered. “And you hate golf.”


“Rush?” I teased.

“Quiet, principessa,” Dad said, tugging on my hair. “You know what I mean.”

“I do, Dad. And we’re not rushing. We’ve been friends for two years. This relationship only came to fruition a month ago,” I said.

“And yet he gave you a ring. A ring that I remember buying for your mother,” he quipped, picking up my right hand.

“Mom gave it to him,” I said. “You’re not mad, are you?”

“You loved this ring since you were a baby. I’m glad that your mom gave it to him and that you finally have it,” Dad smiled. “I love you, Kyra. So much. You may be a young woman, but you’ll always be my baby girl.”

“And you’ll always be my first love, Dad,” I whispered, kissing his cheek. “I do have to go. I have to get ready for classes tomorrow.”

“When does your internship start?” he asked, lugging my bag down the stairs.

“It’s on Tuesdays, Thursdays and every other Saturday,” I said. “I don’t start until after Labor Day.”

“Don’t let your studies slide,” he said, kissing my cheek.

“I won’t,” I replied, hugging him tightly. My mom came downstairs, hugging me tightly. “You are so tan, Mom. I’m jealous.”

“I like having a summer home,” she laughed. “Oh and Aunt Rose and I bought you some clothes from Rodeo Drive. They’ll be delivered to your apartment sometime this week. And this is from me.” She handed me a jar filled with sand. “A little piece of Venice Beach for your home.”


“There’s also a shell,” she laughed, shaking the jar, revealing a small mollusk.

“Mom, you are acting more and more like Grandma Renee,” I teased. Mom rolled her eyes. “Thank you for this. Um, do you think that I could possibly go to the LA house? Perhaps for spring break? Invite some friends?”

“As long as it’s not Steve,” Dad grumbled under his breath.

“Edward,” Mom growled. “You promised to not give her too much grief.”

“Too late,” I snorted.

Mom smacked his arm. He glowered at her playfully, rubbing his bicep. “You can, sweetie. Just let us know so we don’t show up and crash your party. And you can bring Steve. Just don’t defile the pool.”

“You two probably already did that,” I smirked. Dad beamed proudly while Mom hung her head,
shaking it shamefully. “Love you both. Give Mia and Masen a hug for me. They’re probably happy to see me go. I was a bit of a tyrant with them. Well, Masen, really.”

“He’s turned into a ladies man,” Mom said, wrinkling her nose distastefully.

“He kept trying to bring over girls and I had to chase them out with a broom,” I laughed. “You may want to have the talk with him, Dad. I may not be the one to worry about having grandkids.”

“Fuck,” Dad muttered, thrusting his hands into his hair.


“Go back to school, brat,” Dad laughed, hugging me and kissing my forehead. “Drive safe. Be safe. I love you.”

“Love you both more,” I said, pulling my mom into our snuggle fest. I slid into the driver’s seat, backing out of the driveway and waving as I pulled away from my house. My drive back up to Northwestern went by quickly since it was late in the evening on the first Sunday before classes. I was so grateful that I came back to my condo to see it lit up with Rex watching television on the couch with a package of Oreos on his lap. “Did you eat me out of house and home?”

“No,” he said, throwing a cookie at me. “I actually went shopping.”

“Did you get anything healthy?” I asked, taking apart the cookie and licking the icing in the middle.

“Um, lettuce and stuff for my salads,” Rex said. “But that’s it, really.” I padded to the pantry, checking out Rex’s purchases. It looked like a combination of a bakery, candy store and bar. Rex may be gay, but he had the stomach of a typical college student. Sooner or later, he’s going realize that when he’s not running around a soccer field, his six pack is going to go away, replaced with a keg.

After having a long discussion with Rex, once he moved in, we decided to split the costs of the condo 33/67. He’d pay a third of the assessments, electrical, and cable. Every other week, he’d go grocery shopping, but he was supposed to stick with the list we make together. In addition to that, we laid down ground rules for relationships and behaviors revolving around them. Any sexual activity – which this was for Rex, not me – needed to be kept in their room, not in the common areas. I did not need to see my roommate getting it on, nor did he see me either. Not like I’d be getting any anytime soon since my boyfriend is in New Haven. Also, any sort of party had to be okay with either one of us. I couldn’t unilaterally say that I’m having a get together without Rex’s approval and vice versa. However, things were going well and Rex made for a great roommate. He was like a goofy older brother and he reminded me a lot of Uncle Alex, with the body of Uncle Dem.

“Rex, we are going to have to back to the store since all of this stuff I can’t cook with,” I chided. “How can I make something with pork rinds?”

“Um, well?” Rex mumbled, scratching his highlighted blond hair. “We’ll go once I’m done with my classes in the afternoon, before soccer practice. I’m sorry, sweetie. I thought you could do something with this.”

I looked him, arching a brow. My phone chirped and it was a text from Steve. “I’ve got to go, but we’ll go grocery shopping tomorrow.” I picked up my bag and dialed Steve, spending an hour talking to him on the phone.

Classes for the first half of the semester were challenging, harder than my freshman year. I struggled to stay on top of everything and do well with my internship. Ironically enough, that was the easiest
part of my day. The kids loved me and I got a few of them that were closed off to really open up. My supervisor said that I had a gift and asked me to stay on for second semester, altering my hours since my class schedule was different.

Unfortunately, Steve couldn’t come out for Halloween. The attorney’s office he was clerking for had gotten a big case and it was all hands on deck. He promised to come out for Thanksgiving, spend time with my family and then the weekend at my condo. It wasn’t ideal since I had to deal with my dad’s grumbling, but he was warming up to the idea.

xx STTD xx

To: Kyra

From: Steven

Date: November 21st, 2032 at 12:09 am

Re: Itinerary

Dearest Kyra,

Attached is my itinerary for Thanksgiving weekend. I’m arriving late Wednesday night (like after eleven, maybe closer to midnight) since I have to be at the attorney’s office until seven. I leave on Sunday at nine at night - trying to squeeze as much time together as we can, emails and phone calls are not really cutting it, sweetness. I miss your face and being able to hold you.

Christmas will be better since the office is closed down for the holidays. I’m planning on visiting my family for a few days down in Florida and then fly up to take you to New Haven for New Years. I do need to get some sleep, baby. I’m running on fumes. I should be reading for my criminal law class, but my bed is looking too inviting right now.

I love you and I’ll see you in a couple of weeks.

Always,

Steve

PS ~ Thank you for the care package. I didn’t need all that candy, but it was the picture of you in your costume that made me smile. You were the sexiest firefighter I’d ever seen. We do need a picture of the two of us, though. Thanksgiving, maybe your friend Victoria can take a few pics for us?

PPS ~ There’s something in the mail for you, too. No candy since you’re a health food nut, but I think you’ll like it. Love you, baby!

xx STTD xx

To: Steven

From: Kyra

Date: November 23rd, 2032 at 11:37 pm
Re: Snow Storms

I. Hate. Snow.

Your flight has been diverted to Milwaukee since we’re in the midst of a snowstorm. I couldn’t even get to the airport since the roads were all fucked up. I’m so pissed. We’re never going to see each other.

I’m going to run it off in the basement since I’m so pissed. Call me when you get this. Perhaps we can work something out, but I don’t know if this shit is going to ever stop falling.

I. Hate. Snow.

But, I love you,

Kyra xx

xx STTD xx

StevePOV

“I need to rent a car,” I said, glaring at the girl behind the rental counter. “I’ve been to six different counters and they are all booked. I need a car. I need it now.” I slammed down my credit card.

“Um, sir, we’re …” she rambled.

“You’re not booked. I see cars out there. No people in here. Give me a car,” I said, my frustrations climbing to an all-time high. She typed anxiously, her face relaxing slightly before looking up at me.

“Is there something?”

“A luxury rental,” she said. “Lincoln Navigator.”

“Great, I’ll take it,” I said tersely, thrusting my credit card in her face. I’d actually prefer it. The snow was coming down in droves. I was afraid that my two hour drive from Milwaukee would last all night. We landed just after midnight, but weren’t allowed off the plane in case the snow cleared. The natives got restless and finally we were allowed to go. Most everyone went to sleep it off in the terminal, but fuck that. I’m driving to see my girl. I signed the credit slip and heaved my duffel bag onto my shoulder, walking out into the brisk air. I found the monstrosity I was driving and took off, heading south to Chicago. The roads were clear until I hit Kenosha. That’s when the snow started to fall. I carefully navigated the slick highways, grateful for the extra weight of the SUV.

It didn’t take as long as I thought. I left Milwaukee around one in the morning and arrived in Evanston around four. I was exhausted, cranky and I knew I smelled like something that came out of Johnny’s ass. I reached Kyra’s condo just after four thirty and I parked in one of the visitor’s spots. I found my key that she gave me so I didn’t have to be buzzed in by the security guard. I ran up the stairs, unlocking the door. The condo was quiet, as well as it should be at o’dark thirty. I slipped into the guest bathroom, hosing off since I couldn’t stand my own smell and I wanted to Kyra to know that I was there. She loved my cologne, not the smell of my sweat.

Changing into a pair of sleep pants and a t-shirt, I snuck into her room. My girl was curled up in a ball, her body wrapped around a pillow. Her eyes were red and puffy. Fucking snow. Made my girl cry. I crawled into the bed, taking her back in my arms and my body just relaxed. So did she. I held her so tightly, my nose tracing her jaw as I snuggled so close to her. She let out a shuddering sigh, turning in my arms and burying her face against my shoulder. Then, she stiffened, inhaling deeply. “You made it,” she said, her voice raw and thick with sleep. She slid her leg between mine, trying to
get as close to me as possible. Tears were falling onto my shoulder as she just lost it quietly.

“I couldn’t stay away, sweetness,” I said, holding her against my body. “I nearly scared the crap out of some poor unfortunate soul at the car rental counter in Milwaukee, but I had to see you.” Being close to her, I was drained and the adrenaline that I had running through my veins dissipated now that I was safe with her. My sweetness. “I’m so tired, Kyra.”

“Just sleep. We have all day,” she said, kissing my jaw. “My parents told me to not come in this weather. I’m not a good snow driver, honestly.”


“Love you more,” she said, her fingers massaging my scalp. I was lulled to sleep and it was the best sleep I’d ever had. Hands down.

I woke up around noon, feeling confused as to where I was. Kyra was still in bed, but typing on her computer. I scrubbed my face, blinking a few times to focus my vision. “So, I did make it. I thought it was all a dream.”

“You’re here,” she giggled, smiling crookedly down at me. “And you are dead to the world, snoring like nobody’s business.”

“I do not snore,” I grumped, sitting up and stretching my stiff muscles.

“I beg to differ, baby,” she said, pressing a button on her phone. The most obnoxious sound filled the room.

“Ugh, that’s me?” I groaned, slumping back onto the bed and covering my face with a pillow. Her answering giggles give me my response. “I’ve turned into my father. Wrong, that’s just wrong.”

“You were up for almost twenty-four hours, Steve. I think snoring is allowed,” she said, tossing the pillow from my face, laying down on my chest. “It’s still snowing.”

“I may not leave,” I said, holding her and idly playing with her curly bronze hair.

“I wouldn’t mind that,” she said, tightening her arms around my waist. “But, you have to finish your degree, Steven James Burgess.”

“Oooh, I’ve been middle-named,” I snorted, kissing her forehead. “I will, but seriously, if the snow keeps up, I may not be able to fly out. I’ll keep my eyes open on the weather and keep my professors in the loop. For now, let’s just enjoy the time we have together.”

“Do we have to get out of bed?” she asked, her golden eyes twinkling up at me. “I like staying here, cuddled with you.”

“I’m certain your family wants to see you at some point,” I offered. “And I hate to burst your bubble, but we have to get out bed to pee.”

“You’re such a smart ass,” she snickered. “And my family is going to celebrate Thanksgiving next weekend. Owen is coming up then and so, that’s that.”

“Honestly, having a lazy day sounds perfect. Nothing sounds better than cuddling with my girlfriend on a snowy day,” I whispered.

“I don’t care where we cuddle as long as we get to cuddle,” she sighed happily. “I’m so glad you’re
here and safe. I love you, Steve.”

“I love you more, sweetness,” I whispered.

xx STTD xx

To: Kyra

From: Steven

Date: March 13th, 2033 at 4:36 pm

Re: News

Dearest Kyra,

Sooooo, I’ve got good news and bad news. The good news is that I am off for the entire summer from school. My time is a little more flexible now in regards to any summer plans you may have. The bad news? I have to stay on campus for my spring break. Our spring break. The clerkship at the attorney’s office has turned into a paid position. That’s great for me since I need some more spending money and saving my pennies for a few big purchases. It’s bad since I have to now work between twenty to thirty hours a week in addition to class. It’s a great resume builder and I’m gaining invaluable experience, but it’s going to cut into our time together.

I suck. I know. You can thoroughly kick my ass when you see me next. I’d let you fly out to see me, but I’m trying to rack up as many hours as I can. I’m getting paid really well and that car rental fiasco at Thanksgiving really put a ding in my savings. Who knew that a Lincoln Navigator would cost almost $400 a day? Yeesh! I’m even continuing to work at the office over the summer, but they’re going to be more flexible with my hours since my family and loved ones live so far away.

Anyhow, things are picking up steam. I’m enjoying my classes, especially the family law ones. I knew that I didn’t want to be a criminal attorney, though the subject is interesting. However, I think I found my niche with family law. With working with the Foundation, I’m glad that I can put that knowledge to good use.

How are classes going for you? You seemed kind of upset when you surprised me for my birthday. Which, I loved. I know I thanked you numerous times, sweetness, but you have no idea how much that meant to me to see you standing on campus, waiting for me outside of my class. Is everything okay? And don’t tell me they’re fine. I know you, Kyra. Something’s up. Talk to me. It’s my job as your boyfriend to be there for you.

I’m here if you want to talk and I am sorry about spring break, sweetness. I promise to make it up to you.

I love you, always and forever!

Steve xx

xx STTD xx
Dear Steve,

I’m happy that you have the summer off, with flexibility in your schedule to come out to visit or to have visitors. I am bummed that our plans to go out to California for spring break have fallen through. I was looking forward to spending the week with you in Los Angeles. However, I can’t be upset with you since you are doing so well in your classes and with your clerkship.

My classes are tough. I’m enjoying them (though, I hate chemistry. I hated chemistry in high school. Why am I taking it again?). It’s my internship and this one little boy. He’s seven and he came from abusive home. This kid tries to be all tough, beating up the other kids at the group home. I tried to talk to him and he ended up hitting me, giving me a pretty substantial bruise. My supervisor didn’t want me working with him again, but there was something about this kid that drew me in. I met with him almost daily since he came into the group home, slowly gaining his trust. I even took him to the Cullen Children’s Foundation in the city so he could meet other kids who were not in the system, after I got approval from my supervisor.

Long story short, the boy, David, had only ever received violence. He was bit, kicked, hit, smacked, burned, bruised and broken. He never once had an adult ever touch him with love. Nana was at the Foundation, working with a few of the kids and she hugged one little girl. David thought that Nana was going to beat the crap out of her, but was shocked when all he saw was this woman loving up on this girl. He broke down, telling me everything that had happened. He was so upset, pacing and ranting angrily as he told me that his mom and her boyfriend used him as a punching bag. I did something that my supervisor told me not to and I hugged him. David fought me, thinking that I was trying squeeze him. I just held him, whispering to him that it was alright. That he was safe. He finally relaxed and sobbed against me. I was so proud of him, but proud of myself. You know?

The day before I flew out to see you for your birthday, David’s mother came back with a court order, releasing him back into her care. Naively, I thought she had pulled the wool over the judge’s eyes, thinking that she had changed. When I got back, my supervisor called me into his office and he told me that David was dead. She killed him. Not with her own hands, but with her actions. He tried to get away from her and he ran into the street, getting hit by a car.

