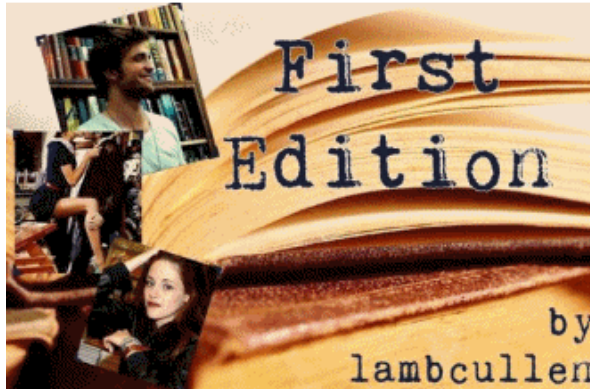


First Edition by lambcullen

Summary:

He watched her for weeks and wanted her for just as long. Can one lonely day in his bookstore bring them together. Bella & Edward. OOC AH





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Story Notes:

S Meyer owns all things Twilight. I just twist them into my own shapes.

1. **Chapter 1** by lambcullen
2. **Chapter 2** by lambcullen
3. **Chapter 3** by lambcullen
4. **Chapter 4** by lambcullen
5. **Chapter 5** by lambcullen
6. **Chapter 6** by lambcullen
7. **Chapter 7** by lambcullen
8. **Chapter 8** by lambcullen
9. **Chapter 9** by lambcullen
10. **Chapter 10** by lambcullen
11. **Chapter 11** by lambcullen
12. **Chapter 12** by lambcullen
13. **Chapter 13** by lambcullen
14. **Chapter 14** by lambcullen

- 15. **Chapter 15** by lambcullen
- 16. **Chapter 16** by lambcullen
- 17. **Chapter 17** by lambcullen
- 18. **Chapter 18** by lambcullen
- 19. **Chapter 19** by lambcullen
- 20. **Chapter 20** by lambcullen
- 21. **Chapter 21** by lambcullen
- 22. **Chapter 22** by lambcullen
- 23. **Chapter 23** by lambcullen
- 24. **Chapter 24** by lambcullen
- 25. **Chapter 25** by lambcullen

Chapter 1 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>I do hope you like Bookward, ladies.</p> <p>Love & hugs to my amazing beta Maylin.</p> <p>Boob gropes to Elusivekoolaid for prereading.</p>

EPOV

I watched her.

I *always* watched her.

Much more than a thirty-three year old man should. I'd watched her come into the store every Thursday for the last six weeks. She'd always smiled shyly, lowering her head slightly. The movement would make her hair slip from behind her ear, making me wonder just how soft it was. Her dark locks would frame her petite face, and provide a stark contrast to her pale skin tone.

She intrigued me.

She never bought anything from my bookstore, just wandered the aisles, touching the battered and broken spines and pulling them out randomly to look at the covers.

Thursdays were quiet days for the store. I would get two or three customers, at best, but I'd begun to look forward to them. To her. I'd check my watch from eleven thirty, even though her usual time was around one o'clock. She'd stay two hours, no more, no less, then she'd leave with an innocent little wave. The bell above the door would chime as it closed, and it would be as if she had never been here.

Only her pretty lilac scent remained.

She was a complete mystery, and one I needed to solve.

Just last week, I was certain she'd whispered 'bye', but it had been so quiet it was drowned out by the bell. I'd promised myself that this week I was going to talk to her, or at the very least say hello. I didn't even know her name, and I couldn't keep mentally referring to her as bookgirl.

I'd told no one about my strange obsession with her. How could I? She wasn't even a customer; more like a browser, because that was all she ever did.

Browse.

But then so did I. I was just looking at her instead of books. She must know how entranced I was with her. She mesmerized me.

Today she'd appeared upset. She'd dropped her backpack onto the threadbare chair in the corner of the store, and taken off her coat. Bookgirl had flung it dejectedly on top of her pack, sighing. I held in a gasp, amazed at the way her white t-shirt pulled tightly across her breasts. I moved from behind the cash register as she walked towards the other side of the store. I followed her slowly, making sure she didn't see me. I felt like a sick stalker, but I couldn't get enough.

She never started at the same section, and to me, her choices seemed completely random. Today she started with *Science Fiction*. It wasn't my particular choice of reading matter, but it was extremely popular.

I hid behind the end of a bookcase, breathing quietly and hoping she couldn't hear the loud crashing of my heart against my chest.

She ghosted her fingers along the spines of the books. The store was so quiet I could hear her fingertips flick across them. There was also another weary sigh. She was definitely troubled. Everything within me screamed to ask her what was wrong, but I fisted my hands and just continued to study her.

Her tongue darted out, as she scrutinized the titles. It ran slowly across her bottom lip, making my groin twitch and skin heat. My trousers became impossibly tight when she stretched up to the top shelf to retrieve a book. Her top lifted, showing a sliver of skin across her abdomen, just above her jeans. It was creamy and delectable, making my mouth water.

I tried to see which book she'd removed, but she turned slightly, giving me the most delicious view of her ass.

I was lost.

There was something about today that was calling to me more than usual. Whether it was her evident sadness, or her slivers of flesh, I didn't know. Images of how I would touch that skin, and what I would do to her shot through my head, making me perspire. I wanted her under me, over me and panting against me. Never in my thirty-three years had I had this kind of reaction to another person.

I tried to convince myself just knowing her name would be enough. However, the moment another small sigh left her lips, I knew that wouldn't be possible. The little sounds were making my stomach clench, so Lord knows what her words would do to me.

She replaced the book and strolled slowly to the next aisle, flicking her hair and kneeling down to peruse the lower shelf. I gulped. The denim stretched across her ass, at the same time her top rode up. She had two fucking dimples at the base of her spine. I licked my lips, desperate to taste them; to dip my tongue into the little dents. I must have groaned, or made some sort of noise, because she looked around sharply. I shifted quickly back behind the shelves, panting. I really was a stalker. This wasn't what normal men did.

Bookgirl adjusted herself and sat crossed legged on the floor facing the bookshelf. Her hair fell forward, like a curtain concealing her face from me. Like the deranged stalker I clearly was, I tip toed around the shelves to the other end. That way, I could see her properly again.

Her lips were pursed as her finger skimmed across the page, and a tiny frown was evident on her forehead. The urge to kiss it away built within me, making my hands fist and my jaw rigid.

It wasn't the only thing that was rigid.

Christ, I really was perverted.

Again, she returned the book back to its place, and I thought she was going to stand up, but she leaned back, resting on her hands and stared in my direction. I was hidden by the wood, but my skin prickled in awareness. Bookgirl knew I was here, watching her.

I swallowed hard at the emotion rising in my throat. Guilt? Shame? I had no idea. I weighed up my options, wondering if I should finally say something and introduce myself.

"I know you're there," her soft voice floated out, breaking the silence.

She sounded confidant, and at ease with the fact that I was effectively stalking her. I found that a little odd, especially given her demeanour when she'd entered the store.

Taking a deep breath, I revealed myself, shoving my fingers nervously through my messy hair.

“Um, hi?”

“Did you *want* me for something?” she whispered seductively.

I shook my head a little. Were my ears playing tricks on me? Had she really just purred the ‘want’ part of that sentence?

“I could ask the same about you,” I retorted.

“Touché.”

She raised her eyebrows at me, as if silently asking for more. The problem was I didn’t know what. I pushed up the sleeves of my shirt, as she toed off her Vans. Apparently, she was staying.

“Sit with me, Bookguy.”

“*Bookguy?*”

She shrugged.

“Sure. Better than say, weirdo, or stalker,” she replied staring right at me.

The lump in my throat got a little larger, as my jeans appeared tighter. There was no fucking hope for me. I looked over to the door, making sure no one had wandered in and I simply hadn’t heard them, before sitting alongside her on the floor. It was oddly claustrophobic sitting here surrounded by shelves of books. I took in the titles, realizing what section we were in.

“Mythology?” I questioned.

Again, she shrugged nonchalantly.

“Have you been looking for something in particular?”

“You could say that.”

What was with the evasive answers?

“You’ve been coming here for a while now, and haven’t bought anything. If you tell me what it is maybe I could track it down for you. Order it in.”

She knocked her foot against mine and glanced at me through the top of her eyes.

“The thing is...what I want can’t be ordered in. It’s kinda already here.”

I was completely confused now. If what she wanted was here, then why didn’t she buy it?

“Is it in this section? You’re going to have to help me out here. I’m a little perplexed,” I stated softly.

She leaned forward, resting her elbow on her knees. It pushed her breasts together, making my mouth water at the sight of her deep cleavage. I gulped and tried to keep my eyes on hers. However her big brown eyes seemed to be asking me questions that I simply couldn’t read.

“Oh,” she giggled lightly. “It’s definitely in this section. It’s rather edible.”

“Vampires?” I asked, making the link between mythology and biting.

“If you like. I’ve never tried that kinda kinky shit before, but I’m game.”

I held my hands up in surrender, and shook my head.

“I’m completely confused. I’m sorry if I’m being somewhat dense, but what book is it that you want?”

“Did I say it was a book? Sorry, my bad. I should have been clearer...”

The bell on the front door interrupted us. I stood and wiped down my jeans, before muttering I’d be right back. I tried to focus on the customer, but my mind kept going back to the brunette in the mythology aisle. What the hell did she want, if she wasn’t interested in my books?

I was thankful the customer only wanted to collect a previously reserved book. I rang it up on the register, and tried to calm the erratic beat of my heart before walking back to my bookgirl. She was sitting in the exact same place I’d left her, watching the end of the aisle, waiting for me. I walked slowly, and stopped just in front of her. She smiled at me, licking her top lip slowly and almost making me jizz in my jeans.

What the fuck?

“I think I’ve been a bit vague,” she purred. “Maybe this will make things a little clearer for you.”

With that, she began to stand, but it was incredibly slowly and her face was inches from my shin, then my knee, and up to my thigh.

Holy fuck, her face was in my crotch. I swear she hummed as she moved up my abdomen, and eventually stood upright at chest level.

“Does that make things clearer?”

I had two options. I could feign ignorance and get her to tell me exactly what, or rather *who* she wanted, or I could be a fucking man and accept she wanted me.

Holy fuck.

I inhaled sharply and made the first move, shoving my fingers into the hair on the back of her head and crashing my mouth to hers. She responded immediately, fisting the front of my shirt in her hands and pulling me as close as she could. It was her tongue that entered my mouth first, sliding harshly against mine, and making me growl. Lust took over, and I no longer had a clear thought in my head. I slammed her into the bookcase, making it shake, and many titles tumbled around us onto the floor. I’d never been this crazed, and certainly not after one solitary kiss, but there was something about her taste, her scent that was making me see red. I wanted her and didn’t give a fuck where we were.

Her tongue skimmed my teeth, as I hitched her leg up to wrap around mine. I gripped tightly onto her thigh at the exact moment she let go of my shirt, and reached for the buttons. With a calmness I envied she slipped each tiny disc from its little slot, until my chest was completely exposed to her. I felt her small hands roam over my pecs and down across my abs, making them twitch. I ripped my mouth from hers, panting for air.

Book girl crossed her arms and reached for the hem of her t-shirt, pulling it roughly over her head and flinging it across the store. It flitted through my mind that if anyone came into the store now we were done for. The customer would never return. However, I couldn’t begin to make myself care. Not with her amazingly creamy breasts ready for my mouth. I could already see her dark nipples pressing against the white lace, almost poking through.

I shook my shirt off, as my mouth descended, sucking on her erect peak over the material. She moaned and my cock throbbed. Her hands wove into my hair, holding my head at her tits. I couldn’t have moved anyway, she was entirely too fucking delicious. I nibbled at her nipple, making her knees buckle and eliciting a small gasp from her.

My fingers snapped open her bra, and I heard it drop on the floor, but by then I had my hands filled with her smooth skin. I cupped her breasts, flicking her nipples with my thumbs. She pushed her hips towards me, making me growl again. I wanted this woman badly. I was out of my mind with lust for her. I begrudgingly let go of one tit, but only so I could hitch her leg back up around mine. She tried to ride my thigh, and desperate for more of her, I pushed mine harder against her.

I could hear our panting getting louder, as the little noises of approval got closer together. I stroked my tongue along her collar bone in one long sweep. She tugged on my hair, whispering for me to continue, so I swirled it into the little dent at the base of her throat. I could feel the vibrations of her enjoyment, as she purred and rubbed against me wildly.

Her hand loosened in my hair and skimmed down across my face and throat to my torso. She began to peruse each muscle and indent, turning her hand slightly, as she reached the top of my jeans. Before I could say anything, or remove my mouth from her chest, she pushed her fingers under the denim and down to touch my erect cock. I snarled into her tits, making her giggle. Her fingers wrapped around my erection tightly and she pumped me three times, before circling her thumb over the head. I knew it would be wet with my pre cum. I was shaking from holding myself in check, but I almost lost my shit when she removed her hand and sucked her thumb into her mouth. She was looking me straight in the eyes, her brown ones glittering in arousal. Her tongue lapped at the cum on her thumb, as she hummed.

“Fucking hell!” I groaned.

“Am I clear now?” she asked playfully.

“Christ yes!”

She pushed at my chest, moving her leg and began unbuttoning her jeans, shoving them over her hips and down her thighs. She eventually kicked them across the floor. I noticed the store was a mess, but it was of little concern to me. I wanted one thing.

Bookgirl.

She stood against the bookcase in her white lacy panties, waving a silver packet in my face. I made a mental note to ask her afterwards exactly how long she’d been planning this little seduction. She nodded at my open jeans, gesturing for me to remove them. I didn’t need to be asked twice. I tugged them down, along with my underwear, and made a grab for her. She laughed loudly, twirling from my grasp, and running down the aisle.

Oh, really? Playful much?

I chased after her, catching her before she even reached the next section, and fixed my mouth onto hers. Our tongues danced and lips mashed, as we both moaned from the lust controlling us. I cupped her ass tightly, picking her up. Her legs instantly wrapped around my waist and her ankles locked over my naked ass. Our kiss got harsher, as I walked over to the low research table and sat her on it. She immediately reached for my hard cock. It was almost painful and throbbing for attention, but I needed to be inside of her. I ached with want.

My fingers pulled on her panties until she lifted her hips, and allowed me to remove them slowly. I could smell her arousal, a heady musky scent that made me want her even more. Her pussy was glistening, showing me just how affected she was by what was happening between us. It also told me foreplay was over, and I ripped the foil packet from her grasp. I was going to bury myself so deep inside of her she would never want for anyone else.

She watched me sheath myself, and I almost collapsed when she opened her thighs wide and skimmed a finger down her slit. With her wet finger she beckoned me forward. I took it into my mouth and tasted her essence, as I stepped between her thighs. She was fucking delicious. I continued to suck on her finger, as I ran my cock up and down her wet pussy. Bookgirl lost her cool and hissed at me.

“Stop fucking around and fuck me!” she demanded.

I blinked at her, but couldn’t stop the smirk that formed on my lips. She was feisty. I fucking loved it.

My hands gripped her ass, and I pulled her forward, shoving my cock inside of her in one long stroke. We both gasped loudly at the contact. I tried to focus on my breathing, because I was stunned at just how close

to losing it I really was. This whole escapade was beyond any dream. Bookgirl wasn't willing to wait, though, she wanted fast and fierce. She was rocking her hips and pulling me closer.

I lowered my head to her chest and took her nipple into my mouth, as I pumped forcefully into her. She was soaked, and I slid in and out so smoothly I groaned with each movement.

Her breathing was now short little gasps of delight. The harder I fucked her, the more books scattered around us, but the more my girl screamed. She was insatiable.

Her nails were biting into my ass, and I could see teeth marks on her chest, as we both neared our completion. Bookgirl yelled out first, as I felt her begin to spasm around my cock. Her chest mottled red and her eyes fluttered closed. The clenching of her body around my dick made me growl into her neck and spill my load into the condom. My whole body was wracked with twitches, like nothing I'd ever experienced. It was the wildest, most carnal sex I'd ever had.

It had been fucking amazing.

"Wow," I panted into her neck.

"Pretty fucking good, right?" she answered smugly.

I nodded, but scowled as she pushed me away. I slipped out of her pussy and she hopped down off the table. She didn't look back at me, just walked towards the aisle where our clothes were scattered. By the time I'd got to grips with my thoughts and my body was functioning enough to walk she was dressing herself.

"Um, was that OK?" I asked, stunned by the mood change.

"It was hot, but I gotta go. I've been here longer than I should. It's past three."

She smiled and shrugged her backpack on. I noticed she hadn't bothered with the bra this time, and her nipples were still hard. My cock stirred again.

I scratched my head, bewildered, as she kissed me quickly on the lips.

"That was the best way to spend two hours, ever. Thank you, Edward."

She knew my name. How? I realized at that point I didn't know hers, but as I raced to put my jeans on, I knew it was too late.

She was gone.

All that was left was her scent, and the tinkling of the bell above the door.

End Notes:
<p>O.O</p> <p>Well, what the hell, Bella?</p> <p>Thanks for reading</p>

xx

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 2 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>Maylin (my awesome beta) has put up with my ramblings and helped me hash out the outline.</p> <p>Elusivekoolaid for being my friend & dealing with my freakouts. ILY.</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

BPOV

I checked my watch, as I rushed into the diner. I was late.

Fuck.

I glanced around the room, searching for them. My heart was still pounding, and it wasn't just from having to rush to get here. Edward had given me the best sex of my life. I hadn't been lying when I said it was an amazing two hours. However, that was my little diversion, real life now took over.

I started to panic when I couldn't see them. Had I missed them? I didn't think I was that late. The diner was packed, and I tried to get my bearings to hunt them down. It was difficult, because my mind kept racing back to a certain bookstore. I could practically feel his hands on me, as the books tumbled around us.

I shook my head, hoping to dislodge all thoughts of Edward and the Mythology section.

"Mommy!" a shrill cry came from the far corner of the room.

A huge smile spread across my face at the sight of my four year old daughter. She was the light of my life, but wore me out. She was forever on the move. Like right now, her curly blond bunches bobbed as she bounced excitedly in her seat.

"Mommy, Mommy, Mommy!"

I laughed, strolling closer, and kissing her nose, before wrapping my arms around her tightly.

"You're late," Jasper drawled.

"Sorry," I replied, my tone inferring that I really wasn't. "I got kinda waylaid, and hey, I've never been late before. Cut me some slack!"

Jasper nodded, his lips pursed at my non-apology. He was frowning at me intensely; his ice blue eyes assessing my every move. He knew what I'd been doing, or at least suspected. He was always too damn perceptive for his own good.

I dumped my back pack under the table and stole a fry from his plate, glaring defiantly back at him. I was silently daring him to say something, but knew he wouldn't. Jasper wouldn't voice anything like that in front of Gracie.

"Mommy! I did it! I swam without any water wings."

"Really baby? Wow, that is so clever!" I replied, watching her little face light up at my encouragement.

Gracie then proceeded to tell me all about exactly how her wings had come to be removed. I listened to her, but was conscious of the glares from Jasper. I refused to feel guilty for taking two hours for myself. The world hadn't come to an end, because I was ten minutes late.

“...said, because I was such a good girl, I could get a new swimming costume. I want a Hannah Montana one!”

I blinked trying to follow her words. She was starting to remind me of Alice, because of the speed at which she spoke. My head was already spinning.

“Hannah Montana?” I asked incredulously. “Haven’t I told you you’re too young to watch that?”

“Daddy let me,” Gracie replied petulantly.

“Oh, really?”

I raised my brows at Jasper, waiting for him to excuse himself, but the cocky bastard just smirked at me, shrugging his shoulders.

“I thought we’d agreed she was too young. Jasper, you can’t do this. It makes me out to be the nasty evil parent, while you’re the fun one.”

“Listen to the pot calling the kettle!” he snorted. “I caught her singing a certain *Buckcherry* song this morning in the pool. Apparently, she knows every word to *Crazy you-know-what*.”

Rolling my eyes, I agreed he had a point. I did tend to treat her more like my friend than my daughter. Jasper didn’t fare much better. We were not the most conventional of parents, but we got by, and Gracie was happy and well adjusted.

“I have to go. Ali is picking out the wedding cake, and if I don’t get there quickly enough it will be nothing more than tiered slabs of chocolate.”

“Oo yummy!” Gracie added, making us both grin.

“Can you get Ali to call me later? I *really* need to talk to her.”

Jasper slid out of the plastic chair and pulled his gym bag over his shoulder. He kissed Gracie, telling her to be good and that he loved her, before placing his lips at my ear. I braced myself, knowing what was coming.

“I’ll bet you need to talk to her. I can *see* exactly what you need to talk about.”

I smirked deviously as he kissed my cheek.

“The foods been paid for, and I left an envelope in her bag. I noticed she needs new sneakers.”

“I want Hannah Montana ones!”

I took his hand and kissed his knuckles.

“Thanks Jazz. Have fun with the cake, and get her to call me!”

Jasper simply saluted me, as he walked from the diner, leaving me and our daughter alone.

Gracie was finally silent, chewing away on her burger and looking at a magazine. I groaned internally and sent a text to Jasper, cursing him for buying her a Hannah Montana one. He would suffer for this kind of mental torture. He always spoiled her, and no amount of talking to him changed that. She was the apple of his eye. If I was honest, Gracie was worshipped by us all. She was something I never knew I wanted, until she was growing inside of me.

My father adored her, and liked nothing more than being referred to as Grandpa Charlie.

She'd been a surprise. Jasper and I had used protection, and even when that little blue line appeared on the stick, I still didn't believe it. I'd done everything right. We'd used a condom, so neither one of us really understood how she'd occurred. On reflection, I doubt we'd have it any other way.

We'd known nothing about each other, but he'd stuck around, and we'd even tried to be together. Our own little family, but only four weeks after Gracie was born, Alice had entered our lives. The moment he looked at her I knew he'd met his one. To his credit, he stayed and tried to make us work, but we were miserable. Eventually, it was me that had called time on our relationship, if that's what it was. I was the one that sent him to Alice. My father thought I was a complete head case, but then nothing shocked Charlie where I was concerned.

Everyone was happier now. Alice had become a huge part of our odd little family. She was my best friend, and that fact still made me laugh. I was technically best friends with 'the other woman'. The trouble was I'd never looked at her in that way, mainly because I'd never loved Jasper. I adored him because he was the father of my child, and he was an exceptional one at that, but there would never be anything more than that between us.

Thursdays were swim days. Jasper took Gracie for her lessons every week and that gave me two hours to kill. I'd been browsing the town when I'd first seen him.

Edward.

He'd been outside the bookstore, laughing loudly with another guy. My first thought was that he was gay, because the other guy was being awfully touchy feely with him. At one point he actually kissed his cheek. It was a bit of a turn on to watch them, they were both attractive men. That initial assessment faded the longer I watched, though. The same couldn't be said for his friend.

That was the day I found out his name. It was also the night I started to dream about him.

I watched the way he'd run his long fingers through his freaky colored hair. I was certain there was no exact name for the shade of it. It was beyond human. I noticed he was about the same height as Jasper, and had similar muscle tone. I clearly had a type when it came to men.

My heart pounded as I walked into the store. I'd stood outside for fifteen minutes wondering if I should just go in and talk to him. Jasper said I scared people with just how forward I was. I didn't want to scare him off, so I decided I would go in and look. That was all. I knew he saw me when I entered, and every time I went in afterwards, but he remained silent. Today had been my 'Jasper' day. The day I took charge and went for what I wanted, just like when I'd sent Jasper to Alice. Hence the term.

The whole liaison in the mythology aisle had made my legs weak. I'd never met a man that could make me come so violently; I was still throbbing. My palms itched to feel him again. He'd been so hard, and so damn ready to fuc...

"Mommy, are you listening?"

"Sorry, baby. I was a million miles away. What were you saying?"

"Daddy said the store around the corner has Hannah sneakers. Can we go and see? Please, Momma?"

I groaned. We could, but I didn't want to bump into Edward, at least not until I figured what the hell was going on. Was he just a fuck? Did I want to see him again? I'd cleared out of there pretty fast, so maybe he wouldn't want to see me again. Maybe Edward made a habit of fucking his customers against the books.

I was tying myself in knots, and I knew only Alice could help me with it. Gracie had begun to pack her things and was staring at me expectantly.

"OK," I sighed. "But you're not having the Hannah ones."

Gracie complained all the way to the store, and after forty minutes finally decided on some pink glittery ones. According to her, they would sparkle in the sun, and Hannah would totally wear them. I worried for my sanity. Alice was spending too much time with my daughter.

She skipped ahead of me, and I kept my head down as we walked past the bookstore. The closed sign was hanging in the window, and I frowned, wondering if he usually closed on a Thursday afternoon.

Gracie climbed into her booster seat, mumbling away to herself. I caught fragments; it was something about Daddy, Alice and the sneakers. I didn't want to know, because I had a feeling she'd end up with those damn Hannah ones anyway. I turned on the radio and we sang as I drove us home.

Charlie was waiting when we got back. He sat on the couch and listened to Gracie ramble on about everything that had happened today. I envied her. I really needed to do that, but I didn't think Charlie would be very receptive to that little gem.

"Has Ali called?" I questioned nervously.

"Nope. You OK? You look flushed."

Shit, did I?

I fidgeted under his gaze, feeling like a child again, and hoping to Christ he wasn't as perceptive as Jasper.

"Um, I'm good," I squeaked.

"Sure you are."

I knew he didn't believe me, but I didn't care at the moment. I couldn't wait until he moved back into his own house. He was staying in my small one at the moment, and it was getting cramped. He had some structural issues with his place, and the architects were dealing with the problem. From what he'd been told it would take at least a month.

It had only been a week.

I was trying to be the caring and considerate daughter, but Charlie was a strain. His hours were erratic and I had to take care of him like I did Gracie. He never ate correctly, nor did he drink anything other than beer or coffee. I knew I shouldn't complain. When Gracie was younger he altered his shifts so he could care for her while I worked. She was about to enter kindergarten now and it was no longer an issue. My job at the local Library was only part time, but gave me the space and freedom I needed.

"I'm...um, gonna go upstairs and call her. Is that OK?"

Charlie nodded, but didn't take his eyes from Gracie and her magazine. I bounced up the stairs and locked my bedroom door, before flopping onto the bed. My cell rang three times before Alice answered.

"Hey, Bells, Jasper told me you wanted to talk about getting hot and heavy at lunch."

I moaned into the receiver. "I bet he fucking did. Snitch."

"You gonna spill? Was it the book guy?"

"Can you talk?" I asked, hoping she said yes. I really needed to purge.

"Sure. Jasper's driving, so go ahead, and tell me your dirty little secrets, Bella."

When she said it like that it did sound rather sordid. However, I could tell Alice I'd done it on the floor in the alley and she wouldn't judge. She was a true friend.

I rolled onto my stomach, and exhaled loudly.

“Yes, it was the book guy, Edward. Holy fucking hell, Alice, it was intense. When I walked into the store there was this...energy. I just knew today was the one. He followed me around the bookshelves, and I couldn’t stop myself from teasing him, you know a flash of skin here and there. I heard him groan! I was trying to be all coy with him, but he was completely clueless, well until I kissed him. Fuck! Against the bookshelves, Ali! I don’t even have the words to tell you how many sordid little fantasies today fulfilled. Oh, my God, it was simply amazing!”

“Wow, I can hear that, and Jasper was right when he told me you were glowing. I think this calls for a girly night, don’t you. I need some real deets, woman!”

I heard Jasper complain in the background, making me snort.

“I don’t even think I could replay it all without coming again. It was *that* good. I mean seriously never felt like this in my entire life kinda good. My toes curl just thinking about his cock.”

She squealed, making me pull my cell from my ear. I wasn’t lying; my toes really were curling just remembering what he felt like.

“Tonight? Can I come over?” She begged. I could hear the desperation in her voice. “I promise not to bore you too much with the wedding plans, instead you can go crazy on the deets.”

“Charlie’s working tonight, so you can definitely come over. We can chat after I put Gracie to bed, but I’m not drinking, I have work tomorrow. Oh, tell Jazz I got the sneakers, she can’t wait to show you guys.”

We agreed what time she’d come over and hung up. I wasn’t ready to go back downstairs though. I wanted to take a moment; to just lie back and replay the entire episode in the bookstore. I’d been overly assertive, trying to make him see just how much I wanted him. I thought one hot fumble and he’d be out of my hair, but he wasn’t. He was consuming my thoughts more than before. I remembered the way his hand had cupped my tit, stroking at my nipple. The way he gripped my thighs as he thrust into me, and the way he slammed my back into the books.

Holy Fuck.

I was lost.

...and I wanted it again.

That was by far, the biggest shock. I’d rarely wanted anything more than sex. I’d been there with Jasper and it hadn’t gone too well. All I needed was my daughter and the odd heated fumble.

Didn’t I?

EPOV

Fucking hell.

Fuck. Ing. Hell.

I sat on the floor, shaking my head, trying to get my mind to work, but it was fucking stuck. Stuck around thirty minutes ago, when my cock was buried in the most beautiful woman a stalker like me could want. It wouldn’t move on from the feeling of being inside her as the books rained down on us. My body still buzzed from my orgasm. It was completely fucking insane!

I was sitting on the floor placing all the books back onto the shelf, it was monotonous, and I hadn’t realized how many had fallen. I must have slammed her incredibly hard against them. I winced. I had yet to get dressed. I still only wore my jeans, so when the bell above the door tinkled, I jumped out of my skin.

“Holy Hell! What’ve you been up to?”

I groaned, rolling my eyes and turning to see Seth standing at the end of the aisle. His dark eyes were taking in the mess surrounding me.

“Babes, as much as I want you on your knees, half naked in front of me, now isn’t really the time,” he teased.

“Shut it!” I spat, but with no real venom to my tone.

Seth had been my friend since I was six years old. He knew every little thing about me, including my obsession with Bookgirl. He wheedled it out of me after I kept checking my watch one Thursday. I could never keep anything from him. We were as close as brothers. I’d been the first person he’d told when he was finally ready to accept his sexual orientation, though the bastard joked it was only to get in my pants. High school had been horrid for him, but college was a revelation. We’d drunk and fucked our way through those years, before a twist of fate had handed us this place. If I was honest, we hadn’t really changed much since college, only now we were older and had a decent income. Seth lived upstairs in the small flat, while I was only a couple of blocks away.

I took care of the store, because in the last year Seth had decided to go back to school. He wanted to become a doctor, so we’d decided the day to day running was down to me. I’d never decided what it was I wanted in life. The store was as good a choice as any. He took the weekend shifts, though. Between us, we did alright.

Seth had recognized immediately when something had changed within me. After that first day Bookgirl had entered the store, Seth knew something was different. He’d interrogated me, like the good friend he was, until I snarled at him, and spilled it all.

“What the fuck happened? And why are you displaying your delicious abs to me?”

I sighed heavily, as he came to sit on the floor next to me. He was crass, sometimes rude and forever flirting, but he was my friend. The only person I trusted implicitly.

“Bookgirl happened,” I stated, as if that answered his question completely.

“Um...You’re gonna have to give me more than that, babes. You look like someone just kicked your puppy, but your hot bod is telling me something entirely different went down here. Spill!”

His hand was on his hip, his lips pursed waiting for me to respond.

“She came in, usual time, but looked upset. I couldn’t help myself, Seth, I wanted to make sure she was OK, so I...”

“You followed her around the fucking store?” He asked incredulously. “Edward! Come on!”

I shrugged and waited for him to stop shouting me out, before continuing.

“She slid up my body, her face inches from my crotch, Seth! I almost jizzed from that alone. Do you know how hot it is to have a woman tell you she wants you? Not just in general, but wants you right then and there!”

“Um...NO! Gay man, Eddie dear, I didn’t think you needed me to explain that little gem. How the hell would I know shit like that?”

“It was a turn of phrase and you know it! *Anyway*...Before I knew what the fuck was going on we were going at it against the bookcase.” I shook my head in complete awe. “I still can’t believe what happened.”

I slammed some more books into the case, waiting for Seth to say something, but all I heard was silence.

“She ran off. Said it was the best two hours ever, but still left. I didn’t get her number. Damn, I don’t even know her name!”

Still Seth said nothing.

I eventually looked up to see his mouth hanging open and his eyes like saucers.

“You want more,” he accused.

I shook my head in denial. I’d never wanted more. I didn’t have relationships, I had sex. And lots of it. For him to insinuate I wanted more from her was just...*fuck*...He was right. I groaned loudly and tugged at my hair.

“It’s OK. It happens to us all,” He replied patting me on the back.

I laughed. He was being a smart ass now.

“Like you’d know. Peter was out of here pretty damn quick this morning.”

He grimaced, before shuffling to collect some of the books from under the table.

“Yeah, well Charlotte was working nights, so he had to get back to bed for when she got home. Then he could pretend to be the doting boyfriend that he is so clearly not.”

There was a note of sadness to his voice, but he brushed it off whenever I mentioned anything.

“I don’t know how you put up with it,” I said, trying again. “I mean Peter needs to sort out what he wants, because right now he’s getting the best of both. I don’t like what he’s doing to you.”

Seth brushed my comment away and huffed, “I’m doing it to myself.”

I opened my mouth to speak. Even though that was technically true, he was still being manipulated, and it was wrong. However, he continued to talk.

“I’m a grown man, and knew what I was getting into. It’s not like I’d want his ass if he came running to me, anyway.”

There was an edge to his tone that told me to back away, so to lighten the mood I teased, “His ass is exactly what you want. Don’t lie!”

“Babes, I’ve had it. Now get dressed before I jump you. I’ve been waiting years to take a bite outta you, so don’t tempt me.”

I handed the last of the books to him, and looked around the floor, trying to locate my shirt. It was nestled in the trash can, looking as dejected as I felt. I pulled it out and started to put it on when I felt something drop to the floor. It was shiny and long, and on closer inspection I noticed it was a hair barrette.

Bookgirl’s barrette.

I picked it up and placed it into the back pocket of my jeans, before returning to Seth.

“You know you’re gonna have to redo all these, right? You and the pretty lady made a right mess.”

“Jealous,” I stated.

Standing up, he laughed loudly. “Damn, right I am. Who the fuck doesn’t dream of rough sex against some books?”

I stopped and glared at him.

“Who said it was rough?”

“Sweet cheeks, you didn’t need to. The state of this place spoke for you. Now stop moaning and get your jacket, I’m taking you for a drink. You look like shit.”

I had to agree. I needed a drink. Maybe I could pick up a pretty little blond and take my mind off Bookgirl. I would stay away from brunettes. They were clearly more trouble than I could handle.