That’s been on my mind and I’m trying to get over it. I am, but I can’t. I was able to help that kid, Steve and some stupid judge believed the mom could be rehabilitated. She hit him and he ran away, getting killed by a car. My supervisor gave me some time off, thinking that being away from the group home may help me regain my composure. I’d been distant with the kids and short with some of the staff members. She understands that I was hurt by what happened with David. She also said that I can’t get so emotionally invested in these kid’s lives.

How can I not be invested? How am I supposed to reach them if I don’t show that I care? I’m confused, really. I love my major and the help that I can do, but I’m afraid of seeing or losing another David.

Anyhow, Rex and Melissa are taking me out for some comfort food for our weekly dinner. I’m going to gorge myself on some Lou Malnati’s pizza with breadsticks, mozzarella sticks, deep fried zucchini and cherry coke. With some ricotta cheesecake. I’m like my mom, an emotional eater.
I’m sorry I didn’t call you about this. I can’t talk about it without crying. I hate crying and I know how much you hate me crying, especially if you’re not here. I’ll be fine. I hope.

I love you,

Kyra xx

xx STTD xx

To: Kyra
From: Steven
Date: March 17th, 2033 at 11:11 am
Re: Really Missing You …

Dear Kyra,

I’m really getting worried over here. I haven’t heard from you since you sent that email about David. I’ve tried calling you and your phone goes straight to voicemail. Please, call me, email me, text me, send me a damned carrier pigeon. I need to know if you’re alright.

I love you, forever and always,

Steve

xx STTD xx

To: Steven
From: Kyra
Date: March 17th, 2033 at 1:29 pm
Re: Re: Really Missing You …

Steve,

This is Rex, using Kyra’s email. Your girl is really sick. She worked herself into a tizzy over that little boy David. Her parents had to come up to see her and they ended up taking her to the hospital. She was diagnosed with mono and is admitted to Northwestern Memorial Hospital. She’ll be fine, but she had a really high fever. She said that she started feeling crummy after the whole fiasco with David, but she chocked it up as grieving for that little boy. She only got worse.

I had mono when I was a freshman and I know how much it sucks. She’s in for a long recuperation. Possibly even taking the rest of the semester off, but you know Kyra. She’s spitting nails about doing that, even with a medical excuse. That girl is a workaholic and worries about everyone, not herself.

She wanted me to email you, but she’s spending most of her days sleeping at the hospital. She’ll be released in about a day or so, once her fever stops going up at night. You also may want to get checked out since, she was with you when she was infected, too.

Call me. Here’s my number: 847-555-6827. I’ll keep you up to date with her recovery since she’s as weak as a newborn kitten.
Later,

Rex

KyraPOV

I felt like ass. Smelly, stinky, nasty ass. My body was so sore and so tired. I blinked open my eyes, expecting to see my parents next to me, but Steve was there. His fingers were threaded with mine and his face was covered with a full beard. “Steve,” I rasped, my throat on fire.

“Shhh, don’t talk, sweetness,” he said, leaning forward and getting me some water. “You gave us a scare.”

“What are you doing here?” I asked, trying to shift, but the IV in my arm poked my vein and my body didn’t want to cooperate. “You have classes, your job …”

“I got on the first flight out of New Haven when I got an email from Rex,” he said, running his fingers down my cheek. His hand felt delightfully cool against my heated skin. “I was so worried, Kyra. From the bedraggled looks of your parents, so did they. I sent them back to your condo to get some sleep and to freshen up.”

“I can’t believe you’re here,” I said, collapsing against the hospital bed.

“Well, I spoke with my boss at the attorney’s office and my professors, explaining that I needed to care of my girl who was very, very sick. I took spring break a week early. I’m still responsible for the classwork, but I flew out as soon as I could. Your dad was shocked - in a good way - that I came and he said he’d cover the costs for my return flight. I think he’s also trying to finagle depositing the cost of the flight out here into my checking account,” Steve snickered.

“With my dad’s hacking skills, he probably can,” I said, smiling sleepily at him. “I hope I didn’t get you sick. I thought what I was feeling was just depression over what happened with David. Certainly not this.”

“I have the constitution of an ox,” Steve laughed. “And I had mono when I was in college. My roommate had it and I caught it from him at the beginning of the summer. I was a lump for the summer and I even struggled for the first semester of classes with exhaustion. This is going to take a lot of time for you to get over, sweetness.”

“I don’t want to take the rest of semester off,” I grumbled stubbornly. “I’ve been submitted my work online and reading the chapters when I’m awake. I’m still getting good grades …”

“Kyra, you need to take care of yourself,” Steve whispered, his hands wrapping around mine. “Don’t push yourself and get even sicker.”

“I spoke with my advisor and I said I’d make my decision after spring break,” I muttered. “With the severity of my illness, most of my professors are willing to give me extended time complete the work, which I’m grateful for. I could use the rest of the spring semester to recuperate and complete the course work over the summer, finishing it just before the beginning of the fall semester. I’d get incompletes until I turn in the assignments, but they’re flexible. I just hate falling behind. I had plans for the summer, which included some classes.” I huffed out a breath, extremely frustrated at my body and what this illness did to me.

*Steve did come to take care of you. That’s at least one positive.*
And he stayed with me at the hospital and again when I was released from the hospital, cleared to go home. My parents stayed with me at my condo, sleeping in one of the guest rooms. Steve, not wanting to fluster my father, ended up sleeping on the couch. I had four people, my parents, Rex and Steve, waiting on me hand and foot as I recuperated. And that recuperation was slow going. I couldn’t move around my condo without getting winded. My mom had to help me shower that first day out of the hospital since I was so weak.

I hated it. I was so used to being independent, that relying on someone was foreign to me.

My parents did leave a few days before Steve had to depart back for New Haven. They had to get back to Mia and Masen. Aunt Alice and Uncle Jasper needed to get back to their house. Dad tried to convince me to come back home with them, but I knew I’d be fine. Rex was hovering like a mother hen and Steve was as attentive as he could be, with my parents hanging around. However, before they left, my parents did convince me to take the extended time my professors offered me. With as weak as I was, it was for the best. I don’t think I could have finished out the semester. I called my advisor and informed him of my decision. He said that I had until the beginning of the fall semester to complete my course work. My modified syllabi would be sent to me through my school email and it would be like online courses, accommodating for my illness.

My dad did manage to deposit money into Steve’s account for the flight and various other things. It turned out that my dad never removed him from the payroll of Whitlock Technologies, which was how he paid him and the rest of the security guys when they worked for us. Apparently, he added more than just the cost of the flight. My dad was warming up to Steve and felt badly that Steve had to take time off of school and his job.

After my parents left, Steve stayed in the bedroom with me and he continued to wait on me. I was working on a project for my educational psychology class in bed, doing something involving Gardner’s multiple intelligences. Steve suggested that I focus my attention on one class at a time. I agreed since my brain was still foggy. “I have some food for you, Kyra,” Steve said, carrying a tray.

“I’m not hungry,” I said, saving my work. My appetite had gone away and the smell of certain foods made my stomach turn. I had to have Rex throw away all of the eggs, peppers and beef. Three of my favorite foods made me sick and want to puke.

“You need to eat, Kyra,” Steve chided, putting the tray over my lap. Thankfully, they were tiny finger foods, but still healthy. And none of them had a nasty odor. “Eat what you can. You need your strength to get past this.”

“I don’t know how I got it. You’re the only one I’ve kissed and you’re perfectly fine,” I snorted, picking up a grape.

“I got it from a roommate and I certainly didn’t make out with him,” Steve snickered. “You could have gotten it from the group home or even Rex?”

“He’s fine, too,” I shrugged. “This sucks. I’m so tired all of the time. All I want to do is sleep. It hurts to think and the smell of food makes … ugh!”

“You’ll get better, sweetness,” he said, kissing my temple. “It will take time. I only wish I could stay and really care for you.”

“You have to go back, Steve. I don’t want you to give up your future because of my sick butt,” I grumbled, popping in another grape. “The sooner you finish, the sooner you can come back to me. Permanently.”
“We’re almost done with the first year,” Steve quipped, seeing that I wasn’t going to touch the meal he made for me. He moved the tray onto a side table and then took me into his arms. Even though I’d been sick, Steve was still being sweet and through his help, we’d been intimate. Had we had sex? No. We fooled around and both ended up shirtless when I surprised him for his birthday in February, but he was still being respectful, loving and kind. It was driving me nuts, but part of it was him, his nature. According to Steve, we have the rest of our lives. We needed the time to be right and so far, that hadn’t happened.

“Two more to go,” I said, laying my head on his chest, yawning.

“Take a nap, sweetness. I’ll be here when you wake up,” he murmured, his fingers running along my spine. I dozed off and slept for the rest of the afternoon.

Steve left a couple days after that. I wanted to go with him to the airport but I was still too weak and running a fever. Rex drove him to Chicago Executive Airport since Dad was letting him use the Whitlock jet to fly back to New Haven. It was bittersweet to watch him go since he had helped me with everything, except showering. I did that on my own, taking almost two hours to do it since I had to take a breather between each step.

The next five months were spent with me recuperating from mono and completing my spring semester course work. Steve came back to Chicago and he worked at an attorney’s office in Chicago. Uncle Jasper and my dad arranged it. The office was the same office that they’d used for Foundation business and any legal issues that the company had. This was my dad’s way of accepting my boyfriend. The summer went by faster than I anticipated and Steve left to go back to New Haven for his second year of classes. I began my junior year of college, but taking it easy since I was still very tired from my bout with the ‘kissing disease.’

I didn’t really start feeling better until Christmas. I was able to get back into a more active routine and start living life again. I actually got to have some alcohol, only six months after my twenty-first birthday. I also experienced my first hangover. Rex, who still lived with me since he worked at the Art Institute, was there for me as I threw up and cursed the invention of tequila.

Thankfully, the spring semester was a lot less drama filled than last year’s. I was able to actually get back to my internship and the time away gave me a new perspective. I was able to maintain a professional distance with the kids, but still build a rapport with them. My supervisor loved my work so much that she offered me a paid position over the summer and I jumped at the chance. Steve was working at the attorney’s office in the city again and so it worked out in the long run. Before I knew it, Steve left again to finish up his law degree and I began my senior year of college.

Holy crap. Where did the time go?

xx STTD xx

To: EdwardCullen (at) whitlock_technology (dot) com
From: SJBurgess2 (at) yale (edu)
Date: May 21st, 2034 at 2:42 pm
Re: A meeting?

Dear Mr. Cullen,

I was wondering if I could set up a time to meet with you. I’m packing up my belongings and
driving back to Chicago in the next couple of days. I graduated, with honors, from Yale School of Law. I know that I am going to be working with the Cullen Children's Foundation, in conjunction with the Denali, Bernard and Smith Law offices. I’m looking forward to that endeavor and I will forever be in your debt for helping me realize that dream. However, the meeting I’m proposing is of a more personal nature.

Can we get together for a beer and talk? Oh, and don’t tell Kyra. I want to surprise her that I’m back.

My cell phone number is 630-555-1901. If you could call me and we can set up a time when we could get together. Sometime before Kyra’s graduation would be ideal. I look forward to hearing from you and working with you in the future.

All the best,

Steven J. Burgess

xx STTD xx

StevePOV

I was driving through Indiana when my phone rang. I looked at the screen and saw Edward’s number on it. Oh, crap. I slid in my Bluetooth headset and answered his call. “Hello?”

“I just got your email, Steve,” Edward said, his voice sounding gruff. “Is everything okay or do I need to use your nuts as golf balls?”

“I was hoping that we could meet. Face-to-face, Mr. Cullen, Mr. Edward, um, Edward?” I squeaked out. God, I sounded like I was going through puberty!

“You okay?” Edward chuckled, probably relishing the fact that I was so freaking nervous.

“I’m fine,” I replied, purposefully leaving off his name. “Could get together for some dinner? Maybe some drinks?”

“That sounds great, Steve. When are you getting into Chicago?” he asked.

I checked my GPS. “Around four hours, or so. But, I do want to go to my new place before I see you. I’ve been driving through most of the night,” I said. “I’d like a shower.” I was staying in the corporate apartments until I got settled, and hopefully, things squared away with my former boss and the father of my girlfriend. Not your girlfriend. The ring in your pocket will hopefully claim her as your fiancée.

“How about we have drinks tomorrow? I don’t want you crashing,” Edward laughed.

“You didn’t tell Kyra that I was coming back early, did you?”

“No. You’re secret is safe with me,” he said. “You drive safe and be safe, Steve. We can have lunch and drinks tomorrow. I’m in the city for a few meetings. I’ll call you when I’m done.”

“Thank you,” I smiled. “I’ll see you then.” I sighed, pushing down the accelerator, feeling a second wind as I drove closer to home. The past three years had been amazing. Kyra and I, despite the distance, were closer than ever. She was my best friend, my confidante and my dream come true. I never thought I’d find a love like hers. When Thea died, a part of me died with her. Then, I met a
sullen, spoiled teenaged girl and something sputtered in my heart. I couldn’t do anything about it. I wouldn’t. The Cullens were a job and I had to do that job to keep them safe. However, as the year progressed, Kyra matured and changed into something more. She was not just a job to me. She was my friend, someone I could talk to, and comic relief. She had such an amazing, snarky sense of humor.

Then, she was taken by Jacob. Bella, Kyra, Alice, and Gianna were kidnapped under Oliver’s watch. I so wanted to kick his ass for leaving them unattended, but thankfully, I was following them at a safe distance. It was my stalker-like skills that prevented that harrowing experience from being far more tragic. Yes, Alice was injured, but she was alive. Bella had nightmares and feared for her safety for a few months, but she was unharmed. She just dealt with the psychological damage afterward. But, Kyra bounced back probably the easiest. Knowing that the threat to her family was gone, she relaxed.

Then, she moved into her condo in Evanston. I stayed with my parents in the corporate apartments until they moved back to Florida. It was my mom who suggested that I go check on her. She knew how I felt about Kyra since I talked to her at length about liking a younger girl. She was nineteen, seven years younger than me. She never acted nineteen or younger, just like a friend. So, I took my mom’s advice and checked on her one night. She was having dinner with her friends and invited me to stay. Over the course of her freshman year, I went over a couple nights a week, one day over the weekend. I had moved in with Oliver by this point and I didn’t want to encroach on his time with his twin girls. Our friendship bloomed but I knew that I was deeply in love with her.

And so, I told her, on her twentieth birthday. The rest, as they say, is history.

Except, I wanted to take that next step. We’d been together for almost three years. Our relationship was strong and I knew we loved each other. We hadn’t made love yet. I didn’t want to push her, nor did I want to push myself. I knew I had a future with her, but my old-fashioned sensibilities prevented me from taking that step. Had we fooled around? Yeah. I may be a prude, but I was not going to stop touching and loving her. We both learned what we liked and what we didn’t like, but we kept it very PG-13. We got each other off, but clothes were never fully removed. She kept her panties on and I ruined more pairs of boxers than I cared to admit.

I wanted to give her all of me on our wedding night. Oliver gave me shit constantly over the phone for being a pussy, but the last time I trusted myself to give myself to a girl, she died. I knew that Kyra was healthy – though, her bout with mono scared the shit out of me – but that lingering fear still stuck in my head. I explained it to her, after she tried to do more than just give me a hand job. She felt rejected, but I explained my reasoning and then she said she fell in love with me all over again. I’d always wanted to be with one woman. My wife. That hasn’t happened since I made love to Thea, but Kyra would be the last woman I would ever make love to. She would be the mother of my children and the one person I wanted to devote my life to.

I could just hear Oliver laughing at me. I was going to be thirty this coming year. The last time I’d had sex, I was sixteen. Fourteen years since I’d gotten ‘laid.’ Asshole. Sex is the basis of a strong relationship. It was friendship, communication, intimacy. Kyra said that we were more intimate than some of the more sexual couples she was friends with, because we took time to listen to each other. She said that she saw a lot of her father in me, from my respectful quiet ways to my old-fashioned beliefs.

I definitely could see that. It was one of the many reasons why I respected Edward Cullen. It was also why I needed to get his blessing and approval for me to marry his daughter. I knew he accepted me. When he paid for my ticket from New Haven and sent me back using the Whitlock jet when Kyra was sick, he accepted me as a constant in his daughter’s life. When he arranged for me to have
a job at the law office that I will be working for as an attorney during the summers, he understood
that I wasn’t going anywhere and that he wanted to make things easier for her. For us.

My ruminations helped me get through Indiana and up through the nastiness of the Tristate. I got to
the corporate apartments and signed my lease agreement. It was month-to-month for the time being.
When I got upstairs, I saw a note on the kitchen counter in Bella’s script.

Dear Steve,

I was here when your boxes arrived. I took the liberty of putting stuff away for you. I know how
much of a hassle moving is. I have things labeled on a map in the kitchen and the bedroom is pretty
self-explanatory. Also, I put a few meals in the fridge for you as well as went shopping for you.
You’re stocked with groceries for a couple of weeks!

Love,

Bella

PS ~ Welcome home and congratulations! I’m so proud of you!

I was so grateful for Bella’s thoughtfulness. I didn’t want to unpack my shit. Granted, a great deal
went into storage. I was lucky that my bungalow in New Haven had been furnished, part of the
rental agreement. I only had my clothes, plates, cookware and my dated CD collection, most of
which belonged to my Dad. I’d pilfered them once I moved out.

Relaxing now that I didn’t have to unpack, I rooted around in the fridge and found something to eat.
I scarfed it down and then padded to the bedroom, stripping out of my clothes and crashing. I slept so
hard since I was so exhausted. I almost missed the phone call from Edward. I fell out of the bed,
grumbling as I picked up the phone. We decided to meet up at a nearby tavern for a late lunch, early
dinner.

Once I got off the phone, I decided to get cleaned up. I showered and dressed in a pair of black dress
pants and a button-down shirt. I’d have to go shopping for new suits, but I’d wait until I got a
paycheck. All of my money I had saved was in my pocket. Kyra’s ring. I did go get a haircut and
had a shave. I finished up, walking to the tavern and saw Edward at a booth, looking at a menu.

“Hey,” I said, sliding into the booth.

“I got you a beer,” Edward said, sliding me a pint of Blue Moon. “How was your drive?”

“Long and I’m glad I don’t have to do it again. Though, I understand that you may have to?” I
chuckled.

“Yeah. Owen was accepted into the master’s program at Yale for conducting,” Edward said. “He’s
got another year to go, but his professors had already encouraged him to submit his application.
Tasha is going with him, but she’ll start her teaching career in New Haven.”

“They’re still together. That’s awesome,” I smiled.

“We Cullen men mate for life,” Edward snickered. “Well, the geeky Cullen men. Masen has turned
into a manwhore. I’ve caught him with so many girls in his room.”

“Sex?” I asked, arching a brow.

“Not quite. Blow jobs,” Edward groaned. “My son has grown into his body and now he’s a chick
magnet. As far as I know, he’s still a virgin, but that could change soon. My wife is about ready to chemically castrate him. However, it’s his only flaw. Masen is a smart boy, on the honor roll and works hard. He just thinks with his dick.”

“Most teenage boys do,” I said, shrugging. “Not Owen, though?”

“Oh, he thought with his dick, but he at least asked me about what to do,” Edward said. “Right after we got back from Los Angeles, with the Charmed movie premier, Owen asked about condoms.”

“I remember that. He asked me first and I said that I wasn’t touching it.”

“Well, Tasha and Owen finally took the plunge last year and suffice it to say, that semester was not their best, academically. They had a hard time staying clothed,” Edward deadpanned. “But, Owen and Tasha are committed and he knows he’s going to marry her.”

Nice segue. Go with it. “Speaking of marrying,” I whispered, looking up at my former boss, kind of friend and soon-to-be father-in-law. “Kyra and I have been together for over three years. I know you didn’t, at first, condone our relationship. You were afraid that I was too old and she was too young. It was your wife who encouraged me to build a friendship and my mom to help foster that friendship. That turned into something more, but it’s always been more to me. I love your daughter, Edward. She’s my best friend, my support, my strength and my heart. I can’t imagine a day without her.” I blew out a breath, looking up at him and staring into his golden eyes. The eyes that his daughter shared. “I’m asking for your blessing and permission to ask her to marry me.”

“You love her?” Edward asked.

“With all of my heart. All of my soul,” I whispered.

He arched a brow, his lips pursed. I saw so much of Kyra in his face. It was weird to be stared at so intently by the father of my dream girl. I shifted uncomfortably, but held his gaze. “You hurt her, nobody will find your body, Steven,” Edward growled.

“Never, Edward,” I breathed.

He continued to gaze at me, his eyes narrowed. “I’m giving you my blessing. You are a good man and I’m so grateful that Kyra has you. I could be dealing with the drama that my sister is dealing with.”

“What’s that?” I asked, reaching and taking a hefty sip of my beer.

“A boy from the wrong side of the tracks. He smokes, he drinks, he does drugs,” Edward grumbled. “Gianna is kind of fucked up and she’s rebelling against Jasper and Alice. It was kind of expected since all of that drama a couple of years ago, but it’s causing more drama. Thankfully, Jasper and Ali are a strong united front and Adam is on their side, trying to talk sense into his sister. My fear is that she’s going to hit rock bottom before she makes any sort of changes.”

“I’m sorry about that,” I frowned. “I hope that Gianna doesn’t …” I trailed off.

“Me, too,” Edward snickered. “Now, do you have the ring?” I nodded, reaching into my pocket and handing it to him. He opened the wooden box, his eyes glistening with unshed tears. He smiled at me, a single tear falling down his cheek. “She’s going to love it. When are you going to do it?”

“Graduation,” I murmured as I took the box back from him. “Surprising her at graduation.”

“Perfect,” he beamed. “Alice said I needed to bring these, so here’s your ticket. We’ll meet you at the
corporate apartments at eleven?”

“Sounds like a plan,” I said, nearly collapsing against the leather of the booth.

“Now, that the heavy stuff is out of the way, let’s eat!” he quipped, picking up his menu. And like that, I had Edward Cullen’s permission to marry his daughter.

The next couple of days, I emailed back and forth with my girl. She still thought I was in New Haven. I said that my graduation ceremony was the same weekend as hers and that I couldn’t get out of it. However, it was a white lie. I wasn’t walking. I received my law degree and all I needed to do was take the Bar Exam before I could practice. I would take the exam sometime in mid to late June, working on research for the office until I could start doing my job in earnest. I already spoke to one of my bosses, Edward’s cousin, Kate. She said that I would start June first, so I had a couple of weeks before I would have to go to work.

The morning of her college graduation dawned sunny and bright. The weather was warm, but comfortable. I dressed in a suit that I’d bought with Kyra when she came to visit me during her senior year. It was a navy blue Armani. It was more expensive than anything else in my closet, but I wanted to look good for my girl. I made sure I had her ring and a bouquet of flowers. Promptly at eleven, the doorman called up and said that Edward and his family was here. I grabbed my keys, cell phone and flowers, riding down to the lobby.

I walked outside and was greeted by a very happy Bella. She hugged me tightly, congratulating me for my own accomplishment and for the plan for today. She was always so sweet to me. Her eyes were warm and loving. She took care of me when I lived in their home and a lot of her actions were in Kyra. Edward shook my hand, smirking at the suit. I blushed and got into the back seat. What I hadn’t expected to see was how much Mia and Masen had grown. Mia looked a lot like Bella, with dark brown hair and heart-shaped face, but she had blossomed. Her appearance, though, was slightly masculine, with a choppy short haircut and loose-fitting clothes. It made sense since Mia had come out to her parents, siblings and friends. She was still sweet and blushed when she talked to me. According to Kyra, I was her first male crush, but that went away when she met Sammi. Masen, on the other hand, was as tall as me and probably could bench press a Honda. His voice was deep and he looked like a model.

Edward drove us to the stadium, parking the car and leading us to our assigned spots. We were right in front. I was getting more anxious with each passing moment. Just before the ceremony began, Kyra sent me a text with a picture. She was smiling, wearing her cap and gown.

I’m getting ready to graduate. Summa Cum Laude, baby! Just like you! I love you and I’ll see you when you get into Chicago. By the time we talk next, I’ll be a graduate from Northwestern University ~ K

I’m so proud of you, sweetness. You worked you ass off to get that degree! Nothing can stop you. I love you more than words can say ~ S

She didn’t respond because the band began playing Pomp and Circumstance. The crowd of students walked onto the field and the ceremony began. Throughout the course of the ceremony, I got a few more texts from Kyra. The guy sitting next to her was drinking Jägermeister. He was completely bombed. She even sent me a picture of his nearly empty bottle. It was a big bottle. Oh, boy.

The ceremony lasted nearly two hours. Kyra had won some award from the psychology department, which she received when she got her diploma. Bella poked me in the side. “She also received a scholarship to continue her master’s degree here at Northwestern. She’s going to be working, for the time being with the group home while she’s getting her degree. You both can stay in her condo, after
you get married,” she whispered.

“That’s amazing. There are no words to express how in awe I am of her,” I murmured.

“You don’t have to. It’s written on your face,” Bella said, rubbing my back. I smiled at her, turning back to the ceremony. The president of the university congratulated them and their mortar boards flew up. That was my cue. Bella hugged me as I got up, nearly sprinting down the steps to wait for Kyra at the entrance of the field house. Edward wanted to be there, but Bella said that this was a private moment.

A sea of black graduates came walking back to the field house. I saw Kyra almost immediately. She was laughing with her friend, Melissa. I stood up taller, walking toward her. “Kyra!” I called out. She turned to me, her hand holding her diploma and mortar board. Her eyes widened and she handed her stuff blindly to her friend. Melissa laughed as she pushed her way through the other graduates. I ran to her, dropping the flowers as maneuvered through the crowd and caught her as she flung herself into my arms.

“You’re here! I thought you were graduating today, too,” she said, her legs wrapped around my waist. “I can’t believe it!”

“I’m here, sweetness. I wouldn’t miss this for the world,” I murmured into her curled hair. I put her down and took her face, kissing her soft lips. “I’ve missed you so much. The past few months have been torture. So close and yet so far.”

“Yeah,” she murmured, snuggling close to me. “I’m just so happy that you’re here. Steve, you have no idea how much this means to me, but what about your graduation?”

“I already walked for undergrad. I don’t need the memory for law school. I had bigger things to do than listen to my criminal law professor drone on at my own ceremony,” I said, cupping her sweet face. I leaned in again, brushing my lips with hers. I hoped she didn’t feel my trembling. Pulling away, I reached into my pocket and got down on one knee.

“Oh my God,” she breathed.

“Kyra Marie Cullen, I’ve loved you for over four years. We’ve had an unconventional but amazing relationship and I want to continue it. You are everything to me. My sun, my moon, my stars, my dreams. I can’t imagine not being by your side, loving you forever. So, Kyra, sweetness, will you do me the distinct honor of becoming my wife?” I asked, my voice shaking and my body almost convulsing with nerves. I’m surprised that her engagement ring didn’t fall out of my grasp.

She blinked a few times. Her classmates had created a perfect circle around us. She was crying, her hands clasped in front of her mouth and her body vibrating. With a tiny smile, she nodded.

“Answer him out loud, Kyra,” Melissa teased. “The guy just professed his undying love for you. At least you can give him a verbal answer!”

Kyra waved her hand and stared at me, getting down on her knees. She took my face and gave me one hell of a kiss. Her mouth was soft, pliant and commanding as she slid her tongue between my lips. I stood up, taking her with me and eagerly responded to her nonverbal answer. She pulled back and her face was radiant, tears running down her cheeks and her smile infectious as she replied with the most beautiful word in the world. “Yes!”

I spun her around, laughing and crying as I realized that she was going to be my wife. Gently, I placed her on the ground and handed her the ring. With shaking fingers, I slid it on her left hand. She
gasped when she saw it. This was the reason why I worked my ass off in addition to classes. My girl deserved the best and she got it, a two carat cushion cut diamond with pave stones on the side set in platinum. “Steve,” she breathed. “This ring is …”

“What my dream girl deserves,” I whispered, kissing her hand. “I love you, Kyra Burgess.”

“Hmmm, I like that,” she giggled. “Say it again.”

“Mrs. Kyra Burgess,” I smirked, kissing her lips.

“Dr. Kyra Burgess,” she corrected. She threaded her fingers into my hair and reaffirmed her answer with her mouth, kissing me in a sea of recent college graduates. I held her tightly, my heart beating out of my chest. And with that, all of my dreams came true.

A/N: I had to go back to the beginning with the emails, like Edward and Bella, but continue it with Kyra and Steve. Alas, this was the last real chapter of Surviving the Teenage Dream. We’ve got the epilogue coming up, where we’re going to wrap up loose ends and find out about the family’s happily ever after. We will have a combination of POVs for the final chapter, but ultimately, it will end with Edward and Bella, since this is the end of their story (but the beginning for the rest).

I do have pictures for this chapter of Steve’s bungalow, the corporate apartment, and Kyra’s engagement ring. Those are on my blog and tumblr. Links for those are on my profile. You can also find me on Facebook: Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation and twitter: tufano79. If you liked it, please leave me some loving!
And They Lived Happily Ever After: Epilogue

They survived falling in love and having four (count ‘em, FOUR) children. Now, Geekward and Nerdella are parents of teenagers. Say a prayer for them for they are in for a bumpy ride. Kyra is being a brat, displaying actions akin to her uncle who is nearing the end of his life on death row. Owen is a geek, like his dad. Then there is Mia and Masen, the twins. They’re still cute and adorable. Well, as cute and adorable as twelve year olds can be.

Let’s not forget Alice, Jasper, Adam, and Gianna (the Whitlock’s), Justin, Alex and Demetri (the Volturis), Esme and Marcus (the Volturis), Tim, Rose, Ava and Lucas (the Napletons) and our antagonist, Jacob Black. Emmett will also make a brief appearance in this story, too. But he’s not causing drama. His final goodbye, as it were.

We’ve got the epilogue coming up, where we’re going to wrap up loose ends and find out about the family’s happily ever after. We will have a combination of POVs for the final chapter, but ultimately, it will end with Edward and Bella, since this is the end of their story (but the beginning for the rest).

I’m going to do my thank you’s and announcements at the beginning since I don’t want to clutter the end. This story, well trilogy of stories, is near and dear to my heart. I started writing SGD and ANSOL when I was going through a divorce and moving out of my house. The humor of my shy, geeky Edward and socially awkward Bella brought light to me during that dark time. It continued with our geeky couple having kids and eventually, dealing with them as teenagers. This last story is a bit bittersweet, too. I lost my mom during the course of writing this. She passed away about two months ago, but I think she guided me in how this story was supposed to end. I like to thank her for that last chapter before the epilogue. It was her stroke of genius.

Sorry about the long A/N. Anyhow, thank you to everyone who stuck with me throughout this journey of SGD and Nerdella. There are so many people who have read these stories and supported me. I had a lot of fun with developing these characters and seeing them grow up into the family they are today.

Will I completely give up SGD and Nerdella? Probably not. This is the last full story. I may do some outtakes (Steve and Bella with the promise ring, Steve and Kyra’s first time … the options are limitless, really).