I grabbed my coat, and was pulling it on, as Seth flipped the closed sign. We strolled out onto the street, and I couldn’t stop myself from searching the crowds. Would she still be here somewhere?

Seth groaned and shoved at my shoulder.

“You’ve got it bad! Let’s go and find you some little hottie to take your mind off her.”

I smiled, not really feeling it. Even though I’d thought of it myself moments ago, I didn’t really want to take my mind off her.

I wanted it on her.

I wanted Bookgirl.

End Notes:
<p>O.O</p> <p>Was it what you expected? I bet it wasn't!!!</p> <p>Tell me, tell me.... do you want more?</p>

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 3 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>So, I shocked you all last week with where I took this. Let's see if I can do it again. :)</p> <p>Love to my amazing beta, Maylin & my stunning prereader elusivekoolaid.</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

EPOV

One week.

One week and absolutely nothing.

Bookgirl had come into the store, fucked me senseless and vanished. All I had, to prove to myself that it wasn't a dream, was the silver barrette I'd found on the floor. I was like some sappy fucking teenager carrying it around with me. For the first couple of days, I would jump whenever the bell above the door chimed, but as the days wore on and she was still a no show, I gave up.

Seth had taken me to McCarty's, on more than one occasion, in the vain hope of getting me drunk and foisting some blond on me. I'd decided I was sworn off brunettes for a while. According to Seth, burying myself balls deep into someone else would help me forget. It was like an erotic exorcism. He was crazy. I didn't want to even try. No one held the same kind of appeal to me.

I wanted bookgirl again.

He still thought it was highly amusing that I didn't know her name. He kept reminding me of the bewildered mess he'd found me in that day. Though, I didn't find it the least bit humorous. I was becoming obsessed with finding her. I hunted around the aisle we'd screwed in, not sure what I was looking for. Just something. I'd begun to look at every brunette twice when we were out in a crowd, making sure they weren't her. I was certain I'd see her one day, or hoped that she would come back into the store. But a whole week had gone by and there was still nothing. Without that barrette it would be nothing more than a dream to me.

I shook my head in disgust at myself. I'd never once in my whole life been infatuated with a female, let alone one that fucked and ran. Maybe that was why I was stuck on her. Maybe I was never meant to find out who she was. She would always be elusive, an unresolved part of my past.

I slammed a book back on the shelf and strolled towards the cash register. Seth was coming down the stairs that led to his flat. He was clad only in plaid pajama bottoms, and Peter followed him. He looked at me sheepishly, before touching Seth's arm protectively. I hated the way he treated my best friend, but Seth wouldn't hear a wrong word said against him. He would shoulder the blame, stating he knew what he was getting himself into when he'd met Peter. The fuck he did! He'd met him at a gay bar, and didn't learn about his girlfriend until weeks later. By then Seth had fallen hook, line and sinker for the idiot. He would never admit that, though. Seth thought of himself as forever single. Cue mental eye roll from me, because that was so far removed from what Seth really was, but he was my best friend, and I'd do what I needed to, to see that he was happy.

I watched them together, always confused by what he saw in Peter. I could see the affection shining in Seth's eyes, but to me, Peter was never truly here. It was as though a part of him was always with his 'other life'.

Seth grasped Peter's neck, stroking his thumb along his jaw tenderly. Peter wrapped his hand around my friend's wrist, I just couldn't determine whether he was keeping him close, or stopping him from going any further. Seth didn't seem to have that problem as he moved his mouth to Peter's and kissed him softly. Peter's body language spoke volumes to me. I just didn't understand why my friend was so fucking oblivious. He was rigid, no movement, apart from his lips. Something that should have been beautiful to watch was cold and rather calculated.

I ground my teeth, and slammed the cash drawer closed. I knew it would startle them, and once Peter knew I was watching he would fuck off.

"You're such a perv." Seth snorted, as he entered the store. "Watching me. You know, hun, you can have me whenever you want. You don't have to spy."

"Well, you will flaunt yourself to me," I teased, touching his naked chest. "And, anyway, I like watching."

I knew it would really piss Peter off, so couldn't stop myself. Seth merely laughed, pulling Peter towards the door and kissing him again, before waving goodbye.

"Um, bye Edward," he said quietly.

"Yeah." Was all he was getting from me.

The bell tinkled as the door closed, and Seth stood defiantly, hands on his hips, glaring in my direction.

"What?"

"We've had this conversation. I make my own choices, sweets. Just be my friend."

I shook my head in exasperation but agreed. We ended up talking about it every time Peter left. I could see what Seth couldn't, or chose to ignore.

He strolled past me, and was making his way back towards the stairs, when the bell tinkled again. He slapped me playfully on the cheek, and brought his lips to my ear.

"You've got company, and I'm not helping clean the mess this time." I frowned, before he started walking upstairs. "I'll use the back door to leave. Have fun, children."

It was only after he'd disappeared, that I turned around and looked across the counter towards the door.

Fuck!

Bookgirl.

Here. Again.

In a fucking skirt! Christ!

My ability to form a complete sentence had obviously left through the door with the asshat. I stared at her, unsure of what the hell to say. I knew it was Thursday, and it was probably around one o'clock, but she hadn't contacted me all week, so why would I hold onto any hope of her coming in today?

She was licking her painted red lips slowly, and twirling her hair with her gloved hand. It was a very child like mannerism, but my cock appreciated it. My cock also liked the plaid skirt and heeled boots. It was virtually beckoning her over.

She sashayed towards the counter and leaned on her elbows, towards me.

"Hi," she said, smirking.

This was far from fucking funny.

I rested my palms flat on the wood and stared down at her.

“Hi? That’s it? Seriously?”

“That’s how people greet each other, *Edward*.”

“I wouldn’t know,” I retorted rather harshly. “You never say it, nor do you say goodbye.”

“Oo did someone get their period?”

What the fuck was I supposed to say to that? She clearly thought there was nothing wrong with what had gone on between us. Was I being completely over sensitive?

“I have a right to be a little pissy, *Bookgirl*. You fucked me, and then fucked off and I see, or hear nothing from you until now. You know who I am, where I work and yet, I don’t have the faintest idea who you are.”

She shrugged causally, and replied, “We all have our secrets. Does it make you feel dirty not to know what my name is, given what we’ve done?”

“No, it annoys the shit outta me. Secrets? I don’t have secrets.” I shook my head, receiving a snort of derision from her. “What?”

“Your *boyfriend*? You never explained you were bi. Tsk tsk, bad boy.”

She’d lost me. Boyfriend?

She pointed up towards the ceiling, and it took me a second to understand she was referring to Seth. I threw my head back and laughed loudly.

“Seth’s my best friend, and trust me darlin’, you of all people should know just how straight I am.”

“Fancy refreshing that memory?” she asked playfully, stroking the back of my hand with a solitary finger.

“Ahh, and there we have it! I’m the Thursday fuck? Need something to do for an hour or two and after last week, you thought I was it?”

She winced. I had no idea why I was so upset by her boldness. Hadn’t I done similar a few times? I knew I was being a little hypocritical, but she still hadn’t even told me her fucking name. I pulled my hand away, and began scribbling notes into my order book. I was writing gobbledygook, but she didn’t know that. I needed to show her I wasn’t affected by her presence, which was complete bullshit, of course.

“That’s not it at all. I, well...I...shit! Bella, OK? My name’s Bella, though I’m rather taken with *Bookgirl*.”

Bella.

I smiled at her, finally pleased at getting something from her other than teeth marks. I snorted and raised my brows in question.

“You wear that shirt specifically for me today, *Bookgirl*?”

She grinned, pushing her breasts out towards me, and making me growl in frustration. Her t-shirt was tight, like before, only this time it was black and displayed huge red lips and vampire teeth. Emblazoned with “Bite Me”, across her tits, I wanted to shout “Hell yes!”

“What would make you think that?” she asked, pretending to be coy.

“Mythology aisle? Vampires? You mentioned kinky shit last time.”

Why I was being playful, when I was still rather annoyed, I didn't know. My eyes followed her tongue as it slid seductively across her lower lip, and visions of exactly what I'd like to bite flitted through my head. To divert my attention I picked up a pile of stray books and walked over to the shelves, intending to put them back.

Bella gripped my forearm, trying to stop me, before moving it to my scarf and tugging gently. She pulled me closer to her face, and I inhaled her sweet scent. It was already burned into my brain, but now it was permeating my skin, surrounding my senses in pure Bella. She was making it very difficult to stay defiant and not fuck her against the book shelves again.

"Why are you being so offhand with me?"

I stared into her huge brown eyes and swallowed. When she looked at me like that I simply didn't know. I was irritated that she hadn't contacted me, but there was something about her that drew me in. She had a presence unlike any other. I could admit to myself that I wanted another taste of her, and my cock was certainly happy to see her again. It was straining against my jeans and demanding an exit.

When had I become such a girl? Was I really debating whether to fuck bookgirl or not?

"I'm not being offhand. I have work to do."

"Sure you do," she replied. "Brush off? I get it. Fine."

Bella turned to leave, but I couldn't let her. Who the hell was I kidding, pretending to be hurt by her confidence? I'd been a part of the rendezvous last week, and even though I'd not been able to find her, she was here now, and from the looks of it she wanted a repeat performance.

"Stop."

She twirled around smiling, and tilting her head coyly. She knew I'd stop her, and I shook my head in amazement. She was one clever girl, woman? Shit! I didn't know.

"How old are you?" I blurted out, wanting to make sure the cops weren't about to bust my ass.

"Why? Are you scared?"

She was so damn sure of herself. It was such a fucking turn on.

"Tell me," I stated bluntly, stepping forward.

She grinned and twirled her hair, taking a step back.

"Don't worry, I'm legal."

I took another step closer and growled, "Like, last year legal? Or *legal* legal?"

A snort of ridicule was her only response, as she backed away from me again. It was an interesting dance, because the closer I got, the more she backed away. There was only so much room in my small store, though. I wanted to know how old she was. I needed an answer, it was important, even if my libido didn't care.

She rolled her eyes at me and shrugged, before adding, "I'm thirty in a couple of weeks. Happy?"

Her brows rose in question, and I had to admit, I was fucking ecstatic, though I would have pegged her nearer to twenty than thirty. Hell, who cared? The cops would be leaving me alone. I could almost hear Seth saying it was a lesson learned. Not that he was big on learning by past mistakes or anything.

"Very," I stated, stalking further forward and backing her up into the door.

A humph escaped her lips at the contact, but she didn't stop with the eye fucking. It was killing me to keep my hands off her. My palms itched and balls throbbed. I needed to get a grip, and not of my cock. I couldn't screw her in the store again, it was simply too risky. It was a miracle we hadn't been caught last time, and I was pretty sure Seth was still upstairs. Not that he'd care.

"But I'm not fucking you now, *Bella*. I'm not anyone's dog. I don't come when you click your fingers."

"No, you only do that when I take you in my hands."

Fucking hell, I adored this woman!

"Maybe, but I'm not changing my mind," I replied defiantly.

She looked down at my crotch and slowly back up to meet my eyes, before stating huskily, "Looks like you need that hand, though."

I stepped back and watched her pout those hot red lips. I gestured to the door, and she spun to look behind her. I was positive she blushed, but it seemed a little out of character for her to do that. Then again, what did I know about her.

Nada.

Not a fucking thing.

I wanted to, and that was the most surprising part of it all. I wanted to know her. She was confidant, cocky and sexy as hell. No woman I'd ever met had given me a hard on as fast as her, or made me see stars, but it was more than that. I wanted to know who she was, why she came into the store every Thursday, and why me.

"You will change it. I guess I just have to alter my tack," she said smugly.

A woman came through the door with her young son, and strolled over to the children's section. It made me whisper my response.

"Sure of yourself, aren't you? What makes you think you weren't just a quickie for me? How do you know I don't do that every day of the week?"

Bookgirl came closer, drenching me in her sweet scent, and spoke into my ear.

"If that was the case, you would have known exactly what I was asking for last week. You would've also had me sooner. I got tired of waiting for you to make your move."

I held the books tightly in my hands, trying to get a grip of myself, because all I wanted to do was toss them aside and have her. She only made matters worse when her tongue snaked out and flicked my lobe. I hissed, gritting my teeth, and hoping to hell she left it there. Bella had other ideas. She cupped me through my jeans, rubbing her palm harshly against me. I growled loudly.

"Tell me you don't want a rerun, and I'll go. Tell me and you'll never have to see me again."

I closed my eyes, laughing internally at myself. How the hell did I get here? I didn't understand it. I would never usually want details. I'd fuck and run, just like she did, so why was it so important that this didn't happen with her?

I tossed the books onto the counter and gripped her wrist, pushing her palm harder against my erection. Her eyes sparkled with lust, as the side of her mouth lifted in delight.

"Does that feel like I don't want you?" I hissed.

"Oh, I know what it *feels* like, but I prefer to know what it *looks* like," she said confidently.

I smirked. Did it get any better than her?

I dragged her towards the back of the store, around the counter and towards the stairs leading to Seth's apartment. I pushed her against the wooden post, at the same time my mouth captured hers. It was a heated, devouring of lips. In some twisted way I was claiming her back as mine. Marking what I sought to keep, because I knew I would never get enough of her. She was entirely too intoxicating.

Her fingers pushed beneath the waistband of my jeans and palmed me tightly.

"Christ," I snarled against her jaw.

She giggled softly and began to stroke me. My eyes almost rolled into the back of my head, as my hand cupped her breast harshly, squeezing and rubbing. I moved my mouth to her neck and nibbled, eliciting a moan of enjoyment from her.

I'd all but forgotten where we were, instead focusing on the carnality of us.

She tasted of pure sex, and I wanted to devour every inch of her. I ground against her hand, seeking a quick, hot release. My hand trailed to her thigh, hitching it around my leg, my fingertips digging into the soft flesh. She hummed and lifted it higher, aligning her pussy with my shaft. My balls grew tight and needy, as I bit her nipple through her clothes. Her breath was coming out in short little pants, and only aroused me further.

Bella's fingers toyed with the buttons on my jeans, popping them open one at a time until she could release me from the confines of my underwear. The air tickled my sensitive skin, making me gasp.

I nuzzled her top, pushing the neckline further down, hopefully allowing me to taste her nipple without the cotton hindrance.

"My eyes! My eyes!"

I groaned, and pulled away, focusing on the source of our interruption.

Seth.

He stood laughing at the top of the stairs, pretending to shield his eyes, but peering through his fingers. I tucked myself back into my jeans, and swiftly fastened the buttons. Bella adjusted her skirt, and wiped her top. It was wet around her tits where I'd bitten through the fabric, wiping it wouldn't help. I grinned sheepishly at her, running my fingers through my dishevelled hair.

"I see you two picked up where you left off. Though, maybe not quite, you're both still clothed."

He was such a fucking smartass.

"Can it, Seth."

He snorted and walked down the stairs, slapping me softly on my cheek.

"Tell me that you at least shut the store first."

My eyes went wide, remembering the woman and her son in the children's section. It caused a howl of laughter from Seth, and a 'oops' from Bella.

"You need to get a fucking room. This shit is embarrassing. People are going to stop shopping here. Sweets, I don't want to have to move house because we're bankrupt. Think with your head a couple of moments before the dick takes over, OK?"

I smiled at him, shoving his chest playfully.

Seth held his hand out to Bella, and pouted.

“So, you’re the hottie that’s taken my boytoy away from me? I don’t know whether to kiss you or pull your hair. I’m Seth by the way.”

Bella took his hand, shaking it firmly and laughing at his introduction.

“Bella. Bella Swan. It’s good to meet you, and I wouldn’t say I’d taken him away from you. Well, maybe on a Thursday between one and three, but other than that, he’s all yours. In fact, I’d pay to watch that go down.”

“Oh my Christ, Sweets, I love her already! Invite her over for Christmas. She’d get on so well with daddy dearest,” he said sarcastically.

“Christmas? It’s not even October!”

“I know,” he retorted wrapping his arm around Bella’s shoulders. “But she is a keeper! Snarky, witty and hot, what more could you want?”

“You to leave?”

“Ooo, see,” he stated to Bella, ignoring me. “He gets bitchy when he’s due his period. Watch out for that.”

She laughed loudly, patting Seth on the chest.

“That’s exactly what I was asking him only moments ago.”

“No, darlin’ you weren’t asking anything by shoving your kitty against his rod. You were demanding.” He let her go and kissed her cheek before stepping closer to me. “I like her. As I say, a keeper.”

I shook my head, as he placed his usual peck on my cheek and waved.

“Bye bye. Remember, we have customers, and they didn’t come in to buy your naked ass.”

I groaned as he left. What the hell would she think of that little interlude? I glanced over to her, waiting for her to run for the hills. My friendship with Seth was something most people, including my father, found very strange. They assumed I was gay and was hiding it, or at least bi, given the affection we had for one another. However, Seth touching me, or kissing me, for that matter, was no different than my sister doing it. I could admit I loved him, and didn’t see any shame in that. He was my best friend. But what would she see, and why did it feel important to me?

“Hmm, so that was Seth. He’s my friend, lives upstairs.”

“Yup, I get that. I like him. He’s cute, and you guys are hilarious together! Is he usually so snarky with you?”

“Yes,” I grinned, and started to walk back into the store. “Only that was tame.”

I stood next to the cash register, and she walked around the front of the counter, leaning across it like before. I glanced around the store, only now noticing there were three more people browsing. Fuck! I’d been completely oblivious to anything other than bookgirl. Seth was right.

We needed to get a room.

She checked her watch and groaned.

“Um, so I kinda have to go.”

“But it’s not even three yet,” I stated, my tone slightly pleading.

“Yeah,” she shrugged. “I have to be early today. Sorry.”

Bella walked over towards the door and picked up her bag, slinging it over her shoulder. I was consumed with the need to beg her to stay, and it scared the shit out of me. What the fuck was happening here?

“I just wanted you to know...I didn’t come here for a booty call. I came here to see you.”

My mouth fell open, and all I could say was, “Oh!”

“At least now you know I’m not a complete tart, right?” She joked, but there was a hint of hurt laced amongst the words.

I couldn’t let her leave thinking I agreed with that observation, so I rounded the counter, and stalked towards her. She licked her lips in anticipation, and I glared at her.

“I do not think you’re a tart. I like your confidence. I like that you go for what you want, even if I was blind and took a while to catch on,” I grinned. “Don’t ever think I’d judge you from those actions, bookgirl.”

She smiled widely, and slapped something into my palm. I didn’t have a chance to look at it, as she pulled me forward and kissed me hotly. Her tongue delved instantly into my mouth, dancing with mine.

I was hard again.

Bella pulled away as abruptly as she started, laughing at my dazed expression.

“Use it. I want you to.”

...and with that she was gone. Again, only leaving the sound of the bell, and her intoxicating scent in her wake. This was getting to be a habit with her. I shook my head, trying to get to grips with what had happened in the last hour. It was all a hazy blur of Bella.

“Hello? Are you working here? I need some help.”

I turned to the voice. A young girl was standing at the cash register, waving a book in my direction. I smiled and strolled over, trying to put Bella aside to work out later.

I dealt with the transaction, but my mind kept wandering back to the hot brunette in the *Bite me* t-shirt. It was only when I finished serving the customer that I checked to see what it was that she insisted I use.

Her number.

My pulse increased rapidly, as I stared down at the scrap of paper. Her pretty black script stated simply her name and number, but it was the only encouragement I needed. I waited until the store was empty before picking up my cell and calling the number. It rung for a while, and I was about to hang up when a child’s voice answered.

“Hello?”

“Um...Is...Is Bella there?”

There was a small giggle, before the child shouted. I cringed, because she hadn’t removed the cell from her face to do so, and she therefore bellowed into my ear.

“Mommy! There’s a man on the phone. He wants you!”

I gasped. Mommy?

If that wasn’t startling enough, seconds later I heard a male voice in the background.

“Gracie? What’s wrong?”

“Nothing, Daddy. There’s a man on the phone, he wants Mommy.”

Daddy? Mommy?

I hung up.

Well fuck, what was I supposed to do now?

End Notes:
<p>Thank you all for reading.</p> <p>xxx</p>

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 4 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p style="text-align: center;">Hi all!</p> <p>Thank you so much for all the amazing reviews for this. I'm really pleased you're all liking, especially Seth :)</p> <p>Love to my awesome beta - Maylin. I have no idea how you keep up with me, and everyone else. Thank you babes.</p> <p>Hugs and whatever she wants, to my prereader elusivekoolaid.</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

BPOV

“But, Ali, he didn’t call. There’s nothing more I can do. That’s it. Done.”

“Oh, get over yourself. Go to him,” she retorted.

I rolled my eyes. I didn’t have a ‘Jasper day’ every day and how much running was one person supposed to do after another. Even though he’d told me I wasn’t a Thursday fuck I didn’t know that for sure.

I watched as Alice pointed out some pink fluffy hair ties to Gracie and smiled. I would have to stop thinking about him. I didn’t need a man in my life; Gracie was all I needed. That’s what I’d been trying to convince myself for the last four days, but it wasn’t really working. I saw how happy Jasper and Alice were and I envied it. I never expected that with Edward, but some fun and a few dates would have been great. Being around him made me smile, and his friend Seth, was hilarious.

“Momma, can I?” Gracie pleaded, holding the fluffy things out to me.

I groaned and checked the tag.

“”Baby, you know Momma can’t go buying you things like this at the moment. I’m sorry,” I sighed, hoping she understood.

Alice raised her brows at me, silently asking if she could buy them instead, but I shook my head slightly. I wouldn’t let her and Jasper continually pick up the tab for the nice things Gracie wanted. They would always splurge on her, and I was the one left buying the necessities; the things that simply didn’t make my daughter smile. However, they were all I could afford with my part time job at the library. I’d asked about more hours since Gracie was going to school, but they’d yet to decide, therefore fluffy things for hair were out of the question.

Gracie pouted, but placed them back and took hold of my hand.

“I’m sorry, Momma.”

I knelt down and hugged her.

“Ah, baby, I wish I could buy you everything you ever wanted, but right now I can’t. I promise, though, when I have a little money to spare I will get them for you, OK?”

She grinned and clapped her hands, reminding me of Alice.

“You!” I complained, pointing to my friend. “...are a bad influence on her.”

“Ha! Well would you rather be late to pick her up from school on a Monday?” Alice laughed.

She had a point. Alice would always collect Gracie on a Monday and hold onto her for half an hour, while I finished my shift. We’d usually go for something to eat then.

Gracie strolled on ahead looking into the window, as we left the store. Alice took that as her cue to continue our Edward conversation.

“Are you sure you wrote down your number right? I mean just one digit...”

“It was right,” I shrugged. “I guess he just doesn’t want anything further. Then again, nor do I. He was a fuck Alice. One I was desperate for. It would have been awesome if we could have done it again, but I guess he’s moved on. I didn’t give him a chance to refuse my number. Christ, he did tell me he wouldn’t have sex with me.”

“Yeah, but he meant *then*, right? That’s what you told me, and let’s not forget the little make out session on the stairs. Seriously, Bella, call him!”

“No! I won’t. Jeez, Alice what’s with you and this guy? I’ve told you about my hook ups before and it’s never resulted in this.”

“You’ve never given them your number before,” she replied smugly.

Gracie tugged on my hand, but I was on a roll with my friend. She needed to drop this.

“Just leave it. I don’t want to talk about it anymore. He didn’t call me, he simply didn’t want to.”

“But Momma, a man did phone for you,” Gracie interrupted.

I stopped in my tracks, staring down at my daughter.

“What was that sweetie?” I questioned, trying to keep my voice even.

I was not about to get my hopes up over something a four year old said. Even if she was a very intelligent four year old.

“The day I go swimming with Daddy. There was a man on your phone, and I told Daddy, but he went.”

She shrugged and skipped on ahead, clearly telling me everything she knew. Alice stood waiting, hands on hips and smirking. Bitch!

“It tells me nothing. The man could be anyone,” I denied.

“Yeah, Bella. You tell yourself that. Seems odd to me, that a strange man would call you on the day you give Edward your number.”

I groaned at her words, now I knew that she wouldn’t stop. She would nag me until I did call him. I couldn’t though, not without knowing it was definitely him. I felt stupid, especially if my assessment was right, and I was no more than a quick screw.

“You could always go into the store. I’ll take Gracie for something to eat. Text me when you’re done.”

She started to walk off, but turned and shouted down the street, “No rush, though I know you like it fast!”

I muttered a multitude of expletives at her and watched, as she skipped off down the street with my daughter. That had not gone as I’d thought it would. I looked around, getting my bearings and realizing I was almost at the bookstore. My heart rate kicked up a notch almost instantly. What was I going to say to him?

I stood outside trying to calm myself, but in the end decided to wing it, and walk in as if nothing had happened, maybe my ‘couldn’t give a shit’ attitude would make him horny again. I pushed the door open, and glanced at the counter. My stomach dropped when Seth looked up at me.

“Well *hello*, sweetie,” he drawled cheekily.

“Hey, Seth.”

I walked further into the store and stood in front of him, unsure of what the fuck to say.

“Eddie-boy isn’t here, hun. He’s at some old guy’s house checking out a first edition. So I’m afraid you’ve got me, and as much as I like you, there isn’t a hope in hell I’m getting hot and heavy with you against the books.”

I laughed, and it broke the nerves I felt almost immediately. I could casually prod Seth and maybe find out whether it was worth me calling Edward, or even coming back. That’s if Edward had even mentioned anything to him.

He leaned across the wooden counter, resting on his open textbook.

“So, sweetcheeks, what’s going on with you and my hottie?”

“Huh?” I asked, not quite sure if he meant Edward or not.

“Well, either the guy finally did get his period, or you got his tighty whities in a twist over something.”

I snorted at the image of Edward in tighty whities.

“He doesn’t wear them,” I denied.

“Oh, missy you have no idea what he does, or doesn’t wear, but I can tell you they are definitely tight and you have them twisting around his balls turning him into an epic bitch.”

Again, I laughed. I could just imagine him stomping around the store.

“What makes you think it’s me? Maybe it’s his Tuesday fuck?”

I knew I was being childish, bringing it up, but it burst out before I could stop it. This way I could find out a few things without Edward being around.

“Really? Tuesday, you say?”

My stomach sank. He really did have one each day of the week. I was trying to keep my composure when Seth burst out laughing.

“Christ, girl, you are so gullible. There is no Tuesday quickie, in fact I’m pretty sure there has never been anyone in here with him. Which, trust me, is a feat for Edward. So tell me, what did you do?”

I sighed, scrubbing my face with my hands. I was surprised Edward hadn’t bitched about me, or at least said something. I just didn’t know how much to disclose. I didn’t know why he’d either hung up, or not called at all.

“I don’t know that I did anything. I’m a little confused. I gave him my number but he never called, and now I’m wondering if I should just cut my losses and run. Did he say anything to you?” I asked quietly.

Seth walked around the counter and wrapped me in his arms. I was a little shocked at first, but he was so sweet, and I knew he was just being nice. I hugged him back, thanking him, before asking again.

“He did, yes, but sweets, you aren’t gonna like what he said.”

Confusion reigned, as I asked him to elaborate. He was still holding my hand and tracing little circles on my palm, and making me giggle. He was adorable...*and very gay, Bella!*

“He did call you, and some kid answered. Edward was sure she called you Mommy, and Daddy was in the background. Tell me I’m not gonna have to get all girly and pull your hair. I’d really hate to do that, honey. Was he right?”

I instantly nodded. I wasn’t about to deny my child. Seth gasped and slapped his hand across his mouth, glaring at me.

“No, Seth, it’s not like that. Jasper and I aren’t together. We weren’t even married. I was admitting to having a child. She’s four and the cutest little thing you’ll ever see. Oh God, did he think...? *Ohhh...*now it all makes sense. Gracie said Jasper was there and Edward probably heard...”

“Woah!” Seth stopped my ramblings. “Ok, so let me get this straight, sweetness. You have a four year old with some guy, that you’re not with, but he *lives* with you?”

I shook my head. He was tying me in knots. Hadn’t I just told him what Jasper was to me? I dumped my backpack on the floor, and stared at him.

“Jasper doesn’t live with me. It’s just me and Gracie. Look, does Edward think I *cheated*? Or is he put off by my daughter?”

“Hun, I don’t even think he thought that far ahead. He heard the little girl say Mommy and Daddy, and balked. You’re gonna have to talk to him.”

He stepped back around the counter to serve a dark haired Goth boy. I studied Seth’s textbook and tried to take in everything that he’d just told me. Edward had been annoyed when he thought I was with someone else. Did that mean he wanted to see me again? Or was he just annoyed because he thought I’d lied to him, and some guy was going to come and pummel him?

“When will he be back?” I questioned when he’d finished with serving the boy.

“Should be in the next hour. Are you gonna sort him out? Because I really can’t take anymore of his moods. It’s worse than living with a woman, not that I’d know.”

I chewed my lip nervously, before asking, “Do you think he’ll want to see me again?”

Seth sighed.

“Sweetcheeks, I can’t tell you that. What I can say is he wouldn’t be PMSing over you if you hadn’t touched a nerve, or something else for that matter. But then I know exactly what you’ve touched, because I saw it!”

I picked up my backpack, slung it over my shoulder and kissed his cheek.

“I’ll be back in about an hour then. Don’t let him leave. Please?”

“Sure thing, sugar, but I’m not cleaning up any blood that may get spilled, OK?”

I slapped his cheek softly. “You’re such a comedian. Later.”

I had no idea what I was going to do, but I would make Edward listen to me. I didn’t want to analyze why it was so important. I wasn’t ready to go there. I would talk to him and see where that left us. I just hoped Alice would care for Gracie for a couple of hours; otherwise it would have to wait.

// FE \

As it turned out, Jasper had gotten off work early and wanted to take Gracie to the park. That gave me a few hours to deal with Edward. I’d still not decided what I was going to do, but I realized it would be almost

dinnertime, and the bookstore would be closing soon. I called into the small McDonald's on the corner and grabbed a few things, before heading there.

My guts twisted with nerves. I just didn't know what to expect. I tried to treat it like any other day where I took charge, but my will was weakening, and I was buckling under the pressure.

Telling myself that it didn't matter if he rejected me, I opened the door and smiled.

"Sorry but we're about to...oh."

Edward simply stared at me, clearly waiting for me to speak. I waved the brown bag containing our dinner at him.

"I brought you something to eat."

"Um," he mumbled. "I'm not hungry thanks. I was just about to close up."

"Don't let me stop you. In fact that would be better, because then we can talk," I stated, walking towards the counter.

"Don't you have a husband to feed instead of me," he hissed.

I blinked, totally taken aback by his harshness. It took me a second to regain my composure, before I stated coolly, "No husband. No boyfriend. No significant other, only a daughter, but you knew that."

Edward frowned a little, as he closed the cash register and rested his palms flat onto the counter. I let out a breath, as he finally made eye contact with me.

"Really? Or is this just a line, because I may be rather easy going when it comes to sex, but there is no way I get involved with someone who's taken. Trust me, bookgirl, I've been exposed to it and it's nasty."

He winced, letting me know to steer well clear of that particular subject. I folded my fingers slowly around his wrist, and met his intense green stare. He looked hot when he was pissed. I made a mental note to get him angry at least once. Sex with him when he was annoyed would be like nothing else, I just knew it.

"No line. Come and eat, and I'll answer anything you like."

I could see his resolve weakening. I was winning, and I just had to keep prodding. I hid a smirk, as I took our food towards the far corner of the store, and dropped my backpack. It was an area they'd tried to define as a reading corner, but it was nothing more than two rather eclectic armchairs.

I could hear him walking around the store. The door clicked, and shortly after there was a flapping of the blind closing over the window. My pulse sped up as I waited for him. He seemed to believe me; otherwise he would have made me leave. From his tone, he was really not into sharing, not that I was, but I found it interesting. Something had upset him.

I placed two large books on the floor and cover them with napkins, before laying out our burgers and fries. His chuckle startled me. I turned to see him standing at the end of the aisle, his arms folded across his chest, assessing me. His sleeves were rolled to his elbows, exposing his forearms to me. I licked my lips, trying to work out when I'd decided forearms were sexy. My entire body throbbed for him, making my skin prickle and my pussy ache.

This was going to be a long meal.

He strolled slowly across to me. His walk was almost predatory, like a panther stalking its prey. I licked my lips again, waiting, wanting.

"Picnic? Really?" he questioned incredulously.

I shrugged. "It's as good a place as any."

He sat down facing me, crossing his legs and lifting the top off his burger. I laughed as he took the pickle from it and flung it into the empty brown bag. His face showed pure distaste.

"Ergh, they are just plain wrong. Just touching them makes me shudder."

"I can see that," I smiled. "Is the burger alright though? I had no idea what to get you. Sorry."

"Its fine," he mumbled around a mouthful of food.

My mouth watered. Was it wrong to want to be that burger?

Oh Christ, he was licking ketchup from his lips, making my thighs clench and my breathing hitch.

I was never going to make it through this alive. Everything he did made me more aware, more turned on, and so much more in need of what we'd previously done right here. I couldn't look at the table, because images of him fucking me on it flooded me. I was all but panting, when he finally spoke.

"So..."he dragged out. "A daughter?"

"Yup. She's four now. She goes swimming with her dad on a Thursday, that's why I started coming in here. *Originally...*"

Edward nodded and raised his brows at me, clearly wanting more. He was not going to make this easy.

"Jasper and I, well, we tried but it didn't work. He's getting married next month." I sighed, taking a moment to chew on a fry, before continuing. "It was never meant to be with Jasper and me. Gracie was an unexpected gift. She's very cute, and getting to be super sassy, too."

"Seth told me you came in to explain. You have to understand what it looked like to me, Bella."

"I do!" I interjected. "Gracie never usually answers my cell, and it wasn't even like I was keeping her a secret, because we'd screwed around, that's it. I don't hide my daughter, Edward."

"I would never infer that you did, Bella. It just took me by surprise. Um...I don't really know what to do with kids. I was, and still am kinda freaked out by it. Seth thinks it's hilarious of course, asshole."

He discarded his half eaten burger and picked up a fry, but instead of placing it between his lips, he put it in front of mine. I gulped and opened my mouth a little. He leaned closer, and I thought he was going to push it in, but he threw it over his shoulder and crushed his mouth against mine. He tasted of salt, fast food and Edward. I groaned and pushed my tongue against his.

How could I have missed something so much when I'd only tasted it once? But I did, as soon as his lips began devouring mine, I realized just how much I had missed them. He was needy and aggressive, and within seconds it had spiralled out of control. I could feel his arm shoving the picnic out of the way, as he crawled even closer. My hand clawed at his t-shirt, tugging it up and over his head. His green eyes glittered as I ran my palms over the planes of his chest. I could feel his increased heartbeat, and it only incited me further. I hadn't really come here for sex, but damn, there was no way I was saying no to him. My whole body was fully charged and needed a release.