Pictures and such for this chapter are on my blog and tumblr (links for that are on my profile). I’m also on Facebook. I’d love to hear from you at Tufano79’s Twilight Fanfiction Appreciation or on twitter: tufano79. Thank you again for sharing in this journey of geekiness, silliness and love.

And now …

Chapter Thirty: They Lived Happily Ever After

Epilogue
Three months later … Beginning of September

“I can’t believe that Kyra’s engaged,” Rose mused as we waited for a meeting with the movie producers for the final *Charmed* movie. “She was a baby yesterday and now? She’s getting married? My goddaughter is getting married. Fuck!”

“Language, Rosalie,” I snickered as I flipped through a bridal magazine. Kyra was excited about her engagement, but was more thrilled that Steve was back in the Chicagoland area. He worked incredibly hard, making a name for himself at Kate’s law firm, but his eyes were just for my baby girl. He worshipped the ground she walked on.

“Have they set a date yet?” Rose asked, checking her cell phone.

“Nothing yet. They’re leaning toward New Year’s Eve,” I said.

“Of this year?” Rose shrieked.

“No. Next year. Kyra is still trying to balance work and her own studies. She wants to make sure that their wedding is special and not something thrown together haphazardly. Plus, they’ll get married before Steve turns thirty-one,” I said.

“Wasn’t that how old Edward was when you got married?” Rose asked.

“He was thirty-two,” I countered. “How are things going with Ava and Lucas and their significant others?”

“Lucas broke up with the gold digger,” Rose scoffed. “When he refused to buy her a diamond watch, she threw a fit and he finally saw her materialistic ways. Ava is still bouncing around Europe, reeling from the breakup from hell, blogging about her travels. I think she’s going to come back with a much older, Italian husband.”

“And you’re okay with that?” I snickered.

“I’m fine with it. But, I’m not ready to be called *Nana*,” she shuddered. “I do not look like a grandma. Neither do you.”

“You don’t act like a grandma, either,” I pointed out.

“Exactly, I still have sex with my husband without the need of Viagra,” she said proudly.

“It helps that Tim’s younger,” I quipped. Rose smiled smugly, waggling her brows. The movie producer finally called us into his office and we had our final meeting for *Charmed Endings*. The final movie was in post-production. The series had made both Rose and me millionaires. I put most of my money that I received from the films into a trust for my four children. We had more money than we knew what to do with, but I felt proud of my success in the Hollywood business. My other movie scripts were just as lucrative, but I did it for fun now. Not as a job. I wrote two or three scripts a year. If they were made into a movie, then bonus for me. If not, and they were shelved, they had another script for a later date.

We finished with the meeting, planning the final premier. It would happen just before Thanksgiving in San Francisco where the books/movies were set. When we finished our meetings, Rose and I went back to my house in Brentwood. Edward couldn’t come out with us since he had a Foundation opening in Green Bay. We had a girl’s night in, discussing plans for Kyra’s wedding. The next day,
we flew back to Chicago.

Back at the house, I returned to my two remaining children who lived at home. Kyra was still in her Evanston condo and Owen had an apartment down in Bloomington, Indiana where he went to Indiana University. Esme and Marcus had stayed with them while we were out in California. I trusted my daughter, but my son left much to be desired with his slutty behavior. *Can a man be a slut?* Mia and Masen were now juniors. Mia was dating a sweet, shy girl named JJ. Masen was a ladies man, emphasis on ladies. That boy was giving me more gray hair. My trips to the salon were far more frequent because of my youngest, horniest child. Thankfully, my son didn’t have one of his *girls* in his room. We removed his door when Edward found him getting a blow job in the basement. He had yet to earn it back. Masen’s only vice was pretty girls. He was smart and worked hard with his grades, but a pair of tits and cute ass, he was drooling. Teenaged hormones had attacked Masen and turned him to a horn-dog.

“Mom?” came the sweet voice of my youngest daughter. I turned to her. She was taller than me and very muscular, due to her athletic abilities and numerous sports activities. She also had large breasts, which shocked me. I was fairly small and Esme, her grandmother, didn’t have big boobs. She was still gorgeous with porcelain skin, and a choppy, but cute short haircut with bright red highlights that framed her face, but had more of a tomboyish appearance since she finally grew into her skin and accepted the fact that she was a lesbian. She still liked to get her eyebrows waxed and she wore mascara, but she was more comfortable in a pair of jeans than a dress. “Mom! You’re spacing out.”

“Sorry, Mia,” I said. “What’s up?”

“Can I borrow the car to take JJ out to dinner and a movie?” she asked. “Her older brother totaled their shared car and that only leaves our vehicle.”

“Where are you going?” I asked.

“Dinner at Rock Bottom and then a movie after that,” Mia smiled. “I should be home by eleven.”

I handed her my keys. “I may have to talk to your father about getting you and Mase a car. Thank goodness I don’t have anything going on,” I snickered. “Have fun and say hi to JJ for me. Oh, and she needs to give me that recipe for those lemon bars she made for your birthday party.”

“I’ll remind her. Love you,” Mia said, hugging me tightly.

“Before you go, where is your twin?” I asked.

“Out with some guys from the football team,” she answered, rolling her eyes. “Probably looking for girls or something. Masen is such a walking stereotype. I’d try texting him. Bye, Mom!”

Mia was disgusted with her brother’s behavior. He had hurt her last year when he had made out with a girl that Mia was interested in, just to spite her. Masen said that he could get more pussy than Mia and my daughter refused to talk to her twin for almost six months. Masen was, of course, grounded for being an asshole and he made up with Mia, but she lost all trust in him. I didn’t blame her.

As a result, she rarely brought JJ over to our house because she was afraid he’d do it again and cause her heart to break. I hated that I never got to see my daughter’s girlfriend since I did like her and Edward was just ashamed of Masen’s douchebaggery.

I did end up texting my son, asking where he was. He responded with a very teenaged response. *Out.* I picked up the phone, dialing his number. I reamed him a new one saying that if he wanted to stay ‘out,’ he’d tell me where he was. He apologized and said that he was at the movies with his
friends. I reminded him of his curfew and went to make dinner for me and my husband. He was on his way back from Green Bay, almost home from my brief conversation with him after I spoke with Masen.

An hour later, Edward strolled in the door. I was just finishing up making our meal and putting it on the kitchen table. Our house, which was once filled with kids, laughter and noise, was now empty and quiet. It was weird. I had to keep music or the television on so I wouldn’t go bat-shit crazy.

We ate dinner and he told me about the opening in Green Bay. It was a smaller building, but we still tried to go to every single opening for the Cullen Children’s Foundation. It was our baby, our brainchild to stop bullying and the strong preying on the weak. We both struggled with people teasing us, bullying us when we were children and we wanted to show them that anything was possible. That being teased doesn’t mean that you’re always going to be weak. Edward and I were a testament to that. We persevered, growing stronger than any of our tormentors ever imagined.

We were doing dishes and I turned to my still sexy husband. *Like a fine wine, only getting better with age.* “I think we need to consider getting a car for Mia and Masen,” I said.

“Yeah, I noticed that the Range Rover was gone,” Edward replied, looking to me. “Who has it? Mia or Masen?”

“Mia,” I snorted. “I wouldn’t want to give Masen my car. It would come back smelling of sex.”

“You see this?” he asked, pointing to his silvery shock of hair. It was still thick and unruly, but now it was the most alluring shade of silvery gray. “All Masen. I do not trust him with a car or any responsibilities other than school work or his devotion to the theater.”

“If you think about it, we’re pretty damn lucky. Yes, Masen is a bit of a slut, but he’s smart and …”

“Doesn’t have a bedroom door, Isabella Marie,” Edward deadpanned. “Slut is an understatement. I love him. I do, but ever since he grew into his body, he’s been out of control with the girls. I always thought he’d be gay with his foray in musical theater in middle school.”

“He still does musical theater, but it’s to attract girls,” I giggled. “I think that we need to get ONE car for the both of them. Kyra received your old Volvo. Owen got the Prius before it was totaled.”

“And then we got him another one since he went away to school,” Edward replied. “They can share the car. I like it. And when they go off to college, I’ll give one of them my current Volvo and buy a new one.”

“We have to set up rules for the car usage,” I said, wrinkling my nose. “Just because we’re giving them a car doesn’t mean that it’s complete freedom, an all-access pass to leave the house whenever you want.”

“Well, like with Owen and Kyra, we’ll pay the first six months of insurance and then the rest is up to them, in addition to gas and maintenance of the car. They also need to share the vehicle, as well. What if they both need a car?”

“That’s something they need to figure out, but I’m afraid that Masen won’t let Mia have it. Should we get two?” I asked, my lips pursed. Edward shook his head fervently. “You’re right. It’s just that their relationship is so strained. Mia doesn’t trust her brother.”

“We don’t trust her brother,” Edward countered. “Rules. For both of them in order to have access to the car. Maintain their GPA. Don’t let their freedom get to their heads. If they get into trouble, they lose the privileges of driving the car; staying out past curfew, getting into trouble at school, having
“Girls in their rooms.”

“What about with Masen? He doesn’t have a door. Wouldn’t that count against him already?” I asked.

“No. We don’t trust him to be in there with a door. That’s a given. When he moves out, he can have a door and fuck the world for all I care,” Edward said, his voice tense. “But that boy better be smart. I’ll tan his hide if he gets a girl pregnant.”

“When I’ve picked up his laundry, I’ve seen a few boxes of condoms buried in the back of the closet. Your ‘no glove, no love’ speech is embedded in his brain,” I snickered. “So, we can talk to them when they get back about our decision. Then, we can go out and find them a car. New or used?”

“I’ll leave that up to them and give them the same deal we did with Owen. They pay half and we pay half,” he said. He sighed, pulling me into his arms. “I liked them when they were still cute and listened to what we had to say.”

“Now, now. Kyra, Owen and Mia are perfectly fine,” I giggled, scratching his back. “It’s Masen who’s a pain in our ass.”

“Can I just lose myself in you? That six hour drive back from the land of the Cheese Heads kicked my butt,” Edward whined, his lips finding my ear. “My hips are tight and I know that making love to my wife will help me loosen them up.”

“Who am I to say no to you?” I purred, kissing his lips. He growled lowly, dragging me up to our bedroom and locked our door, thoroughly enjoying the benefits of privacy and being alone. I loved not having to keep quiet.

xx STTD xx

“But, Bella, we have to do something for your birthday,” whined Alice as we wandered around the grocery store. “Kyra and Steve are coming into town. Can’t we have a party?”

“No, Alice,” I said. “Dinner’s fine, but I don’t want a party. Who has a party for their forty-seventh birthday?”

“Uh, you!” she snickered. I shot her a look. “Come on! We need to have a party!”

“We just had a party. Did you forget the engagement party we hosted for Steve and Kyra?” I asked, arching a brow. “And let’s not forget the wedding we’re planning for New Year’s. I don’t need a party. A family dinner is perfect, really. I don’t even need that. I don’t want to be reminded that I’m getting older.”

“You don’t look like you’re almost forty-seven,” Alice said. “If I had to guess, you look closer to thirty.”

“It’s that wrinkle cream that Rose gave me and an awesome hair salon,” I grinned. “Plus, I don’t try and act like I did when I was twenty-five. There are some mothers at Mia and Masen’s school that dress worse than the kids with short skirts, tops where their tits hang out and it’s awful.”

“I tried,” Alice sighed, her face falling.

“Are you trying to stay distracted?” I asked. She nodded. “Gianna?”
“That girl has black hair. She dyed her white blonde hair black. She’s wearing all black clothes and I know she’s smoking cigarettes, possibly pot. My daughter is a mess and I know that it’s my fault,” she said, her tiny fists clenched around the shopping cart handle. “Nothing we do is helping.”

“Sometimes, you need to let your children fail or crash before they can accept help,” I said, hugging her. “It sucks to not be in control, but it may help her in the long run.”

“I don’t want my baby girl to get hurt or …” she trailed off. Alice looked at me, tears in her hazel eyes. “Just let nature run its course. I hate this, but maybe you’re right. I pray that you are.” We walked for a little while longer, shopping for our families. Alice settled herself and picked up a cake as we passed the bakery. “We’re still celebrating your birthday even if you won’t let us have a party, Isabella Marie.”

“Damn it,” I spat.

We finished our shopping and went our separate ways. Alice planned a small family birthday celebration. I was looking forward to it, really. My daughter and her new fiancé were coming for dinner and so I was happy about that. We had some things to discuss for the wedding. I was excited to help her find her dress, plan her day and assist her taking that next step in her life with Steve. As I was driving home, Kyra did call me, confirming that she and Steve were coming for my birthday dinner.

The rest of the week went by quickly. Mia and Masen were in the process of choosing a car and were cooperating for the first time since Mia came out to the family.

I spoke with Owen toward the end of the week. He called to wish me a happy birthday since he couldn’t get home for the weekend. He had a performance with one of his many ensembles at school. It was understandable since he was a music performance major, with a minor in orchestration and conducting. He had already been accepted to Yale University for his masters. Steve even took him on a tour when he went to visit the campus over the summer since he had received his law degree from the same university. Steve had some time to kill before he started his job and he went out to New Haven with my son, showing him the campus and the best options to live. He and Tasha were going to move there. Tasha got her degree in music education, hoping to teach in the New Haven area.

On Saturday, Steve and Kyra arrived at our home. They were living separately. Steve was very conservative and also he wanted to respect my daughter. Plus, the slight fear he had of my husband prompted his decision to stay in corporate housing until they got married. However, when they were in the same room, you could feel how much in love they were. It reminded me of my relationship with my husband. Steve doted on Kyra, treating her kindly, respectfully and grounding her. She brought out Steve’s silly side, making him laugh, and showing him the fun in any situation. They were never not touching. He had his arm around her waist or their fingers threaded together. I loved that my baby girl had a wonderful man who adored her. Edward was warming up to Steve, but he was still apprehensive about the age difference. I did put Edward’s mind at ease after they got engaged, informing my sullen hubby that our daughter was still a virgin. He liked Steve a lot more after knowing that tidbit.

Edward didn’t need to know about their frequent adult sleepovers.

On Saturday night, Kyra and Steve went out with Mia, JJ, Masen and his new ‘girlfriend,’ Emily. Gianna went with them, but you could tell she would have rather put a white-hot poker into her eyeball. It was better than staying home with her parents. Alice and Jasper came over and helped with the prep for my birthday. I wasn’t cooking. Alice insisted. She and Edward were preparing one of my favorite meals, chicken Milanese. They were laughing and pounding the chicken breasts.
Jasper was giving pointers.

Our laughter came to an abrupt stop when Jasper’s phone rang. “Hello?” he said. “Wait, hold on, Kyra. Slow down. Let me put you on speaker.”

“… Gianna hopped to some guy’s motorcycle and left!” she said, her voice breathy and anxious. “She gave us all the bird and they drove off. As they pulled out of the parking lot, she threw her cell phone onto the ground and it was obliterated by some truck.”

Alice paled and leaned heavily against Edward. “What do we do?”

“I got a partial license plate, Edward,” Steve said. “I can’t tell you much about the guy since he was in all black and wore a helmet. The helmet, though, had purple flames on the sides. Oh, and he had to be older than eighteen. He was a big guy.”

“Gianna is sixteen,” Alice whispered. “He could …”

“Don’t think that, Alice,” Steve said, his voice stern. “I’m going to give you back to Kyra and call the police. I know we can’t do anything since she wasn’t ‘kidnapped.’ However, they can be made aware.”

“Thank you, Steve,” I said.

“Mom, we’re coming back,” Kyra said once she got the phone back. “Mia is really upset. JJ is calming her down, but she doesn’t understand why Gianna would just get onto some random guy’s motorcycle. Masen and Steve tried to run after the douchebag, but two guys can’t beat a motorcycle.”

“Drive safe,” I whispered. “I love you, sweetie.” The phone call ended and Alice tried to call her daughter, only getting her voicemail.