I shoved at his shoulder, knocking him backwards, before slowly crawling up his body. Edward lay back muttering something about the view.

"Huh?" I asked.

A cocky little smirk played across his lips, before he nodded towards my chest. "Fucking amazing view."

I looked down and smiled. The v-neck of my top was hanging down, exposing my breasts in the red bra. His intentions were clear, so I laid all my cards on the table by pulling my top over my head, and flinging it behind me. A low throaty growl from Edward made my nipples harden and my stomach knot. He only made it worse when he cupped my tit, and began squeezing, before rolling my nipple over the fabric. I lowered my head and nibbled on his neck, licking a path along his collarbone and back again. His other hand fisted into my hair, tugging a little and sending short, stabbing sparks into my scalp.

All I could hear was the sounds of our panting. It increased the more we touched, the more we licked, the more we tasted. His fingers delved into my bra, making me sigh as he caressed the soft pillowy flesh. I wanted more, and it was becoming urgent.

I pulled at his belt, tugging it open, and unfastening the button to his jeans. At the same time, I began licking a torturously sensual trail down his abdomen. I could feel his stuttered breathing under my tongue, and taste the salty tang of his perspiration. It only made me wetter and more wanton. The closer I got to the fly of his jeans, the louder he seemed to growl. That was, until I reached the coarse hair that led me to my goal, because at that point he gripped my hair tightly, and I was fairly certain he stopped breathing.

“Bella,” he rumbled, whether in warning or in request. I simply didn’t know, but continued further down.

I pulled his jeans off his hips, noticing fleetingly his lack of underwear, at the same time I came into contact with his cock. My mouth watered. I cupped his balls, as I placed one long lick along his entire shaft.

“Holy fucking hell!” he snarled, as his hips bucked towards me.

I didn’t give him a chance to catch his breath as I lowered my mouth onto him, covering his cock with my mouth. His hand tightened again in my hair, but it only served as confirmation that he wanted this. My fingers played across his sac, as my tongue twirled around his head, each time making Edward moan, and thrust towards me. I’d begun to rub my breasts against his thighs, trying to gain some kind of friction for myself, but it wasn’t enough. His taste, his smell was incensing me. I wanted to tease him further; to prologue this, but just as before, our lust took a strangle hold and all I could think of was making him lose it. I wanted him screaming, undulating and spilling himself inside me. I felt powerful.

I hummed around his cock, feeling his thighs tremble and his stomach twitch. At the same time I circled the base with my fingers and held it firmly, bobbing my head quickly up and down his length. A growl emanated from his chest, as he tossed his head back, slamming it against the floor. He didn’t seem to feel the pain, though, clearly too entrenched in what my mouth was doing to him. I lapped at the tip of his erection, tasting his salty fluid. My eyes met his through my lashes, and I swear the man gulped. It only made me want to tease him further. I stroked at his balls and press my tongue flat on the underside of his cock, pressing hard as I moved along every inch of him.

I’d begun rocking my hips against his knee, needing to ease my own ache. I could feel just how wet my panties were becoming. Edward’s reaction to the luxury of my mouth was intoxicating. He was extremely receptive to my perusal of his anatomy. I hoped Seth didn’t decide to make an appearance this time. I knew Edward was too far gone to deal with his brand of cockblock. His balls had begun to tighten, and his breathing was becoming ragged. His fingers tightened in my hair, as he gasped my name.

Moments later he exploded into my mouth, spilling his seed against my tongue. I sucked and licked him until he spasmed at the way my tongue touched his sensitive flesh and pulled me away. I sat back watching his chest rise and fall as rapidly as my own was. I could practically hear our hearts thumping loudly against our chests. He’d slung his arm across his eyes, clearly trying to gain some control, however I liked it when he lost it completely. He came with complete abandon. It was so fucking sexy.

I twirled my finger around his navel, gazing at him through hooded eyes, and waiting for him to respond. He trembled and moved away from my touch.

“Uh huh, gimme a sec,” he whispered.

Edward sat up, tugging his jeans back in place, but he didn't refasten them. I couldn't drag my eyes from the sliver of intimate flesh. I licked my lips wanting more.

"Christ, you're insatiable. Keep looking at my groin like that and my cock will be up for round two."

I wiggled my brows, "I was planning on it!"

That sexy fucking smirk played across his lips again, before he looked at his watch.

"I think a second bout is off the cards. Uh, don't you have to get back to your kid soon?" he asked sheepishly.

Fuck!

"However..." he crooned, cupping me through my black leggings. "...there is certainly time to make sure you leave here with one hell of a smile on your face."

"Really?" I asked playfully.

"Most definitely, bookgirl."

He crawled closer to me, pushing me onto my back and hooking his thumbs into the elastic of both my panties and leggings.

My fucking phone rang.

Fuckfuckfuckfuckfuck!

Edward groaned, and moved away from me, allowing me to roll over and pull my cell from my backpack. I didn't even check to see who it was before answering.

"Hello?" I snarled.

"Momma! It's starting to rain and I wanna go home. Daddy said it was okay for me to use his phone," Gracie said sweetly.

I bet he did. I'd have to talk to him later.

"That's fine, baby. Give me twenty minutes and I'll be with you, and we can go home."

Edward pouted and handed me my shoes. I winced at him, hoping to convey an apology. I was certain he didn't buy it, because he stood up and began fastening his jeans, before retrieving his top from the floor.

"Okay, Momma I'll wait on the swings for you. Bye!"

I snorted, making Edward glare at me.

"Sorry, and there I was thinking Seth would be the problem. Look, I'd stay if I could."

He nodded, but it was short and abrupt. He was pissed off, but then so was I. I pulled on my top and gripped his forearm, making him face me.

"Edward! Do you really think I want to leave? I'm so fucking geared up right now. I swear one touch and I'd explode. I think a dozen cold showers won't sate this need."

He stepped closer to me, placing his hands on my hips, and grinding against me. His lips met my ear, as he whispered huskily, "So stay a little longer. I could make you burst into a thousand pieces with one lick of my tongue."

Holy fuck!

I wriggled free and collected my pack. “I really wish I could take you up on that, but my little girl needs me. As much as I *need* you, it will have to wait.”

He pouted again, reminding me a little too much of a toddler that didn’t get their own way.

“Did you toss my number?” I questioned, walking down the aisle of books.

“No, I kept it.”

“Good,” I smiled. “Use it. I’d really like a rain check on that tongue thing.”

I kissed his cheek, and left before he could say anything further. I wanted to stay, but Gracie came before any man with me. She always would.

I slung my backpack over my shoulder and practically skipped to the park. I was in a pretty good mood considering my body was screaming for some kind of release. I suppose me and my eight inch buddy would be having a date tonight, but it didn’t compare. I’d only had Edward once, but knew nothing would really match what he could do to my body, certainly not a plastic dildo.

My phone buzzed as I entered the park.

Proof I didn’t throw your number away.

I’m sorry I was an ass.

I’ll call you

E

I grinned. Maybe I would get that rain check with his delectable tongue. The thought made my insides clench, as I skipped towards my little girl.

I would save my fantasy of that for my date with my vibrating friend when she was asleep.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 5 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
Thanks to my amazing beta - Maylin, who does so much more than makes my words look pretty.
Love to my darling prereader - elusivekoolaid.
SM owns all things Twilight.

EPOV

Uncharted Territory.

That's where I was now. I'd never wanted to see a woman again. I wasn't the sort to have a repeat performance, but damn, I wanted one with Bella. Badly. Seth thought it was hilarious, but then he would. Anything that would torture me was amusing to him.

"Just call her!" he laughed at me, as he stacked the bookshelves.

"I texted her. Isn't that enough?"

"Um...No! Christ, sweetie, you suck at this."

I ran my hands through my hair, gritting my teeth and grumbling.

"Seth, I know I suck at this! That's because I've never done *this* before, and you know that. Cut me some slack."

"Oh, I'm trying, but if you carry on this way you're gonna fuck this up. I really like Bella and it appears you do too. I just want to see you happy, hun."

"What like you?" I snapped, regretting it almost immediately.

Seth winced, but quickly recovered. He walked over to me, raising his brows and waiting for me to apologize.

"Sorry. I promised I'd say no more on the Peter matter. I'm just stressed. I have no fucking clue what to do next. It's like she's holding all the aces, you know? That's not something I'm used to dealing with," I complained.

He took hold of my shoulders and stared at me, his fierce brown eyes meeting mine.

"Fucking call her! I swear to you, if you don't I will, and what I have to tell her won't be pretty. You moping around here like someone took your puppy is tiring. You look kinda hot all broody, but it's now seriously pissing me off."

I smirked at him, pulling my cell from the back of my jeans and scrolling through the numbers. Seth patted me on the shoulder, and winked at me, before going around the counter and heading upstairs. It left me alone in the store.

I connected the call and lifted my cell to my ear. I drummed my fingers on the wooden counter, as I waited for her to answer.

Why the hell did no one pick up as soon as it rang?

I was about to disconnect when a small voice answered.

“Hi.”

“Um, hi?” I replied.

“Do you want my Momma?” The little girl asked.

Maybe it was dense of me, but it was only when she said ‘Momma’ that I realized it must be Bella’s daughter. I didn’t have a clue what to say to her. I’d never dealt with a child before and had no idea what to say to her.

“Is she there?” I asked softly.

“Shower.” The child answered bluntly.

Okay, this was going to be harder work than I thought.

“Is there anybody else there that I can leave a message with?”

“Hmmm, yes. Me! Silly man,” she giggled.

I couldn’t stop a smirk spreading across my face. She laughed just like Bella, and certainly had her sassy attitude.

“Ok then,” I stalled. I couldn’t recall her name. I knew Bella had told me, and I felt like a bastard for not remembering now. “My name’s Edward...”

“I’m Gracie and I’m four!” she interrupted, saving my skin and making my smile bigger.

She was adorable.

“Hello Gracie, do you think you can remember to tell your mommy that I called her?”

“*Well...* Momma said I shouldn’t talk to strangers, so I really shouldn’t,” she retorted. I could practically see her pouting just like Bella did.

“Here’s the thing, Gracie. I have your Momma’s cell number, right? So I’m not a stranger to her, am I?” I asked carefully.

I hoped I was being simple enough for a four year old.

“Hmm, I guess. Why do you want my Momma?”

I raised my brows in surprise. She was very direct, just like Bella. It would appear her assertiveness was in her genes.

“Has she been in there long?”

“Nope, and Grandpa Charlie is in the garden,” she said proudly.

I wondered if she had Bella’s eyes, and quickly shook the thought away. Where the hell had that come from and why did it matter?

“Do you have a pen to write down a message?”

“I’m not allowed to use pens. Only crayons.”

“Fuck!”

She gasped loudly, before screaming into the receiver. “Momma! Your friend said a very bad word. I think he needs a time out for that!”

I scrubbed my face at my stupidity. This was going all wrong. Why the hell had I just asked a four year old to write down a message? To top it all off, I’d cussed down the phone at her.

“Hello?”

I breathed a sigh of relief as Bella’s voice filled my ear.

“Oh, thank Christ it’s you. I’m so sorry I said fuck to your daughter. It just came out and I really didn’t mean to say it. Sorry, again.”

“One minute, Edward.” I heard shuffling down the line and she mumbled for Gracie to go and play with Grandpa Charlie, before coming back to me. “You cussed at Gracie? What did she do to deserve that?”

Bella sounded angry. She had the wrong impression, and obviously thought I was saying it *to* her. I stuttered and fumbled my way through an explanation, but still didn’t think I was completely clear as to what happened. I felt thoroughly inept when it came to dealing with Gracie.

“So...,” she started. “You called to talk to me, but ended up in a strange conversation with my daughter where you asked her to *write down* a message? Then you said an *adult* word to her?”

“Yeah. I’m so sorry. Fuck, Seth will kill himself laughing at this mess. I only called to ask if I could see you again and now look at what I’ve caused.”

Bella laughed loudly, making me wince and pull the phone from my ear. When I was sure she’d simmered down I asked what the hell was so amusing.

“You! Edward, you asked a little girl that can barely write her name to take down a message for you. That’s hysterical. You don’t know many kids, do you?”

“I don’t know any, Bella. I wasn’t really thinking,” I said sullenly.

“You definitely gave me a laugh today, so thank you. Now, what can I do for you, other than embarrass the hell out of you?”

I leaned across the counter, resting on my elbows and looking over towards the *Mythology* aisle. I could still picture us there and what we’d done to each other. Those books would never be the same again.

“I wanted to ask you out for a drink, but it appears I suck at that.”

“Oh, you do suck, but it’s all good,” she said huskily, making me chuckle.

The line was silent, and I didn’t want to ask again. It would be begging, and that simply wasn’t my style. I’d mentioned going out again twice now, that was all I was willing to do. I could hear movement at the other end, and when I heard a short tut, asked what she was doing.

“Trying to get dressed. I ran out of the shower when Gracie shouted me. It’s freezing in just a towel.”

“Just a towel? I say even that’s too much,” I whispered seductively. “Gimme your address and I can come and keep you warm.”

She laughed throatily into the receiver, making me rock hard in a matter of seconds.

“If only it was that easy. I have a child, Edward, and I’m sorry to disappoint you, but I can’t drop everything for you, no matter how much I’d want to.”

Bella did sound apologetic, but it still annoyed me a little. I'd never been with someone who had other priorities, certainly not ones that couldn't be dropped as soon as I asked. I didn't know what to do about it. I was jealous of a four year old.

"Gracie is sleeping at her dad's house tonight. Maybe we could see each other later? I mean, that's why you called, right?"

I smirked, the envy dissipating, and rumbled a 'yes' into my cell.

"Do you know McCarty's? I could meet you there at seven."

"Sure," she replied nonchalantly, but I could hear the smile in her voice. "I'll see you there then, Edward."

"I'll be upstairs. I know the owner and tend to stay out of the crowds. Just ask for me, OK?"

"I certainly will. See you at seven."

She didn't wait for me to say goodbye, she just hung up. Well, fuck, she really was the one in control of this, and I wasn't happy about that. I needed to turn the tables, but didn't have the first idea of how I could do that and not come off as an uncaring ass. I knew she had Gracie to care for, so her life was very different from mine. It would be wrong and incredibly selfish to demand things I knew she couldn't give, but that didn't help me. I wanted her, just hearing her voice made me hard. Damn it, I was pining for her.

"Seth!" I bellowed up the stairs to his apartment.

His head popped over the wooden balustrade, grinning wildly and raising his brows in question.

"You rang m'Lord?"

"Yeah, funny, Seth. I need your help."

He bounced down the stairs, still clutching a medical dictionary and a pen. I realized he must have been studying, and I wanted to tell him to ignore me, but I needed him. I vowed I'd make it quick, that way he could go back to studying.

"What can I do for you, sweetie?"

I scrubbed my face with my hands and groaned.

"I don't know," I shrugged. "I don't know how to treat her now I know she has a kid. I want to see her again, and asked her to McCarty's tonight but what do I say to her?"

"Erm, you could start with 'Hi'," he laughed sarcastically.

"You're not funny. I need help, not humor!"

"Oh, get the hell over yourself. For fucks sake, babes, it's a kid not a fucking goblin. I don't get the problem."

Was he completely missing the point? Or was I making something out of nothing? I was confused and it wasn't something I was used to feeling in a relationship. It was like I was one step behind her. I didn't like it.

I leaned back against the counter and folded my arms across my chest. Seth stepped forward and began rubbing my biceps soothingly. His dark eyes pierced mine, but I could see he was biting back laughter.

"You're not funny..."

"You said that already, but personally I think the whole situation is hilarious."

"She's a *mom*, Seth. Do you know what it's like to want to fuck a mom?"

“Christ, Edward! I tell you frequently, I’m a gay man! It never ceases to amaze me that you forget that, but even so, I don’t even know what it’s like to want a female, let alone, one that’s had a child. Can I ask why it matters to you, babes?”

I frowned. Why did it matter?

“I just... I... Damn, I don’t know. It just feels...*odd*, OK?”

He moved his hands to the sides of my face and held it between his palms. I pouted at him, waiting for him to get angry with me at my stupidity, but he didn’t. Seth gaze at me, and stroked my cheekbones with his thumbs, comforting me.

“Darlin’, just treat her like any other woman. No, scratch that. I like her, I mean *really* like her, and I think you do too. That’s what’s scaring you, not the kid, so just go with it and see where it takes you. Have you asked her about the kid?”

“Yeah,” I whispered. “She’s four, in fact, I just spoke to her. She seems really cute. It just feels weird.”

“Why? You’re thirty-three years old! Most people our age have baggage, attachments, whatever you want to call them. You don’t normally stick around long enough to find out about them, that’s all. So, analyze that particular piece of the puzzle, hottie, not the little girl.”

I moaned and exhaled loudly.

“This is confusing the shit outta me, Seth.”

He wrapped his arms around my shoulders, pulling me into a hug, and whispered that he understood. I began hugging him back when the bell above the door tinkled.

“Balls!” Seth spat, as I heard someone clearing their throat.

I knew who it was by Seth’s distaste and the fact that the hairs on the back of my neck were standing on end. My visitor would hate the affection passing between me and Seth. I wanted to wind him up further by kissing Seth, but that wasn’t very fair, so I ruffled his hair playfully.

“Thanks man. You go up. I’ll sort this out.”

“You sure?” he mumbled.

I nodded, and turned to face my father, as Seth returned to his apartment.

“Good afternoon,” I stated dully.

“Son,” he nodded and placed his briefcase on the counter.

I waited. He could say what he needed to and then leave. I wasn’t in the mood for his brand of bullshit.

“I see you and him are as close as ever.”

I raised my brows at him, ignoring his innuendo. He insisted there was something dirty and sordid going on with me and Seth, and I was tired of trying to explain how much I loved him as a friend. But my father only heard that I was *in* love with him; he saw no difference.

“Your mother made me come and see how you were. I was on a house call only a few minutes away. Edward, she’d like for you to come to dinner one evening next week.”

“Can I bring Seth?” I asked immediately.

I knew the answer would be no, and therefore that was my get out clause. I could see the heavy set of his jaw, as he gritted his teeth in annoyance. I shouldn't get my kicks from pissing him off, but the guy was too easy. He hadn't even come of his own accord; mom had sent him.

He stuttered a little before regaining his composure.

"I think your Mom just wanted it to be family."

"Seth is family. *My* family."

"Edward," he whined. "Why must you make it difficult? Your mother wants to see you. It's been months."

"I wonder why," I snorted. "Is Rose permitted to bring Emmett to this dinner?"

I knew the answer, but wanted to drill my point home.

"Of course she is! They're married! Grow up, Edward."

I bit the inside of my cheek to stop from smirking. His cheeks had begun to mottle in anger and his eyes were blazing. I was annoying him enough and he would leave soon. I'd call mom straight after. She wasn't as ignorant as *Dad* about Seth. The perplexing thing was I didn't actually want to take Seth. All I could think of was bringing Bella, and introducing her to my family.

I shook my head, dislodging the silly thought.

Carlisle collected his briefcase, and scowled at me.

"The dinner is next Friday at eight. I think you would really disappoint your mother if you don't turn up, and you will really disappoint me if you turn up with *him*. The choice is yours, Edward. It always has been."

"Yeah, some choice, Dad," I snarled. "Don't rush to set me a place, and don't let the door hit your ass on the way out."

I turned and pretended to absorb myself in the books behind me. I waited until the bell chimed and the door closed, before I slumped to the floor and tried to cool down. The man got under my skin and irritated me more than anyone I'd ever known. He was so fucking rigid in his belief that I was gay, or at the very least bisexual. I could give him specifics of why I knew that wasn't the case, but that would probably only add fuel to his pathetic little fire. I also didn't see what the hell was wrong with it. Seth had helped me more than anyone, why did his sexuality have to cloud my father's judgement of him?

"You OK, babes?"

"Yeah, my father..."

"I know." Seth interrupted. "I heard. I was on the stairs the whole time. Didn't want to leave you."

"He's such a fucking asshole!"

He sat down on the floor next to me and patted my knee.

"I know, but hun, you need to stop goading him. You knew he wouldn't want me there, so don't ask him. I hate being your toy to piss him off further. Please don't."

I swallowed the lump that formed in my throat. I'd never really thought of it that way before. He was right though, and I didn't want to hurt him. I'd call mom later and speak to her. I checked my watch and cursed.

"What?"

“I asked Bella to meet me at McCarty’s. I need to sort this place out and go back to my apartment to shower and get changed.”

“Go. I can close up. You need as much time as you can to look presentable,” he snorted.

“Hey!” I complained, standing up and pulling Seth to his feet.

“I’m serious! You’ve been letting yourself go.”

I pulled him into a tight embrace and thanked him.

“My pleasure, darlin’. Now fuck off.”

I laughed as I grabbed my coat, bag and bike helmet.

“I’ll call you later, or you could come to the bar?”

“Yeah, I’m sure I’ll be over. Peter is spending the night *elsewhere*,” he said sadly.

“You mean with her?”

“Don’t Edward. Please?”

I nodded and tapped his cheek.

“Catch you later, OK?”

Seth nodded and closed the door behind me. His sad face stayed with me, as I drove my *Kawasaki Ninja ZX-10R* back to my apartment.

// FE \

“So, dear brother, I hear you managed to piss Dad off in record time today.” Rose stated, as she placed my drink on the table in front of me.

She often helped Emmett out when he was short staffed, or he was busy. They always intrigued me. They were both so different and yet connected together perfectly. Emmett was a big kid and would never grow up, Rose, however, took everything far too seriously. Maybe they simply balanced each other out.

Rose stood towering over me, waiting for an explanation. The expression on her face reminded me so much of Carlisle that I had to look away.

“He asked me to dinner. I asked if Seth was invited, end of,” I shrugged nonchalantly.

“Edward, can’t you just drop it? You know how he feels...”

She stopped and followed my gaze to the top of the staircase.

Bella.

She stood grinning at me, and looking mouth watering. I blinked and tried to take her in. She wore a skirt with an odd ruffled hem, but it suited her perfectly. Her shoes were a matching burgundy color and had little ankle straps.

I drooled at the image flitting through my head.

Bella’s top was black and nothing out of the ordinary, except for the deep V at the chest. My trousers became tight. If her outfit wasn’t torture enough, she was wearing a deep red lipstick smeared across her lips. I had visions of her on her knees with those fucking red lips leaving an imprint around my...

“Hello! Earth to Edward!” Rose yelled at me.

I stood and shook my head, apologizing to Rose. I held my hand out to Bella, and she skipped over to take it.

“Hey,” she said happily.

“You look amazing, Bella. Thanks for coming.”

She didn’t respond, just sat down on the leather couch I’d just vacated. Rose eyed me warily. I groaned and introduced them.

“Bella, this is my sister, Rosalie. Her husband owns this place. Rose this is...erm...Bella.”

Rose was still staring at me, trying to work out what was going on, when she held her hand out and shook Bella’s.

“Nice to meet you. Feel free to stay up here. There are no parties or whatever tonight. The balcony is yours, though you’ll have to go down to get drinks. I don’t have anyone serving up here.”

“Thanks Rose,” I stated, hoping it would be enough to get her to leave.

She didn’t.

“So, Bella, how did you meet my brother?”

Bella tucked her legs up underneath her, giving me the most delectable shot of her creamy white thigh.

This was going to be a long night.

“Well, that’s a very funny story.” Bella started, but there was no way I was going to let her finish.

“Rose, I think Emmett needs your help downstairs.”

She rolled her eyes, knowing exactly what I was playing at, but I didn’t care. I wasn’t really ready for the introductions. Rose started to walk to the staircase, but turned and smiled at me before she descended.

“I’ll be back up later, Edward. Have fun, but please remember I have cameras up here.”

Bella giggled, and I couldn’t do anything except groan.

“She’s seems cool.”

“Are you kidding me? Rose is cold. I will forever ask myself what the hell Emmett sees in her, even though she is my sister.”

I adjusted my position next to her at the exact moment she leaned across me and picked up my beer. I drank in her cleavage, licking my lips in anticipation. I wanted a taste of her. She only made matters worse when she began drinking from the bottle, her throat constricting as she swallowed. It was too much and I moved closer, my nose running along the column of her neck. She sighed, removing the bottle, and tilted her head, giving me more of her neck to devour. I tickled my lips against the skin, lapping at it softly with my tongue. Bella skimmed her hands slowly across my shoulders and up to my head, pulling my beanie hat off.

“You shouldn’t hide the hair. I need something to grip,” she whispered seductively.

“It was cold outside,” I replied lamely, as I took her earlobe into my mouth and sucked.

The volume of the music in the bar increased. The night crowd was starting to spill in and I knew in the next thirty minutes or so, they would turn the main lights off.

“Thank you for asking me to come.”

“I wanted to see you again. This is very unusual for me.”

Kiss.

“What is?”

Lick.

“Wanting to see someone again.” *Kiss.* “Letting them consume my thoughts.” *Lick.*

She hummed when I nibbled at the base of her neck, and threaded her fingers into my hair, holding me closer. Her spicy perfume swamped me, teasing my nostrils and filling my lungs. I was thoroughly intoxicated with her.

“Good to know this is different for you too,” she whispered, her hand moving down my chest and snaking under my shirt. She stroked the skin of my abdomen, making me twitch. I pulled her closer by gripping her bare thigh. Her skin was so smooth, I could spend an entire day just stroking it and feeling the softness under my fingertips.

“Can I admit to something?” I breathed into her chest and licked a line between her breasts.

“Oh God, you can do whatever you please if you keep doing that,” she gasped.

I ran my finger along the seam of the neck of her top. It connected with the lace of her bra, and after dipping it further in, it hit her erect nipple. We both moaned. Fuck, what was it about her?

“I’m kinda daunted by your daughter. I have no idea what to do with a kid.”

Bella stilled and moved her head back a little. She stared at me, confusion marring her features. Apparently I’d done something wrong, though I had no clue what.

“What?” she asked.

“Huh?”

“You mentioned my child. It confused me. Why are you daunted? Edward, I’m not introducing you to Gracie.”

She lowered her feet to the floor and smoothed her clothes. She was pulling away from me, and I didn’t know why.

“I’m confused Bella. Please explain to me. I thought you’d want me to take an interest in her.”

I watched her take another swig of my beer and tried to calm the churning in my stomach.

“This is new to both of us. Neither you, nor I have a great track record when it comes to relationships, so why would you assume after a couple of quick meetings I’d introduce you to my child? I can’t do that, Edward. I can’t let her meet everyone who I have any interaction with. Kids get attached and it would be unfair when you leave. Do you understand?” She asked softly.

I nodded. I completely understood. From my small conversation with Gracie she seemed like a sweet little girl, and it wouldn’t be fair to make her upset when I stopped seeing Bella.

“Now, are you gonna keep pouting, or are you gonna do something much more satisfying with those lips?” she purred.

I grinned, as she straddled my hips and sat on my lap. Damn Emmett and his cameras!

“I could do much more satisfying things if we weren’t in the middle of a bar, *bookgirl.*”

“Then...” she whispered into my ear, making me shiver. “...maybe we should leave?”

“Oh! Yes.”

My shocked exclamation made her laugh, but I wanted to make something clear to her.

“Bella, I didn’t invite you here for this. I just wanted to see you again.”

She kissed me softly, her lips massaging mine in a delicate dance.

“I know, but I want to. I mean, I *really* want to.”

“Gracie?”

Bella climbed off me and reached for my hat.

“She’s at Jaspers. I told you that, but we can’t go to my place.” She winced. “My Dad’s staying with me at the moment, sorry.”

“Mine then?”

She nodded, making my groin tighten and my heart race. She’d have to straddle my bike. Her arms would need to wrap around me to hold on, which would make her hands extremely close to my crotch.

I swallowed and tried to calm myself; preparing for the ride home.

“Um, you’ll need to ride on my bike. Have you ever been on one?”

She blushed and averted her gaze, mumbling something I couldn’t quite understand.

“Huh?”

“I said my ex rides all the time. He has a couple of Ducati’s, so yeah, I know how to ride. Do you have a spare helmet?”

I was unsure what to do with the ‘ex’ comment, so set it aside for now, and explained Emmett kept a spare behind the bar. She took my hand in hers and tugged me towards the staircase. Just before we descended I brought her to a stop and kissed her fiercely. I’d been desperate for it from the moment I’d seen her.

My lips caressed hers, as my tongue delved into her mouth and swirled. She whimpered, reminding me of those sexy little noises she made when we fucked. I was going to make her beg tonight. She certainly wouldn’t want to leave my apartment willingly.

“Wow,” she gasped.

“Yes, wow, and there’s more of that. So move your ass,” I retorted playfully, swatting her on her bottom.

She giggled and virtually danced down the steps. Tonight was certainly going to be interesting. I just had to keep my dick in check until I got home, didn’t I?

End Notes:
Thanks for reading.
xxx

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 6 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>Love to my super awesome beta Maylin. ((hugs)) baby.</p> <p>Gropes to my prereader and friend elusivekoolaid</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

EPOV

I didn't really have a plan when I'd asked her to leave McCarty's, but I knew I wanted her alone. It wasn't necessarily to get into her panties, though I wouldn't turn that shit down. I just wanted to be with her, and not tens of other people in a crowded bar. There was also the issue of Rosalie. I knew she wouldn't leave us alone. She'd want to keep Dad informed of my latest fuck, but it wasn't like that. It was strangely different.

That in itself scared the shit out of me.

I'd never let someone other than Seth, on my bike before. It was my pride and joy, and I hadn't really thought about what it would do to me having Bella seated behind me. I'd straddled the machine, and watched as she tried to do the same, completely forgetting she was wearing a skirt.

Fuck. Fuck. Holy Fuck.

Bella wasn't bothered in the slightest. She cocked her leg over the seat, and shimmied closer to my body. I had to shake my head to dislodge the image because of the quick glimpse of panties, and when she wrapped her arms around my waist I realized one thing.

This was going to be a fucking long ride home.

Her scent permeated the leathers, and even with my helmet on, it was still there, floating around me and driving me insane. She only increased my frustration when her fingers brushed the fly of my jeans. I had to grit my teeth to focus on the road. I've never dealt with a need so intense before, sure I'd wanted to fuck, but right now, with her, I wanted to possess. I kept trying to picture my father, hoping that would be enough to curb the wave of lust until we got to my apartment, but the aggression I felt whenever I saw him, only made me want to take her harder; to channel my anger elsewhere.

Her body swayed with mine as we took the corner, affirming that she'd ridden on the back of one many times. I didn't want to think of her in this position with her ex, but then I couldn't exactly ignore it, given that she had a child with him. She must have been in much more intimate positions with him than this to produce another human being. Dealing with that kid had been the strangest thing ever. I didn't have the first idea how to talk to a four year old, and the way I'd asked her to write down a message proved that. The whole situation was foreign and very bizarre. I needed to get a grip of something other than Bella.

She squeezed me tighter, as I increased our speed. It wasn't much further until I reached my apartment, but now we were nearing it, I wanted to ride around the block a few more times, just to continue to feel her body next to mine. I would be torturing myself, but I simply didn't want her warmth to leave me.

When we stopped at the traffic lights I did a thumbs up to her. I wanted to make sure she was OK on the bike, and that my speed didn't frighten her. Bella placed her hand over my aching crotch and pushed her palm gently. The bike jerked forward, before completely cutting out. I exhaled and tried to get a grip of myself, but she hadn't removed her hand. I had a feeling she knew exactly what she was doing, and the kind of effect it would have on me.

A horn beeped, and someone yelled for me to move it. After flipping them the bird, I revved the bike, and sped off in the direction of the apartment, trying to ignore the game Bella's hand was playing with the zip of my jeans. It took every ounce of willpower I had not to stop at the nearest dark alley and show her what her teasing was doing to me. By the time I rode into the garage under my building and shut off the engine, I was brimming with need, and nothing would sate it but her.

I kicked the stand on, as she climbed down and pulled off the helmet. I studied her through the visor, while she shook out her hair, and righted her skirt.

"What the fuck was that?" I asked, after ripping my helmet off.

Bella grinned at me, and toed the floor innocently.

"I have no idea what you're referring to. I was merely holding on tight."

"To my cock?"

She giggled and gazed at me through her long dark lashes.

"Oh, is that what it was!"

Oh, fuck me! She was really in the mood for playing, so I placed my helmet on the floor and tugged her toward me.

"Do I need to re-educate you on it? Don't you remember what it did to you, Bella?" I said suggestively, nuzzling her ear.

I felt her shudder, as she hooked her fingers into the belt loops of my trousers. I was straining against the zip and desperate for her to free me from the confines of my jeans. It was usually deserted down here, so I wasn't too worried about just how far this teasing went. The building only had two apartments, and they weren't exactly the Hilton. The elevator was still the old service one that they used to use in the sixties. I thought the place had character, so had leased the top floor two years ago. I now couldn't imagine living anywhere else. The other plus was that my father refused to visit because apparently, it was disgusting.

"Ooo, yes, Mr. Cullen, I could definitely do with some pointers. It's been a while, and to tell you the truth, the first time could have been more memorable."

I growled and bit at her neck. She immediately began pushing my leather jacket from my shoulders and fumbling with the buttons on my shirt.

"No, no. I'm the one who needs to educate you, so..." I crooned, turning her and backing her into the bike. "Just take it easy, and let me refresh that terrible memory of yours."

I licked down her throat and between her breasts, pushing the top down with my chin. Her hands threaded into my hair, as she hitched her leg around my knee. I could feel the heat emanating from her pussy as it neared my thigh. My hold on my sanity was precarious at best when she was close, and she was about to sever it now.

"I'll need to see it, or at least touch it then, Edward," she said seductively.

She was crucifying me with the little innocent act. I wanted to take her so hard I'd end up pounding her into next week. I nibbled at her skin, trying to fend off the aggression, and spoke into her chest.

"Unzip me. Take me out."

She laughed quietly and skimmed her hand down my torso towards my crotch. At the same time, I pushed my hand up her top and cupped her bare breast, groaning at the contact. Her leg lowered a little, allowing her much better access to my fly. She'd already undone the button while we were riding back here, so all she had to do was lower the zipper and push her hand inside.

“Do you ever wear boxers?” she sighed, as I toyed with her nipple.

“Nope. Do you ever wear a bra?” I shot back.

“Rarely.”

I couldn't say anything further, because she did as I requested and took my cock into her hands, pulling me from my jeans. I gasped as the cold air hit the hot flesh, but groaned almost immediately afterwards when she gripped me and pumped twice. I bit the swell of her left breast and pinched the nipple, making her hips thrust against my thigh. I rocked it against her pussy, as she continued to slowly stroke my erection. It was fucking beautiful. We watched each other the whole time; eyes locked while our hands played.

Unable to stand it any longer, I kissed her, pulling on her lower lip harshly, and sucking her tongue into my mouth. She gripped me harder the more aggressive I was with her. It reminded me of the heat and ferocity of the first time in the store. It was a need that couldn't be denied, and I wasn't about to. I'd have her here, and afterwards in my apartment. She wasn't leaving here without being sore, and maybe a little bruised.

On that thought, I pulled away and began sucking her neck, gently at first, but with the sole intention of marking her. What the fuck was wrong with me? I'd never wanted to do that to anyone else.

“Unf... Christ, you're good at that,” she groaned.

“The sucking, or the flicking?” I questioned softly into her ear.

“Fuck! Both? Yes, definitely both.”

My breathing was shallow, and the more she stroked my cock, the harder it was to breathe. I continued to roll her nipple and massage her tit, but skimmed my other hand down her stomach to her heated pussy. I slid my index finger across the cotton covering my goal. The material was wet, proving what I already knew.

She wanted me as desperately as I wanted her.

I smoothed my finger under the hem and pushed her top up at the same time I skimmed her slit. I wanted entrance, but wanted to continue to drive her crazy with need. She loosened her grip on me, and I swirled my tongue around her nipple. I felt her sag completely against the bike, and hoped it would hold still. It was a fucking heavy machine, but I was damned horny. It was risky, but right now I wasn't thinking with my brain. My dick was in complete control.

“Edward, stop fucking around!” she demanded, making me snort.

She was as aggressive as me when it came to sex. It was a huge turn on to find someone so honest about what they wanted.

I flicked my tongue against her taut skin, and pushed my thumb between her folds, pressing against her wet clit. Bella's head fell back, elongating her neck and demanding I taste her. I wanted to be everywhere; to taste, touch and smell every inch, all at the same time. My lust was burning through me and threatening to reduce me to cinders.

“Bella,” I grunted. “I need...fuck it, I need to be inside you.”

“Who's stopping you?” She winked.

On those final words my control snapped. I shoved her panties to one side and gripped her thighs tightly, before thrusting my cock into her. We both gasped as she encapsulated me, and to steady herself she wrapped her arms around my shoulders. With each movement I was forced further into her. I lowered my forehead to hers, as I drove into her hot body. I couldn't get my pace right, so picked her up a little and rested her ass on the bike. Bella immediately wrapped her legs around my waist, pulling me closer. Her heels dug into my pant covered ass, as her hands fisted at my leather coat. She was grinning wildly at me, and it was infectious. I smiled back, bewildered by this moment. I'd never actually had fun during sex. It

was a function I performed to blow off steam, and chill out. No woman had ever wanted me to laugh with them while my cock was teasing at their G spot. She was one hell of a revelation, and one I knew was already rocking my very existence.

She licked her top lip slowly, never taking her focus from me, as I began to speed up. I lapped at her tongue, winking at her playfully. Her only response was to squeeze her thighs around me. Her muscles clenched around my cock, making my abdomen tighten, along with my balls. I skimmed a hand up her thigh and groaned when it met her wetness.

“Oh fucking hell, yes, Edward,” she shouted.

Her voice echoed off the walls in the garage, surrounding us and adding to the passion running through our veins. My heart was pounding so hard against my chest that it threatened to break through. Her lips met mine, at the same time my thighs began to quiver. Her pussy contracted around me, starting the first wave of my orgasm. I gave a loud guttural groan against her lips, gasping for air as it burned through my body.

Bella’s head lolled to the side, and her eyes fluttered closed, as I filled her. She looked completely lost, as her own ecstasy approached. She had just begun to whimper, when I heard the service elevator begin to rumble into life. *Oh fuck!*

The last vestiges of my orgasm dissipated, but Bella’s was only just beginning. As the metal door was pulled open I moved her head to my chest, and whispered for her to relax her legs a little. Jake walked passed and waved. He lived in the apartment below me, and was what Seth liked to refer to as *prime eye candy*. I didn’t see it myself.

“Hey, Edward. She OK?”

“Erm... yeah. She just took a bit of a spill. She’ll be fine, won’t you Bella?”

Bella gave a muffled squeal and lifted her hand to Jake. He grinned again, before opening the garage door, and getting into his car. I was still inside of her, gritting my teeth as she purred into my chest, waiting for Jake to leave. Her pussy was clenching at my cock, alerting me to her lingering completion.

“It’s OK, he’s gone now,” I whispered, rather dazed by the experience.

She blinked up at me, her brown eyes trying to focus.

“What the fuck was that?”

“Jake? He’s my neighbour, well, actually he lives underneath me, but you get it,” I rambled.

“Edward! We were screwing while he was walking by!”

I laughed loudly, trying not to piss her off too much.

“I know, fun wasn’t it?”

She shoved at my chest, and untangled her limbs from around me. My dick wasn’t the only thing feeling the loss. At first I thought she was annoyed, but a small smile began to tease the corner of her lip, and before I could zip my pants back up she was laughing along with me.

“We’re fucking twisted, you know that, right?”

“Hell, yes!”

I took her hand in mine and bent to pick up my helmet. Bella followed suit, eyeing me warily.

“Huh?” I grunted, as I tugged her towards the elevator.

“We didn’t use a condom...” My heart stopped. “It’s OK, Edward, don’t panic I’m on the pill. I only realized myself when I was hiding from your neighbour. It seems we lose our heads when we get horny, and I don’t want to get too serious right now, but I don’t want it going down that way again.”

I pulled the metal gate open, gesturing for her to enter and pressed the button, after sliding it closed. She leaned back against the panel, assessing my reaction. I didn’t want to get serious either, but I couldn’t allow something so stupid to happen again.

“I’m sorry. I wasn’t thinking,” I stated, walking towards her and cupping her face in my palm. “I promise, I’m clean, but I will be more careful in future.”

I lowered my lips to hers and kissed her softly. The moment she moaned, it span out of control again, and only the elevator grinding to an abrupt halt tore us apart.

I pulled her towards my front door, laughing at her protest because she wanted to continue.

“We can neck all you want in here,” I sighed, as I opened the door and led her inside.

She placed my spare helmet on the small table by the door and tugged her bag over her head, letting it flop to the floor. I left her to look around. My apartment wasn’t much more than one huge room. There was a small kitchen in the far corner, and a curtained off area right at the back, which I used as my bedroom. The bathroom was the only room that had an actual door and was considered a separate room. The walls were bare brick, and as far as I knew the windows were all original. It used to be an old factory, but had gone out of business many years before. There had been plans to renovate the whole building, but it had never happened, and Jake and I were comfortable here.

I’d always loved the space.

“Not one for being tidy, are you?” she teased.

I raised my brows at her, sauntering closer.

“Hey! You be a good little guest, or I’ll have to rethink you spending the night.”

I held onto her hips, holding her close and kissed her mouth quickly.

“Staying the night? Me? I don’t recall discussing sleepovers,” she replied quietly.

I couldn’t ascertain whether she was annoyed, or just confused. We hadn’t discussed it, mainly because I hadn’t intended for it to happen until the moment the words left my lips. No woman had ever been back here. This was my haven, so why was it important that Bella stay here with me tonight?

Confused by my strange train of thought, I shook my head and changed the subject.

“Drink?”

Bella nodded, and pulled away from me, making me instantly worried that I’d blown it.

“Bathroom? I could do with freshening up.”

I nodded and pointed her towards the white door at the far end of the floor. The second she closed the door I tugged my cell from my pocket and called Seth.

“What? I’m busy, sugar,” he moaned impatiently into the receiver.

“Oh, hi to you too!” I retorted.

“To repeat, what?”

“Are you really busy? I need to talk.”

He sighed, but it wasn’t in exasperation. I groaned. “Are you with *him*?”

“Yeah, sweetie, I’m kinda being swallowed by it all, if you catch my drift.”

“Ergh! Seth, that’s way more than I needed to know. Can you tell him you need a second? For me?”

There was a muffled conversation I couldn’t grasp, before a moment of silence.

“Hottie, this better be fucking good, because I was getting the best blow job of my life right then. Speak!” he demanded.

I ran my hand in frustration through my hair, and grumbled down the phone.

“I’m fucking lost, Seth. Totally lost, and I’m hoping you know how to sort me out. It’s Bella...”

He laughed loudly, making me wince. “Of course it’s Bella. No one else would get your panties in a twist like this chick. So what’s the damage? What do you need to buy flowers for?”

“I need to buy flowers? Fuck, really? You see, no one tells you this shit, there’s no manual!”

“Woah! Calm it, and start at the beginning.”

I groaned again and slumped on the floor, before explaining the date and the ride home. He’d laughed and interjected a few times, but had yet to offer anything of any help to me.

“...but now I want her to stay, and, Seth, you know I don’t do sleepovers. She has me in knots and I’m useless at the relationship stuff. What do I do?” I whined.

“You’re asking *me*? The gay guy with the straight boyfriend? Christ, Eddie-babes, you must be completely mindfucked. My only help is to let her stay, go with it, see where you end up. Oh, wait where’s the kid?”

“With her father,” I sneered, instantly perplexed with myself at that little outburst.

The lock on the bathroom door rattled, alerting me to Bella’s imminent return.

“You aren’t being very helpful. Please?” I begged.

“I can’t babes.” I practically heard him shrug. “You have to go with this one and see where it takes you. Sometimes getting lost is the best way. Have fun, because I know I will.”

With that, he made a kissy noise and hung up.

“Fuck!” I spat, as Bella came out of the bathroom.

My jaw hit the floor, not only had she removed her shoes, but her skirt seemed to have done a disappearing act too. She stood before me in a tiny black cotton thong, and her tight black top.

She oozed sex, and it shocked me to the core to admit just how much I wanted her again.

“Something wrong?” she questioned sweetly.

“I don’t recall you wearing that to McCarty’s,” I replied, trying to regroup.

She grinned and sat down on the floor next to me.

“I don’t mean my clothes; I mean you were on the phone. Is there a problem?”

I leaned forward, and kissed her lips softly.

“None at all, just Seth being all whiny. Where’s your skirt?”

“I left it in the bathroom,” she shrugged, making me chuckle.

“Well,” I drawled, prowling closer, and bracketing her hips with my hands. “I like the new look. It suits you.”

Bella leaned back slightly, allowing me to almost completely blanket her body with mine. I could still feel the heat radiating from her. Her dark eyes were twinkling in excitement, and her cheeks were tinged with color. I could feel her breath as it skimmed across my cheek, and I watched in fascination as she licked her lower lip slowly.

“You gotta stop doing that shit,” I moaned.

“What?” she questioned, smiling.

“You’re such a fucking tease. All your lip licking, and innocent little comments, you know what trouble that got you into in the garage.”

I placed a kiss on her chin, and another on the tip of her nose.

“But, Edward, maybe I want to be in your kind of trouble.”

Her voice was husky and there was no denying she wanted the same as me. We’d only just fucked, and yet, I wanted to slide into her all over again. I was completely entranced by her. Every cell in my body called out for me to touch her, taste her. I was salivating at the thought of running my tongue along her flesh again. I could practically taste her.

Bella’s hand moved to grasp the back of my neck, before pulling me down on top of her. Her legs folded around my waist and she devoured my mouth, penetrating it with her tongue. I sighed into her touch and went along for the ride, just as Seth had told me. She met me kiss for kiss, nip for nip and eventually we were both naked again, sprawled across my wood floor, and fucking as if our lives depended on it. She was riding me, and scratching harshly at my chest, as my own nails bit into her hips. We were insatiable, and it was amazing.

She screamed loudly, as she was flooded by her orgasm. It made me grin proudly, because that was her third in as many hours.

“I give in...complete surrender from me,” she panted, flopping onto my chest.

I looked down, smoothing the wet tendrils from where they had stuck to her face, and kissed her forehead.

“Yeah, maybe we should rest. I’m pretty sure I have friction burns on my fucking elbows.” I felt her snort against my chest. “Why the hell are we on the floor, when there’s a bed over there?”

“Fun? Spontaneity?”

“Umm, well we did both, but now I need the comfort of the mattress,” I complained, slapping her ass. “Scoot.”

Bella hissed as she climbed off me, and strolled naked to the bed. I appreciated her smooth pert ass, as she swayed it seductively. I knew she was doing it on purpose; she was one huge tease, made to drive me wild with lust.

My own hissing turned to curses, as I noticed angry red welts on my elbows. They’d been worth it though. I moved gently to the kitchen, my joints aching, and poured a glass of wine for us both before joining her in bed. Placing them both on the table beside the bed, I climbed in and pulled her close to me. She snuggled against my chest, kissing my nipple.

“Will you stay?” I asked quietly.

She was quiet for the longest time, and when I looked down I saw she was asleep. Her long dark eyelashes were casting shadows across her flushed cheeks, and her mouth had opened slightly, forming a tiny ‘O’. She looked beautiful, and something odd within me began to stir.

Not wanting to analyze it, I shuffled further down, careful not to wake her and drifted off to sleep with her in my arms.

// FE \

I woke to my phone ringing, and knew instantly she’d gone. The space next to me was cold, so it had been vacant for some time. I leaned forward and smelled the pillow, drinking in the subtle scent of her that remained there, before shaking my head at my complete sappy state. I was moping over her, and she’d only been away from me for a few hours, at best.

Looking around the floor, I located my phone, and grinned like an idiot at the screen.

“Hey,” I greeted, my voice still husky from sleep.

“Hey yourself, sorry I deserted you. I had to pick up Gracie. I just wanted to say thanks.”

“Um...OK.”

“*Gracie, come here! I mean it!...*Sorry, she’s always wild when she gets back from Jaspers. Look, I need to go. Thanks,” she repeated.

“Can I see you again?” I blurted out, before changing my mind.

She snickered down the receiver, making me smile too.

“Yes, you can. I left you a present on the kitchen worktop. Call me, Edward. Bye.”

She abruptly hung up, not giving me the opportunity to say anything further. Curious as to what she could have left me, I swung my feet onto the floor and climbed out of bed. My muscles ached, and I could see a scab forming on my right elbow. Floor sex was not good for my skin. I winced as I walked around the counter, and then burst into great fits of laughter.

She’d left me her panties.

They were placed neatly on the chopping block and she’d written on them in her red lipstick.

Best date ever. Thanks B xx

I stared at them, grinning and replaying the whole night in my head. At that point I accepted one thing.

She was turning my world upside down, and I never wanted it to go back to what it once was.

End Notes:
Bella is certainly holding all the cards in this relationship!!!

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 7 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p style="text-align: center;">Hello!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Thanks for sticking with me...this one is so damn cute!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Love to my beautiful beta Maylin, who did her magic on this even though she had a million other things to cope with.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Kisses to my prereader elusivekoolaid. Muah xx</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

BPOV

“Jasper, it's not really any of your business. I told you I know what I'm doing and it's just a bit of fun.”

“Bella it is my business, we have a child together.” Jasper stated.

He was being an asshole after an argument with Alice, and had decided I was an easy target. I wasn't.

I tossed the cloth onto the kitchen counter and glared at him.

“Don't you dare throw Gracie at me! You, of all people, should know of the sacrifices I'm willing to make for her.”

He cringed knowing I was right. Gracie came first, and I wasn't going to let him use her as a reason to dismiss what was going on with Edward. Even though I had no real idea what that was, but I wouldn't let him bully me into submission.

“You never had an issue with me seeing guys before. Why now?”

“You've never seen anyone before,” he stated adamantly.

“Oh please! I know you don't think I became celibate when I kicked you out! Come. On!”

He ran his fingers through his wavy hair, and groaned loudly. I could see the harsh set of his jaw, and knew he was trying to keep a lid on his anger.

“What I'm trying to say is...I knew you'd been with guys, but this guy seems a little different, and I'm asking you to be careful. Not just for Gracie, but for me. We need you, baby.”

I shook my head, as he reached out to pull me closer.

“No, don't. Jaz, I'm a fucking adult, and you can't lay this on me. I'm allowed a life. For fuck's sake, I let you run off and have yours!” I bellowed.

He tugged my arm again, and eventually I succumbed to his embrace. He enveloped me in his arms and stroked my hair. My body was rigid; my shoulders set, because I wanted him to feel just how pissed I was at him.

I pushed at his chest, not really intending to move him.

“What *is* your damage?”

I felt him exhale into my hair, before swallowing audibly.

“I’d like to say I don’t know, but I do...Come and sit with me. Please?”

“Gracie...”

“Gracie is in the garden with Charlie. Come on, I think we need to discuss this. Bella, we’ve always worked through our issues; we’ve always been close. I’m not about to have that altered by my petty arguments.”

I rolled my eyes at him, and stalked petulantly into the living room. Flopping down onto the threadbare couch, I glared at him, waiting. He perched on the edge of the cushion, and tapped his fingers absently on the arm, before taking a deep breath.

“Ok, truth be told, I’m jealous. There’s something very different with this dude, and I feel threatened...”

I opened my mouth to speak, when he held up a hand to stop me.

“Just let me have my say, and then the stage is yours. I know what you did for me; what you did for Alice, but you’ve still been here with us. We’re a team. I think that’s changing, and I don’t like it. It makes me selfish, I know, but it’s how I feel. I trust you to make the right choices when it comes to our daughter, but I worry about you, Bells.”

I sagged against the cushions, pulling my hair into a haphazard bun, but my eyes never left Jasper's.

“Don't. Just let me have this one thing. I've done nothing but think of you and Gracie since the first night we met, but now *I* want something. Me. Don't give me an ultimatum over something that is nothing more than a bit of fun.”

He scowled and tried to hold my hand in his, but I wasn't going to allow him to comfort me, when all he was doing was causing me pain. I'd been the one to send him to Alice. I'd made the sacrifice, and I wouldn't let him decide that now he was jealous. He couldn't have every aspect of me. As close as we were there would be a side of me that he was no longer entitled to.

“But I really think this guy is more than that. I've seen you with dudes before, this is more.”

I laughed loudly at him, shoving at his shoulder.

“You haven't even seen him!”

“I don't need to. Bella, I see your face when you come back from seeing him, or like now when we talk about him. I'm not telling you to stop, or giving you an ultimatum. I just want you to be aware that I know there's a shift, that I feel it, and therefore I want you to be careful,” he said softly.

I kept my voice low, but only because I didn't want Gracie caught up in it all.

“I'm going to repeat what I said at the start of this ridiculous conversation.” I poked at his chest, drilling the point home. “You have no right. This is a part of my life you have no control over. It's nothing to do with Gracie, and that means it's nothing to do with you.”

“How long do you think you can keep the two apart?” he snarled.

I stood abruptly, trying to get a grip on my anger. What the hell did he think he was doing?

“It's none of your business! Fucking understand!”

“Mommy, Grandpa Charlie touched a frog!”

I inhaled sharply, before turning to see my little girl. She was grinning widely, her eyes twinkling, as she pointed to my Dad.

“Ergh! Now isn't that just gross? Did you tell him that, Gracie?”

“I did! He says it's not! Daddy, isn't it gross? Tell him, Daddy!” she demanded, placing her hands on her hips and pouting in the direction of the garden.

Gracie effectively ended the conversation, and it was one that I wasn't willing to restart. Jasper was being selfish and unreasonable. He had Alice. I tried my best to ignore him over lunch, and deal with our daughter. I could see Dad shooting looks between us, he knew something had happened, but I wasn't about to discuss my sex life with him. It was bad enough that he was living with me at the moment, effectively stopping any time I had to play with my vibrating buddy. It was just too uncomfortable knowing he was in the next room. I shuddered at the mere thought of my father hearing, or Christ, catching me.

When Jasper's phone rang, I knew Alice had unknowingly rescued me. He said his goodbyes, and tried to kiss my cheek, but again, I dodged him. I knew we'd have to have this discussion again, but right now I was too pissed to deal with him.

He left with a shifty glance at Charlie.

“Let's go get some ice cream, baby!” I said excitedly.

Gracie squealed loudly, and began clapping her hands. She didn't stop her giggles until we arrived at the store. She'd brought her own purse, which Alice had bought her. It matched her hot pink hat and her pink and black stripy tights. My daughter, even at four, had very specific tastes.

“So,” I started around a mouthful of mint choc-chip. “Did you have fun at Daddy's last night?”

“Yes. Alice put some lotion on my face after we played models. She has lots of glitter, Mamma.”

I smiled at my little girl, nodding as I spooned some more ice cream. “I bet she does. She likes make up.”

“She said we need to give you a makeover. She told me you got a boyfriend. Do you Mamma?” she asked, tilting her head to the side inquisitively.

I was going to kill Alice. She constantly forgot that Gracie was my daughter, she wasn't our friend; another member of our group.

“No, Gracie, I don't. I have a new friend, who's a boy. Maybe that's what Alice meant.”

She shrugged and licked her lips.

“Maybe.”

We ate the remainder of the ice cream in silence, just looking at each other and smiling. She was the best thing I had ever done in my life; everything I hadn't known I'd wanted until I got it. I would do anything to protect her, and the fact that Jasper inferred otherwise just pissed me off. I wasn't the one who had the partner. I'd been alone, and was willing to be like that until Gracie could adjust.

I groaned internally, knowing that was bullshit. I longed for someone, and was using Gracie as my excuse for not putting myself out there. Even though Jasper and I had lived together, I'd never given him my all, mainly because I'd never loved him. We had done it for our baby, so now the realization of handing my heart to Edward scared me to death. I'd slept with men since Jasper, but Edward was the first one I'd seen more than once, and the first one I'd come anywhere close to spending the night with.

He was also the only one I'd had sex without a condom with.

That had scared me, but then I'd used one with Jasper and was staring right at the product of that night. Nothing was certain, I'd learned that the hard way, though I wouldn't change a thing.

“Momma, you look sad.” Gracie stated.

I grinned and touched her nose with the end of my spoon. She giggled as she noticed some ice cream had been left behind. Her little nose wrinkled, and her eyes crossed as she tried to see it. She was utterly adorable.

“I'm not sad, baby. I was just thinking.”

“Alice bought my shoes for Daddy's wedding. They're pink!”

“That's nice. Did she get the ones with the bows?”

Gracie nodded, wiping her nose with the back of her hand. I passed her a tissue, but she ignored it and went back to eating. My phone buzzed, and glancing down I smiled as I read the screen.

It was a text from Edward.

Leaving without your panties was very naughty.

Punishments will be given.

E xx

I snorted, making my daughter jump.

“What's funny? Is that Alice?”

I shook my head, and began replying.

I will need replacements.

Think you're up to the task?

B

I giggled as I waited for the answer, feeling rather sordid for playing such games while eating with my kid. She'd begun coloring in the place mat, and singing a song I was fairly certain was sung by Hannah Montana. My heart pounded, as I waited for the response. I tried to ignore my cell, and helped her color in the clown.

“Sissy said my dad has stupid hair.”

“Why did she say that?” I asked absently.

“Well...” she drifted into a long conversation about yesterday at school. She'd mentioned Sissy before, and it had never been in a good light. It worried me, because she'd only been at school for a few weeks. I would have to talk to Jasper, and then maybe the school.

Edward's next text had me blushing so much, I had to hide my face behind my hair before Gracie asked. He'd sent a photograph of a pair of tiny thong panties. They were resting on top of a paper bag and still had the price tag attached. The message he'd written simply said:

They r waiting for you

E

xx

I wasn't sure how to respond, so pushed my cell back into the pocket of my jeans. It would be good to make him wait anyway. It would appear he'd bought them for me, and that freaked me out a little. It was very personal, but then wasn't leaving my underwear at a guys house personal?

“I'm finished. Can we go to the park, Momma?”

I collected my bag and we strolled out of the store hand in hand. She skipped and sang away, as we rounded the corner. I was gazing down at her, brushing her blond curls underneath her knitted hat, when I ended up walking right into someone.

I gasped, putting my hands out to brace myself, and was instantly flooded with heat. That, mixed with the woody scent tickling my nostrils alerted me to exactly who I'd just connected with.

Edward.

Fuck!

I wasn't ready to introduce him to my daughter, but I didn't have a choice now. Fate had taken that choice out of my hands. I slowly raised my face, meeting Edward's green gaze.

“Bella?” he questioned.

“Um, Edward, hi.”

My hand was still on his chest, the other still clutching my child's. He looked uncomfortable, running his fingers through his hair.

“I was out shopping for...well for your little gift,” he said seductively.

“Edward!” I groaned, tilting my head down towards Gracie.

To his credit he blushed, and smiled at my little girl. Gracie tugged on my hand, nervous of this stranger.

“Hi, I'm Edward. Do you remember talking to me on the phone?”

Gracie nodded. “You're the bad man that said a naughty word to me. Did your Momma let you out of your time out?”

My daughter was so damn cute.

Edward chuckled, and knelt down to her level. Her hand squeezed mine a little tighter.

“My Mom was very angry with me for saying that to you. She said I could leave my time out, if I came to apologize to you.”

Gracie nodded and looked up at me for reassurance. I was conflicted. I wanted to pull her away; to keep them separate, but a small voice down deep inside of me, was telling me to give them a chance. It was obvious he wasn't used to children, but he was trying right now. He was talking to her at her level, and the first thing he'd done was say sorry. I appreciated his thoughtfulness. I just didn't know where to go from here.

“We've just had ice cream.” Gracie muttered.

“Oh! I'm sorry I missed that. What flavor did you have?”

“Strawberry with sprinkles and a cherry.”

He stood as he told her he liked cherries. I had to stifle a laugh at the innuendo of his comment. I wasn't even sure if that was what he meant.

He repeated his 'Hi' as he met my gaze. Edward looked as uncomfortable as I felt, and we stood, shuffling our feet and fumbling for something to say. My hand itched to touch him again, but I worried about giving

Gracie the wrong idea, especially after what Alice had said to her. I could see the paper bag he was carrying and flushed, knowing what it contained.

"I'm sorry I left," I whispered. "There was a problem with the mini, if you understand me?"

"I do, and I understand, I guess. It's just different to have other people to consider."

"Hmm, can we not have this conversation right now? Please?" I asked, hoping he would understand.

"Sure..."

"We're going to the park. Wanna come?" Gracie interrupted.

"Gracie!" I chastised. "Edward is shopping, and doesn't have time to come with us."

"Well, I kinda can. I mean, I was only going home to wait for you...erm, Seth to call."

Gracie let go of my hand and immediately grasped hold of Edward's.

"Come on then!" She laughed, tugging him down the street. His expression was comical, a cross between confusion and pleasure. I ignored the slight irritation at being forced into the situation, and walked after them. I wanted to take back Gracie's hand, but stayed slightly behind them, studying Edward's interaction with my baby girl. She was skipping along next to him and chattering away. I could tell by his perplexed expression he had no idea what she was talking about, but he was nodding and asking questions anyway.

It was beautiful to watch, and something within me began to bloom.

It was an odd stirring, something I don't think I'd ever truly felt before, and it scared the shit out of me. I shouldn't be feeling this about a guy I just met. Edward had me completely bewildered. He was supposed to be a fuck; a quick release, but he was swiftly becoming something else.

"Momma, Edward doesn't know who Hannah Montana is! Can you believe that?"

"I certainly can, and neither should you! I could kill Alice and Jasper for this."

Edward raised a solitary eyebrow at me, as Gracie raced towards the slide.

"Jasper's Gracie's dad and Alice is his fiancée. They get married next month. They care for Gracie a lot, and Alice seems to have more influence over my little girl than I do."

We walked to the bench and sat watching Gracie as she started chatting with a little girl.

"But didn't you say your best friend was named Alice?" he inquired.

"Hmm," I swallowed, before continuing. "She is. They're one and the same."

"So you're best friends with the other woman? Seriously?" he asked incredulously.

I turned slightly, not really wanting to take my eyes from Gracie, but not wanting to be ignorant either.

"Look, I could give you every detail of my sordid past with her father," I stated, nodding towards Gracie. "...but that would imply that there was something going on between us other than sex. I just don't know what's happening with us, at the moment. I'm kinda stumped."

Edward grinned, and rubbed the back of his neck, before adding sheepishly, "That makes two of us then."

"OK, so at least we're starting in the same place...that's assuming you...well, that you want to start something."

He reached over, taking my hand in his and stroked my knuckles gently.

“I have no fucking clue what to do here. I don't usually see women more than once, and I'm certainly not interested in going to the park with their kids.”

“And you are now?” I shot back.

He nodded, as Gracie waved for us to watch her go down the slide.

“She's fucking adorable, Bella. Seth would eat her up!”

“I couldn't imagine my life without her. She was a shock, but I wouldn't have it any other way now.”

“I've never really been around kids,” he confessed.

I laughed out loud, slapping his knee. “No shit! The thing is though, there is no *me* without her. Do you understand?”

He nodded, and squeezed my hand a little.

“I'd like to see you again, Bella, and I understand it's all new, but I'd like to try. Christ, Seth would kill himself laughing if he could see me now. He thinks this situation is hilarious.”

“I'm funny?” I asked confused.

“No! I am. He's never seen me as tied up as I am now.”

“Good to know I'm not the only one on virgin soil.” I sighed and shuffled closer. “I'd like to see you again. Yes.”

Gracie squealed as she ran off towards the teeter totter. I stood to follow her, not wanting her out of my sight. Edward followed.

“Edward! You gets there!” Gracie pointed to the other seat.

He snorted and shook his head, but I thought this would be an interesting initiation.

“Oh, Edward! Don't upset her. Go on, just for a little while.”

He pouted and rolled up the sleeves on his t-shirt.

“OK, then Gracie. What do I need to do?”

He swung his leg over the bar and sat uncomfortably on the tiny seat. Gracie giggled looking from me to Edward, before she began telling him what he needed to do. He listened like it was the most interesting piece of information he'd ever heard, and nodded when she finished.

“Right then, Gracie. Let's get to it!”

I stood back, watching them move the bench up and down. Edward barely looked at me, my daughter had his full attention; he was enraptured. It was damn cute to watch them laugh and play. Gracie obviously liked him.

He climbed down and lowered my daughter's side carefully. I was about to walk over, to help her off, when Edward beat me to it. He picked her small body up and spun her around.

“Momma, lookie!”

“Be careful, please,” I begged, but not wanting to spoil their fun.

“Can you push me on the swings, Edward?” she asked.

He looked over to me, checking I was fine with that. I gave a short nod and got out my cell to take a picture. I laughed when Gracie handed Edward her purse, and told him to 'take care of it'. He pushed the handle up his forearm, allowing him to use both his hands to push her on the swing. I snapped a few shots of them playing, and selected one of just Gracie to text to Jasper and Alice.

I waited for them, as Edward showed her just how high he could climb on the jungle gym. I was questioning his mental age when he hung upside down, only holding on with his knees. Gracie went crazy at his acrobatics, whereas I could only gape. His t-shirt had rolled down to his chest, exposing his toned stomach. My mouth became devoid of all moisture, at the same time my heart began to thump loudly. Just looking at his flesh turned me on. It made me recall each and every single thing we'd done, and many things I *wanted* to do.

I wasn't even looking at his face. My gaze rested solely on his abdomen, and I was pretty sure he knew it.

"He's red! Momma lookie at his face! Edward looks like a tomato."

I giggled with Gracie, and eventually Edward accepted he couldn't remain upside down. He lowered himself, smirking playfully at me as he came closer. There was a predatory gleam in his eyes, one that my body didn't ignore.

"He was like a bat." Gracie said in awe.

"A vampire bat!" Edward encouraged, grabbing me around the waist and pulling my back to his front.

I struggled, not really ready for this kind of display in front of my daughter, when he lowered his mouth to my neck and scrapped his teeth along the skin. My body sagged at the touch, as my eyes fluttered closed.

"Edward," I moaned, not sure if I was complaining or begging for more.

"She's fine," he whispered into my ear. "Not even looking. She's playing near the sandpit."

His mouth began to move across my skin, down my neck and tried to burrow under my hoodie at the shoulder. I squeaked and turned in his arms, looking into his smug expression. Our arms were folded around each others waists; our chests molded together.

"This is definitely new," he stated.

"Playing with four year olds in the park?" I queried.

He shook his head softly, and quickly glanced over my shoulder. My insides warmed as I realized he was checking on Gracie; making sure she was OK.

"No, Bella, I didn't mean that, though that is new. I meant cuddling in broad daylight. I'm usually a 'in the dark' kind of a guy, and cuddles were definitely out."

"So why now? Why me?"

I felt him shrug as he continued to divert his attention between me and Gracie. I found it extremely sweet.

"I don't know. I just needed to see you. I still need to see you."

"Even after meeting Gracie?"

"Truth? More so after meeting her. Bella, she's amazing."

That shocked me. I knew my daughter had the ability to win perfect strangers over, but Edward was saying he wanted me more *because* of her.

His hand skimmed my face, resting on my cheek, as his thumb stroked my lower lip.

“Can we take it a step at a time, and see how it goes? We're both new to this, so we could discover it together.”

I nodded, breathing in his scent, and trying to calm myself.

“Isn't it your birthday soon?” he asked.

“Tuesday.”

“Can I take you out? Would you be able to get someone to look after Gracie? If not I could come to you,” he hedged.

I grinned happily.

“I'm sure Jasper, or even my dad could do it. I'd actually really like that. Thank you, Edward.”

I felt Gracie begin to tug on my hoodie and looked down at her.

“I need the toilet, Momma,” she whined.

I pulled away from Edward and took hold of Gracie's hand.

“I think we need to go home,” I stated, wincing at Edward.

He reached over and cupped my face.

“OK, I'll call you.” He bent down and kissed Gracie on the nose. “You, sweetie, take care of your Momma, and hopefully, I will see you again soon.”

I swallowed the ball of emotion that was lodged in my throat, and started to walk away. However, he stopped me by placing his hand on my arm. I turned to him and smiled. He leaned his head closer and kissed me very lightly on the lips.

“I've had a fucking amazing afternoon, but don't forget your panties.”

He handed me the bag and waved, before jogging off out of the park. I was momentarily gobsmacked.

It didn't last, because Gracie dragged me from the park, and towards the car. Today had gone very differently than I'd expected.

Today had been the start of something very new.

End Notes:
Thank you for reading!
xx

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 8 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>Thanks for all the reviews - I adore them all.</p> <p>Love to my beta, Maylin & my prereader elusivekoolaid.</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

EPOV

"That's the third time in five minutes you've said the word cute, sweetie." Seth said as he handed me a beer.

I grinned remembering Gracie as we played in the park.

"She is though!"

"Yeah, I get that, but how do *you* feel?"