“Edward, do you have your laptop here?” Jasper asked. My husband nodded, grabbing his computer from the bag near the table. He handed it to Jasper, who quickly began typing on it.

“What are you doing?” Alice asked, her eyes filled with tears. “Jazzy?”

“I put a tracking chip in her bracelet/cuff thing,” Jasper said. “She never takes it off except to shower.” He smiled evilly, clapping his hands. “Got her! They’re on I-88, heading to the city.”

“Gianna isn’t allowed in the city,” Alice growled.

“Do you think she cares?” I asked, hugging Alice.

“Call Oliver or Johnny,” Edward smirked. “They both have this program on their laptops.”

“What about Steve?” Jasper asked. “And us?”

“Do you think that’s wise?” I argued. “Gianna is fighting back against everything right now. Having her dad and uncle come and stalk her would send her further away. I think that Oliver and Steve might be the best bet. Oliver has his girls and Steve is really good with Gianna.”

As we were talking, Mia, Masen, Kyra and Steve walked through the door. JJ and Emily presumably were dropped off at their respective homes. Mia ran to me, crying quietly and clinging to me. Masen was pale. Steve was limping. “Are you okay?” I asked.

“Motorcycle one, Steve zero,” he quipped, pulling his leg up until it cracked. “The cops said they...
couldn’t do anything. She’s of age to consent, supposedly. They couldn’t issue an amber alert. They told us to wait, essentially.”

“That shit ain’t happening,” Jasper growled. He pushed the laptop toward Steve. “We’re following them.”

“Jasper, we are not going on a wild goose chase,” Edward chided.

“I can’t just sit here and do nothing,” Jasper snapped.

“Uncle Jasper, do you trust me?” Kyra asked, her eyebrows raised. Jasper frowned, his hands clenched. “If you go after her, she’s going to keep pushing you away. Let us handle it. Let me handle it. I went to school for psychology, counseling. Specifically, teenaged girls.”

“Kyra, this is a really shady part of the city,” Edward whispered, pointing to the laptop.

“I’m still licensed to carry,” Steve smirked. “Nothing is going to happen to my fiancée. I’d take a bullet for you, sweetness.”

“Aww, that’s so romantic, baby,” Kyra snorted, kissing his lips. Steve rolled his eyes. Turning to her father, she gave him a hard look. “We’re going. You got that fancy little program on a tablet?”

Edward barked out a laugh and grabbed his tablet. He found the program and put in the GPS tracker information. “You are a force, Kyra,” he said. “Don’t do anything stupid.”

“Summa cum laude,” she said, obviously calmer than when she called us. “Come on, baby.” She grabbed Steve’s arm and they went out the front door.

xx STTD xx

KyraPOV

“Turn left up here,” I said, pointing to a very scary looking street. “There’s the bike.”

“I don’t like this, Kyra,” Steve growled. He was wearing a black leather jacket, which I knew concealed his shoulder holster. “This neighborhood is bad. Really bad.”

“My cousin is fucked up,” I grumbled. “She needs help and we’re going to do it. How are your arms?”

“My arms?” he asked, laughing confusedly.

“You may have to do some lifting,” I smirked. “I don’t know if your old ass can handle it.”

“I’ll show you old,” he retorted, kissing me swiftly. He looked up at the boarded up brownstone. There was some fire burning on the second floor. “Let’s get this shit done. I want to get you both home before we become an inner-city statistic.” He got out of the car and walked in front of me, his hand squeezing mine. We walked up the stairs and slipped through broken door. He pulled out a tiny flashlight, clicking it on. The building was disgusting. I heard scratching and I whimpered. “Shhhh, sweetness.”

“Rats,” I hissed. “This was a bad idea.”

“It was a bad idea when you suggested it, Kyra,” Steve deadpanned. “But, we’re committed. Gianna is up there. I can smell pot and other nasty shit. I just pray that the guy who took her hasn’t taken advantage of her.”
“Can I shoot him in the balls if he did?” I asked.

“No, Kyra. I will kick him in the balls,” he growled, leading us to the rickety stales. We climbed them and the smell of marijuana and booze got stronger. The sounds of laughter and slurring speech got louder as well. Once we were on the second floor, Steve clicked off his flashlight. He stood taller and prepared for a fight, his hands clenched into tight fists. Gianna was there, making out with a skeevy looking man with long, stringy black hair. She was rocking against him and he was going to take off her shirt. “I’d stop that, if I were you. She’s only sixteen,” Steve said, his voice barely controlled.

Gianna turned around and she was not fully with it. She slumped off him, not moving once she was off his lap.

“You bitch! You told me you were twenty,” the guy snapped, going to hit my cousin. Steve, faster than a blink of an eye, had the guy slammed against a wall. He was held up against it with Steve’s forearm and I think he was turning blue. I was shocked. I never saw Steve move so fast. His face was pulled into an angry snarl.

“You don’t want me to get mad, fucker,” Steve hissed, his eyes narrowed at the guy. “What did you give her?”

“Nothing!” he choked out.

Steve looked at the ‘party.’ “Coke, marijuana, ecstasy, you’re a regular pharmacy and taking advantage of an underage girl? I could just call the cops and then fucking send your smelly, nasty ass to jail for attempted rape. What. Did. You. Give. Her?”

“Ecstasy and some whiskey,” he rasped.

“Call the cops, Marie,” Steve said, his eyes cutting to mine. He used my middle name so we couldn’t be identified. I dialed 911, speaking quietly, telling them about the squatters. The rest of the ‘party’ was too stoned to do anything. They were just watching, blinking sleepily. The lights of the police flickered, which got them moving but the cops stopped anyone from leaving. Steve dropped the skeev and removed his coat, wrapping it around Gianna, picking her up easily. One of the police officers asked Steve about his weapon and he asked me to show him his concealed weapon license from his wallet. He also explained that he was an attorney. I got to cup my fiancé’s ass while I fished for his wallet. Steve smirked.

Steve carried Gianna down and set her in the backseat of his car. She was drifting in and out of consciousness, slurring her words. We both gave our statements to the cops, really focusing on the guy’s actions to my underage cousin. After we gave our statements, we were cleared to leave. Steve wanted to take Gianna to the hospital, but I said we were taking her to my condo. I called my parents, explaining what we were doing. Gianna was going to spend the night with me and I was going to give it to her. Aunt Alice, Uncle Jasper, no one could interrupt us. Gianna had to realize that she fucked up.

I apologized to my mom for missing her birthday, but hopefully I could use my degree and help someone in my family. Mom was understanding, as was my father. Aunt Alice was pissed, but Dad said he’d sit on his sister to stop her from messing up what I had planned.

Steve and I put Gianna in the guest bedroom that used to be inhabited by Rex. He moved out when I got engaged and into a cute little studio in Boy’s Town. He said he didn’t want to hear any moaning. Steve just gave him a look, but Rex squeezed Steve’s cheek.
If he only knew.

There was no moaning.

Okay, a little moaning.

But no sex.

By choice.

I changed into a pair of pajamas, sitting on the couch in the bedroom where Gianna was sleeping. Steve put a garbage can next to the bed, pulling me into his arms. “Do you think you can reach her?”

“I hope so. I’m going to approach her like I do the kids at the group home,” I shrugged. I twisted my engagement ring, a nervous habit I acquired. “How long do you think she’s going to be out?”

“If I had to guess, she’ll start puking around two,” Steve said, his lips finding my neck. I shuddered. He stopped kissing me. “Did I scare you? Tonight?”

“I thought you were bad ass,” I said, turning to face him. “You picked up that asshole like he weighed nothing.”

“He smelled,” he grumbled.

“That explains why your hair is wet,” I teased, running my fingers through his cropped blond locks. “Thank you for helping me get her.”

“She’s family,” Steve said, his face softening as he looked at Gianna. “She needed our help.”

“I love you, Steve,” I whispered, kissing his lips softly.

“I love you more, Kyra,” he whispered back. He moved us so he was laying down and I was on his chest.

We made out innocently until the sound of Gianna moaning broke us apart around one in the morning. I hopped up and helped her as she stood up uneasily, guiding her to the bathroom. She threw up what felt like for hours. She was moaning and crying, wishing for her mom. I held her hair back and massaged her shoulders as she dealt with her hangover. She fell on the floor, leaning against the bathtub. “I’m going to die.”

“No, you’re just dealing with an awful hangover,” I said, my voice cold. “I’m going to be easy compared to your parents.”

“Shit,” Gianna said, rubbing her face and smudging her mascara. She looked like a raccoon.

“Steve? Can you get me some extra pajamas?” I asked, poking my head out of the bathroom door.

“Sure, sweetness,” he replied. He returned with a pair of loose pajama pants and a t-shirt. Stuck between the two pieces of fabric were a pair of panties. “Do you want some Tylenol for Gianna?”

“A gun would be nice,” she said, scowling at the toilet.

“I’ve got one of those, but I’m not letting you near it,” he said, arching a brow.

“Shower,” I barked, handing her the clothes and getting up from the floor. I closed the door and went to make her some toast. Steve stood behind me, his arms wrapped around my waist. “You know?
You’re going to be an amazing mom.”

“In order for that to happen, we need to have sex,” I snorted.

“We will, sweetness,” he smiled against my shoulder. “Did you get off the shot?”

“I’m back on birth control pills,” I grumbled, wrinkling my nose. “I hate them. My boobs constantly hurt.” Steve’s fingers slid underneath my t-shirt, squeezing my breast and I moaned. “Stop it. We’ve got to be a good example for the delinquent.”

“Sorry,” he laughed, kissing my shoulder and still massaging my breast. He was irresistible.

I turned, glaring at him. “You are too adorable, but behave,” I said, pointing at him. He kissed my fingertip. “Why don’t you get some sleep, baby? This may take a while.”

“We’re a team, Kyra,” he said, taking my hand and kissing my palm. “I’m here for you. I’ll sleep when you sleep.” He smiled at me tenderly. “Thank you for getting off the shot. It’ll make the decision to have children a lot easier. You just have to stop taking the pill.”

“The things I do for you,” I smiled. “But, that’s almost a year and half away before we do anything. I wanted to control my girly business so I wouldn’t have my period on our wedding night, or our honeymoon.” I stood on my tiptoes, brushing my lips with his. “But, I do like the idea of having babies with you.”

He picked me up, placing me on the counter and standing between my legs. His hands cupped my face as he gave me the most radiant smile. “I love the idea of having babies with you, sweetness.” He gave me a deep, loving kiss. I almost lost myself in him until I heard the shower turn off. He chuckled against my mouth as he helped me off the counter. “Right. I can behave. Maybe.”

“No, you can’t,” I chided as I finished with Gianna’s toast and got her a water bottle along with some pain killers. She padded into the living room. Her face scrubbed clean of the dark, overbearing makeup. However, because she wore a tank top, I could see more of the problem. The tops of her arms were covered with scars. The most substantial one was hidden underneath her cuff, which she had removed. Steve squeezed me in support as we sat down with her on the couch. “Do you feel better?” I asked, handing her the toast.

“Not really,” she said, her voice rough and unbearably tired. She looked up at me. “Do my parents hate me?”

“They’re very worried, Gianna,” I said, sitting next to her. “Why did you get on that motorcycle?”

“We’d been chatting online. I sent him a text when I heard you were taking out Mia and Masen,” she shrugged, covering the ugly scar on her wrist. “I told him to meet us at the restaurant. I needed to get away. Mom and Dad are just … so fake! They don’t care about me. They send me to a fucking shrink and he does nothing.”

“I asked, pointing to her wrist. “And your cutting?”

“No,” she said sullenly. “He asked me how I’m doing. I say fine and he hands me a prescription for a new anti-depressant. I hate taking them. I feel like a fucking zombie. So, I don’t. I flush them down the toilet so Mom thinks I am taking them.”

I sighed, staring at her. Without her war paint, Gianna looked like the girl who spent so many hours at our house when her own mother dealt with her issues a couple of years ago. I knew that was what got the ball rolling with Gianna’s behavior, her depression, her cutting. “Have you talked to your
parents?” I whispered, taking her hand and massaging her arm, trying to erase that ugly scar.

“They. Don’t. Care,” she hissed, trying to take her hand away. I held firm.

“I beg to differ. Your dad was ready to fight the world to get you home safe. Your mom was a mess. You worried all of us, Gianna. We found you in an abandoned building with druggies and that man who was trying to have sex with you,” I said, arching a brow.

“No, he wasn’t. We were just kissing,” she scoffed.

“Then, why do you have a hickey on your breast?” I asked, pointing to the bruise on her chest. She blushed and pulled up her shirt. “Were you aware of what you were doing? What was the last thing you remember?”

“Pulling up to this huge building,” she said, her voice tiny.

“And then?” I pressed.

“Puking in the bathroom,” she replied, looking up at me, tears brimming in her blue eyes.

“You don’t remember kissing that guy, or Steve carrying you out of that building, or Steve carrying you in here?” I asked. She bit her lip, shaking her head and tears falling down her pale cheeks. “Gianna, you may think your parents don’t care, but they do. They love you so much and tonight? It scared the shit out of all of us.”

“I don’t know what to do,” she cried. “I hurt all of the time. The only time the pain stops is when I’m drinking or I’m cutting!” I pulled her into my arms and held her tightly. I felt Steve kiss my head, slipping out of the room and into my bedroom. “I want to die, Kyra. I can’t do this!”

“You can, G,” I whispered. “You are strong, intelligent, beautiful girl. Your family loves you and we don’t want to lose you.” I kept her in my arms as she cried herself to sleep. I eventually dozed off, Gianna curled to my side. When I woke up, my neck was stiff and sore and Gianna was still snoring on my lap. Steve sat down behind me, running his fingers through my hair. “Alice called me. They’re on their way, but are not going to come up until you give the go ahead.”

“She needs a lot of help,” I whispered, my hand brushing through her tangled black hair. “But, she has to ask for it.”

“I’m going to get some of those pastries and donuts from that bakery around the block. I think that she needs the carbs,” he said, kissing my forehead.

“Oh, a venti café mocha with a triple shot of espresso for me,” I said, pleading with him.

“After last night, I’ll get you a quadruple shot, sweetness,” he chuckled quietly. “Love you.”

“Love you more,” I said, puckering for a kiss. He gave me one, slipping out of my condo. I stayed on the couch until my bladder was screaming. I got up from underneath Gianna and quickly peed, changing into a pair of jeans and one of Steve’s button-downs he’d left at my place. I tossed my hair up into a ponytail and started looking up residential programs for girls that had problems for Gianna. She needed help. More than what just a psychiatrist could provide. I wrote down a few excellent programs, one of which was located near Nana and Papa in Naperville. Steve came back a half hour later with a large box of goodies and two huge cups of coffee. He handed me mine and I kissed him stupid. “You are the best fiancé on the planet.”

“I do try,” he said, putting the donuts onto the kitchen counter. Gianna moaned and shifted on the
couch. “Do you want me to make myself scarce?”

“I like having you around, but it’s up to you,” I said, sipping my coffee.

“I’ll just go into the bedroom and let you two finish your talk,” he nodded, going back into my room.

A few moments later, Gianna woke up, confused. She remembered our discussion and took off to the bathroom. She dry heaved. I just waited for her to come back out of the bathroom, holding the other cup of coffee. She groaned, leaning against the door. “Do you want water or coffee?”

“Coffee,” she said, reaching for the proffered cup. “I’m never doing this again.”

“I certainly hope not,” I smirked. “What did you remember from our talk?”

“Everything,” she said, her lip jutting out. A few fat tears fell out of her eyes.

“Do you want to die, Gianna? Do you want to hurt yourself?” I asked, becoming a counselor and not a concerned family member.

“No,” she whispered. “I was just so desperate.”

“I need to hear you say it, G,” I murmured. “I can’t do anything until you say it.”

I stared at her and kept my eyes on hers until she looked up, her blue eyes shimmering with tears. She broke down in sobs, clinging to me. I soothed her until I heard those magical words. “I need help.”

“You’ve got it, Gianna,” I vowed. I hugged her, texting Steve to call Aunt Alice and Uncle Jasper. A half hour later, the doorman called up when my aunt and uncle arrived. Aunt Alice looked like a wreck. Her normally coiffed hair was as messy as my father’s. Uncle Jasper look like he’d aged ten years. I told them everything that had happened and what we’d discussed last night, with Gianna’s permission. Aunt Alice felt so lost when she saw the scars on Gianna’s arms and angry at the shrink for not really caring. “These are some residential facilities. While we were waiting for you, Gianna and I agreed that staying at one of these might be better to help her path toward healing. It’s not permanent, but she’ll get round the clock psychiatric care, therapy and help.”

“Anything for you, Gianna,” Uncle Jasper whispered, opening his arms to her. She ran into them and the tears began anew. I held it together as I watched my cousin, my family, heal a little bit in front of my eyes.

“I’ve taken the liberty in calling Linden Oaks in Naperville,” I murmured, handing Aunt Alice the address. “If you want to do this, they’re expecting you today.”

Aunt Alice hugged me, nearly strangling me with the power behind her embrace. “I’m so proud of you,” she whispered against my ear. “I love you, Kyra. Thank you for helping my baby girl.”

“You’re welcome, Aunt Ali,” I whispered back. She squeezed me once more before enfolding Gianna to her arms. Uncle Jasper hugged me, but didn’t say anything. He was too busy crying. I gave Gianna a hoodie and the three of them left. Once they did, I collapsed, my own tears flooding out of me. I sobbed and Steve held me, reiterating that he was proud of how I handled the situation and that he loved me so much, counting the moments until we were husband and wife. I couldn’t have done it without him. Steve was my rock, my hugest supporter and he gave me strength when I didn’t know I needed it.

He really was my dream man.
Six months later ... February

“Edward?”

I looked up and saw my business partner and best friend. “What’s up, Jasmine?” I asked.

“I’m heading out,” he replied. “Gianna is getting released today from Linden Oaks and I want to be there to pick her up. I just wanted to drop off the schematics for the latest update for the malware program.”

“How is Gianna?” I asked.

“She’s almost the sweet girl I remembered,” he smiled, sitting down across from me. “Kyra saved her.”

“If you asked Kyra, she wouldn’t agree with that statement. She was just merely doing her job,” I said, pride coming through my statement. She really had saved Gianna. I spoke with my sister and she said that if Gianna had continued with her downward spiral, she probably would have died before the end of the year. “I hope everything goes well. Is she going back to school?”

“No. We’re going to homeschool her for the rest of the year and send her back as a senior,” Jasper explained. “Alice already has the curriculum and a tutor lined up through the school district.”


After thinking it over, Jasper didn’t ‘retire.’ He did cut back his role in the company to focus on his family. He was still the CEO on paper, but almost all of the executive decisions were made by me, Demetri, Charlie, Eric and Oliver. Charlie, however, was looking to retire. He was getting older and he wanted to spend his time fishing up in Canada. His wife, Sue, had already scouted out a few locations to build a cabin. I knew it was just a matter of time before Bella’s dad would pack it all in.

Oliver, though, really surprised me. He took to the company easily. He helped make our educational technology department the best in the country and third in the world. He also had a knack for code and programming. He shadowed Jasper, working with him in the software department as well. In addition to his position at Whitlock, Oliver finally won custody of his twin girls. They were living with him and they were the cutest things I’d ever seen. His ex-wife fell off the face of the planet after he gained full custody and was dating a woman from Eclipse Publishing, the floor below, named Senna.

I was working on my latest upgrade to the medical tricorder when Demetri came strolling in. He had the widest grin on his face. “Guess what?” he asked.

“You won the lotto?” I teased.

“Pssh, no. I’d have to hide the money. Alex could spend it like that,” Demetri snickered. “Seriously, guess!”

“I did. The lotto?” I said, arching a brow.

“I’m going to be a grandpa!” he bellowed, holding his arms out. “Justin and his wife, Sarah, are expecting!”
“Congratulations!” I cheered, getting up and hugging him. “When did you find out?”

“Justin called, asking if I could go to lunch with him and Sarah. We met at Sarah’s favorite restaurant and they showed me and Alex a sonogram. They’re about twelve weeks along,” he replied, handing me the fuzzy ultrasound picture. “That’s my grandbaby. I’m going to be a grandpa! Papa Demetri!”

“Wow,” I breathed. “I can’t believe it. It just seems like yesterday that Justin and Sarah flew off to Vegas.”

“It’s been a year,” Demetri said. Justin, Demetri’s adoptive son, had been dating Sarah for only six months when he proposed, shortly after he graduated from college with a degree in engineering. They didn’t want a long engagement. Justin suggested Vegas. A month after he proposed, they flew to Vegas, with Demetri, Alex, and Sarah’s parents. They got married in the Bellagio chapel. Sarah was a beautiful girl with long, sleek black hair and gorgeous ice blue eyes. “Speaking of weddings? How are plans for Kyra and Steve’s nuptials going?”

“Good, actually. Bella and Kyra found a church and a reception venue. There’s a gorgeous venue on the campus of Millennium Park. They had their engagement pictures taken around there just before Christmas. Kyra fell in love with the space. Thankfully, they had a cancellation and we were able to use the indoor reception location,” I explained. “Next, we need to find the dress, caterer, DJ or band, photographer …”

“Aren’t you going to use Victoria?” Demetri asked. “She’s been your go-to for everything!”

“Victoria will be an invited guest. However, Victoria is looking for someone for us. She doesn’t trust just anyone with my principessa’s wedding. She’s trying to get in touch with her old business partner, Riley. Regardless, Bella’s handling most of the arrangements since Kyra is working almost fifty hours a week, in addition to taking master’s courses in the evening. My poor daughter is pulled in so many different ways.”

“She should hold off on her master’s degree,” Demetri frowned.

“She showed me the schedule and if she takes the classes scheduled, Kyra will be done with her master’s degree, minus her internship, before the wedding. Once she gets back from her honeymoon, she’ll start her internship and take a year off, focusing on her job, before going back for her doctorate,” I said. “But, I think they may start a family relatively quickly. I don’t know.”

“Kyra can still be a counselor without her doctorate, right?” he asked.

“She’s a counselor now. She works for DCFS in addition to her time at the Foundation on the weekend,” I replied. “I couldn’t be more proud of her.”

“Jasper couldn’t stop lauding the praises of Kyra for what she did for Gianna,” Demetri smiled. “He said that Kyra broke through that thick armor that Gianna put up, really making her see what she was doing to her body and to her family.”

“It hit my baby girl hard. Steve said that she was a hysterical, sobbing mess the rest of the day. Kyra was so strong for Gianna, but it killed her to see her cousin so afraid, vulnerable and hurt. What really got her was the cutting,” I shuddered. “But, Kyra took on a role of protector of Gianna when she was dealing with the whole fiasco with Alice and her selfishness. It makes sense that Kyra got through to Gianna. They still talk, every night. Kyra is Gianna’s biggest cheerleader.”

“Well, I wanted to let you know my big news,” Demetri beamed. “I can’t believe I’m going to be a grandpa. I don’t feel like I’m old enough to be considered a grandfather.”
“You don’t look it,” I snorted. “And I can’t picture Alex being grandfatherly, either.”

“Alex is grandma,” Demetri snickered. “And he’s already planning on quitting his job to babysit our grandbaby. I’m going to be working until I’m eighty. I’ll see you later.”

“Congratulations, again and give my love to Justin and Sarah,” I said. Demetri smiled, bouncing out of my office, singing that he was going to be a grandpa. I worked until four and then decided to pack it in. I drove home and found my wife reading in the living room, her head bopping to some music from her mp3 player. I put my work bag next to the door and sat down, pulling my wife’s feet into my lap. She stopped reading, smiling brightly at me. “Hey, gorgeous. I like the haircut!”

“Thanks! It was getting pretty ratty and the grays were popping through,” she snickered. “My stylist had an opening so I went in. Did you hear the news? About Justin and Sarah?”

“Demetri told me earlier this afternoon. I’m so happy for them.”

“Alex called as I was getting my foils taken out and his voice was so loud. I had to put him on speaker. I think he broke the mirror at the salon,” Bella giggled. “He’s very excited about being a grandma.”

“So is Demetri,” I murmured, rubbing her little feet. Her toes were painted a sweet pink with hearts on the big toe. “Valentine’s Day pedicure?”

“I used the gift certificate that Steve gave me for Christmas,” she murmured. “Oh, speaking of Steve and Kyra! Our daughter coming to visit this weekend. We’re taking her wedding dress shopping.”

“Me?” I asked, arching a brow. “Isn’t that a girly thing?”

“She wants you to be there, Edward,” Bella said softly, her eyes piercing through me. Bella wants me there. “We have an appointment at twelve at this high-end boutique in Schaumburg. If we can’t find anything there, I have a contingency plan down in the city at another boutique near your office.” I scratched my head. My daughter is coming into to town so we can go back down to the city? “Don’t think about it, Edward. Just trust me.”

“Okay, gorgeous,” I shrugged. “Where are Mia and Masen?”

“Mia’s at work and Masen has rehearsal until six,” Bella said. “He’s getting a ride home from Emily.”

“They’re still a thing?” I snorted.

“Supposedly so. They’re the leads in the show, Footloose,” she nodded. “They’re dating in the show and so they’re dating in real life.”

“He still doesn’t have his door, right?” I grumbled.

“It’s in the basement, Edward,” she laughed. “Masen has calmed down since that ordeal with Gianna and since he started dating Emily. Maybe he’s learned the error of his ways.” I grunted. “Come on, angel. Have a little faith in our horny son.”

“I’d rather get horny with you,” I said, pulling her closer to me, kissing her neck.

“We’ve got an hour before Masen is supposed to get home,” she said breathily. I growled, dragging her off the couch and up to our bedroom. Clothes were strewn everywhere and we were a heap of naked limbs, lost in each other. An hour wasn’t nearly enough time, but having a rushed tryst is
better than being cut off, or interrupted by your children. And I still got it. Making my wife scream and climax three times in the hour?

I’m so the man.

xx STTD xx

The rest of the week went by without any more huge announcements. The weekend came and with that, so did my oldest daughter. On Saturday, we got up and drove to Schaumburg to the boutique to find Kyra’s dress. The trip to the boutique was fruitless. Kyra didn’t like anything she tried on and the sales woman was very pushy. I thought that my daughter looked beautiful in everything. I was holding back tears most of the afternoon. My baby girl was buying her wedding dress. Gah!

An hour later, we were back in the car and driving to the city to another boutique. It was the same place that Bella found her dress when we got married. I was shocked that it was still in business, but Bella reassured me that high-end couture would never go out of style, especially for wedding gowns.

The one thing we learned from the first shop was that Kyra did not want a huge, princess ball gown. She was so tiny that it dwarfed her. As much as I loved one, I had to agree. You didn’t see my daughter, you saw this enormous dress. With that knowledge, we searched the boutique in the city, finding something called a mermaid style dress. The petite woman who helped us, pulled all of the mermaid dresses and pushed Kyra into a dressing room. Bella and I sat on a plush-looking couch, sipping champagne and eating petit-fours. The first few dresses we saw were too big and just too gaudy. The gowns had a clear break from the bodice and the skirt, which poufed out at her knees. She didn’t like that and wanted a more subtle flare, or a the skirt starting its poufyness higher, around her thighs at the lowest or at the hips at the highest.

We spent a couple of hours, finding things we liked about each dress, but nothing really stood out. However, the sales woman said that we could create a customized design. Kyra’s eyes lit up and she said she knew what she wanted, or at least, the basis for her dress. They changed back into one of the favorites and we began ‘pulling’ it apart. The first dress was somewhat ornate with a sweetheart bodice. The bodice was strapless, but we added a single strap on one shoulder, with some beading around the arm and the same beading at her waist, moving up the body of the dress. The skirt of the dress resembled a duvet cover, so we nixed that, opting for a simple A-line chiffon skirt, flaring out at the hips. The train was long, something called a cathedral train.

Kyra stood on the podium with her jimmy-rigged, customized dress. Bella was fluffing her veil and cooing over what we’d created. I was trying not to cry. When the sales woman handed Kyra a bouquet, the tears started flowing. “Daddy,” she whispered, turning on the podium and shimmying down. She took my hands, squeezing them gently. “Don’t cry, Daddy,” she sniffled, wiping my tears away.

“You’re getting married,” I said, cupping her face and smiling sadly. “I thought I’d be okay – a tough guy – but, my baby girl is getting married. I’m so proud of you and you are so beautiful.” My voice cracked as I enfolded her in my arms. “I don’t want to lose you, Kyra.”

“Daddy, you’re not losing me,” she said, rubbing my back. “You’re gaining a son.” I laughed, kissing her head. “I may be getting married, but you will always be my daddy. The guy who scared away monsters under my bed, who taught me how to drive, who showed me how to love.”

“I know,” I whispered. “It’s still … it’s real now. You’re standing in your sort of wedding dress, wearing a veil and tiara.”

“Well, it’s not real since I’m wearing a combination of three different dresses,” Kyra snickered,
waddling back. “It’ll be more real when I have my final fitting and when I’m walking down the aisle to become Steve’s wife. Just don’t cry then, Dad. You can cry now all you want, but I don’t want tears on my wedding day.”

“Miss Cullen, I need to take your measurements,” said the sales woman. “We’ll get started on your dress and it should be ready by November.”

“Are you okay, Dad?” Kyra asked, squeezing my hands.

“Not really, but I will be,” I answered, kissing her forehead. She hugged me once more before she went back to the dressing room with Bella to get her measurements and finalize the design of the dress. I sat down, trying to wrap my head around all of this. I knew it was coming; that it was a reality, but seeing her in a wedding dress made it more real. My phone vibrating against my ass broke me from my reverie.

*Where are you? I need to talk to you! ~ Owen*

I got up and walked to the entrance of the shop, dialing Owen’s phone number. “Owen?” I barked when he picked up. “Is everything okay? What’s wrong?”

“I’m sorry, Dad,” he said, his voice whiney. “I didn’t mean to just show up, but I need your advice. Your help.”

“Well, I’m out with Kyra and Mom, buying Kyra’s wedding dress,” I explained. “We’re probably going to go out for dinner and then come home. Do you need me to come now?”

“No, it’s not that pressing. But, I was hoping we could go shopping tomorrow?” he squeaked out. “For an engagement ring?”

*Fuck. Me.*

“Dad?”

Another one of my kids is getting married. Is Tasha pregnant? Am I going to be a grandpa?

“Dad.”

I can’t breathe. I need to sit. Yes, sitting is good. Shit. I can’t handle all of this.

“EDWARD!”

“What?” I croaked out.

“I thought you had a stroke or something,” Owen said.

“I’m about to,” I said, pinching my nose. “You’re proposing to Tasha? Is there more you need to tell me?”

“We’re not pregnant, Dad,” he deadpanned. “It’s just her dad is giving her shit about moving to New Haven without having a ring on her finger. I knew I was going to propose to her before we left, after we graduated, but I’m thinking about doing it over Valentine’s Day weekend.”

“Okay, we’ll go shopping tomorrow. Can you stay for dinner?” I asked.

“That’s fine. I don’t have class until noon on Monday,” Owen said. “Thanks, Dad.” We hung up. My wife and daughter walked out of the boutique, talking animatedly about the wedding. Now that
we had the dress, everything was falling into place, supposedly.

“You okay, Edward?” Bella asked, smiling.