I took a long drink and thought about it. Meeting Gracie had been very strange, but within such a short space of time she'd won me over. I still felt out of my depth, but I supposed it was something I could learn. It was shocking that I was even thinking about it, but I'd really enjoyed spending time with them both.

"It's going to take some getting used to, and it's not like I have to see her every day. Things are very casual with Bella. I like it that way. It works for me," I shrugged.

"Casual?" Seth chuckled. "You really believe that? Man, you're fucking blind sometimes."

"You know nothing!"

We watched the rest of the TV show in silence, as I downed the beer. He pissed me off with his snarky little comments sometimes. I wondered what he meant by his accusation that I was blind. *We were casual!* I understood it was odd. Because he'd never known me to see someone more than once, and the idea of them having a kid would bring me out in hives. It was a revelation just how different Bella was. I guess everyone changed at some point in their lives, and maybe this was mine.

I lifted my feet onto the coffee table, crossing them at the ankle, and groaned loudly.

"Are you just gonna ignore me now?" Seth moaned.

I glared at him, making him pout and try his puppy dog eyes on me. When I didn't respond he lowered his head onto my shoulder, and looked up at me.

"Sorry, Eddie. Please forgive me."

I tried to hide the smirk, but I lost the battle as soon as he began to make whining noises like a dog. I chuckled and shoved playfully at his shoulder. He moved slightly but returned his head to my shoulder and sighed.

"I like her," he stated.

"I know, Seth. I like her too, but I'm more than a little confused."

He moved closer, stroking my arm in comfort, as I rested my head on the top of his. We made a pathetic pair.

"How goes it with Peter?" I grimaced, knowing he couldn't see me,

"Don't go changing the subject."

"I'm not. I'm interested."

He rubbed his cheek across my shoulder in a comforting gesture, as he got more comfortable. His legs curled around his body, and he rested his hand over mine. To the casual observer we looked like lovers, both at ease with one another, but Seth being in my personal space never bothered me. In fact, I'd grown used to his affection and never thought it was anything other than a deep rooted friendship between us. I loved him, and knew he felt the same about me. That's why it hurt to see him upset; to watch him struggle with his feelings for a man that clearly didn't reciprocate.

"I don't know what to say sweets, that we haven't been over a million times. I'm happy with how things are, OK?"

"You're not," I denied. "I know you, so please don't lie to me."

Seth glanced up at me, his dark eyes focused with purpose on mine, as he asked, "How is that different than the BS you just spouted about Bella?"

He had me there.

"The difference is there isn't a third person in ...whatever I have with her. You know that Peter is with someone else, and sometimes he's with her only moments after being with you. Seth, you deserve more than him."

"Yeah, but 'the more' doesn't want me." Seth muttered sullenly.

"You don't know that! You haven't even asked."

He snorted and squeezed my hand gently. "Anyhoodle, there's more than three in your relationship. Not only do you have her kid to worry about, but from what you say, you have the ex and the new girlfriend. That's some fucked up shit!"

I shoved him off me and stood up, pushing my fingers through my hair in frustration. My skin crawled at the image of Bella and her ex together. It was so strange and foreign that I couldn't even begin to analyze it.

"Messes with your head, doesn't it?" Seth asked from behind me.

I turned, and he immediately hugged me, his arms wrapping around my waist, as he continued, "Welcome to my world, Hon."

Extricating myself from his embrace, I went to get another beer, but had to stop on the way when my cell rang. My pulse instantly kicked up a notch, and my body went on alert, all in the hope that this could be Bella.

I was disgusted with myself, when I glared at the screen and felt instantly deflated when I saw it wasn't her.

"Hey, Mom."

"Edward, why haven't you come tonight? Your father assured me he'd asked you, and he left a message telling you the day had changed."

I groaned. I bet he had.

"Sorry, I meant to call, but I've been so busy. The store is really going well," I said apologetically.

"Wonderful, son, but I really wanted you to come tonight, even Rose and Emmett made it. They got someone to cover the bar."

"Well...erm, I couldn't Mom. I'm...I'm on a date," I lied.

Fuck!

"Oh my! A date, well that certainly changes things. Tell me all about her. What's her name? What does she do? How did you meet her?"

"MOM! Stop!"

"Oops. I got a little carried away, but can you blame me? When was the last time you went on an actual date?"

I heard Rose squeal in the background and shout, "So he's told you? She's really pretty. Way too pretty for him!"

Christ, what had I started here? I should never have lied.

"Edward?" she questioned, making me realize she'd still been talking to me.

"Yes, Mom."

"When?"

Damn, what had I just agreed to? I stuttered incoherently, until she repeated herself.

"When are you going to bring her to dinner? I can't wait to meet her, Edward."

"Um, Mom, please," I begged. "I'm only just getting to know her. Just gimme time, please? I promise you, as soon as it starts to move along, I'll bring her over."

"Thank you," she sighed. "So, tell me how's Sethy?"

"Somewhat battle weary," I grumbled, but knowing immediately that I should have kept my mouth shut. She wittered on for the next twenty minutes about making sure I took care of him; reminding me that he had no one else to watch over him.

My mother's feelings towards Seth were vastly different from my father's. Mom had taken the time to get to know my best friend and he had won her over in a matter of minutes, much like Gracie had with me. I grinned, remembering the fun we'd had together.

"Edward? I'm going to let you go, because you keep going quiet on me. That means you're busy."

"OK. I'll call you."

"I love you, son. Have fun," she said softly.

I felt so guilty for lying to her, but swallowed it and replied, "Love you too, Mom."

I ended the call and turned back towards the living area. Seth was still standing behind me though, hands on hips and pouting at me.

"You fucking liar! How could you say that?"

"Oh, come on," I moaned, moving around him and slumping back onto the couch. "I couldn't have dinner with his Highness. You know that. I didn't really lie to her, because I'm sorta dating, right?"

"Semantics and you know it."

"Fuck off, Seth," I snapped, kicking at the table.

There was no bite in my words, and he would know I was merely tired of discussing it. He wasn't happy with my curse, but said nothing further. The silence began to suffocate me, and on a whim and needing to clear my head, I stood and grabbed my bike leathers.

"Where are you going?"

"Out." I said sharply, but then softened my tone. "I'm just gonna ride around on the bike for a while. I need to sort my head out, Seth. I'm being an asshole to you and I really don't mean to."

Seth lifted his hand and smoothed the hair from my eyes, smiling warmly at me.

"I know. Go! I'll stay here, drink your beer and keep your TV company."

I hugged him fiercely, and waved as I left. I knew he would be asleep on the couch when I returned, or even in the damn bed. The bastard never could be alone at the store when he was moping.

// FE \

I rode for an hour before I stopped to take stock. I was a confused mess, and Seth didn't fare any better. However, we were old enough now to work through relationship issues like this. The problem we both faced was that neither of us had been in this predicament before. I chuckled at that realization, we were two men in our thirties with no knowledge of how to interact in a relationship. I could go to Emmett, but it would take him at least two hours to stop laughing before he could give any help. If you could call it that, because I doubted he could help that much. Rose had done all the hunting in that marriage. She'd decided he was hot, and hadn't stopped until she had him under her. Literally.

I stood on the hill and stared out towards the city. Dusk was settling in, and the lights had slowly begun to flick on one by one. I came here often, just to look down on the city and be alone with my thoughts. Many times, after interludes with my father, I'd come up here and watched the world go by. I'd even sat out in the rain, anything to get away from him and his accusations.

I didn't really know when things had begun to go sour with us. It had been years after I'd met Seth, so I didn't understand why he focused on my friendship alone. My mom never appeared as concerned as he did, in fact she adored Seth, and she knew how Dad felt. I just didn't have the patience to deal with him and finally have it out. One day it would have to be done though.

I rested back against the bike, remembering the day we opened the store. We'd both been drunk on champagne by lunchtime and had closed early. That was four years ago, and since then we'd become much more responsible, maybe we'd do that now with the people we were involved with.

Thinking about her made me smile, and before I could acknowledge what I was doing, I pulled my cell from my jeans and called her.

"Hi," she stated.

I could hear the smile in her voice, and it pleased me. I was a fucking sap for this woman.

"Hi...erm...I...shit!" I spluttered.

"I know the feeling. I was actually just holding my phone and trying to talk myself out of calling you."

"Why would you do that?"

"I can't look too eager Mr. Cullen, though the fact that I'm sitting outside the bookstore sorta gives me away."

Shocked, I asked, "Where? *My* store?"

Smooth.

"Yeah," she said, and for the first time since I met her she sounded shy. "I'm such a dumbass. I should have called you first. I just needed a break and started driving, before I knew it I was here, and...well, you weren't."

I took a moment, just listening to her breath on the other end of the line. Glancing down at the city, I tried to spot landmarks; tried to see my store where she was waiting. For me. It was, however too dark, and even in daylight I wouldn't have been able to see it. At that point I comprehended what a moron I was being. She was there on the doorstep, waiting for me, and all I was doing was listening to her breathe on a cell phone.

"I'll be with you in ten," I stated.

She giggled and ended the call.

I climbed back onto the Ninja and even though I'd told her ten minutes, I was pulling up outside the store in eight. She was literally sitting on the step, her legs crossed. Her smile was huge when I pulled the helmet off, and I immediately felt my own grin spreading across my face. A need to drag her body close to mine swamped me. It was so strong I had to grit my teeth to stop from reaching out. Instead I stepped forward and held out my hand, offering to help her stand. Bella took it, and to my astonishment perched on her tiptoes to kiss me quickly.

"I like a man who's on time."

"Really? I shall definitely remember that."

We gazed at each other, our fingers randomly interlocking and unlocking at our sides. She licked her lips slowly, teasing me, and unable to hold back any longer I lowered my mouth to hers and kissed her fiercely. My lips vibrated as she hummed, and the moment she opened up I penetrated her with my tongue. I wanted to penetrate her in so many other ways, but here on the street was more than a little risky.

I backed her into the door of the store and as my mouth mated with hers, I fumbled with my keys and opened it. I obviously wasn't thinking too clearly because we both stumbled backwards, tripping over each other, and eventually landing just inside the store. I was on my back and Bella lay on top of me, her brown hair hiding our faces from the world; cocooned in our chocolate haze. She was back to the giggling, as I cupped her face.

"Thank you for coming to see me," I whispered, wondering when my voice got so damn gravelly.

"You're more than welcome, and to be honest, if this is the reaction then I'm totally coming back."

"Coming?" I teased, quirked a brow.

Bella pushed at my chest, and climbed off me, picking up my helmet and closing the door behind her. I lay staring up at her, as I adjusted my jeans. My cock was straining, demanding attention; the kind only Bella could give. It was uncomfortable as I sat up, running my fingers through my already messy hair. She walked around, switching on a couple of lights, before strolling back over to me and sitting down. We were face to face, both still breathing heavily from the encounter only moments ago. She slowly peeled off her jacket, never breaking eye contact, and I sucked in a gasp as I took in her tiny tank underneath.

"You must have been cold out there."

"What makes you say that?" she asked, tilting her head to the side.

I reached out, cupping her breast and stroked my finger across her already taut nipple. It strained against the thin pink fabric, and all I wanted to do was pull the top down and tease that exact area with my teeth. As if reading my mind her head lolled back and she moaned, her chest flushing beautifully.

Taking her reaction as acceptance, I continued to toy with her breast, eventually slipping my fingers underneath and releasing it from its cotton confines. I was well aware that yet again, we were on the floor of the bookstore. It seemed we were destined to always fuck on the floor, and for some reason that was like being dowsed with a bucket of cold water.

I pulled away, shaking my head.

Bella frowned in confusion. "What's wrong?"

I couldn't believe that after all the women I'd been with I was only now getting an attack of conscience. I'd known from the start just how different she was, but turning down sex was like underlining the point.

"I can't believe I'm saying this, but can we just talk? I'd actually like to get to know some more about you, Bella."

She held her lower lip between her teeth and nodded cautiously. I took her hand and jostled us across the carpet, so I leaned against a bookshelf and she climbed between my legs. She pressed her back against my chest, and my nose nuzzled in her hair. It was a very intimate position, but neither one of us tried to move.

"Gracie?" I inquired, breaking the silence.

"In bed, of course! My Dad is staying with us for a while so he's with her tonight. I had a bit of an argument with Gracie's father, my ex, and needed some space. The rest I've already told you," she shrugged.

Of its own volition, one arm came around her chest, holding her closer, as the other stroked her hair. What the fuck was I doing? What were *we* doing?

"Do you want to talk to me about it?"

I wasn't sure whether I really wanted her to, but my mouth had a will of its own.

"No. It was stupid, and I'll be cool. Um...is Seth upstairs?"

I chuckled. "Actually, he's at my place, probably hogging my bed as we speak."

"You guys make me laugh. Is there really nothing going on with the two of you? I mean, you're close, *really* close, and to an outsider it looks like..."

"I know how it appears," I interrupted. "But it's not. I'm not going to deny it; I love him, but I'm straight, Bella, and I think you of all people should know that."

Christ, she smelled divine, and I couldn't get enough.

"I find it very attractive, you know?"

"Huh? What?"

"The way you and Seth are together. I don't mean attractive in a sexual way. I mean your friendship, and the feelings you have for him make you a very attractive person. You're loyal to the people you care for."

"Wow," I laughed. "This was way deeper than I expected when I asked if we could talk."

She turned and kissed me quickly.

"Yeah, I find myself thinking about you when I really shouldn't be."

"Me too. So, have you been shopping for a new outfit for our date tomorrow?"

"I was going to do it in the morning," she whispered. "You don't have to do anything for me. You don't need to celebrate my birthday. We barely know each other, and I don't expect it, Edward."

Touching her chin, I turned her face towards me and stated, "I want to, so let me."

Her face lit up with excitement.

"Where are we going?"

"It's a secret," I replied, tapping her nose. "Just wear something sexy and smart, OK?"

"Is a bra a requirement?" she teased, rubbing her breasts against my bicep.

"Tomorrow? Probably. Now? No. Fucking. Way."

I'd barely spoken the last word before she pounced. Lips locked to lips, hands fisted in hair and tongue slid against tongue. She twisted in my lap, and nestled her jean clad pussy over my desperate erection. Our kisses deepened as she began riding me. It was little more than a heated dry hump, but it was fucking perfection.

Her gasp released my lips, and as she moaned I nibbled along her exposed collarbone. I wanted to take her; to do more, but I didn't have a condom. I wouldn't risk either one of us. It took every ounce of strength I had to pull away, but when I explained my reasons, she agreed.

"I didn't bring one either. You're right, and I should go home anyway."

We rearranged our clothes in silence, and before she left I kissed her deeply, holding her in my arms.

"Tomorrow I'm buying a fucking shitload of condoms, woman! And I'm putting them everywhere. We will not be caught short again."

Bella grinned, making my chest flood with warmth.

"See you at eight tomorrow then?"

"Here at eight tomorrow," I agreed, watching her with a little sadness as she walked towards the door.

After she'd left the store I locked up and strode to my bike. I was aware of the size of my smile. I felt like the Cheshire cat, and my cheeks were beginning to hurt. My whole body was lighter, as if being with her had eased any anxiety I'd had about what was happening with us. I hadn't even fucked her! We'd made out like two teenagers in the library, and it had been amazing.

She was amazing.

We were actually going to do this. We were going to try for something more than sex, and it scared me shitless. I decided I really did need to talk to Emmett after all. Even though Rose had done the chasing I was pretty sure he had to work at their marriage too.

I groaned as I pulled the helmet on. She had me so mixed up I didn't know which way was up, and I was coming back for more. She hypnotized me in the most wonderful way. Thoughts of her consumed me as I pulled out onto the next block. It was late, so the flow of traffic had thinned, but a light fog had settled around the town, obscuring my view slightly. As I pulled up at a set of lights I flipped my visor, checking further down the road and wondering whether it was the same down there. I couldn't see that far though, the fog seemed to get denser. I hated riding in these conditions, but I wasn't too far from home and would be back to wake Seth up in no time. My cell buzzed in my back pocket, distracting me, just as the lights changed. Ignoring it I moved across the junction and the rest happened in a strange slow motion. I was pushing through the fog, only it had become thick and pillowy, like marshmallow. I heard a loud horn, and turned to the sound, at the exact moment there was a jarring screech that seemed to go on forever.

Someone screamed.

My heart began to pound, as headlights illuminated me.

I knew what was about to happen.

I could do nothing to stop it.

I closed my eyes as the car hit my bike. Searing pain lanced through my leg when the metal pushed at my shins. Seconds later I was in the air, disconnected from my bike and heading for one hell of a fall. It was as though I watched the whole accident from the sidelines, and by the time I hit the ground the pain was so bad that I could barely see. I felt my helmet smack against the road, as every breath left my lungs.

I tear trickled from my eye.

This was it.

This was my end.

My last thought was of three people.

Gracie.

Seth.

Bella.

End Notes:
<p>*HIDES*</p> <p>Thank you xx</p>

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 9 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>Thanks to everyone still reading/reviewing.</p> <p>Love to my amazing beta Maylin, and my prereader elusivekoolaid.</p> <p>.....and on with the show</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

BPOV

I'd waited for hours for Edward. I'd called his cell more times than I cared to admit, but he never answered.

The bastard had stood me up. On my birthday too.

I wanted to cry, but there was no way I was giving him that. I was stupid for thinking that this could be more than a fuck. I should never have let him in, or let him meet Gracie. I felt like the biggest fool.

I was glad I was alone in the house. At least no one was here to see my shame at being stood up. Jasper would have taken great pleasure in his 'I told you so's and Alice would want to go and hunt Edward down. Right now, all I wanted to do was take this stupid dress off and climb into bed to lick my wounds.

This had to be the worst birthday ever.

I looked down at the leather cord bracelet dangling from my wrist. Gracie had given it to me this morning; her face alight with excitement. She'd wrapped it in pastel pink paper with a little lemon ribbon holding it together. It wasn't neat, nor was it tidy but it was perfect. Apparently, she'd saved some of her pocket money and gone shopping with Alice. It was adorable, and she'd been so happy when I put it on, and I'd promised to wear it on my date.

I was wearing it.

But I didn't have a date.

His rejection hit me hard, and I had to grit my teeth to stop the tears from falling. I tried his cell one more time, before giving up and stomping upstairs to my room. I stripped off and slowly took the pins from my hair, one by one. It had taken me almost two hours to get ready for him, and now it had all gone to waste.

My upset was soon turning to anger. I was annoyed at myself for starting to believe this was different, at Alice for encouraging me, and then at Edward for being a fucking asshole. I glared at my cell, as if I could make him call me by my will alone. When it didn't ring I donned my running shorts and tank, and turned on the treadmill. I wanted to punish myself for wanting, punish myself for being so pathetic over someone I barely knew.

I turned my music as loud as possible, and zoned out. For the next thirty minutes all I was aware of was the pounding of my feet on the belt and the panting of my heaving chest. I pushed myself harder than usual, needing to feel something other than self pity. When I was gasping harshly for breath, I gave in and showered. I scrubbed every trace of date night away, and rather than hanging my new dress back up neatly into the closet, I shoved it, without care, under my bed. I didn't want to see it ever again.

"Bells?"

My dad shouted, interrupting my pity party. I dressed quickly, checking the time. He should have been home a couple of hours ago, but then it wasn't unusual for him to be late. He was probably surprised to find me here, so I skipped down the rest of the stairs, putting a fake smile on my face.

"Hey, kiddo, weren't you supposed to be out?" he asked taking off his coat.

"Got canceled."

I shrugged as if it was nothing, taking his coat and hanging it up next to the door. "You look exhausted. Bad night?"

Charlie sighed loudly and slumped onto the couch. He hadn't even removed his gun, so I knew it must have been a hard night.

"Accident. Damn car went plowing into a bike. We had to close the roads; it was a mess. I've been dealing with the aftermath all day."

"Oh, no. Was anyone hurt?"

Dad nodded, pushing his fingers through his hair. "Yeah, guy on the bike ended up going to hospital. He never came to. Bells, his leg looked bad. I called the hospital, and he's still unconscious."

I patted his shoulder and went to get him a beer. The things my dad had to see on a daily basis made my upset pale into insignificance.

I handed him the bottle, and sat on the arm of the chair. He took a huge swig before asking, "Who canceled on you, Bells?"

I winced, making up an excuse. Even as the words were spilling from my mouth I was forgetting them, and when he turned on the TV, I feigned exhaustion and went to bed.

Alone.

// FE \

I tried to forget about him over the next few days. I tried to block him out completely and move on. I'd shamefully told Alice about his no show, and she'd obviously informed Jasper, because he'd said nothing. It had been Gracie who'd mentioned him first, and I had no idea what to say to her. She'd wanted to know if we were going to play in the park with him. I'd stumbled, but eventually told her he was busy in the store. She accepted it like everything else, with a simple shrug and smile.

I'd occasionally look at my cell with hope, but was always disappointed. I wondered if he even felt guilty about cutting us off. Did he give us much thought before raising my hopes, only to ruin them?

I was determined to draw a line under it and move on, but I found myself walking past the store on Thursday, while Gracie was swimming. I'd come here without any conscious thought and was now kicking myself. However, the store looked closed, and that seemed strange.

I walked closer, noticing a small piece of paper taped to the door. Out of curiosity I stood on the step and read it.

OPENING HOURS WILL BE INTERMITTANT DUE TO UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES.

It listed the bookstore number to call for further information. Confused, I stepped back and looked up to the windows of Seth's apartment. The drapes were still closed, and there appeared to be no sign of life at all in the store. I took out my cell and began to call the number, hoping Seth would answer, but before I could hit the call button, it rang. I didn't recognize the number and debated ignoring it, but curiosity always got the better of me.

"Hello?"

"Bella? Thank fuck, sweetie!"

"Seth?"

"Yes," he said happily. "Damn, woman, I've been trying to get you for days. You aren't easy to find, you know."

"What? Why do you need me, and why didn't you just get my number from Edward, or has he deleted it already?"

"Um, babes, why the hell would that hottie delete your number? He's fucking head over heels for you..."

"So why hasn't he called, and why the hell did he stand me up on my birthday?" I interrupted. "That was low, Seth, even if all I am is a fuck."

"Edward's in hospital."

I went silent. It was as though the words took an eternity to register in my brain.

"What? When? How? I don't..."

"Just calm down, babes. He's OK. Well, he is now."

I lowered myself onto the step, not sure my wobbly legs could hold me up for much longer.

"Tell me," I asked quietly.

"He crashed his bike. Actually, some asshole plowed into him, broke his leg in two places! He was a mess, Bells, like, for real. He was unconscious when I got to the hospital, and didn't wake up until after the surgery."

"Surgery?" I gasped.

"Pins in his leg, as I said, fucking mess."

"Oh, Christ."

"He's been asking about you." Seth whispered tenderly.

I sighed into the receiver, holding the bridge of my nose between my finger and thumb.

"Where is he?"

"I've just brought him home. He can't really move much, so he'll be stuck in bed for a while yet. I'm gonna have to sort something out with the store."

He sounded tired and very stressed. I debated what to do. Instinct told me to go to him, but I needed to make sure Jasper was OK to have Gracie. I wasn't going to take her to see Edward if I didn't know what he looked like myself. He could look horrific after the crash.

"What about his bike?"

"Complete write off. E's devastated, though he'll get a full pay out for it."

"When did it happen, Seth. Why haven't you called me before now? I'm standing outside the bookstore wondering what the hell is going on. Why did he stand me up?"

I sounded whiney even to my own ears.

"Doll, that's what I'm trying to tell you. He got plowed into on the way back home the night you met him at the store. He's been in hospital since that night. His cell was lost in the crash, and only he had your number. I tried to find you, but essentially I had to wait until E woke up," he rambled.

"My dad told me..." I whispered to no one in particular.

We were silent for a while, before I croaked, "Can I come over?"

"Hell, yes! I'm tired of his complaining, maybe you can kick him into silence. Want me to tell him you're coming?"

"Um, no. I need to sort out a babysitter for Gracie, so I don't know how long it will be before I can get there. I promise as soon as I can, OK?"

He agreed and hung up. I immediately called Jasper, hoping they were out of the pool. When he answered I spilled the situation out in one long stream, not pausing for breath. He seemed concerned and told me to go. I spoke quickly to Gracie, who was as excited as always to be sleeping over at her dad's house. Only when I'd sorted everything out did I allow myself to digest the news.

Edward had been really hurt, and all I'd done was curse him and call him every mean name under the sun. What a fucking bitch!

I began crying while driving to his apartment. I wasn't sure why. This whole situation with Edward was very new, and it shouldn't affect me this much, but the thought of him lying in the road while I was bitching about him seemed sick.

I'd only been to his place once, and I'd been on his bike, more interested in the feel of his cock beneath his trousers than where I was. I should have clarified the way with Seth, but I was so stunned by his news that I hadn't been thinking clearly. I still wasn't.

I tried to focus on the road, looking for random landmarks that I could recall from before. I took a wrong turn twice and ended up in the middle of Lord knows where. I was beginning to give up, when I finally spotted his building. I remembered it looked abandoned and was shocked that someone actually lived there. I wondered if I could park underneath the building, as Edward had done, but the gates appeared to be locked, so I opted for the street, and hoped my car would still be there when I came back out.

I nervously chewed on my lip as I buzzed up to his apartment.

"Hey, there sexy!"

I frowned. It was Seth, but how did he know who it was?

"You coming up, or you just gonna gawk?"

"How did you...?"

"Camera." He said nothing further.

There was a buzz from the door, alerting me that I had been allowed to enter. I pushed the door open and moved into the dark, cold hallway. My boots echoed on the tiled floor, and I impatiently walked straight to the stairs. I really needed to see him, to prove to myself that he really was well enough to bitch at Seth.

"Hello, hello!" Seth called from the top of the stairs.

He looked utterly exhausted. I hugged him, feeling him sag against me. He whispered into my ear a thanks for coming, and he didn't let go of my hand when he pulled away.

"Have you been with him the whole time?" I asked as we walked into Edward's apartment.

"Yeah, apart from when his Dad visited. We...well, he doesn't really like me. I couldn't leave him."

His hand trembled in mine as he tugged me towards a draped section of the room. I knew Edward's bed was behind it, and breathed deeply, mustering the courage to deal with what was behind it. Seth squeezed my hand, and plastered a smile across his face.

"Look what I brought you for being such a good little patient."

He pushed the drape back and waved his hands around me. Edward winced and tried to adjust his position on the bed. He struggled and eventually gave up.

He looked better than I'd expected, his face virtually unmarked. I assumed his helmet had saved him in that respect. The same couldn't be said for his leg. He was trying to cover it with a blanket, but it wasn't working. It wasn't something he could hide. There were rods coming from the skin, and from what I could see, holding his shin together. The car had done a real number on him.

"Hey," he said, his voice gritty.

"Oh, Edward..."

"Don't! Don't feel sorry for me. I've had enough of that from this pansy. You know he cried? Fucking wept like a baby!"

Seth snorted, stuck his tongue out at Edward, and mumbled about making some drinks. I shuffled uncomfortably, still staring at his leg. It was only when Seth left us that I tried to speak again.

"I thought you'd stood me up. I thought you...well, it doesn't matter now, does it?"

He frowned, confused at my ramblings, and patted the space beside him.

"Come here."

Something was changing between us. Something I wasn't convinced I wanted yet, but I moved and slipped cautiously onto the bed next to him. I was surprised when he placed his arm across my shoulder and pulled me closer. My throat constricted with emotion. I wanted to cry. He'd been through so much, and I'd been too busy slagging him off.

"Does it hurt?"

"Not anymore. I have a fuckton of Vicodin to take the edge off it. I was unconscious for most of it."

"But, Edward, your leg?" I whined.

"Yeah, it's a mess, right?"

His fingers stroked my arm, a slow caress that was obviously meant to soothe me. It only made my guilt worse. He shouldn't feel sorry for me. He was the one hurt.

"Tell me what happened."

Edward squeezed my shoulders and gave a heavy sigh, before trying to adjust his position again. I climbed back off the bed, wrapping my arms around him and helping him get more comfortable.

"I fucking hate this!" he spat.

"It won't be forever. You'll get better soon."

"Months, Bella. It's going to take months. What the hell am I going to do about the store? Seth can't take all the slack, he has his own shit to deal with."

"You'll sort something out," I soothed, sitting back down next to him.

"How? I can't move! I'm stuck in this goddamned bed for the next four weeks, and that's the best scenario, chances are it's going to be longer. I'm going to have to learn how to use it again when the metal gets removed."

I could hear the drawers in the kitchen open and close. I knew Seth was trying to give us time alone, but I didn't really know what to do. Edward and I knew very little about each other.

As if reading my thoughts, Edward asked, "Where's Gracie?"

"Jasper has her. I told you, I thought you'd stood me up, but ended up back at your store today while they were swimming. What can I say..." I shrugged. "I'm clearly a glutton for punishment."

"I wasn't punishing you."

"I know that now, but then I thought you'd gone and left me."

He nodded, but said nothing further. I continued to stare at the gruesome sight of his lower leg. I didn't mean to, I just couldn't help it.

"Is she OK?"

"Huh? Oh, yeah, she doesn't know about you, but she was asking the other day. She wanted to go to see you at the park."

He chuckled softly. "I'd like to, but I guess it'll be a while before I'm swinging from the jungle gyms. I guess it'll be a while before I'm doing anything. Fuck!"

Instinctively, I cupped his face in my hands and stared into his deep green gaze.

"I'll help. I'll come and make you lunch or dinner. Seth and I can help you, can't we Seth?"

There was a 'yeah' shouted across the room, but I didn't think he really knew what I'd said. Edward didn't look happy, though.

"No, you won't. You're too busy. You don't need another child to care for, because that's what I am right now, Bella. A fucking child! I can't even go for a piss by myself."

I stroked my thumb across his lower lip, trying to get him to look at me again. I didn't know what was driving me, but I had to get him to understand he wasn't going to have to face this alone.

"I don't have a problem helping you, Edward."

"I do! I can't expect you to do this, we barely know each other. It's not fair."

He tried to turn away from me, but I kept my hands rigid on his face.

"Look at me, please? If this hadn't have happened would you have shown up for our date?"

His brows drew together, before he stated, "Of course."

"And would we have seen each other again after that?"

"I hope so."

A small smile teased the corner of his mouth, creating a little ripple of flesh. I wanted to kiss it; to trace the crease with my tongue, but held myself back until he accepted that I wanted to help.

"So, why are you saying no to getting to know each other now?"

"I'm not," he sighed. "I'm saying no to you playing nursemaid."

I giggled a little at the image that flitted through my head, and moved as close as I could to him, before whispering, "And here I was thinking I could come and see you everyday dressed for my role."

"Really? Well, now you've mentioned it, maybe I could use a bed bath."

His hands moved to my wrists, where he held them firmly, as he mouthed 'thank you'.

I decided not to push anymore, and instead I kissed him gently. I felt his huge exhale, as if it was the one thing he needed to calm down, and as my tongue slid against his, there was a knock at the door.

Seth gasped from where he stood in the kitchen and Edward gave a throaty laugh.

"What? I feel like I'm missing something," I asked bewildered.

"You're about to meet the person who features very heavily in Seth's dreams, and I mean heavily."

I shot my gaze from Edward to Seth, hoping someone was about to elaborate.

"How do you know who it is?"

"The knock." They replied in unison, just as knuckles were rapped against the door again.

I stood up and began to walk to the door, because Seth was frozen in shock.

"What's the deal? Seth, it's not like you haven't slept with him."

I pushed at the metal bar, forcing the door open, as Seth whispered, "It's not Peter."

I was dumbstruck when the tall, muscled man walked into the apartment. His grin was huge, spreading right across his face and showing his perfect white teeth.

"Where's the invalid?" He snorted.

I blinked, trying to digest the mountain of man before me.

"Jake, good to see you, man." Edward greeted.

My eyes went wide at the memory. Jake was the guy who caught us having sex in the garage, only he didn't know that was exactly what we were doing, and as if reading my thoughts he turned back towards me.

"Did you get back at him then?"

"Huh?"

"You took a spill when I saw you last time, and now Edward's stuck in bed because of it."

Seth howled with laughter as if it was the funniest thing he'd ever heard. The problem was no one else laughed, making him look very stupid.

Jake didn't wait for my answer after that, he wiggled his fingers at Seth and strolled over to Edward. They began talking about the crash, and I felt the need to comfort Seth.

"You OK?" I muttered.

"I'm a fool. Why the hell did I laugh like that? I wanna curl up in the corner."

I winced at his embarrassment, and reached out to rub his back soothingly.

"So, I have to ask, if you want him why are you with Peter?"

He gave a short shrug and replied, "He isn't interested in me."

"Really? You've asked?"

"No way!" he scoffed.

"Then how will you...?"

"Not talking about it, sweetness."

He effectively ended the conversation there. Edward's chuckle filled the silence, and I turned to watch him with Jake. I could still make out the sadness behind his tone, maybe because I knew what he sounded like when he was happy.

He'd begun talking to Jake about the store, and I could see how worried he was.

"Seth can't pick up all my shifts, so I don't know what I'm going to do. Neither one of us can afford to shut the shop. We're going to have to employ someone part time, and I hate the idea of a stranger being in my shop."

"I'll help," I interjected, shocking the shit out of myself.

I hadn't intended to volunteer, but now that I thought about it, it was a great idea. I'd been looking for more hours at the library, but they couldn't accommodate it. If Edward would let me, I could work at the shop while he got better. It would also give us more time to get to know each other, because I knew without a doubt that I wanted to.

I wanted this with Edward to be more than a fuck against the bookshelves.

I gasped as the thought of that really sank in. I'd given Jasper his future, but I'd hidden myself, not willing to be hurt again. However, now I'd met the one person I wanted to be selfish with. I didn't want to share him, or let him go.

Edward was gawking at me, his mouth hanging open in surprise.

"I'm sorry, did you just...?"

"Yeah, I'll help in the store. I already work in the library, so its not like I need help with books, and I kinda, um...well, I know my way around the store." Seth snorted. "I'd need to sort out Gracie's collection from school, but I think it would solve everyone's problems."

Jake stood up and walked into the kitchen, as Edward and I continued to stare at each other.

"Do you mean it, Bella?"

"Yes," I replied, coming back to sit next to him on his bed.

He lifted my hand, kissing my palm and if I hadn't been seated my legs would have buckled.

Something had altered between us.

I just hoped it wasn't one sided.

End Notes:

Thank you xx

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 10 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:

Huge thanks to my beta Maylin & pre reader elusivekoolaid.

I really want to thank all the people over at PIC. A whole week dedicated to me was just too amazing for words.

This chapter is high on cuteness scale- be warned. :)

SM owns all thing Twilight. Gracie is all mine.

EPOV

I felt like a fucking child.

I could only move from the bed to the couch and had to get help to piss. This was ridiculous.

I was miserable.

The only time I smiled was when Seth came to check on me, or when Bella called. She'd talk to me about the store, about Gracie, but never about us. We hadn't kissed or touched since the accident.

Two weeks.

Two whole weeks, and I was getting desperate.

She'd been a lifesaver with regards to the store, and with helping Seth and Mom take care of me. Dad had called, but hadn't been anywhere near the apartment. Asshole. Rose and Emmett had stopped by, but with the bar to run, they never stayed for long, and all Emmett could do was stare at the metal frame and say, "Ergh."

I spent my time watching TV, reading books or doing accounts for the store. I was bored and going stir crazy. I couldn't even bring myself to think about the accident. I wouldn't go there, couldn't revisit it.

The low whir of the service elevator had me putting my book down, and making sure I was covered enough. Chances were it was either Seth or Bella, but I wanted to make sure I looked presentable, in case it was Jake. He'd been a great help when it came to groceries.

"Edward?" Bella shouted.

She worded it as a question, but where did she expect me to be? I could barely fucking move!

"Over here."

"Eddie!" A little voice came from the same direction as Bella's.

I leaned back over the couch, trying to get a good look at the elevator, and grinned when I saw who it was.

"Hey, Princess Gracie!"

I tried to sound happy and cheerful for her, even though that was far from the truth. I felt useless.

Gracie skipped across the floor, her cute little curls bouncing around her angelic face. Her dress bore a huge skull logo in complete contrast. I smiled as she approached, she was a rebel like her mom.

"Oh," she gasped. "Momma said you wus bad. What's that on your leg?"

I patted the seat beside me and pulled the blanket down a little to show her. Bella stood behind us, placing her hands on the back of the couch. Her fingers flexed and stroked my shoulders, making me want to sink backwards into them. It had been so long since we'd touched like that. I missed it.

I shook my head, feeling like a fool for pining over a fucking touch.

"Did your mom tell you what happened?"

Gracie nodded solemnly, and began to worry her bottom lip, just like Bella.

"She said you crashed your damn bike..."

I stifled a giggle, as Bella placed a finger across her daughters lips.

"Gracie! No!"

Bella had reached over me to get to her daughter, but that left her tits mere centimeters from my face. It was as though she was teasing me with what I couldn't possible have, and it only made me feel more inadequate.

Gracie looked at me wide eyed, after her mom's chastisement, before whispering that she was sorry for the naughty word she'd used.

"Sorry, Edward." Bella said, rolling her eyes. "I'm on my way to the store and wanted to see if you needed anything."

"There are a few things you can bring me back, but I'll call you when you get there and tell you where to find them, OK?"

"Sure," she shrugged, before rounding the couch and sitting next to my foot on the coffee table. "How're you doing?"

"Same as I have been everyday you've asked: Bored."

Gracie grabbed the clicker for the TV, and began to check what was on, as Bella lifted the blanket from my leg and took a good look. She winced slightly, making me groan.

"It's still grotesque, right?"

"It'll get better. Smile, Edward, it could have been so much worse. I know it's crappy being stuck in here, but it won't be forever. We're all helping as much as we can."

"I know. I really do. I'm just having a pity party. I'm sorry."

"Whats a pity party?" Gracie asked.

Bella giggled and told her I was being silly. Gracie accepted it readily and went back to watching the TV. I nodded my head towards her daughter, trying to communicate to Bella without actually asking.

"Oh! Jasper couldn't take care of her today. Schools closed and Alice is working too. I spoke to Seth and he said he could juggle a few things, but he'd definitely need me for a couple of hours. I made her bring some toys, and thought she could play in the store for a little while with me. Is that OK?"

I reached out and linked my fingers in hers, before whispering, "I'll tell you if you kiss me."

She rolled her eyes and pouted.

"You never give up, do you?"

"Nope. Bella, it's been way too long since a got a kiss from you. Please? I *am* the patient. I need caring for."

"Gracie will kiss you, won't you sweetie?"

Gracie wasn't paying any attention, she was too busy watching that teenage girl she adored sing and dance.

"She's busy." I stuck my bottom lip out and gave my best doe eyes. "Don't you want me now I'm broken?"

"Oh, please!" she groaned. "If I kiss you will you stop complaining?"

I nodded, and leaned as close to her as I could. She teased me by placing a quick, sharp kiss on my lips and standing up, clapping her hands at Gracie.

"Right, honey, we have to go to work. Say goodbye to Edward and collect your backpack."

"Aww, I don't wanna! I'm watching Hannah, can I stay here, Momma?"

Bella picked up her purse from the floor, lifting it over her head so the strap fell across her body, and shook her head at Gracie.

"Edward can't care for you. We'll only be at the store for a little while," she tried to reason, but Gracie was as stubborn as Bella.

"You could let her stay. Jake will be here soon with the groceries, so we wouldn't be alone for long. You're on the other end of a phone, and Seth will be back soon too. If I'm honest Bella, I could use the distraction."

Her expression altered as she thought through the possibilities. I wondered if she just didn't trust me enough to leave her daughter with me, or if her decision was solely based on my injury.

"Please, Momma! Please!"

"Yeah, Bella, please!" I joined in.

Bella laughed and nodded, making Gracie clap loudly, before turning back to the TV.

"But only if Jake is definitely coming by. I'm worried about you, not her. How will you get her what she wants, drinks? Snacks?"

I shrugged, "Leave some on the table, and when Jake or Seth get here they can fill her up. Seth's taking over from you at the store, right? Then he can bring Gracie to you, unless you want to come and play nurse for me again."

I wiggled my brows playfully, hoping she'd agree to coming back. Even though she was here most days I missed her. Our budding relationship had taken the oddest turn, but I wanted it back the way it was. I needed for her to look at me with lust in her eyes, not the pity I saw now.

"I'm not sure..."

"MOMMA!"

I cringed at Gracie's wailing as Bella checked her watch. When she looked back at us I knew she'd given in, and so did Gracie, she bounced excitedly, as Bella began to check I had everything in reach.

"Bella, we have what we need for a couple of hours, unless she needs help with the toilet. Does she still use diapers?"

Bella burst into fits of laughter, shortly followed by Gracie. I flicked my gaze between the two, confused. I didn't have a clue what age kids stopped using them, so why was it funny?

"Oh, Edward! You crack me up! Diapers? Seriously? She hasn't used them since she was two."

"Well, how the hell was I supposed to know?" I spat, annoyed at her.

"Woah! Calm it. It was funny, I'm sorry I upset you."

She walked cautiously around the couch and smoothed Gracie's curls before kissing her forehead.

"Promise me you'll be good for Edward."

"Yes. I'm gonna watch Hannah. We like Hannah, don't we Eddie?"

I nodded and winced again.

"Are you OK?" she whispered clearly seeing the pain on my face.

I opened my mouth, but closed it almost immediately, so she asked me again.

"I need...fuck, I hate this."

"Tell me, please. I want to help you, and if you don't hurry I'll be late getting to the store."

I crooked my finger at her, beckoning her closer, before whispering into her ear.

"I need you to help me to the toilet. I haven't quite worked out my damn balance on those crutches."

I felt my face burn in embarrassment. This was mortifying.

Bella had no such issue with it though. She retrieved the crutches from where they rested next to the couch and helped me up.

"I'm sorry, so damn sorry," I whined.

"Shut it. You need help. I'm here. End of, and it's not as if I haven't held it before."

"What? No! You ain't going there!" I gasped. "I just need help balancing. Not holding!"

Bella giggled as she pushed the bathroom door open. She was teasing me, and it was working, because the ache in my chest was slowly beginning to ease.

We fumbled around with my loose shorts and the crutches, and to her credit, she turned her back while I took a piss. I hated this so much, but swallowed it, and said thank you while I washed my hands. I could hear Gracie giggling in the other room, and before Bella could open the door I turned, blocking her path to the handle. She quirked a brow in question, her petal pink lips pouting.

"Kiss me," I asked softly.

I didn't want to sound too desperate, but I really wanted some affection from her. When had I become such a fucking girl? Seth would crack up over this.

"Edward, I don't..."

"Oh!" I interrupted. Clearly it was only pity I saw in her eyes.

"Let me finish." She placed a hand on my chest as I leaned against the door for support. She grew solemn as she continued. "I don't want to hurt you anymore than you have been. I want you to get well."

"And kissing me won't help that?"

"Edward, our whole relationship was based on sex. I'm bothered that kissing you will make you uncomfortable because we can't do anything more. I just..." Her voice broke and she took a deep breath

before looking back at me. Her eyes were shining with tears and the ache returned to my sternum. "I just want you well again."

"Bella, please kiss me."

I didn't beg. I never begged, but right now I would have done my best to get down on my knees. I needed her to kiss me and tell me this was going to be all right. For some reason it meant more coming from her than my mom, or even Seth. It really mattered to me; *She* mattered to me.

I was about to ask again when she stood on her tip toes and moved her mouth to mine. It was slow, and rather chaste, but it was amazing. It was as though none of this happened, and we were back on the floor in my store, giggling and tickling our way to fulfillment. When I tried to slip my tongue against hers, she pulled away smiling and stroked my cheek.

"You need to shave."

"Yeah, Seth said the same this thing morning. Nothing to get dressed up for, know what I mean?"

"Me. Gracie, and yourself, Edward. Come on, try? It's just a wash and a shave," she pleaded, moving her hand around me to open the door.

I stole another quick kiss, before asking huskily, "Care to assist in the washing? I could use a hand or two."

She ignored me, helping me across the floor and back onto the couch, but was still smiling when she spoke. I'd gotten to her.

"Right, are you sure she can stay, and that you'll both be OK?"

"Yes," we both said drolly.

Bella kissed us one last time and left. I turned to look at Gracie who, in turn, gazed at me.

"What?" I asked.

She shrugged, before stating, "You like my momma, right? Like, kissy type like."

I wasn't sure what *kissy type* meant, but nodded anyway.

"There's a girl at school, well she has two daddies. Would I be like that?"

"Hm, no," I replied nervously, not liking where this was going.

"Well, will I have to live with Daddy and Ali then?"

"What? Why?" She'd lost me.

Why the hell had I thought I could look after a four year old?

"Well. When Daddy moved out, he went to live with Ali, so will momma come and live here now? You have to live together to get a baby, you know."

"Whoah! No baby! No."

"Why not? Don't you like me and momma?"

Oh, my God this was terrible. A child was tying me in knots. I didn't know what to say to her to make this right. In the space of five minutes I was moving Bella into the apartment and making a damn baby. What the fuck?!

I took a moment to try and think clearly. All the while Gracie was staring at me, waiting for my response. It felt as if this was some huge joke, and Seth or Bella were about to jump out at any moment. However, the longer I waited, the more I realized it wasn't a joke, and this was what Gracie was really like. If I wanted Bella, and I was fairly certain I did, then I would have to learn how to talk to this little girl. She was becoming important to me. I'd understood that when I'd seen her face as the car hit me. At that point I'd only met her once, but she'd had a huge impression on me.

"Right," I stalled. "Let me put it this way. I like kissing your Mom, and want to do it again, but my leg is a bit of a mess at the moment..."

"You're right, Eddie," she interrupted, making me grin.

"I need to get better before anything else can happen. Do you understand that, princess?"

She nodded and reached for the clicker again, turning the TV off.

"Wanna play?"

I blinked at the quick change in topic. It had been as if I'd not been talking to her, but I quickly agreed. She hopped off the couch and pulled her purse from the floor. I watched as she began removing pots and tubs from it and placing them on the table next to where my foot rested.

"What are we playing?"

"Hannah Montana."

"And how do we play that, Gracie?" I asked frowning.

"I dress you up," she replied sweetly.

"You do what?"

Just like her mom, she only answered the questions she wanted to. Instead, she dipped her finger into a pot of pink goo and clambered back onto the couch, before placing her pink finger on my cheek.

I froze.

"Gracie?"

"Just stay still. Daddy doesn't move or moan."

I squared my shoulders. If Daddy didn't complain, then I damn well wouldn't. I would sit back and let her place whatever glitter and goo on my face she wanted to.

I watched as she dipped her finger into the pots, followed by little wands, or even brushes. She would sweep them across my eyelids, cheeks or lips, but I stopped her when she came at me with a torturous looking mascara wand. That thing was not going near my eye.

I briefly wondered if I needed another head scan, because two months ago I would never have let a child plaster make up all over my face, therefore there had to be something mentally wrong with me now.

"Can I do your hair?"

"I...erm...well, what would you do?" I questioned warily.

Why was I even considering this? Yup, I totally needed another CAT scan.

Gracie rested her tiny elbow on my thigh and giggled.

"I have some gel and some moussy thing that Momma uses. Can I make it stick up?"

I nodded slowly, still perplexed as to why I was allowing this to continue. She bounced on the couch cushions holding a bright blue tub in her hands.

"Wait!" I shouted. "Is that stuff gonna turn my hair that color?"

"Nooo, silly. That's just the tub."

I sat still, catching the blobs of product that fell from her fingers before they hit my t-shirt. She spent longer on my hair than she had done on my face...or at least I thought she had. Because when she'd finished with my hair, she returned to the make up. She was content here, drawing onto my skin. It was a foreign kind of intimacy for me. I'd never been around kids and never really wanted to be, but after a short time Gracie had captured my heart. She was utterly adorable.

"Your Mom said you're going to start dance classes."

She was, wasn't she? I was sure Bella had told me that was what she was going to do with the extra money she was earning from the store.

"Yes, but 'cause Momma has to look after you, Ali has to take me. It's after school and I get to wear a pink tutu."

"I bet you will look just like a princess."

She frowned, tilting her head to the side, and she was so close I was positive I was going cross eyed tried to focus on her..

"Princesses don't wear tutu's," she sighed heavily, placing her hands on her hips. "Fairies have them though. Ali said I can have ribbon's in my hair to match."

I bit back a chuckle, because her mannerisms completely belied her years, It was highly amusing.

"Do you mind your Momma caring for me?"

"Nope. I like you, and you call me princess like Daddy does."

Fuck! I did not like that.

"Do you like that your daddy is marrying Alice?" I asked, quickly changing the subject.

She shrugged and swept a load of glitter across my cheek. It was going to take some serious soap to get this lot off.

"Alice is fun and she's my friend, but I don't want Momma to be alone. She's sad sometimes, and I don't like it when she cries."

"When does she cry?"

"When she thinks I'm asleep. I pretend."

I felt guilty; like a peeping tom, but it bothered me that Bella was upset about something.

I patted my knee and asked her to sit, making sure she didn't put any weight on my injured one.

"Does your mom cry a lot?"

Gracie shook her head, and I watched the glitter fly into the air as it flew from her curls. I tried not to imagine what I looked like right now.

"Not really. Just sometimes. She gets into my bed and cuddles me."

I didn't know what to say to her. Gracie seemed to brush it off; to her it was acceptable because she was used to it, but my guts churned with the thought of Bella crying at night. Did she still love Jasper and now felt trapped?

I needed to talk to her, but since the accident it was difficult. Apart from the bathroom today she had kept her distance. I understood she didn't want to hurt me, but what if it was more? What if she was here out of pity and her heart really lay with *him*? Come to think of it, why was I concerned with her heart?

Gracie moved off me and started packing her products back into her little backpack. I decided to move the conversation on, because now she looked sad at the memory of her mom crying.

"Am I done then?"

"Yes," she grinned. "And you look very cool. Wanna see?"

I nodded warily and waited for her to produce pink mirror. She held it in front of my face, but even stooping down I couldn't see myself. I had to take it from her, and I groaned when I focused on my image, but just as I was absorbing it the door burst open and Seth walked in.

"Oh. My. God. Sweetness, you look hot! I would totally do you now!"

Before I could yell at him for being so crude in front of Gracie, he ran at me throwing his arms around my neck and kissing me sharply on my now red lips. Gracie squealed in excitement and clapped her hands. It was only then that Seth really noticed her.

"Well,well, well, this must be Miss Gracie." He bowed towards her making her laugh louder. "It's a pleasure to meet you. I've heard a lot about you."

"Me?"

Seth picked her up, and I instantly envied his ease with her. Even though we'd been talking I still had to think two steps in front so I didn't mess it up. He seemed so natural with her.

"Yes, you, little Miss. Eddie thinks you are wonderful! He couldn't stop talking about you when guys played in the park."

"Really? Eddie likes me?"

"Eddie?" Seth spluttered. "Damn, I like her already!"

"Seth, watch your cussing, OK? She's four."

He raised his brows at me and placed Gracie on her feet. "Protective much?"

"No," I denied. "Bella has trusted me with her kid, and I don't want her going back to her mom repeating those kinds of things."

He merely nodded, but there was still an all knowing expression to his face and it was pissing me off. Ignoring it as much as I could, I explained about how he was to take Gracie to the store with him. He accepted it, but continued to glance my way, as he helped her pack her belongings. I knew he'd call me from the store, wanting to talk about my makeover and how I'd ended up with Gracie. I'd ignore the call. I wasn't in the mood to talk to him.

I wanted to talk to Bella.

"Right, peanut, let's leave Priscilla in her desert and go and find Mommy. Give the lady a kiss."

"What desert?" Gracie asked, as she skipped over to me.

"Ignore him. He's silly."

I kissed her on her cheek and waved goodbye, as she started to walk from the room.

"I'll be back in an hour or so. Do you need anything?"

"No. Jake'll be over later though, if you wanna snuggle."

"Bitch." Seth hissed as he closed the door.

The noise echoed through the apartment, leaving me alone. I picked up the mirror Gracie had left and stared at myself. A small smile started across my face, as I took in what she'd done to me, but the shocker wasn't the make up.

In the small amount of time I'd known her Gracie Whitlock-Swan had taken my heart right along with her mother.

I was well and truly hooked on them.

End Notes:
<p>Reviews get a special makeover from Gracie!</p> <p>xxx</p>

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 11 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p style="text-align: center;">Hello, Hello!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Huge thanks to my super amazing beta Maylin & my super amazing prereader elusivekoolaid.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">You guys are the best!</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

BPOV

It had been just under a month since Edward's accident, and two weeks since I'd been working at the store. I adored it. The only downside was that I had to still work at the library. I really wanted to leave and work at Edward's store full time, but didn't know just how to raise the topic with him.

He'd changed.

He was depressed, and the only person that cheered him up was Gracie. She'd taken an instant liking to him; they were a mischievous duo together. It was adorable to watch, but it was the only time Edward seemed to smile.

I'd spoken to Seth. He was worried too, but was adamant that he'd deal with it and would be OK if we left him alone. I didn't know him well enough to make that kind of call, and that bothered me. We'd just been starting out, getting to know each other piece by piece, but now we rarely had a moment together to just talk.

I'd grown so used to our little moments of closeness. Those moments after sex, or even before when we'd sit together and talk about our lives. I missed them and wanted them back. I just wasn't sure how I could go about getting what I wanted this time. Seduction in the Mythology aisle was definitely out of the question this time.

I groaned, gazing out at the aisle in question. I'd been determined to have him that day, and had been very assertive with him. I needed to do that now, but had to come up with something that would work around his leg.

All I wanted to do was to make him smile; to see his face light up like it did when he was with my daughter. It was strange to say but I missed him. It was as if a part of him had been left in the road along with his wrecked bike. I'd tried the simple things, fuck, I'd even bought him flowers! That had garnered more of a laugh from Seth than Edward. I didn't know what else to try. My usual plan would have been lingerie and the element of surprise, but I knew that would make him feel more inadequate.

He still asked for me to kiss him, but I didn't want to tease him, because that's what it felt like.

"Why so sad, sweetcheeks?"

I span around, just as Seth descended the stairs from his apartment. I gave him a short wave and turned back, leaning over the counter. I heard him approach seconds before his arm wrapped around my shoulders.

"Hey, no sad faces here. This store is happy-happy joy-joy."

I sighed and rested against him. In the weeks since the accident we'd become close. He was a good friend, just like Alice. It was great having someone who knew what Edward had been like before, and I could talk to him without having to explain events first.

"Come on then, tell Sethy," he pressed.

"I'm just tired. Gracie didn't sleep well last night," I lied.

"I know that's not it. Tell me, or I'll have to resort to my own brand of torture."

I snorted and tried to move away from him, however he held firm before licking my cheek.

"Ergh! Seth!"

I began frantically wiping my face, glaring at him while he laughed.

"Told you I'd torture you. So, are you gonna tell me before I do it again?"

"Edward," I grumbled.

"I know that! But what is it in particular about my moody little man that's getting your knickers in a knot?"

"Knickers?" I giggled, only to have him nod and knock his hip against mine in a silent prompt.

"Is it wrong to say that I want him back? Seth, I didn't even really know him, but he seems to have disappeared before my eyes. What can I do to help him?"

"Oh, honey, you're already doing so much. Eddie-boy's just having a pity party. I get it, but he needs time, or you could slap him out of it."

I stared at him drolly, only to have him snicker and shove my shoulder.

"You're very excitable today. You get laid last night?"

He instantly sobered, and I was shocked at how quickly his eyes went from playful to sad.

"I certainly did not, though I did see a certain Mr. Black while at Priscilla's last night," he replied, cocking a brow.

"You need to stop calling him that. Edward thought he was being nice by letting Gracie put the make up on him."

"No way! It's too much fun. I just wish I hadn't been so hysterical, because I should have taken photos. That would have been some awesome blackmail material."

"You're mean," I stated, pushing him out of the way to serve a customer.

I rang up the books on the ancient register and placed them in the large brown paper bag. The woman smiled at me, as I wished her a good day. I was a little nervous with Seth watching me the whole time. I frowned and turned back to him.

"What?"

"You like it here, don't you?"

Smiling, I nodded. "Yeah, I do."

He was silent for a while. I could tell he was thinking, but had no idea what was going through his head. I was about to ask him when he stated abruptly, "Go. Go to him. Do what you have to do to make him smile."

I didn't need to be told twice. I rushed into the closet under the stairs and retrieved my purse, along with my jacket. It was only when I was almost out of the door that I turned back to him.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes! Go! If it means you getting into some hokey position with him, then do it, OK?"

I walked back and hugged him tightly over the counter.

"You're a good friend, Seth. Thank you."

He mumbled an acceptance as I left the store and ran to my car.

// FE \

I knew he'd hear me if I used the elevator, so chose to walk up the stairs. I'd been given a key shortly after Edward had returned from the hospital. It was purely because he couldn't answer the door without difficulty, so I slipped it as quietly as I could into the lock and entered the loft.

It was oddly quiet; there was usually the noise of the TV or some music playing. It made me feel intrusive for the first time since having access to his home, and I considered turning around and phoning him from the corridor to tell him I was coming. But I realized that would be stupid, because I was already in the damn room.

I dropped my purse onto the floor, and the brown McDonald's sack onto the small counter that divided the kitchen and the main living area. The fast food wasn't very original when it came to my seductions, but I thought it would cheer him up remembering what had happened the last time we'd eaten it.

I replayed that time in the store, as I searched the loft for him. It didn't take much looking, as he was asleep on the couch; his leg still propped up on the coffee table. I walked closer, taking in his disheveled form. His hair was matted and, to be honest, looked like it needed a good wash. Stubble marred his cheeks and there were stains on his t-shirt.

He *really* did need a wash.

Sympathy pooled in my gut as I came closer, and sat carefully on the table next to his foot. I leaned forward, smoothing a few bronze strands from his forehead. He flinched in his sleep and moaned in disapproval. His shuffling moved his leg to the edge of the table. I couldn't risk it falling off but didn't want to wake him, so I tried to carefully pull him closer by his thigh.

"Mmmm..." he purred, his hand covering mine.

I held my breath, unsure whether or not I had woken him, but his chest rose and fell in a slow steady rhythm. However, his palm was pressing into my hand, pushing it further up his thigh towards his crotch.

He mumbled again, followed by a low groan when the tips of my fingers met his very evident arousal. His sweat shorts hid very little.

My mouth went instantly dry. It had been too long since we'd had this kind of contact, and I debated whether or not to continue it. I stopped for a moment, needing time to think clearly, but his breathing altered and I knew I'd woken him. I looked up sheepishly, snatching my hand away from his.

"Sorry," I apologized looking into his exhausted green eyes. They seemed to have lost their shine and that made me more determined to make him grin.

"What are you doing with my leg?" he almost growled.

My skin prickled, but not in fear. He still had the ability to arouse me with his words alone, and his current gravelly tone only made it more intense.

"It was about to fall off the table. I was trying to stop it."

"Hmm, OK, but that doesn't explain why your hand was on my balls."

I gaped at the shortness in his tone, as he sat up using his arms for leverage. Edward winced and adjusted his leg.

I ached for him.

I bit back the pity and blurted out, "I brought you lunch."

Edward raised his brows, as I pointed towards the McDonald's sack. He didn't look very impressed, in fact he looked angry.

"What's up?"

"Nothing," he snarled, shaking his head.

I had two choices: I could ignore his shit, which wasn't like me, or I could call him on it. My decision hadn't even registered in my mind before the words were spilling from my lips.

"What's your problem?"

"Apart from the obvious?" he snarled.

I sighed loudly; I hadn't meant to, but I could see this was going to turn ugly. Maybe this was what he needed: a swift kick in the ass.

"Oh, get over it, and yourself while you're at it. Edward, you could have died! This," I gestured to his leg. "...will heal. Stop being such a child."

"What did you call me?"

"A child."

My heart raced with anxiety, but I refused to let him do this to himself.

I refused to let him do this to *us*.

"You're right. I am a child, but not because I'm being pissed off and petulant. Would you like to know why?" He snapped. "I'll tell you why, because I can do very fucking little for myself! I have to rely on you, or Seth, Christ, even Gracie helps me and she's four years old! Do you know how soul destroying that is? For a baby to make you a glass of juice!"

I gulped and could feel my cheeks tingeing with embarrassment.

"Edward-"

"No! I have a right to feel upset and cheated, Bella, so don't come in here and try to kick my ass. It isn't going to work."

This hadn't gone as I expected, and now I felt like a fool, so I decided to change my approach.

"But am I OK to bring you lunch and offer to clean you up?" I asked innocently.

For a split second I could have sworn his eyes flashed with amusement, but it faded all too quickly.

"Whatever."

"Oh, now that is being childish." I lowered my head, making sure I met his gaze before I continued, "Do. You. Want. To . Eat?"

He pouted and nodded, making me bite back a laugh. He looked crestfallen, but he really needed to deal with this otherwise he would never completely heal.

I stood and went to retrieve the food, before passing him his burger and fries. He set them on a small tray and looked up at me.

"I'm sorry. This is killing me and I'm taking it out on you."

The sudden mood swing made me blink rapidly. It took a moment for my head to comprehend his apology. He picked up his burger and began pulling it apart, removing the two pickles and tossing them onto his tray. I rubbed at my chest absently, wondering how to word my next sentence without pissing him off again.

"You need to get a grip. There are things you *can* do around here, and making juice is one of them." He opened his mouth, trying to interrupt, but I continued. "I know you can't carry a glass and walk with the crutches. I'm not stupid, but you can get a juice box or a can and pop it in the pocket of your shorts. Can't you? I'm totally willing to help, but I already have a four year old and to be honest, right now she's more mature than you."

His Adam's apple bobbed as he swallowed. I just didn't know if it was annoyance or guilt, not until he spoke.

"It's difficult. I've always been independent, Bella, and this is really fucking hard to deal with. I'm being an ass and I know it. Forgive me?"

I grinned, nodding slowly as he took a huge bite of his burger. He devoured the food in minutes and it took all of my control not to gawk at him.

"Edward? When was the last time you ate?"

He frowned in concentration and exhaled deeply.

"Hmm, maybe last night when Jake came around. My mom was due early this morning but called to say she wouldn't be here until after three. Guess I forgot to get anything."

"You can't do that. You need to fuel your body so that you can heal. I'm damn sure Dr. Seth told you that little gem," I added sarcastically.

He grumbled lowly, and took a huge swig of his drink.

"You need a shower and shave, you know?"

"Wanna volunteer?" he asked playfully.

I snorted, tossing a fry back into the carton. "It would have to be a bed bath, Cullen!"

"Cullen? Where the fuck did that come from?"

"If, and I do mean if, I'm to be your nurse, then we'll need to be more formal. Don't you think?"

"Well," he continued with the gentle banter. "If you feel the need to call me by my surname, then I shall insist you wear a uniform."

I laughed loudly, throwing my head back in hysterics. This felt good. It was like we were before the accident, but I had to remind myself that we had to take this slowly. Edward was still hurting and needed soft little prods before he would completely return to the man he was.

He watched me, grinning widely, as I composed myself and stood.

"Oops, have I offended you?" he teased.

"I'm going to get some water and a cloth. I can't stand the smell any longer."

I turned my back on him and set about getting the things I needed to clean him from the kitchen. I could hear his low chuckles, as I filled the bowl with warm water. It made me smile, and for the first time in days I felt the tightness in my chest ease. Relief flooded my system and with it came hope. I was finally accepting the knowledge that this was more than sex. I'd fooled myself into thinking that it had only been about that, but the whole relationship had changed very early on for me.

I'd just never been willing to acknowledge it.

The final realization had been when he'd met Gracie. She adored him already, and I was powerless to stop it because I felt the same way.

"How's my little princess?" Edward asked as I entered the room.

I placed the bowl and wash cloth on the table near his foot before answering.

"Jasper calls her that." He winced. "But she's still the little madam she always is. Spends too much time with Alice, I think. She asked me to give you a kiss, and wanted to know if you guys could play dress up again."

"Hmm, tell her whenever Seth isn't around to catch us."

I stilled. "You'd do that for her? Again?"

"Sure," he shrugged. "It was kinda fun, but don't ever tell Seth that!"

An odd silence settle between us, before Edward whispered, "So...how're we going to go about this?"

I dipped the cloth into the sudsy mixture, wringing it out as I cleared my throat.

"It would be easier if you removed your t-shirt."

"You could just help me into the bathroom. I don't have a bath but you could help me shower. The doctor said it is possible. I just need to be extra careful, and watch the water on my frame. Or I could just wash my damn self with that cloth."

"So why haven't you?" I shot back.

Again, I received a shrug. I chose to ignore him and maybe embarrass him into dealing with the accident. I reached forward and tugged at the hem of his dirty gray t-shirt. He grumbled but tugged it off, tossing it onto the floor. I leaned over but before the cloth hit his skin he snatched it from my grasp.

"I'll clean myself. It's my leg that's fucked, not my hands."

I clapped, slow and loud, making a show of the fact that he finally realized what we'd all been trying to make him see. He ignored me, scrubbing at his chest and underarms with the cloth, before handing it back for me to rinse. I never broke eye contact as I dipped it into the water and wrung it back out. This time he washed his stomach, the water trickling across his skin and dripping below the waistband of his shorts.

I licked my lips.

"I may need a little help," he croaked out, knowing exactly where my train of thought was heading.

"You said you could bathe yourself. In fact, you took the wash cloth from me, so why would you need my help now?"

"There's a particular part that I know I'll have difficulty reaching, and its very sensitive. I know you can *handle* it with care."

"Exactly *how* do you know that?" I asked, playing along.

"Well," he drawled in a tone I hadn't heard for weeks; a tone that had me squirming where I sat. "I seem to remember a few occasions where your hand connected with that *certain part* and it felt oh, so good! I'd really like your care and attention in that spot again."

His eyes were hooded, so potent with desire that I felt my panties dampen immediately. I reached forward, my fingers moving with a will of their own and caressed his bare stomach. I felt a tremor under my palm, as Edward's stomach muscles contracted from my touch. At the same time there was a low, deep vibration as he growled in approval.

"What you're trying to locate is a little lower," he continued thickly.

"Really? How much lower?"

I stopped moving my hand though my fingers itched to slip underneath the elastic waist.

"If you keep moving I'll let you know when to stop."

Edward bent over, his lips now millimeters from mine, and each time he spoke I fought the onslaught of lust that wracked my body. With each husky sigh my fingers slipped closer, but stopped when his coarse hairs tickled the pads of my fingers. It took every ounce of self control I had not to just grasp his cock and put us both out of our misery. But the anticipation was always so very exciting with us, even those early days when I visited the store had been electric. I'd known that he'd watched me, followed me through the aisles, and I'd been aroused beyond anything I'd ever experienced.

"Bella?" he sang lightly, setting my blood on fire.

My control snapped and I pushed my hand right into his shorts and gripped his cock fiercely. Edward tossed his head back and growled loudly, pushing himself further into my palm.

"Is this the spot?" I whispered against his throat, feeling him swallow against my mouth.

"Hmm, now if you just-"

"Edward, I'm sorry I couldn't make it this morning. I...Oh!"

I gasped and looked up to see, what I could only assume was, Edward's mom staring in shock at us.

Fuck!

End Notes:
Oops....

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 12 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>*Waves*</p> <p>Love & hugs to my beta Maylin & prereader elusivekoolaid.</p> <p>I heart you both!</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

I gasped and looked up to see, what I could only assume was, Edward's mom staring in shock at us.

Fuck!

EPOV

I froze.

Trust my mother to cockblock my first real intimate moment with Bella since the accident. She'd been a little distant, and I could understand why. We knew very little about each other, and the accident had thrown a real wrench into the whole thing.

"Oh! I'm sorry!" My mom squealed. "I'll just go and put this into the kitchen. Though, I don't think it'll take too long to do that. Not long enough for you to finish that, anyway."

She waved a brown paper bag at us, before turning quickly and hiding in the kitchen area. She could still hear us, so I was cautious of what I said.

Bella's hand loosened on my dick, and she slowly pulled it out of my shorts. Her brown eyes were wide; her cheeks bright red with embarrassment.

"I didn't know she was coming over. Sorry."

"Your mom?" she questioned.

I grinned, kissing her on her nose and nodding. She was about to pull away when I grasped the back of her head and brought her back to me. Our lips met in a slow and languid dance, my tongue brushing hers gently and she sighed against it. My dick began to harden again, so before I embarrassed us further I gently withdrew.

"Do you want me to leave?"

"Nope. You can stay and meet my mother."

She winced, but came to sit next to me on the couch. Our fingers linked and rested on my thigh, as my mom walked back into the room.

"I'm terribly sorry. I should have knocked." She turned to Bella. "I usually knock, dear. I'm Esme, and it's a pleasure to finally meet you."

Bella reached out with her left hand and shook my mother's. She was shooting me furtive glances, anxious at her arrival. She was normally so confident, and it was interesting watching her fidget, but as soon as I thought it, she seemed to compose herself.