“Owen’s at the house. He needs me to go shopping with him tomorrow,” I shrugged. Bella narrowed her eyes. I arched a brow, hoping that she could read my mind that I’d tell her later.

“Wan’s home? We don’t need to go out to dinner. I want to see my brother!” Kyra said, breezing past me. She took my keys from my hand and she was out the door.

“Is everything okay with Owen?” Bella asked as we followed our exuberant daughter.

“Owen wants to buy an engagement ring for Tasha,” I whispered. “But, don’t let on that you know. Please?”

“Okay, okay,” she said. We got into the car. Kyra drove us back. I sat in the backseat while Bella and Kyra planned the rest of the wedding. I was merely the funding for the event, and weepie father of the bride. Once we got back to the house, Kyra hugged her brother and they disappeared. Bella made dinner, telling me how much Kyra’s dress was going to cost. My eyes about bugged out of my head when I heard the final price tag. Yes, we had a lot of money, but paying $10,000 for a dress you’re going to wear once? Damn!

Dinner was, in a word, perfect. Everyone was home. Mia had gotten back from work and Masen had rehearsal during the day, but was fighting with Emily, so their plans fell through. I knew my wife was over the moon that all of her children were back, even if it was for one night.

The next day, I took Owen shopping with me to find an engagement ring for Tasha. He had some pretty specific requests. “Tasha doesn’t like diamonds, so I want to find a unique and different stone for her ring. Also, she’s allergic to gold. It’ll have to be platinum.”

“Does she have a favorite color?” I asked as I drove him to the jeweler that I got almost all of the jewelry for my family.

“Peach, pink,” Owen said. I nodded and turned into the outdoor shopping center that had a ton of high-end boutiques and jewelry stores. Parking in front of my favorite, I led him inside. We spoke with Ezra, the older gentleman who I preferred to work with, to find Tasha’s ring. Thankfully, we did find a gorgeous ring for Tasha. It was a platinum ring with a large, round morganite stone. Morganite had a peachy-pink color to it. The stone itself, was set in rose gold to enhance the color, with diamonds surrounding it. On the shank of the ring, there were more pave diamonds. Tasha liked diamonds but not as a center stone. Accents were completely appropriate, according to Owen.

After dinner, Owen got back into his car, driving back to Bloomington, Indiana, his engagement ring in his pocket. My son had saved a fair amount of money, paying for half. I paid the other half, saying that he could use the money we’d put into a trust for him to pay me back. Suffice it to say, my kids, my kid’s kids and their kids would want for nothing. Money would never be an issue for any of them.

Big things were happening to our family. My oldest daughter was well into her wedding plans. My oldest son was getting ready to propose to his long-time girlfriend. Mia and Masen were getting ready to go to college, both of them taking their ACTs and SATs. Mia was leaning toward following me to Whitlock Technologies. She had a knack for all things technological, like her old man. She said she wanted to go to MIT. Her grades were strong enough. Masen didn’t have a clue what he wanted to do. He was bright, but his focus was all over the place. He did enjoy performing and music, but on the stage, not like Owen with the discipline of being a music performance major. He
said that he was considering going to school to be a theater major and listed University of California, Los Angeles and University of California, Santa Barbara as his top choices. He was talented, getting the lead in almost all of the productions he was a part of. Perhaps, we had a future movie star in our family.

One thing was for certain, our children were growing up and moving on with their lives. Part of me was proud, but another part was undeniably sad. My babies didn’t need me anymore.

_Sniffle._

*What am I going to do now?*

xx STTD xx

**BPOV**

*Ten months later ... November*

“Kyra,” I breathed as she stood up on the podium in her wedding dress. It had been everything we’d designed it to be. She was a vision of beauty, poise, and ethereal grace. We’d added some more beading to her dress, putting a cluster of crystals in the form of a snowflake on her hip. We also put an extra layer of chiffon with similar, smaller crystals in the skirt. “Did we do well, Alice?”

“I think this is the most exquisite dress I’ve ever seen,” Alice breathed. “You did amazing. Kyra, Steve will fall over when he sees you.”

“You think?” Kyra asked, running her hands down her skirt.

“And you’re the only one among all of us who should have worn white to her wedding,” Rose snickered, enjoying her champagne.

“As weird as it sounds, I’m glad that we decided to wait,” Kyra said, turning around and smiling. “I love him very much. He loves me enough to respect me and respect my body.”

“Please tell me you’re not flying blind, though,” Rose said, arching a brow.

“Mom! Stop,” Ava hissed as she buried her face into her hands. She, along with Mia, Gianna, Melissa and Khaleesi, were with us to try on their bridesmaid dresses. They were similar to Kyra’s, but a shimmery dove grey with similar detailing on the arm and snowflake beading, but not as full in the skirt. Kyra also had a bolero jacket made for Gianna since she was so apprehensive about her scars on her arms.

“What? Sometimes you’ve got to try out the merchandise,” Rose laughed.

“Aunt Rose, we are not flying blind,” Kyra smirked. “Just because I’m still a virgin, doesn’t mean we haven’t fooled around. What do you think we did for this past eighteen months? Held hands and drank tea on the front porch? No!”

“Have you seen him naked?” Mia asked, her eyes wide.

“Mia!” I chastised.

“What? It’s not like I’ll see a penis, a live one, in my lifetime,” she shrugged. I saw Kyra lean over, giving her sister a thumbs up. I rolled my eyes.

“What do we have left to do for the wedding, Kyra?” Alice asked, sitting down next to Rose.
“Everything is all set, really,” Kyra explained. “All we’re waiting for are responses to the invitations, which are being sent to Mom’s house.”

“And your master’s degree?” Rose asked.

“I’m doing the final edit for my Capstone project,” she said, beaming excitedly. “I’m going to have it submitted by the beginning of December. That way, I just have my internship to complete. My boss at DCFS arranged for me to work at a facility similar to Linden Oaks, but located in Evanston. Half of the time, I’m going to work as a representative of DCFS and the rest, as a counselor, getting my internship hours. It’ll take longer since I am getting paid, but it should be done by the summer.”

“You better be going on a honeymoon, Kyra,” Ava said, eyeing her cousin. “You and Steve work too hard.”

“We’re going to Italy. We leave on New Year’s Day and spend almost two weeks traveling the Italian countryside,” Kyra breathed. “Papa helped Steve set it up, using his Italian connection.”

“Where are you going to live after you come back from your honeymoon?” Gianna asked quietly.

“We’re going to stay in my condo. It’s close to my internship and a short el ride for Steve to get to his office,” Kyra explained while the seamstress pinned a few loose spots on her dress. “He’s in the process of moving some of his stuff over, making it easier when we get back from Italy.”

“I thought Steve was going to work for the Cullen Children’s Foundation,” Alice said, confusion clear on her face.

“He is,” Kyra said. “He’s just working with Kate Denali at her firm. They do the work for the Foundation. He also works with the Whitlock account and a few other corporations that use the firm. He’s the low man on the totem pole, but he is quickly moving up the ranks. Kate is impressed with his attention to detail.” The seamstress said that Kyra was done and she disappeared to change back into her clothes.

“How’s Owen doing?” Rose asked. “And his upcoming wedding?”

“Owen is swamped with school,” I answered. “His master’s program is much more intensive. Plus, he’s teaching private lessons and performing non-stop. It’s different than Kyra’s master’s program. Their wedding, thought, is coming along nicely. It’s scheduled for next summer, July thirtieth.”

“Did Tasha find a teaching job in New Haven?” Rose pressed. “They were stressing about her not finding one when they were up here for the July Fourth holiday.”

“She did, just outside of New Haven. It’s an elementary position, traveling between two schools, but she got a full time job,” I smiled. “She loves it.”

Kyra came back and Rose started chattering about the bridal shower she had planned. It was going to happen in a couple of weeks. It had a winter theme since they were getting married on New Year’s Eve. After we finished at the boutique, we went out to lunch before Ava, Melissa and Khaleesi dragged Kyra to discuss her bachelorette party. Mia and Gianna were a little bummed not to be included, but my guess that the party revolved around alcohol, strippers and sex toys.

After getting Kyra’s dress a week later, it felt like someone held down the fast forward button and it was the rehearsal for her wedding day. We were standing in Assumption Catholic Church in Chicago. Kyra was dressed in a gorgeous silvery gray dress with a pair of nude colored heels. Her hair was curled and clipped at the nape of her neck. Steve was in a dark gray suit, no tie and a pair black dress shoes. They were so happy, laughing and excited about their wedding.
Edward, however, was quiet and somber. He had tears in his eyes and was really clingy. He was very upset about Kyra getting married. I was a mess when she went away to college, but Edward was almost inconsolable at the prospect of Kyra’s wedding. It was a big deal for him. He’d always been Kyra’s rock and now? She had Steve. Technically, she had Steve for over five years, but she was giving up her last name and becoming a family with him.

We went to a local pizza parlor for the rehearsal dinner. Alice made some snide comment when she found out we were going to Lou Malnati’s, but she had to realize that Steve’s parents didn’t come from money. Yes, we had paid both Ricky, Steve’s dad, and Steve amazing wages when they worked for us, but to pay for a huge party at some five-star restaurant was asking too much. Kyra and Steve, along with their wedding party, had made the private room we were in look festive and elegant. Dinner was filling and delicious. Probably, it was better than the meal we had planned for the wedding. Then again, I was more of a pizza and beer girl than fancy, frou-frou meals.

“Edward?” came the quiet voice of Steve. My husband looked up and gave him a put-on smile. “Can I speak with you?”

“Is everything okay, Steve?” Edward asked.

“Everything’s fine, but I’d like to talk,” Steve urged. My husband nodded, finishing his beer and following Steve out of the private dining room. Kyra sat down next to me.

“What’s up?” I asked.

“I think Steve is going to put Dad at ease,” Kyra said. “I hope. I hate seeing him so mopey.”

“He’s mopey because he thinks he’s losing you. I’ve tried to explain it to him that you will always be his little girl, despite the fact that you’re getting married and talking about having babies,” I snickered. I took Kyra’s hand, running my finger across her engagement ring. “Your dad will be fine.”

“I hope so,” she whispered.

xx STTD xx

EPOV

December 30th, 2035

Steve and I walked out onto the back patio of Lou Malnati’s. It was cold, but not too frigid. Steve stuffed his hands into his pockets and looked at me. “I can’t help but notice that you’re awfully quiet and sad, Edward,” he said, his brows furrowed. “Is everything okay?”

“Everything’s fine,” I said, waving my hand. “Unless you brought me out here to tell me that you’re secretly in love Oliver and want to bear his children, effectively dumping my daughter.”

“No! I love Oliver, but as a brother and not romantically,” Steve laughed nervously. “His girls are just so adorable. They think I’m their personal trampoline. All they do is bounce on me.” He looked over at me and stared at me intently. “I know you’re upset about losing your daughter.”

“No, I’m not,” I said, stuttering slightly.

“Yes, you are. That’s why you’re so upset. I get it. Kind of,” he chuckled, running his hand through his hair. “I love Kyra. I would do absolutely anything for her. Hell, I did, when we got Gianna.”
“I wanted to kick both your asses for going into that neighborhood,” I said flatly.

“I wanted to haul Kyra over my shoulder and drive us out of there, but she was determined to get Gianna. And we did and thankfully, it turned out okay. She’s here, laughing and flirting with my cousin, Harrison,” Steve said, a smile spreading over his features. “They’d make a cute couple. But, he lives in Alabama. I don’t know if Alice would like it there. I think it’s beautiful, especially the part where Harrison lives. They are right on a lake and we used to go there over summer vacation.”

“My sister can stick it. I’m sorry about her snobby behavior earlier,” I said, making a face.

“I know my family is a bit hillbilly, but we have fun and we love each other no matter what,” Steve said. “Regardless, I wanted to help you understand the depth of feelings I have for your daughter.”

“The fact that you’re talking to me and trying to put my sullen ass at ease, tells me how much you love Kyra,” I said, giving him a genuine smile. “I’m sorry about being such a grump. It’s a parent’s job to worry.” I hugged Steve, which shocked the hell out of him. He returned my embrace and I whispered, “Welcome to the family.”

xx STTD xx

December 31st, 2035

I was standing in an elegant room in the back of a huge Catholic church. Riley, Victoria’s former assistant and now famous photographer in his own right, was taking photos of my daughter as she got ready for her wedding. She looked stunning and so much older than her twenty-four years. Her hair was curled and pinned away from her face with a sparkling snowflake, matching the same decoration on her dress at the hip. The colors for her wedding were a silvery platinum and white, with accents of a darker grey. The tuxedos we wore were dark grey with silvery vests for the groomsmen and a white vest for Steve. The bridesmaids had platinum colored dresses with similar beading to Kyra’s gown. It was a very elegant looking wedding that came with an elegant price tag, too.

It didn’t matter, though. My baby girl deserved the best.

The wedding coordinator stepped in, dressed in a simple gray pant suit. “We’re ready for you,” she said. “Mrs. Cullen, your husband will escort you down the aisle and then come back to walk Kyra.”

Bella stood up, wearing a beautiful lace gown that was a shade or two darker than the bridesmaids. She held a small bouquet of peonies and silver leaves. I offered my arm and we walked to the entrance of the sanctuary. Very traditional organ music piped through the church. Bella and I walked slowly down the aisle, following Steve’s parents, Ricky and Patty. I kissed her gently before helping her into her pew. I walked to the back as the music changed for the bridal party. Kyra had a lot of bridesmaids. Ava was her maid of honor, sharing the responsibility with Mia. She had two since Mia was still in high school and couldn’t plan things like the bachelorette party. The rest of the bridesmaids included Gianna, Melissa, Khaleesi and Tasha. Oliver’s girls were the flower girls/junior bridesmaids. Steve’s best men were Oliver and Owen. The remaining groomsmen included Masen, Johnny, his cousin Harrison and Ava’s twin brother, Lucas. We weren’t sure if Lucas was going to make it since he was away at medical school at Stanford. He had clinical hours and he almost missed his flight because his supervisor wouldn’t release him for whatever reason.

The doors closed after Oliver and Ava walked down the aisle. I stood next to my baby girl and threaded her arm through mine. “You’ve got a wonderful man, Kyra,” I said, staring at her. She was wearing an elegant veil, covering her face. “He loves you so much. I’m honored to welcome him into our family.”
“Daddy,” she whispered, a few tears streaking down her cheeks.

“No tears on your wedding day,” I smirked, wiping them with my handkerchief. “You said so yourself.”

“Happy tears,” she whispered, kissing my cheek. “I may be marrying Steve, but you will always be my guy. I love you, Dad. Thank you for everything.”

“I would do anything for you, Kyra. You know that. Now? That offer includes your husband,” I said. The music changed again and dramatically, the doors opened. Kyra took a deep breath, tightening her grip around my arm. I laid my free hand over it and we began our long trek down the aisle. Kyra was breathing shallowly as Riley snapped photos. Reaching the front of the sanctuary, the music came to an end. The priest smiled softly at the crowd, encouraging them to sit down. The priest prattled on about the sanctity of marriage and all I heard was ‘blah, blah, blah.’ I was trying to keep it together and say my line.

“Who gives this woman to this man?” asked the priest.

Oh! That’s my cue. “Her mother and I do,” I said. I turned, flipping Kyra’s veil off her face and kissing her softly on the forehead. I placed her right hand into Steve’s waiting palm. With a contented sigh, I sat down next to my wife, threading my fingers with hers.

The ceremony was undoubtedly gorgeous. Tasha and Owen played the Ave Maria on the piano and violin while Steve and Kyra lit their unity candle. We sang some hymns, had communion and the priest announced them as husband and wife. Steve took my daughter’s face in his hands, mouthing that he loved her before he tenderly pressed his lips to hers. “Please put your hands together for Mr. and Mrs. Steven and Kyra Burgess!”