"Hi, I'm Bella."

"Yes, I thought you might be. My son is usually quick to move on, but even he couldn't do that from a hospital bed."

"Mom!"

"Edward, I'm sure the girl's not stupid. She must know how *busy* you usually are. I'm sure Sethy has kept her informed."

Bella giggled, but never moved. Clearly, the revelation of my social schedule didn't bother her.

"So, how's the patient today?" she asked, staring at the bowl of water.

"Whiny and miserable." Bella stated, getting up from the couch. "I just need to use the bathroom. I'll be right back."

I watched her leave, drinking in the way her ass swayed in her tight jeans.

"Wipe your mouth, dear."

I spun my head, completely forgetting my mom was here. Bella entranced me all too often.

Mom was looking at me knowingly, nodding her head slowly.

"What?"

"So she's it then, is she? You certainly took your time, Edward."

"I'm not sure what you-"

"Oh, please!" she interjected. "You know very well what I'm talking about. You're my son, and that look in your eyes tells me that the girl in the bathroom is very special."

I was about to argue back, when she raised her brows at me, and I knew I couldn't lie to her. Bella did mean a lot to me, and in such a short period of time.

"She has a kid," I stated.

If possible, my mom's brows shot further towards her hairline.

"I'm going to be a Grandma? Now Sethy left that little tidbit out! Oh, Edward!"

"Mom, don't get ahead of yourself, and what about Seth? Has he been calling you?"

"Of course he has, dear. He keeps me up to date on your antics, but he's obviously missed things out. Now tell me about the little one."

I grinned widely, unable to stop it as it spread across my cheeks. "She's perfectly precocious and utterly adorable. Gracie is just like her Momma," I said, pride evident in my tone, though I wasn't sure why.

"Uh huh." My mom nodded, coming to sit on the coffee table facing me.

"What does *uh huh* mean?"

"It means your dear old Momma sees it all," she responded patting my thigh. "And I see Bella isn't the only one that has won my son's heart."

I opened my mouth, but stopped when Bella reentered the room. Her dark eyes flicked from me to Mom, and I was fairly certain she knew we'd been talking about her.

"Come and sit down, honey, tell me about your little girl."

I was ignored as Mom and Bella chatted about Gracie, her job at the library and how she was now helping at the store. Mom was captivated by her, completely absorbed in the conversation. It made me smile even more, because it only reinforced what my heart had begun to whisper.

Bella seemed comfortable talking to mom, just as she had with Seth. She slotted into my life perfectly; a missing piece of the puzzle. It was a piece I hadn't even known was missing, until she'd walked into my store and blown me away.

"So, kids, how exactly did you meet?"

Fuck!

Bella's eyes went wide, unsure of what to say. I didn't break our gaze as I stated, "The store."

"That's just wonderful. Fate, don't you think?"

"Mom..." I groaned.

"Hmm, well I really should leave you both alone. I only came to drop of those muffins."

She stood and collected her purse from the chair, before leaning over to kiss us both. Bella smiled and leaned into me.

"It was lovely to meet you, Mrs Cullen."

"And you, dear. I'm positive I'll be seeing you again very soon."

"Have a safe journey home, Mom. Love you," I said softly into her ear.

"Love you too, Son. Now take care of this lovely lady."

She strolled towards the door, but turned after she opened it.

"You can continue with your *hands on* approach, Bella."

There was a gasp, and I looked down to see Bella's stunned expression. I chuckled and waved goodbye. Bella's skin had flamed again. I stroked her jaw with my finger, watching her pupils dilate.

"She's only teasing, but she totally knew what we were doing."

"Oh God, it's mortifying," she moaned.

"Why? You're normally so confident. I wouldn't have thought my mother would worry you."

"She doesn't. Well, not really, but it's your Mom! I had my hand on your dick!"

"Hmm," I crooned, moving closer and nuzzling just below her ear with my nose. "And it felt so fucking good. Fancy a replay?"

She squeaked, as I cupped her breast through her shirt, feeling her nipple bud underneath my thumb. My lips floated over her throat, making her gulp. I tried to shuffle closer, but my damn frame hit the edge of the table, and I recoiled, yelling in pain.

Bella backed away, chewing on her lower lip, as I tried to calm my breathing. I focused on the inhale exhale, trying my best not to cry, because that fucker had hurt. Hard.

"Edward?"

I held up a finger. "Please... just...give me...a second," I gasped.

She nodded, leaning over and carefully placing my leg back onto the cushion. I winced but more in expectation, because it didn't really hurt. She was so gentle; her touch so soft. She stayed silent while I regrouped, stroking my thigh in a small gesture of comfort.

"I'm just going to take a look at it. OK?"

I nodded as she scooted to the edge of the couch, analyzing the metal frame, along with the skin it was attached to. I hissed when she prodded gently.

"Sorry."

"Have I done something to it?"

"It looks fine to me, but when are you back at the hospital? I think you need to tell them what you did," she replied cautiously.

"Tomorrow," I stated on a sigh. "Come here, Bella."

She smiled and moved back into my arms, allowing me to cuddle her close.

"This really sucks."

"I know, but you'll get better, Edward. You can't let this bring you down."

"Why not?" I spat angrily. "What the fuck do I have to be happy about?"

She blinked and pulled back as if I'd slapped her, scowling at me in confusion. I groaned, grasping her hand and trying to tug her back. "I seem to be fucking up constantly with you, forever apologizing. I'm pathetic."

"You need to think before you speak, I know that," she stated abruptly. "I know this is horrible, but we can get through this. We can, Edward, but you seriously need to stop wallowing."

"*We* can?"

Bella rolled her eyes, reminding me so much of Gracie that I had to grin.

"Yes, we! Why would you think I'd changed my mind? I'm taking care of the damn store for you, amongst other things."

"But you've been distant. You didn't want to kiss me."

"I had my hand on your dick less than ninety minutes ago," she pointed out, waiting for me to argue.

"True, but that's the first time-"

"Since the accident? Yes, it was. Edward! At first I thought you'd stood me up, and then I was told you were in a fucking crash! I was wrestling with my own damn guilt. Besides the fact that I have other things to consider here. I'm trying so hard. I'm splitting myself in so many different ways, trying to make sure everyone is happy."

I brought her hand to my lips, kissing the knuckles and watching as she visibly relaxed. We were a mess of emotions, only made worse by the accident. When we'd started this in the store I'd never expected to be at this point, never expected to want so much more from her, but I did.

"OK, I don't know what the fuck I'm doing here, but can we talk? Like *really* talk? About us?"

"Ergh," she complained. "I hate those kinds of conversations."

"You're not alone, but I think we need to right now." I exhaled loudly, running my fingers through my dirty hair. "I really need a proper shower."

"I'll help you later, if I don't hate you after this conversation."

"And you think you might?" I questioned, before nibbling on her fingertips.

"That depends. I don't know what you're about to say, do I?"

"I just...I want to know what's going on with us? What *are* we?"

Her hand tightened in mine, but she didn't remove it. That had to be a good sign.

"I don't have a clue. This was supposed to be a quick fuck; a release. I saw you, and wanted you. You drove me crazy at night, running around in my head." I snorted, feeling very proud of myself. "But then when we actually had sex it hadn't been the end that I'd envisioned. Does that make sense?"

"Yes, baby, it really does." The endearment slipped from my lips so naturally I almost missed it. "I feel the same, but do we have something that we can try to work on? Fuck, I can't believe I'm asking this. Seth would be cracking up if he could hear me."

We studied each other, and I could tell she was thinking by the way she was gnawing on her lower lip. My heart was racing, probably amazed that I was actually considering a relationship. It should have been pounding because I was running away as fast as I could, but then I couldn't really do that with a screwed up leg.

Not that I wanted to.

"Maybe we should shelve this until you're better-"

"A year? You're joking, right?" I interrupted. "We were supposed to be going on a date. For your birthday. We were gonna try, but now you seem so far away."

To my astonishment she shuffled a little closer, placing her head on my chest, and allowing my arm to wrap around her shoulder. Her voice was so quiet I could barely hear her.

"I've tried the relationship thing. It didn't work out well for me."

"That's because he was an ass."

"I have Gracie to consider."

"She loves me," I shot back, trying to prove to her there was no reason why we couldn't go for this.

Bella exhaled loudly and turned her face into my chest. She was protesting, but she wasn't moving, so I pushed a little more. "I've never really been around kids and didn't want to either, but she's adorable, Bella. I'd like to spend more time with her too. I know she has to be a part of this."

She kissed my sternum, easing the dull ache that had developed there.

"You're cute, Edward."

"Then say yes."

"I thought I already had..." she breathed, letting the sentence hang.

"Damn! Any other time, any other place, and I'd be all over you right now. My mouth would be touching flesh that you never realized was sensitive," I all but crooned.

Bella laughed, burying her face in my chest. I held her close, as tight to my body as I could, and for the first time in weeks I felt happy. The accident had taken more out of me than I liked to admit, but this was what I needed.

Hope.

When she began to twist in my embrace I complained, but she shook her head a little, lowering herself to the floor. I frowned, but said nothing. She shuffled on her knees, ducking underneath my frame until she was kneeling between my thighs. The sight made my balls tighten, and it only became worse when she licked her lips.

"I think...we should...maybe...*seal the deal?*"

"Huh?" I swallowed.

"Well, as we've made a pretty momentous decision today, so usually you'd celebrate that with a glass of champagne, but you can't have alcohol because of your meds. I'm suggesting we do something else to commemorate the moment."

"And that would be?" I croaked.

"A shower and a hand job?" She grinned, tickling the waistband of my shorts.

I leaned forward a little, wiggling my eyebrows. "Switch those two, and that would make me a very happy man."

Bella simply giggled, slipping her fingers underneath the elastic and slowly pulling the sweat shorts down. She only moved them enough to release my erection. I hissed as the cool air hit the engorged flesh, but didn't take my eyes from the woman in front of me, not even when she took it in her fist.

I expected her touch to be light, gentle, but she gripped me fiercely, making me grip the arm of the couch for some kind of control.

I groaned, gritting my teeth when she began to kiss my stomach. Her hand continued to stroke my erection in a steady rhythm as my breathing became shallow.

"Oh...Christ!"

Her eyes were looking up at me playfully, as I stroked her cheek with the back of my fingers. She didn't falter in her movements, and those feelings I'd begun to have for her bloomed in my chest. Bella Swan was the most amazing woman I'd ever met, and looking at her now was making one word scream in my head and reverberate around my skull.

Mine.

It shook me to my core. I'd never even considered wanting to share my life, especially not with a woman who had a child. However, when I thought about my future Bella and Gracie were in it.

My inner epiphany was cut short when she flicked the head of my cock with her thumb. It made my stomach twitch and my hip buck off the bed. I grunted, pushing my fingers into her hair. She began to pump faster and before I could try to stave it off I climaxed over her hand.

"Holy Fuck, baby!"

Bella laughed and retrieved the wash cloth. She swept it across my flesh while I was trying to calm down. The water was cold as she cleaned my stomach, and my abdomen twitched, still sensitive from my orgasm.

She washed me with care, but it was too much. My eyes began to sting with an odd emotion, and I had to stop her, gripping her wrist and shaking my head.

"Don't," I whispered.

A solitary brow rose in question, but I didn't want to admit what I was feeling just yet. It was all too new and we'd only just decided on really giving it a try. Beside the fact that I really had no idea *what* I was feeling.

"Did I do something wrong? Did I hurt you?"

"No!" I said loudly, but lowered my tone, murmuring, "You promised me a *hand* in the shower."

Her smile made my anxiety dissipate, and I couldn't stop my own from spreading across my lips when she stood up and reached for my crutches.

This would be the most interesting shower I'd ever taken.

/ FE \

Over the next week Bella came to the apartment every day. I watched as she grew closer to Seth, and Gracie had started to wrap us all around her little finger. I couldn't believe I'd been so scared of her; so worried about how we would interact, because we fit together almost as easily as I did with her mom. There was one thing that bothered me; one thing that Gracie had let slip the day we'd played Hannah Montana makeovers.

Bella cried at night.

I desperately wanted to know why she'd done that and most importantly, whether she still did. I didn't know how I was going to bring the subject up, or if she would think I was overstepping the mark. She was coming over tonight, and she'd promised to bring dinner. I was also hoping she'd bring an overnight bag. I resolved I was going to bring it up. I just didn't know when.

"Hey!"

I turned, trying to calm the butterflies in my stomach as a huge smile spread across my face. She looked utterly stunning in a cute floral dress and chucks. She was certainly individual when it came to her style, and I adored it.

"Hi," I sighed, as a calm washed over me.

"How was your day?"

She flopped next to me on the couch, pulling her purse over her head and dropping it to the floor.

"Oh, you know, the usual, talk show, talk show, news and then a slow hobble to the kitchen to get a glass of juice."

I tried to sound blasé, but I knew Bella could see straight through it.

"You're getting better with those," she said, making it a statement, rather than a question.

"Yeah, it's still awkward, but I can get my own drinks." I beckoned her closer with my finger. "Come here, please."

"Why?"

"Because my lips want to to say hi to yours."

Bella snorted loudly. "God, Edward, that's corny! You learn that line from one of your chat shows?"

"No, baby, that is all for you."

Before she could respond I crushed my mouth to hers, capturing her sigh. She was cautious as she shuffled closer, her hand fisting in my shirt. I skimmed my fingers along her jaw, feeling her shiver delectably. My tongue lapped at her lower lip, it only made her giggle.

"Gracie?"

"It's Jasper's night. Why are you disappointed?"

"Yes," I replied, only realizing at that point that I really was. "I've not seen her for a few days. I kinda miss her."

She kissed me quickly again before replying.

"I could bring her over for dinner tomorrow...if you wanted, that is?"

"Perfect. Though, I kinda have a couple of guests tomorrow. My mom and Seth are stopping by."

"Your dad?" she asked quietly.

"Working." I was abrupt, but didn't really want that kind of conversation. "I know Seth's dying to meet Gracie again."

"Yeah, she hasn't stopped talking about him. When she gave you your makeover..."

"Bella? I need to ask you something actually. It's something Gracie mentioned when she was here that day."

Bella frowned and nodded, allowing me to continue.

"She said you cried at night. Will you tell me why?"

End Notes:
O.o
Will she tell him?

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 13 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>Hello!</p> <p>The usual super thanks to my beta, Maylin & pre reader Elusivekoolaid.</p> <p>I adore you both!</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight. Gracie is all mine :</p>

BPOV

"Gracie, just sit still while I put your sneakers on," I growled, slipping her little foot into the pink shoe.

I couldn't believe I'd agreed to this; dinner with not only Edward, but Seth and his mom. Gracie was very excited and had picked out her own clothes. She'd reminded me too much of Ali when she'd stood perusing her closet. She hadn't done a bad job, opting for a dark gray skirt and a t-shirt that proclaimed *I heart donuts*. Alice had bought her a gray fedora hat, and she hadn't removed it from her head since.

"You look very pretty, Momma," she sang sweetly.

"Thank you, baby. Now promise me you'll be good. No Hannah makeovers, OK?"

I tied her laces as she scowled.

"But Eddie liked it last time."

"Yeah, and I have no idea how you got him to do that-"

"I told him Daddy did it," she interrupted proudly.

A burst of laughter broke from my lips, as I stood up. She was very clever at twisting people to get what she wanted. It worried me, because she was too young to know that kind of manipulation. Charlie insisted all kids did it, but it didn't mean I had to like it.

"Well, when we get there I think you need to tell Edward the truth and apologize."

"OK, Momma."

I raised my brows at her, thinking that was altogether too easy when my dad walked into the room. He held a bottle of beer in his right hand, his holster in his left.

"Why, Miss Gracie, don't you look pretty?"

Gracie skipped across the room and hugged Charlie's legs.

"We're going to see Eddie and Seth!"

Dad looked knowingly at me, placing his holster on the table.

"Huh uh. Seem to be going there a lot."

"Momma's gonna marry Eddie and have babies. I want a brother called Max. Can I Momma, please?"

I gaped at her, completely stunned at her ramblings. Charlie was grinning and stroking her cheek.

"Well then, poppet, I think it's time I met Eddie."

"You'll meet him when I'm ready, Dad." I stated abruptly, tugging Gracie away to put her jacket on.

Determined to end this conversation as soon as possible, I started to walk towards the door.

"You back tonight?" Dad asked gruffly.

I nodded, grabbing my keys of the coffee table and tossing them into my purse. As I left the house I heard Charlie mutter, "Must be serious if you're wearing a dress."

I bit down my response and slammed the front door behind me. Gracie was skipping on ahead, shouting for me to hurry up. Her enthusiasm to see Edward and Seth made the anxiety at seeing Esme again ease. I didn't get along well with the parents of my boyfriends. In fact, Jasper's mom had spent the whole time we were together trying to split us up. She adored Alice, though.

"Come on, Momma!"

Sighing loudly, I opened the car door, letting her climb inside before buckling her in. My cell buzzed as I walked around to the driver's side.

Are u comin? I need u!

I grinned, replying with nothing more than 'really?'

I hadn't even fastened my seat belt when his response came through.

Yeah, I have an itch. Groin area. I can't reach :)

I turned on the radio, wincing when Gracie started singing along to Justin Bieber, and fired off a quick reply.

On my way, but Seth will have to see to the itch!

/ FE

"Eddie!" Gracie screamed, racing into the loft.

I followed, smiling at Seth, before he swamped me in his embrace.

"Hey, hottie. How's it hanging?"

"Good, Seth. Anxious, but good."

We moved further into the room, and he still had his arm resting over my shoulder as he closed the door.

"Why? You've met Esme before and by all accounts, she really liked you. She's very excited to meet Gracie."

"I don't do well with parentals," I mumbled.

"Sure you do. Just smile and give them some of the sassy attitude that made Eddie boy want to jump your bones. You'll have Esme eating out of your hand in minutes."

I frowned, not completely convinced, as I looked around and tried to find Edward. A squealing from Gracie had me staring towards the kitchen.

"Momma, lookie!"

Edward was sitting on a stool, his leg propped up on a smaller one, as he stirred the contents of a saucepan.

"Hey," I breathed softly. Edward's face lit up with the biggest grin I'd ever seen. "Nice dress, though heels would have been sexier," he continued, nodding towards my boots.

I leaned against the counter, crossing my arms over my chest.

"I wasn't going for sexy, Cullen."

"Cullen? Now that's a new one, *Swan*."

"Did you know I have Mommy's *and* Daddy's name?" Gracie interjected. "I'm a very lucky girl to have two names."

I whimpered, about to tell her not to interrupt when Edward swept an arm around her waist and pulled her towards him.

"You are extremely lucky, Miss Gracie. Are you going to help me with dinner?"

She nodded seriously, before holding his wrist to help him stir. I couldn't stop my heart from swelling. It was the sweetest sight I'd ever seen. Edward had been worried about Gracie, thinking he wouldn't be able to communicate with her. I smiled at that now, because watching them here you'd never know he had any reservations.

"*Eddie*." Gracie sang. "I've been thinking. 'Member our talk about babies? Well, I've decided I want a brother, and his name will be Max. OK?"

Edward spluttered at the same time I gasped. I shook my head, trying to advise him not to acknowledge her ramblings. Doing that would only encourage her further. He took the hint and continued to cook the dinner. It was only when Seth lured her away with the promise of animal crackers that she left us alone in the kitchen. I stepped closer, trying to smooth his hair with my hands and kissing his forehead. Edward tipped his head back further, meshing his lips to mine. A soft moan traveled between us both, leaving the sauce forgotten in the saucepan. His fingers tickled up my bare leg, as his tongue dipped into my mouth.

I was anxious about tonight. I'd promised to answer his question; promised to explain why I got upset when I was alone, but his tongue was wiping away that anxiety each time it stroked mine. It hit me hard just how much I missed us being together. We'd started out as purely sexual and that aspect couldn't be ignored. Especially when his fingers were ghosting over the lace of my panties. My thighs quivered in anticipation, but hearing Gracie giggle in the other room was like being dowsed in cold water.

Sighing loudly, I pulled away, my cheeks flaming. Edward chuckled stroked my cheek with the back of his knuckles.

"I really need to be alone with you, Bella," he growled impatiently.

I winced, knowing it must feel like constant teasing to him. It wasn't intentional but even now, when he was recuperating, the desire for more was always there.

"I know," I whispered, holding his head to my chest.

He nipped playfully at my breast, making me laugh and pull away slightly.

"Well, you seem to be feeling much better."

"I do," he nodded, taking hold of the spoon again, but his arm still remained around my waist. "I don't really have a choice, and I got a gift today."

"Oh?"

"Yes. I got a nice new chair from the hospital," he replied cryptically.

"You got your wheelchair? They said your leg wasn't damaged further the other day?"

I felt guilt flood my system. He'd only hurt himself again because we'd been getting intimate in the wrong place. We couldn't deny that part of us for much longer, so I would need to be more careful with him.

"Bella, I'm fine. I just caught it," he replied, before staring at me intensely and continuing, "It wasn't your fault."

I nodded, about to speak when Seth appeared.

"Your mom's here, sweetcheeks, and she's brought a buddy."

I'd never heard Seth sound so solemn. His face was grave, clearly not liking whoever Esme had brought with her. The smile had left Edward's face, as he shuffled on the stool.

"Help me up, Seth."

Edward winced as Seth helped him stand, wrapping his arm around his waist and hobbling out of the kitchen. I didn't know whether to watch dinner or go and see who had arrived. After listening to someone wrestle with the wheelchair, I turned off the dinner and followed them.

Gracie was sitting on the couch, clicker in hand and singing along to Hannah Montana. Esme was next to her, watching her in awe. It made me grin, because she made everyone around her happy, even those that had known her only a few minutes. She was infectious.

It was the muffled voices from out in the corridor that interested me. The front door was open a little, and I could make out the wheels of Edward's chair, along with Seth's boots. I just didn't see another person, though knew for certain that there was one. I stepped towards them when Esme spoke up, "Leave them, dear. Those men have things to discuss, though I fear they'll never get to the point."

"Who?...I mean-"

"I brought his dad. I thought this accident would bring them closer, but it's only causing more friction. What is it with men and their ego's?"

"What's an ego?" Gracie chimed in.

Esme giggled, and I sat down next to my little girl.

"Hmm, do you know when Daddy thinks he knows better than Aunt Ali or even me? Those times when he won't listen? Well, that's when Daddy's ego is showing."

Gracie nodded and went back to singing along with the TV.

I fidgeted in the seat, unsure of what to say next, if anything at all. My head was screaming at me to stop being so stupid. I was strong. I could be just as assertive with Edward's mom as I had been with Edward. I'd decided long ago that I wasn't going to sit back and let life pass me by. I wanted this thing with Edward to continue, wanted it to be more, so I had to prove to her that I was worthy of her son. It was important that I showed her I wasn't a single mom that was using her son for employment and comfort.

Not that anyone had suggested anything like that.

"She's a beautiful little girl, Bella."

"Thank you," I blushed. "She's taken quite a liking to Seth, as well as Edward, but to be honest, she's used to adult company, so adjusts to anyone new. I never intended for them to meet so soon, but we were out shopping one day and Edward was there..." I rambled, unable to stop the words spewing nervously from my mouth.

Esme came forward, patting my knee and gazing into my eyes.

"Sweetie, you don't have to explain that to me. Gracie is your child. Can I tell you something? Edward has never asked a female friend to dinner before. Ever. For him to be so attached to you and your daughter so soon speaks volumes to me. I'm sure you'll be able to confide in me soon, at least I hope so, but for now I'm happy that you're helping my son. You're making him smile, and the only person who can usually do that is Sethy."

Her tone was sincere, and acting on instinct alone, I covered her hand with mine.

"Thank you, Esme. This is very new and not really how I originally saw it going. I want you to know I'm not here out of obligation either. I really like Edward and want to help anyway I can."

She smiled warmly, before whispering, "This has been a long time coming. I'm very excited."

Just as she finished the voices in the hallway became heated and Seth stormed back towards us.

"Mrs C, I adore you, but I cannot abide his attitude towards Edward. I'm going out for a bit. I'll be back when I know he's gone."

Seth leaned down, kissing all three of us before walking out as swiftly as he'd entered. I frowned at Esme, thoroughly confused by what was happening. I felt uncomfortable being here while all this was happening and didn't particularly want Gracie privy to it either. But I didn't know how to be tactful and leave.

"Sorry," Esme cringed. "Edward and his father have a few issues. I try my hardest not to get involved and usually it works, but I guess today isn't one of those days."

She stood and started to follow the path Seth had taken. Gracie shuffled closer to me, but the shouting didn't seem to bother her. She was too wrapped up in the TV.

I didn't want to eavesdrop, but they weren't quiet about what they were discussing. I was startled when it was Edward who brought up Gracie, and not Esme. The door flew open and Edward wheeled himself back into the room.

"I refuse to discuss this when I have guests," he snarled to the blond man in the corridor. "If you want to have dinner with us you'll shelve the attitude until later."

The blond man's lips pursed as our eyes met. He seemed perplexed by my appearance, as if he expected someone else. Gracie peeped around me, looking towards the door.

"Who's that, Momma?"

"That's Edward's daddy."

I tried to keep my voice down, but everyone was so quiet it seemed to echo off the walls. He stopped at my words, before coming closer. Gracie grinned.

"You're Eddie's daddy?"

"Yes," he nodded. "I'm Carlisle and it's a pleasure to meet you."

"You don't look like Eddie."

He smiled, lowering himself down to her level.

"He has the same color hair and eyes as his mom, but he gets his sass from me."

Laughter bubbled from my lips, escaping before I could stop it. My cheeks heated with mortification, but Carlisle smiled warmly, holding his hand out for me to shake.

"I'd love to be able to say that I'd heard a lot about you, but I'm afraid up until I arrived I had no idea Edward was even seeing someone. I thought... Well, it doesn't matter what I thought..." he rambled.

I was a little taken aback by his honesty, because Edward had been out of hospital for some time now, and I'd been here most days. The fact that he knew nothing about me only showed how little he visited his son. Even a phone call would have raised questions, because Gracie was here a lot too. I felt bad for him; I'd always been close with my dad.

Even though he was outstaying his welcome.

"What exactly was it that you thought?"

I span my head around to see Edward exiting the kitchen area. He was glaring at his father, as his hands pushed at the wheels. My skin prickled, knowing this was not going to go well.

"Edward, you know exactly what was going through my head, and to be honest the lying is starting to irritate me. It's no wonder I don't come over to see you, when you act in this manner," he answered dismissively.

"And that would be? Annoyed? You're damn right, Dad, when nothing I do is good enough for you. Every single choice I make is wrong. So I've given up trying to please you."

"I don't think-" Esme started, only to be stopped by Carlisle.

"Son, when have you ever tried to *please* me? I think you stopped that when you hit thirteen. Please do not push this on me."

"Why not?" Edward snarled at the same time I stood, gripping Gracie by the hand. "I'm not the one that's convinced their son is gay and is disgusted by the fact."

"I think I should leave," I mumbled, trying to get past them.

"Oh, dear, don't go."

Esme followed us to the door, as Edward and Carlisle continued to shout at each other. Edward didn't even notice that we'd gone.

That hurt.

"Esme, I have to think of my daughter. She doesn't hear that from me and Jasper, so why should she hear it from those two?"

Her lips pursed, as she nodded slowly.

"I understand. I should never have told Carlisle to come. I'm just a little tired of the way they are with each other. It's horrid, and I hate that Seth isn't considered a part of this family. I love that boy, and after his grandfather died, leaving the store to the boys, I've thought of us as the only family he has. I'm afraid my husband does not see things the same way."

She was close to tears, her voice breaking towards the end. It really hurt her to have her husband and son at war.

"I'm not leaving because of you, and if they hadn't started raising their voices I think we could have managed it. My daughter is exposed to too much adult interaction as it is. I hope you understand."

We walked down the stairs out onto the street, only to see Seth leaning against my truck. He was glaring up towards the loft; his face oozing aggression.

"I do understand. Jasper is her father?" she questioned changing the topic slightly.

I nodded.

"Well, if you and Jasper don't argue in front of her, then I really do understand your reticence. It's good that you're not like that, Bella."

"Jasper and I are friends. That's how Gracie needs us to be."

Reluctantly, she went back to see what was going on with the men up in the loft, but not before kissing us both goodbye. Gracie was staring at me, questioning with her eyes, but I didn't really know how to explain it all to her. Mainly because I had no idea what was going on between Edward and his father.

Groaning, I walked across the street to my truck and buckled Gracie in before going to talk to Seth.

"Didn't get any better then?" he asked softly.

"No. I had to leave, Seth. I didn't want her upset."

"Yeah, whenever those two get together it always ends up in a war. They need to have it out, but they act like they get off on the hate." He sighed loudly, kicking the gravel with the toe of his boot. "Whatcha gonna do, hottie?"

"Gracie needs to have some dinner. I get the feeling whatever Edward was cooking will be spoiled. Fancy tagging along?"

"Really?" he perked up.

"Yeah, why not? Gracie would love it. I'll even let you pick."

His arms came around me in a huge hug; a hug I hadn't realized I needed until he offered it.

"I'll say yes, but I want to pay, OK?"

"Seth..."

"Nope. Let me take you guys out. You're both dressed for it, right?"

The hurt I felt eased a little at the cute smirk he was currently sporting. When I nodded he whooped loudly and rushed to tell Gracie. I expected him to sit up front with me, but instead he sat right next to my little girl.

I gave one last lingering look in my rearview mirror at Edward's place, hoping for I didn't know what.

But nothing happen.

"Sweetie, he can't-"

"I know. I'm just being stupid," I groaned, before taking a deep breath and putting on a fake smile. "OK then, baby, have you and Seth decided where we're going?"

The chatter in the backseat drowned out my thoughts, allowing me to put aside the hurt and worry that had rested there since I'd left Edward's. My fingers itched to call him, but he was the one that hadn't said a word at my leaving.

I was stubborn.

I wouldn't wait for him.

End Notes:
<p>Oops... men are so stupid!</p> <p>Huge thank you to every single one of you that reviews.</p> <p>I wish I could reply to you all but with more than one story going, I'm sure you'd prefer to update rather than a reply :)</p> <p>xxxx</p>

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 14 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>Huge thanks to my beta Maylin, and pre reader Elusivekoolaid.</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

EPOV

"Son, when have you ever tried to please me? I think you stopped that when you hit thirteen. Please do not push this on me."

"Why not?" Edward snarled at the same time I stood, gripping Gracie by the hand. "I'm not the one that's convinced their son is gay and is disgusted by the fact."

I couldn't believe he'd fucking ruined it. It had taken me ten minutes to realize that Bella had taken Gracie and left. I'd been too incensed, too consumed with rage at my father. He never let up, completely convinced that Seth and I were together and that formed the basis of every interaction we ever had. I was tired of the accusations and decided today was the day we were going to sort this out. I had nothing to lose, Bella had Gracie and it appeared Seth wasn't returning. My mom had stalked out. She'd been the one to point out that Bella had gone.

We were on our own.

"So go on," I goaded. "Tell me. Tell me it all."

Dad sat down on the arm of the couch, resting his elbows on his thighs and linking his fingers together.

"Are we going to finally have it out then, son?"

I wheeled my chair forward, trying not to knock my leg on the corner of the coffee table and faced him.

"Go ahead. We're here, you certainly made sure we started, so continue."

Dad cringed at the harshness of my tone, but I was exhausted with this continued confrontation. He sighed deeply, and took a moment before he spoke.

"How long have you known Bella?"

"Does it matter? This isn't about her," I denied.

"But it is, Edward. This thing between you and I, it all stems from somewhere, and it appears I have been led to believe-

"No one has *led* you to believe anything. You've chosen to believe it."

"We are not going to move this forward if you continue to interrupt. Can I please explain where I stand on this matter?"

He waited, his blue eyes piercing mine. I wanted to call Bella; I needed to apologize, but we were actually going to get this shit out in the open. I would have to grovel extra hard to her when this was over.

When I didn't respond Dad took it as permission to continue.

"It was the night Seth's grandfather was diagnosed; he'd stormed out of the hospital. You went after him. I was worried about you both, so I followed..."

I remembered the night with fucking crystal clarity. It was the night I had to be everything for my best friend; I had to be his rock. Seth had sobbed for a straight forty minutes, I'd held him close as he cried for the only family he had left. I felt useless, unable to heal the one person I'd do anything for.

"I rounded the corner of the hospital," he continued. "You were hugging him as he cried. I was so proud in that moment, and even afterward when you two kissed, it's the-"

"What?" I snapped, thoroughly perplexed by what he'd just stated.

"Edward, please do not deny it. I saw it with my own two eyes."

I thought back, but knew what he was referring to.

"And that's when the hate for me set in? I was gay and therefore not worthy?" I asked angrily.

"I do not hate you!"

He reached out, trying to touch my hand, but I moved it.

"Son, what I despise is the lying. Does Bella know about you? Or are you still interested in women? I see Seth is taking it very well."

I held up my hand, asking him to wait.

"You do this to me, because you think I'm lying to you all? You think I am gay, and I'm deceiving everyone?"

Dad nodded solemnly, as nausea swirled in my stomach. This was about something as pathetic as non disclosure? He truly thought I was lying to everyone around me.

I swallowed, meeting his sorrowful expression. There was no hatred in those eyes, just confusion and hurt.

"I'm not gay, Dad," I sighed, lowering my tone. "Do I love Seth? Hell, yes, but not in that way. He's like a brother to me."

"So you do refute what I saw," he stated rather than questioned.

"Let me finish. Please?" I took a deep breath. "I'm not denying it because, yes, Seth did kiss me that night, but if you'd have stayed thirty seconds longer you would've seen me push him away. Seth just wanted to feel loved. He needed a connection, and I was the closest thing he had. When he was thinking more clearly he apologized. I'm not who he wants, and he certainly isn't mine."

"So this with Bella?"

"Is new, but she's different. She mixes me up. When I'm with her there's no up or down, just her," I smiled.

The tension in the room seemed to have dispersed, but I was still guarded. This animosity had been flowing between us for too long for it to just disappear with one conversation.

"I felt that when I first met your mom. I spent weeks wondering what the hell was happening to me. Bella seems lovely. I'd like to meet her again, and that little girl of hers is a ball of energy."

I chuckled, "She is utterly precocious. She told both of us that she wants a brother, and his name will be Max!"

Dad grinned, a knowing glint shining in his eyes.

"What?"

"Sounds like you're in deep, son."

"I'm not sure I get you, but that's irrelevant right now. I want to know why," I asked abruptly.

He asked for me to explain. It annoyed me that he thought compliments to Bella and Gracie would be all I'd need. He was extremely wrong.