The wedding march blared from the organ as Steve kissed Kyra again before walking down the aisle, followed by the rest of the bridal party. After the ceremony, we had pictures at the church. It was a beautiful venue, elegant, and warm. The decorations just added to it. We spent nearly two hours taking photos before Riley dismissed the parents and other various family members. Kyra, Steve and the bridal party were taking photos outside at Millennium Park. It was gorgeous, with just perfect amount of snow twinkling down, making the whole day seem magical.

We made it to the reception, checking on the decorations. Everything seemed okay so we all enjoyed the cocktail hour while we waited for the happy couple to arrive. An hour later, they came in and went directly to the open fire pit in the center of the room. Steve was rubbing Kyra’s arms as she danced on her toes to warm up. We went into the reception shortly after that. The DJ ushered us in, announcing the parents of the bride and groom, the bridal party and Mr. and Mrs. Steven and Kyra Burgess.

Dinner was good, but the cake was amazing. Red velvet, yum! After dessert, Kyra and Steve went onto the dance floor for their first dance. It started off as being a slow, sappy love song then the music changed and they danced this goofy, choreographed routine. Shockingly, Steve was an awesome dancer, lifting my daughter with ease and dipping her at the end, kissing her. Up next was my dance with Kyra. I was nowhere as agile as her husband, so we just danced slowly to “Butterfly Kisses.” Steve danced with his mom, Patty, and then the floor was opened for everyone.

The dance floor stayed open until nearly midnight. At that time, streamers, noise makers, and other New Year’s Eve regalia was passed out. We all went outside, along with the DJ and another set up in a heated tent, complete with television screens and an elaborate countdown sequence. I had my arms around my wife’s body, trying to keep her warm. She smiled softly as the countdown dwindled down to zero. “We did amazing, Edward,” she whispered, looking up at me.
“We did,” I said, kissing her neck. “I’m so grateful for our lives. They were hectic and crazy and perfect. I couldn’t have done it without you, gorgeous.”

She turned in my arms, her fingers tangling into my silvery mop. “I love you, Edward Cullen.”

“I love you more, Isabella Cullen,” I replied, smiling crookedly. I dipped my head, brushing my lips with hers. She sighed as the crowd around us cheered for the New Year. Life couldn’t get more perfect. It really couldn’t.

*Maybe grandkids are bad after all?*

Hmmmmm…

**xx STTD xx**

*Nine months later ... September 2036*

“Alice, this is stupid. Why would Bella want a surprise birthday party for her forty-eighth birthday?” I asked.

“Trust me,” she said. “She’s getting amazing presents. Move that chair over a little bit, Older.”

“You know something, Younger,” I growled, glaring at her.

“I plead the fifth,” she smirked. “Move the damn chair. All of this needs to be done before Bella gets home from her day of beauty with Rose.” She checked her cell phone. “And that leaves us about three hours. Plus, we have guests coming.”

“Who?” I asked.

“You’ll see,” she sang as her phone rang. “Hello? Awesome, come in through the side gate.”

I shook my head, setting up the tables and chairs for my wife’s surprise birthday party. Mia and Masen were helping by cleaning the house and then helping with the decorations. I heard the side gate open up and the sound of voices coming around the corner. My sister was showing a catering company where to set up.

*What. The. Fuck?*

“Mary Alice Whitlock,” I growled.

“Trust me, Edward Anthony Masen Cullen,” she said, her eyes wide. “Why don’t you go and get your hair cut? It’ll calm you down.”

“I’m afraid that if I leave, you’re going to have Bon Jovi set up over by the pool,” I deadpanned.

“Bon Jovi is dead, Older,” she replied, arching a brow. “Get out of here. You’re not helping with all of this negative energy. I don’t need bad mojo. Shoo! But be back before five!” I rolled my eyes, figuring I wasn’t going to understand my sister. We were fifty-three. It hasn’t happened yet. It sure won’t happen anytime soon. I went and got my hair cut. Better to walk away then try and figure out the crazy.

I came back around four-thirty. Kyra, Steve, Owen and Tasha were here, along with the rest of our huge, dysfunctional family. “Hey guys,” I said, hugging everyone. “You here for Mom’s birthday?”

“Yep,” Kyra replied. “Aunt Alice called and we couldn’t say no.”
“She wouldn’t let us say no,” Steve deadpanned. Kyra elbowed him, giving him a harsh look.

“Your clothes are on your bed, Older,” Alice said. She had changed and was now wearing a deep purple dress. Everyone was milling around, drinking champagne or sparkling grape juice. “Go up. Change!”

“You are so bossy, Younger,” I sighed, going upstairs. On the bed were a pair of black pants, light gray button-down and a paisley tie. I scowled at the tie, hating to wear them on the weekend, but I put it anyway. “Edward! I need you down here! Now!”

I splashed on some cologne, jogging down the stairs. Everyone was in the tent that overwhelmed our backyard. “Is she on her way?”

“Rose just texted me,” Alice said, waving her phone in my face. I pushed it out of my face, smirking blandly. She ran over to Jasper, wrapping her arms around his waist. He kissed her sweetly. Then, Jasper pulled his daughter to his side. She eagerly hugged him back. Thankfully, Gianna had bounced back from the darkness that overwhelmed her. She was a senior in high school, preparing to go to Northwestern University to become a psychologist, following Kyra’s footsteps. Adam, her older brother, smiled, thrilled that everything calmed down with his family. He was living in the city, working as a pharmacist at one of the major hospitals.

Demetri and Alex were cuddling their granddaughter, Anna, doting on her. They’d both taken to grandparenthood easily. Alex did quit his job and spent his time as a full-time nanny for Anna. Justin and Sarah were enjoying the moment, kissing softly in the corner.

Charlie and Sue were talking to my parents. Charlie had tendered his resignation/retirement shortly after he’d had a mild heart attack. They were now living in Canada in the summer time, fishing and relaxing, and then Jacksonville in the winter, right next door to his ex, Renee. She had moved to Jacksonville just before Steve had started law school. Bella helped her move in, flying down with Steve so he could help his parents get settled back in their old life. Renee and Phil were down there full time. Phil was teaching and coaching at some local community college while Renee helped out with the Foundation in the south.

Esme and Marcus were also considering moving to the south, closer to Renee, Phil, Charlie and Sue. The past winter was not easy on them. Marcus had fallen and broken his leg. It took a long time to heal. They wanted a house that had one floor, no stairs and most importantly, no snow. I’d miss the hell out of them, but I think it was time for them to go someplace warm for their health. They needed to be snowbirds, migrating south for the winter.

Our extended family of our bodyguards were huddled near the appetizers. Oliver and Senna were engaged and Senna was going to adopt the girls. Johnny and Eric finally got their shit together and reunited. They were the oddest couple, but unbelievably happy. Johnny was six-five and muscle bound while Eric was a few inches taller than my wife, looking more feminine than anything. Steve was laughing with them, my daughter cuddled close to him.

Ava, Rose’s daughter, was chatting with her dad and her longtime boyfriend, Cole. They were living in the suburbs while Ava worked as a journalist for one of the suburban online newspapers. She also ran a blog, working closely with my daughter, about bullying, teasing and how deal with it. Cole, Ava’s boyfriend, worked as a high school teacher, educating the youth of Napervilie about biology and zoology. Lucas was headlong into his medical school studies and was not here.

“Oh my gosh! They’re here!” Alice breathed. “Be quiet!”

We got quiet and waited.
“I don’t understand why I’m all dressed up to go home, Rosalie,” Bella grumbled.

“Maybe SGD has a hot date planned for you,” Rose answered. “Spend some time getting freaky between the sheets.”

“Gross,” Masen groaned. “I do not need that visual.”

“Shhht!” Alice hissed.

“Rose, why the hell is there a huge gray tent in my backyard?” Bella asked.

“Because …” Rose sang, dragging her into the tent. “SURPRISE!” We all yelled and cheered and threw streamers.

“Oh, shit!” she squeaked, covering her face. “Edward?”

“Not me,” I said flatly, pointing to my sister. “This was her brainchild.”

“Come on! It’s fun!” Alice said, running to give my wife a hug. “Happy birthday, Bella!”

“Yay, I’m forty-eight,” she said, wrinkling her nose.

“Here, Mom. Have some champagne,” Kyra said, handing her a flute.

Bella thanked her and sidled up to me. “Did everyone hear Rose with the freaky thing?” she asked.

“We scarred our youngest son,” I snickered, kissing her pink, pouty lips. “You cut your hair. It’s gone.” Her long curls were now replaced with a shoulder-length bob. “Why?”

“It was fried, Edward,” she said. “All of the coloring. So, I decided to do something new. Sorry you don’t have anything to hold onto when we do get freaky between the sheets.”

“I think I’m going to puke,” Masen grumbled as pushed past us.

“It’s not like we don’t know that you get freaky between the sheets, Mase,” I deadpanned. That stopped him, causing him to look at me with wide eyes. “Just because you earned your door back doesn’t mean that the walls are soundproof.”

“Ummm …” he stammered. “It’s not what you think.”

“I found three condom wrappers on the floor, Masen,” Bella snorted. “You’ve lost your door again and you’re grounded.”

“Shit,” he moaned, stomping away.

“At least, he was being safe,” I said, putting my head on her shoulder.

“Small victories,” Bella sighed, turning to kiss me.

“Everyone, come and get some food,” Alice called out. “We have Bella’s favorites.”

“All of Bella’s favorites,” Renee sang. “I gave the recipe to the caterer.”

“Oh, no,” Bella moaned. Renee picked up a plate and filled it with something so disgusting. Renee handed it to her, beaming excitedly. “Mom, you really shouldn’t have.”

“It’s your birthday. I had to,” Renee beamed.
“What is that?” Steve asked, his nose wrinkled.

“Deep fried bananas with tartar sauce,” Bella answered, distaste coloring her tone.

“That actually sounds pretty good,” Kyra said, taking the plate from Renee. “Thanks, Grams.” She dug in, moaning deeply as she inhaled the foul delicacy.

Steve’s nostrils flared. “I think I threw up in my mouth a little bit,” he whispered to me.

“You’re not the only one,” I whispered back.

Everyone got their food. Kyra was the only one who touched the banana thing. After we ate, Rose and Alice rolled out a huge birthday cake. We all sang to Bella and she blew out all forty-eight candles, much to her chagrin. Justin set up a projector and a movie of Bella’s life began playing on the side of the tent.

“Bella, you were so cute as a kid. What happened?” Rose teased.

“You’re a bitch, Rosalie,” Bella laughed. “I’m still cute.”

“No, gorgeous,” I said, holding my wife on my lap.

“Look, there’s Dad! God! Your hair was so poofy!” Ava laughed. “You knew Aunt Bella when you were a kid?”

“Since we were in eighth grade,” Tim said.

“And we didn’t get along until much, much later, Ava,” Bella said, ruffling Tim’s hair.

“I was an ass,” he shrugged.

“Look! That was our first date, Edward,” Bella squealed, pointing to the photo that Mrs. Cope, Bella’s former elementary school librarian, took for us in Phoenix. “We were so young. And skinny!”

“Nice legs, Dad,” Mia giggled. “Way to be pasty.”

“And scrawny,” Owen piped in. “You were so nerdy looking.”

“Hush,” I snickered. “And newsflash, I am still a nerd.”

“Mom, your wedding dress was so beautiful,” Kyra breathed, when photos from our wedding danced across the screen. “You two make such a gorgeous couple.”

“Quickly followed by pregosaurus rex,” Rose snickered as the wedding photo from Marcus and Esme’s wedding appeared. “I’m still shocked that your doctor let you fly when you were pregnant with Kyra. You were so big, woman.”

“I ballooned with you, principessa,” Bella said. “And I was so sick at the end. Thankfully, you arrived safely.”

“And you have dual citizenship here and in Italy,” Marcus added.

“That’s right. I was born at your wedding,” Kyra smiled. “I forgot that. We should go back, Steve.”

“We will, sweetness,” Steve said, kissing her lips. “Soon.” He looked up as Kyra’s baby picture
flashed across the screen. “You were such a beautiful baby, Kyra.” She blushed, snuggling in her husband’s arms.

“And then there was me with a cone head,” Owen groaned.

“You were stuck,” Bella said. The pictures moved quickly through Mia and Masen’s birth and then first days of school, birthday parties, and vacations and just silly times among the family. The video montage changed with the graduation of Kyra from high school and then Owen, morphing into their homes they created on campus of their universities. Mia and Masen were represented as well with pictures of Max, Masen’s productions, Mia’s various sporting events and of course, their car. Photos and videos from Kyra and Steve’s wedding flashed past, followed by more recent photos of Owen’s wedding to Tasha, which happened a few months ago. Then, there was a video of both of my oldest children, with their spouses, sitting on the couch in the living room.

“We didn’t plan it this way, but somehow it happened,” video Kyra explained. Steve kissed her temple and wrapped his arm around her waist.

“It was just fate,” Owen smiled, brushing his lips against Tasha’s mouth.

“You’re going to be a grandma!” all of them announced on the screen.

“What?” Bella screeched.

“Look at the screen, Mom,” Kyra said. On the screen, there were two ultrasound pictures. One said ‘Baby Burgess: Due March 17th, 2037.’ The other said, ‘Baby Boy Cullen: Due January 19th, 2037.’

“You’re both pregnant?” Bella asked, tears flowing down her cheeks. Kyra got up and nodded, hugging her mom tightly. Steve handed her the ultrasound photo. “Edward, we’re going to be grandparents.” She ran to me, showing me the photo of Kyra’s bean. Absently, she handed me the photo and hugged Tasha, pressing her hand to Tasha’s now obvious belly. “A boy …”

“Yeah,” Tasha. “He was unexpected, but very welcomed. Birth control and antibiotics negate each other and he was the result.” She bit her lip, looking at me. “We want to name him after his grandfather.”

“Edward Anthony Cullen II,” Owen smiled.

“After me?” I asked. Tasha nodded, taking my hand and pressing it to her belly. “Wow. I’d be honored. A grandbaby.”

“Two grandbabies, Dad,” Kyra said. “Though, I’m a little miffed that my younger brother is having the first Cullen grandbaby. You just got married.”

“Super atomic sperm,” he smirked.


“Oh, no. There’s one kid baking in my belly, Steven James,” Kyra deadpanned. “The doctors checked.” His face fell comically, earning laughter all around.

“This was the most amazing birthday present. Ever,” Bella murmured, looking at both Tasha and Kyra.
“Now do you understand why I wanted to throw the surprise party?” Alice huffed.

“You knew?” I asked.

“I called her when we found out and swore her to secrecy. I threatened to burn her clothes,” Kyra said, glowering at Alice. “We didn’t know about Owen and Tasha until they came into town and boom, there’s this baby belly.”

“This was so worth it,” Bella sang. “Grandchildren … our babies are having babies!”

Rose snorted, throwing her arm over Steve’s shoulder and pulling me to her side. “It’s finally happened, Edward.”

“What?” I asked.

“You’re a SGG,” she laughed.

“What’s that?” Demetri asked, balancing Anna in his arms.

“A Sexy, Geeky Geezer,” Rose cackled.

“No, Rosalie. A Sexy, Geeky Grandfather,” Bella corrected, hugging me. “Get it right, woman.”

“Yeah, get it right. I’m a Sexy, Geeky Grandfather and I’m fucking proud of it.” And I was, living the perfect, geeky dream. The dream I never thought I’d get, but by the grace of God, I did.

One thing I knew for certain, my dream came true because I was a geek and so was my dream girl. We never changed who we were. We loved each other unconditionally and we loved our children unconditionally. Geeks, nerds and all.

We all lived happily ever after.

_of course I had to end our geeky fairy tale that way_.

Because we did. Live happily ever after

Fin

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