"Why what? I think it's obvious why I thought you were gay, but let me make it very clear I never had an issue with your sexuality, or Seth's for that matter. My problem with you, son, was that I felt you were lying to everyone around us -to your family. That is what I despised."

"I told you that I wasn't," I stated firmly.

I needed for him to see this had started with his inability to believe me - his son.

"But you need to understand that if I thought you were lying about one thing, then why would I believe you when you refuted it?"

He took a deep breath, as if trying to stay calm. I knew the feeling. I was pissed at his control when only thirty minutes ago he'd been his usual passive aggressive self. I wanted to shout at him, to scream because he'd messed our relationship up. He was the one that hadn't asked about what he saw, and then he hadn't believed me when I'd stated I wasn't gay. His treatment of Seth had been fucking ridiculous, and remembering that only enraged me further.

"I can see what you're saying, but I'm your son! You should have believed me instead of carrying on this pathetic campaign of hate!" I shouted.

"I don't *hate* you," he denied, leaning towards me and bracing his hands either side of my chair.

"Not much," I mumbled.

"Edward, please? You just admitted you could see why I'd think those things, so do not condemn me for them. I will admit to being extremely rude to Seth on numerous occasions. I will have to make that up to him."

"He had no one, Dad. We should have all been there for him, but instead he had to deal with the death of his only family alone. I could only help so much. Mom was even cautious about coming to help, in case it annoyed you. Don't you see what you've done?"

Silence fell between us, his head dropping between his shoulders. He never removed his hands from my chair, though. I didn't think this would solve everything, but our relationship had to get better from here, didn't it?

"I apologize for what's past, Edward. However, you also played your part. We could have had this discussion years ago, because you knew what I thought. I think it suited you to be so removed from us. That way you could drop out of school without recriminations."

"I was helping Seth."

"Oh, I have no doubt you were, but it wasn't exactly a hardship for you to drop out and take on the store, was it?"

There was a lightness to his tone, as if he was trying to keep this as far from an argument as he could. When I felt a small smile tug at my lips I knew it had worked.

"You knew I wouldn't just let you leave school, but by distancing yourself you stopped any confrontation."

He raised his brows, pursing his lips and waiting. He was right, but I sure as hell wasn't going to admit it to him now. We'd reached a precarious understanding, and I knew if we continued to try and work this out now we would resume our argument.

"I love the store, Dad. I don't regret what I did."

"I can see that. I also see how much you hate not being able to work there. Your mom is concerned," he stated, leaning back.

"She's no need to be. Seth has worked it out with Bella. They're alternating the shifts between them."

He frowned a little, before asking, "Don't you think you're putting a lot on Bella? Given that you kids are only just starting out, and she has a child."

I rolled my eyes.

"I'm well aware of what my girlfriend has. We're working through it."

"This is a tough incident for her to deal with. Things are pretty new with you two; have you talked about it?"

"Not going there with you, Dad," I stated, shaking my head. "We've only just come to some sort of resolution, so I'm not ready to talk to you about my relationship problems."

"So there are problems?" he pushed.

"Dad! No!"

He held his hands up, surrendering under the harshness of my tone.

"OK, I have to go and make things right with your mom anyway."

"I know how you feel," I mumbled, as he rose to his feet. "Only I have Seth, Bella and Gracie to deal with."

He turned, looking at me solemnly.

"So do I, son. Though, I think it'll take a little longer for me to make it up to Seth."

I nodded in agreement, as he walked towards the door, but as his hand reached for the handle I stopped him.

"Dad?" I took a deep breath. "Can you come back tomorrow?"

"Yes. That would be a good idea. See you tomorrow, Edward."

I nodded, watching as he left and wondered how the hell I could make it right with Bella.

/ FE \

It hadn't been easy getting her to come to the apartment. When I'd called her she'd been abrupt and clearly pissed off. I'd heard Seth in the background telling her to go, and it made me smile. At least he was still on my side.

Bella had insisted she take Gracie home first, and Seth was going to take care of her while we sorted this out. I made a note to thank him, because over the last few weeks he'd done so much more than he needed to.

Bella's responses were short, and she said nothing more than she needed to. I knew the second she arrived here it was going to be hard to make her see how sorry I was.

I'd managed to rescue some of dinner, but realized she'd probably eaten. So I opted for placing wine on the coffee table, along with two glasses. I put *Ani DeFranco* on the CD player and waited for her.

Hurt settled low in my stomach when she knocked on the door, instead of using her key. It only underlined just how much groveling I would have to do.

I started to wheel my way over to the door, when I heard the key slip into the lock. She pushed the door open cautiously and stood in the doorway.

"I'm so pissed with you right now, Edward."

"I know. I'm s--"

"But for some reason, I can't stay away. You ask and I come. That makes me so stupid," she continued, shaking her head.

"You know that's not true. We have something here, Bella, and I fucked up by continuing an argument in front of Gracie. I *am* sorry, but I don't have kids, I don't think the way you do when they're in the room. That's my only defense."

She pursed her lips, and stepped closer.

"I know," she exhaled. "Can I be honest?"

I nodded emphatically and gestured towards the couch, watching as she came to sit before me. The music flowed around the loft, and I poured her a glass of wine while she composed her words.

"It's always been about Gracie," she started. "Every decision I've made has been about her...until you. I thought that day in the bookstore would be a release; a never to be repeated experience, but it wasn't. There was more, so much more. Sorry, I'm not really making any point."

"You are. I'm following," I said quietly.

"You make me want things I'd set aside. I promised I'd tell you why I cry, and I'm going to keep that promise." She took a deep breathe. "I cry, because I'm so fucking lonely, Edward. I know I have Gracie, and Alice and I are really close, but I want someone that will be there at night when I do cry. I'd given up on that after I told Jasper to go, but you put me in a spin by just being you."

I snorted. "Funny, I said the same thing to my Dad only a couple of hours ago."

"You *spoke* with him?"

I could tell by her tone that she thought we'd argued rather than talked.

"I'll tell you later, but Dad and I have come to an understanding. Thank you for telling me. To be honest, I wondered if that was the reason. Please, carry on."

She took a sip of her wine, before resuming the conversation.

"I'm not used to being confused, and you do that to me. My daughter adores you. It seems like you and Seth have become a part of our family in the blink of an eye, but we've missed out the bit in between - the dating. And I know that's only because of the accident."

I nodded in agreement, amazed at how this was going. I expected another argument, at the very least, but she was being extremely honest in trying to explain where she stood right now.

"I know the dating bit will be difficult, and I know it was me that took control in the store that first time, but ...Damn, I'm making no sense at all...Fuck! What I'm badly trying to say is that it may have seemed like an over reaction to you, but it really wasn't, and I want you to think about that."

I placed my hand on her wrist, waiting until she was looking at me and not her glass, before speaking.

"I do understand that, or at least I'm trying to. We're coming at this from different sides, and it's going to be difficult, but I want to try, Bella. I've never wanted that before."

She exhaled loudly, before mumbling, "I wanted you to notice and stop me from leaving. Childish, but it doesn't change the truth."

"I don't think it's childish. I was so consumed with my Dad's appearance I didn't see anything else. I'm sorry, baby."

Her eyes went wide at the endearment.

"Baby?"

I shrugged playfully.

"Just testing it out."

Bella giggled, making the tightness in my chest recede.

"The accident really threw a wrench into this, didn't it?" I questioned, moving as close as I could to her.

She placed her hand at the top of my thigh and squeezed.

"I guess that's because we didn't know what *this* was."

"Do we now?"

She leaned forward, her arm pushing at the underside of her breasts, and making them swell at the scoop neck of her dress. I licked my lips, as my balls began to tighten at the sight, and when I saw she was gazing at me through hooded eyes, I relaxed; she knew exactly what she was doing.

"I think we do, Edward," she purred, stroking her fingers across my covered cock.

I groaned, pushing my crotch into her palm.

"I feel like a teenager, only worse, at least they're *able* to get to the next base even though they shouldn't."

"Very profound," she snorted. "But I know you're being such a hypocrite with that little statement. Both Esme and Seth have told me all about your busy past."

I brought my face to hers, wiggling my brows before whispering, "Without that busy past you wouldn't have such an experienced boyfriend. Would you? And I know you haven't complained about that before."

"Boyfriend? You trying that one out too?"

I lowered my lips to hers and kissed her slowly. Her taste made me growl, as I lapped at her lower lip. Her fingers pulled at the elastic waist of my shorts, pushing underneath and tickling the coarse hairs there. I pulled away from her mouth, hissing and drinking in the way her tits begged for my attention. I mirrored her previous action with my shorts, only I did it with her dress, shoving my hand under the neckline and cupped her breast in my hand. My thumb flicked at her nipple, as we continued to stare at each other.

I saw the exact moment she began to drown in the lust, because her eyes glazed. I wanted to give her so much more than childish fumbles. It angered me, but that quickly diminished, when she swirled her thumb over the head of my cock.

"Christ, Bella, I wish I could..."

"Shush, stop worrying. I think this could be what we need."

I frowned, utterly confused.

"Think about it," she said, wrapping her hand around my cock and making me groan. "We started backwards. So now we get to enjoy all the fun bits we missed."

"Fun bits?" I all but crooned, pinching her nipple, and rolling it slowly.

"Hmm, dinner, making out...foreplay."

"But, Miss Swan," I teased. "We're not even dating!"

She gave a short giggle. "According to my daughter we're about to be married and have a child."

She began to pump my cock slowly, making me lose all thoughts, and it took a moment to remember what she'd said.

"That's because she's as headstrong as you," I gasped, moving my hips to match the rhythm of her hand, but then every breath left my lungs when she lowered her head to my crotch. She pulled my cock from my shorts and instantly engulfed me in the warm, wet heaven of her mouth. I pushed my fingers into her hair, gripped harshly, but Bella simply hummed in approval. The vibrations skittered across my erection, making me snarl.

This was not going to take long.

My balls were already starting to tighten. It felt like an eternity since I'd had this with her, but I wasn't going to hold back now. I couldn't prolong this. I needed her. She seemed to sense it, or knew from the way I fisted her hair and the noises I was making. She pushed her tongue against the underside of my cock, as her mouth moved quicker over my hot skin. The moment she circled her tongue around the head, licking a drop of cum from my tip, I knew that was it.

I roared, as I came in her mouth, slightly embarrassed that it had been all over so soon. Bella purred, lapping at my now very sensitive cock, and laughing when I twitched. She looked up at me, making me groan when she licked her lips.

"Fucking hell, Bella. I really wish I could fuck you right now."

"We'll work it out. There must be *ways*..."

I kissed the tip of her nose, as she righted her dress.

"Spoil sport," I pouted.

She laughed and stood up, making me reach out for her hand to bring her back to me.

"Hey, you're going so soon?"

"Gracie," she stated gently. "I can't leave her with Seth all night. I'll sort out someone to sit for her overnight, OK? Will that please you?"

"I would fucking love it!"

I kissed her ferociously, wanting to leave some kind of mark to show the world she was mine. She went right along with me, sucking my bottom lip into her mouth.

"Tease!" I whined.

"Yup! Sorry, gotta go. I'm at the store tomorrow, so I'll call you from there, OK?"

"You should be working not calling your boyfriend!"

She turned, her hand still on the handle of the door.

"Have we decided that yet?" she asked playfully.

She was amazing, and my heart pounded in my chest. It was trying to tell me something I wasn't ready to acknowledge just yet.

"Bella Swan, will you be my girlfriend?"

"Sure," she smiled, sauntering out of the door.

I felt like a silly child, when I shouted into the empty apartment, "I have a girlfriend!"

End Notes:
Thanks for reading.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 15 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>*waves*</p> <p>Huge thanks to my wonderful beta Maylin & my prereader elusivekoolaid.</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

EPOV

"Can the baby eat his lunch, or does he need Momma to cut it up?"

I glared at Seth, shoving at his stomach with my shoulder.

"Ouch! You wound me. Damn, sweetness, I was only helping the patient."

"I don't need it. I'm used to maneuvering around now, but I'm not stupid, I know exactly why you're hanging around."

He strutted back towards the kitchen, waving my comment away.

"He'll be here in about thirty, by the way," I chuckled.

I knew it embarrassed him. It was probably the only thing that did, so it was the only ammunition I had. He knew I was only teasing anyway. He'd scared me last night. I'd been drifting off to sleep when I'd heard the door open. I'd instantly assumed it was Bella, or rather my cock had, because it was standing to attention. My heart thumped in anticipation, as I listened to the shuffling and muffled cusses. Shortly after a loud thunk, a body flopped onto the bed next to me. I winced as my leg was jarred, and blinked the person into focus. I knew by the scent that it wasn't Bella, not unless she'd taken to wearing cologne.

I'd whispered his name, wiping at my eyes, but I didn't need to see him to know he was upset. I could hear it in his tone when he told me to go back to sleep. The assumption that I even could was ridiculous. I wasn't about to nod off with my friend crying next to me. I'd tried to find out what was wrong, but he'd refused to elaborate, simply turning his back to me, and feigning sleep.

He'd been to see Peter, so I was certain that bastard had something to do with my best friend turning up in the middle of the night and sobbing into my pillow.

Unable to leave him alone, I'd turned as much as my leg would allow and placed my arm around his waist. There was a soft whimper, before he twisted, throwing himself at me and crying louder than before. I'd pulled him close, resting his head on my chest. I hadn't asked anything further; I remained silent, allowing my friend the comfort he sought from me.

Seth had hugged me during the night. I'd found it difficult to sleep, so I'd watched over him. At some point I must have slipped into unconsciousness, because when I woke Seth was in the kitchen and not next to me.

"Aren't you eating?" I asked, as he took a seat on the couch.

He was clutching his coffee mug tightly and staring at the floor.

"Not hungry, babes. Anyway, I gotta be going soon. Thanks for last night."

"Yeah," I started around a mouth full of eggs. "About that, are you OK?"

"Is there any way you'll drop it, if I ask you to?"

I shook my head as I chewed my food. If Bella had turned me into a sobbing mess, then I was damn sure he'd keep asking until I confessed the problem. I wanted to be able to help him, and to be able to remove the hurt that was evident in his eyes. He'd done it for me more times than I could remember. I was such a girl when it came to my feelings for Seth. I had a hard time working out what the hell was going on with Bella, but being with Seth was so easy.

"Spill," I demanded, getting a huge sigh from him.

"Peter."

I rolled my eyes, tossing my fork onto my plate and staring at him.

"I asked him to leave her."

My eyes grew wide at his admission, but sympathy soon replaced the shock. I knew it would turn out this way. Peter had never given a shit about Seth. He was a secret, one that was to be kept in the safe little apartment above a tired old bookstore. I felt my fists clench in anger, but I was utterly useless. I couldn't go and kick Peter's ass for taking advantage of Seth. I could barely stumble around with the frame on my leg.

"Clearly it didn't go well," I said. "Do you *want* to tell me? I will drop it if you ask."

He placed the mug carefully on the coffee table and turned to face me. He looked completely exhausted, and it hurt to know I was useless to him.

"It shouldn't surprise you. You knew that he'd do this when I finally asked. I'm a fucking fool, babes, and everyone knew that but me."

"Seth, no one-"

"I tried to talk my stupid self into thinking *she* didn't matter, that he would eventually see what he really was and leave her. I was wrong."

"You weren't," I stated adamantly. "He's in denial. We both know he's gay, so don't you dare think you're wrong. I fucking hated the way he used you, but I tried to ignore it. I wanted you to be happy...and sometimes you were."

"I thought he was the one," he said softly.

"I thought *I* was your one."

I tried to tease, hoping it would lift his spirits, but he remained sullen.

"I can't have forever with you though, can I? As much as I'd like to, that joy is reserved for a certain Miss Bella and her little princess."

I grinned at the sound of her name. I couldn't help myself. I was done for. I wanted to tell him I had a girlfriend, but it felt stupid and rather selfish to discuss my relationship right now.

"So you think she's my forever?" I questioned still smiling.

He finally laughed, tossing his head back and roaring loudly.

"I fucking love how clueless you are. This whole thing is so hilarious."

He leaned closer and slapped my cheek.

"You're in deep, and I'm stunned you can't see that. From the moment I found you half naked on the floor in the store I knew she was the one," he laughed.

"I have no fucking clue what you're on about. I like her, she makes me smile and I admit, I want to see where this leads us--"

"Huh huh."

"What?"

"Look, Eddie-boy it's written all over your damn face. I say her name and you light up like a damn Christmas tree. It's nauseating really. And don't even get me started on little Gracie."

I grinned, as a strange feeling of pride coursed through me. I didn't understand it. I had no reason to feel pride; I wasn't her father.

"See! You don't even grin like that for me!"

I snorted at the play-pout on his face, and for the briefest of seconds I wondered *what if?* Would Seth really be happy if I was gay; if I loved him in the way he teased that he wanted me to?

I sobered, and asked before I could stop myself.

"Seth, I wish I could make you truly happy. I wish I felt that way about you. I love you, you know that, but I can't give you it *all*."

He flung his arms around my shoulders, hugging me tightly, before talking gently into my ear.

"I love you too, but I don't want your fine ass that way. The ass I want is way more toned than your skinny one."

I shoved him away, but still held his hand.

"What are you going to do?"

Seth sighed deeply, shrugging his shoulders.

"Dunno, babes. I've drawn the line with Peter, and I have no intention of cheapening myself for him. He isn't worth that."

"Jake'll be here any minute, you know," I stated, trying to keep all traces of humor from my voice.

"Don't," he responded, pulling away and standing up. "I'm going to leave, you need anything?"

"Seth, don't go--"

He didn't have the option, because at that moment there was a soft knock on the door, before I yelled, "Come in!"

Jake filled the doorway, holding out a bag of bagels and smiling. What the hell was it with the people I knew all insisting on bringing me food?

"Hey," he said happily.

Seth was transfixed. Jake's dark t-shirt was tight across his chest, outlining his muscles, and I could tell Seth was entranced by them. This was the guy my best friend deserved. This was the one that would treat him right. I just wanted them to find each other.

When the fuck did I turn into a girl?

I could pinpoint the exact moment when, and smiling at her image, I picked up my cell and called her. It rang in my ear as I noticed Jake walk into the kitchen area, swiftly followed by Seth.

"Hello?"

I gulped at the male voice. It could only be one of two people: her dad or Jasper. I didn't relish speaking to either of them, but I'd have to if I wanted to talk to Bella.

"Hmm, hi? Can I speak with Bella?"

"Who's this?"

"Edward. Is she busy? I'll call back-"

"No, she isn't busy." He was very abrupt, and I was going to just hang up when he exhaled loudly before continuing, "I'm Jasper."

Shit!

What was I supposed to do now? I didn't want to talk to him, but was it something that was expected of me? Should I get along with him because their split had been amicable? Should I do it because they had Gracie?

Damn, why wasn't this relationship easy?

"Erm, Gracie's Dad, right?" I asked cautiously.

"That's right, though I'm not really sure what to call you."

He didn't sound annoyed, just blunt, and it set me on edge. What the fuck was he expecting from me? I gritted my teeth before responding. I tried to play nice for Bella and Gracie.

"Edward's fine. So, erm, is Bella there?"

"We're actually in the middle of lunch, Edward."

"Edward? Is that Edward, Daddy? Lemme talk to him. Lemme!"

I smirked at the tiny voice in the background, and I was betting he was regretting saying my name out loud. There was a muffled shuffling before Gracie's voice came loud and clear down the receiver.

"Hiya, Eddie! I'm having chicken, whatcha eating?" She all but sang.

"Hello, princess. Seth and I have had eggs. Seth's a useless cook, but it was actually very nice."

"That's not good. You should've come here. Aunt Ali is doing it all, and she's real good."

"Gracie, you need to go back to the table." Came Jasper's muffled voice.

"No, I'm talking."

I bit back a laugh, but decided to try and be at least a little responsible.

"You should do as your Daddy says. I'll call you tomorrow and then we can have a proper conversation. OK?"

"Sure, Eddie, but I'm sleeping at Daddy's tonight. Do you know his number?"

"I'll...well...uh, what's your Mom doing?" I questioned.

"Dunno-"

"Gracie! Do as your Dad says and get back to that table!"

My heart skipped a beat at her voice. I closed my eyes, listening for more, but all I got was a quick 'bye' from Gracie, and a *clunk* as the phone was placed down. I waited, confused as to whether to end the call when Bella finally spoke.

"Sorry about that. Is everything OK?"

She sounded worried.

"It's fine. Well, apart from a bit of drama between Seth and Peter, but that's not why I called. I...I wanted to hear your voice," I admitted.

There was a small giggled, and shortly afterward, the sound of a door closing.

"I missed you too," she sighed. "But rather than *tell* me, you can actually *show* me later..."

"Huh?"

"I promised you a sleepover, and tonight's the night," she purred seductively.

My cock twitched, and I hoped she was going to use that voice on me later.

"When?" I demanded.

"I'll be there around four-ish. We could order some dinner in, cuddle on the couch and make out in your bed."

"Baby, I'll be doing so much more than making out, though my mouth will be a part of the fun."

Even though she couldn't see me, I wiggled my eyebrows suggestively.

"Your leg," she pointed out, ruining my moment.

"The use of my mouth doesn't effect my leg. Are you turning me down, Bella?"

"I just want to be careful."

She sounded serious, and I knew she was right, but it still pissed me off that we had a huge metal frame between us. We were explosive when we were together and I missed it. I knew she did too, and I just wanted some form of normality back.

"We'll talk about it in a little while. Give Gracie a kiss for me, and come as soon as you can."

"You'll tell me about Seth?"

"Sure, baby."

She giggled at the endearment and hung up. I was grinning like the Cheshire fucking cat...and being stared at by Seth and Jake.

"Holy fuck, you were right!" Jake bellowed. "Hook, line and sinker!"

I gawked at them as they laughed and pointed at me. I wasn't amused, though it was interesting the way they were interacting with each other. Seth had his hand on Jake's forearm, and Jake's was, in turn, on Seth's shoulder. They were awfully touchy-feely. I raised a single brow in question at Seth. He gave a naughty little smirk - one I knew well.

"Gotta go now, Edward. I left the bagels on the counter."

He waved, but turned back to Seth before exiting the door. "Seven?"

"Totally." Seth agreed.

My jaw hit the floor.

"You're seeing him? I thought you were heartbroken?"

"*He asked me!* Can you freaking believe it? That amazing specimen asked me out - just came right out with it as I sliced a bagel. I mean, I was stunned. Silent. And you know that never happens. I had no idea what to say to him. Edward, I squeaked!" he purged, slightly hysterically.

I was thrilled for him, but it was getting difficult to understand him, because the more excited he got, the higher his pitch went.

"Seth, you're gonna be attracting dogs soon. Just calm down."

He rushed over to my chair and kissed my forehead.

"I gotta go! It's gonna take me forever to sort my fine self out. Thanks for the shoulder, sweetness!"

He started to race from the room, and I tried to get him to come back. I needed help with a shower before Bella arrived, but by the time I opened my mouth the door had closed.

Fuck!

/FE \

I managed.

I'd filled the sink and washed up as best as I could, but by the time I'd finished I didn't want to start to shave. She'd always liked a little roughness anyway.

I'd wheeled myself back towards my closet and pulled out a simple black long sleeve tee. It had four buttons on the chest, but I left them open, and rolled the sleeves up my arms. I was still wearing sweat shorts, for ease, but at least the top half could look presentable.

Jake had moved some of my furniture in my apartment, allowing me to wheel my chair around relatively easily. I still hated the thing, because it had really placed a wrench in the works, but I was living with it.

Not that I had another option.

I pulled a bottle of wine from the refrigerator, along with a couple of glasses and took them into the living area. The temptation to tease Seth became too much, so I fired off a quick text.

U hot & sweaty yet? E

I turned some music on, as I heard the elevator start to ascend. My heartbeat kicked into overdrive, as my fingers began to tap on the arm of my chair. Adrenaline flowed through my blood stream. I couldn't believe just how excited I was to see her, to get her alone.

All night.

My breath caught as the elevator doors opened. My Bella stepped into the room and for the second time that day my jaw almost hit the floor. She stood before me in a tight black bustier, tiny black satin panties and the highest fuck-me heels I'd ever seen. She rested her hands on her hips, holding her trench coat open. She

gazed at me, displaying her body, and cocking her hip before raising a finger and placing it childishly between her teeth.

"Christ..."

Bella giggled and rocked onto the other hip. I was now sporting a tent in my shorts and wasn't ashamed. My girl was fucking hot!

"So..." she whispered. "I bought this for you. All. For. You."

"Well, what a waste that is."

"Why?" she questioned, knowing exactly where I was heading with this conversation.

"Because you won't be wearing it very long, baby."

She stepped closer, removing the coat and dropping it to the floor. "Why are you so cheesy, Edward?"

"You do that to me. Now get over here, I need to touch. I'm a very tactile person."

Bella was laughing softly as she strutted closer. The heels clicked on the wooden floor, and my heart seemed to double in speed. She came to a stop by the side of my chair, and I licked my lips as her satin encased tits came level with my face. I leaned closer kissing the center of her chest and breathing in her scent. Her hands skimmed up my neck and combed into my hair, bringing me closer to her. My right hand cupped her ass, as my left ghosted up her thigh, making it tremble.

"Driving across town in this made me so horny, Edward."

"Looking at you has the same effect on me," I groaned into her chest.

I flicked my tongue under the satin cup, and pushed my thumbs into the sides of her panties. She threw her head back and hissed, but pressed her hips closer.

"Do you want more, Bella?"

Her only response was the tightening of her fingers in my hair.

"You need to answer me, and you need to get these off," I stated forcefully.

I pulled the panties down as far as my chair would allow, and let Bella shimmy them the rest of the way. She kicked them across the floor, parting her legs to do so. I instantly pressed my palm to her heated pussy.

"Hmm...", she breathed.

My finger stroked her slit, spreading her moisture and making her knees buckle.

"You need to answer," I repeated.

Bella stuttered, her hips rocking against my hand. I smirked and kissed a path from hipbone to hipbone.

"Don't be going all shy on me now, baby. Your confidence turns me on. You only have to look down to see the evidence."

She did just that, and looked directly at my crotch. Her dark eyes went wide, and then glazed with desire when I slipped my finger into her pussy.

"Oh... oh fuck, yes..."

I continued to kiss her stomach, as my thumb swirled her clit, and I added another finger inside of her. Her thighs trembled, only making me want to speed up. I wanted - *no needed* to hear my name as it was

screamed from her lips. I wasn't about to fuck her, but I could still give her one hell of an orgasm. In fact, I was determined she'd have much more than one.

Her hand gripped my hair, as I pumped my fingers inside of her. It seemed like the faster I went the slicker she became. My fingers were coated and the scent of sex hung in the air. I nibbled on her flesh, feeling the goosebumps underneath my tongue, and when I pressed on her clit I felt her pussy clench around me. I bit gently on her abdomen as she whimpered, and her hips began to twitch.

"Edward! Fuck, Edward!"

"I really wish I could. I want nothing more right now than to ride the rest of your orgasm with my cock buried deep inside of you."

"Shit!" she gasped, her muscles still in spasm.

She was balanced precariously on those fuckhot heels, and all I could focus on was getting her in my bed. I needed her naked and sprawled out on my mattress, showing me exactly how she liked to be touched.

"Bed. Now," I snarled, but when she started to kick the heels off I growled.

"Ooo, kinky, Mr. Cullen. I like it."

"Do it."

She giggled, tottering over to the bed and removing the bustier.

"I may not be able to fuck you, Bella, but I can have just as much fun watching you please yourself."

She licked her lips slowly, lying back on the bed and spreading her legs.

Shit!

"Was this what you wanted to see?"

I nodded.

Tonight was going to be the best sleepover ever.

End Notes:
<p>He is such a dork when it comes to Bella!</p> <p>Thank you all for reading. I really wish I could reply to every single one of you.</p> <p>Just know that I appreciate every single review.</p> <p>xxx</p>

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 16 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>HELLO!!!</p> <p>HUGE thanks to my beta Maylin & Pre reader Elusivekoolaid.</p> <p>I'm not gonna ramble..... right on to the lemon :D</p> <p>SM Owns all things Twilight.</p>

BPOV

I stretched, yawned and opened my eyes. For a moment I wondered where the hell I was, but the moment I heard Edward's soft snore my equilibrium was restored. He was sleeping on his back, his injured leg slightly elevated by cushions, his other bent across the mattress so that his knee touched my thigh. The thin sheet that we'd ended up using last night was bunched around his groin, covering very little.

Edward's naked body was a beautiful thing to wake up to. I took the time to really look, while he was unaware. I followed the planes of his muscles that ran across his chest and abdomen, licking my lips as my eyes met the small trail of hair that led towards my prize. I grinned, noticing I wasn't the only one awake.

Last night had been sweet, sexy and fun all rolled together. I'd never realized it could be all of those things, but Edward had shown me otherwise. Even with his injury we'd managed to get into a few positions.

"Anything of interest there, Miss. Swan?"

I looked up, startled, only to see humor in his green eyes. His voice was crackly with sleep, but still made my pussy clench. I'd missed this aspect of us so much, and knew he felt the same way. Last night had been as if we'd reestablished our relationship, only now it was more than before.

It was serious.

I made sure he was looking right at me when I licked my lips slowly again, teasing him and enjoying every moment of it. He hummed as I slid against him, feeling his knee rub against my pussy.

"Mmmorming," I almost purred.

"It sure is. And what a way to wake up."

He lifted his head and kissed my forehead gently.

"Sleep well?" he inquired. "Well, what little we had, right?"

My response was a huge grin. I smoothed my hand from his chest, down his abdomen and delved under the thin sheet. I never took my eyes from his, watching as a solitary eyebrow lifted in question. My fingers brushed across the coarse hairs surrounding his cock, before I moaned and wrapped my fingers around his erection. His eyes fluttered closed, as his hips bucked closer. My nipples skimmed his arm with each small movement, and hoping to ease the ever growing ache between my thighs, I rubbed myself slowly against his leg.

"Christ, this is the best way to wake up, ever. You're fucking mind blowing, do you know that?"

"Really?" I laughed, still stroking his cock.

"Hmm, you could totally stay here and be my alarm clock," he rumbled.

"Are you asking me to move in, Mr. Cullen?"

It was a tease, but Edward's body stiffened. I decided to put him out of his misery sooner, rather than later.

"I was joking!"

He gave a huge exhale, and pushed back into my palm. It clearly hadn't scared him that much. At least not enough to put him off his stroke. I began to nibble on his shoulder as we both rocked and pushed against each other. We'd done everything but sleep during this sleepover.

"Get up, Bella."

He sounded desperate - exactly how I felt. We'd tried this last night, but had both been too exhausted to see it through. This time I did as he asked and climbed onto his body, straddling his hips.

"Condom. Drawer."

I chuckled, leaning over and shoving my tits in his face, as I reached for a condom. He growled, nipping at them, and licking languidly at my nipples.

"Fucking hell, Edward," I gasped.

I lost all conscious thought, as he rolled a taut peak between his teeth. I circled my hips against his erection, nestling it against my entrance. I wanted to push down until he filled me, but sanity still prevailed and I pulled away slightly. It was only enough to rip the silver wrapper and cover his cock with the latex. Need was raging through my body, making me wet. I pinched his nipples, feeling his fingers grip my thighs tighter and pull me closer - back onto his erection.

I wanted him, even though we'd been at it most of the night. It had been so long since we'd had sex, *actual* sex that I was now struck dumb. Our bodies needed the reconnection, and not another word was spoken. Edward lifted his hips as I shoved down, spearing myself on his cock. We both groaned loudly.

It was bliss.

I was humming as lust thundered through every cell in my body. I took it slow, not wanting to jar his leg, but it was incredibly difficult. I knew how amazing we could be together when we were hot and wild. I lowered my face, licking at his neck.

"You are so fucking sexy. You drive me crazy," he whispered.

I moved back up, gazing down at his hooded eyes, our hips continued their steady rhythm, but I wanted more. I lifted my hands to my tits and began to toy with them, rolling my nipples between my finger and thumb.

"Not fair," he complained, replacing my hands with his own.

My head lolled back, as sparks shot down my torso to my pussy. We fit together in a way I'd never known. It was as if we couldn't get enough of each other. Just like before the accident.

I purred when he brought his fingers down to my sex. An incoherent sound slipped from my lips as he pressed harder against my clit. I tunneled my fingers into my crazy hair, the movement lifting my tits and eliciting a groan from Edward.

Arousal seeped from my pussy as our movements sped up. Teasing him by touching myself, or displaying my tits was one of the most erotic things I'd ever done, and seeing his reaction only made me want to do it more. My gaze met his, and I licked my lips wanting to taste him in my mouth, but the look on his face told me I was going nowhere. He was going to come like this, with me riding him. My stomach swirled with lust and something I wasn't ready to name. It felt so right being with him like this. The connection was perfect. More than I could have ever hoped to find when I'd walked into his bookstore, but it was there and it was getting difficult to deny.

My thoughts were halted when he brought his hand up to cup my tit. They had been aching with need until he stroked his fingers across the swell of skin, making me sigh. I rocked against him quicker than before, but savoring each thrust. I whined each time he left my body, but whimpered when he returned. His eyes never left mine, telling me exactly what he was feeling. I knew mine were mirroring his, and wanting to push him over the edge, I circled my hips. He hissed, gripping my thighs and pulling me further onto his cock. I closed my eyes and threw my head back at the sensation. Edward tugged me closer still.

"Oh..." I moaned, feeling my orgasm beginning to build at an alarming rate. "Oh, fuck!"

I couldn't slow down, and Edward knew it. He thrust faster into my body. It was clumsy and the rhythm faltered a little. His cheeks were flushed now, and his eyes glittering. He was panting as hard as I was, and I could feel his pounding heartbeat underneath my palm. I took the lead and slid across his cock as fast as I could, knowing my orgasm was about to hit.

We came at the same time, our cries echoing around the room. My hips slowed, but only slightly, and by the feel of Edward's hold on my thighs he didn't want me too. We were both panting heavily, but grinning widely at each other. The tremors in my body were starting to subside, and his abdomen only twitched once more. I gasped for air and fell forward onto his chest, resting my head in the crook of his neck. My whole body was quivering, and it wasn't just from the orgasm. There was something else that had developed during the night.

I shoved that thought aside, and inhaled deeply.

"Wow, that was certainly one way to wake up," I whispered, trying to find the right words.

"I could do that every day, baby."

I chuckled. I'd teased him about the endearment, but I was growing to really like it. However, he didn't need to know that.

I adjusted my position, both of us moaning when he left my body. He tried to be discreet as he removed the condom, but it didn't really work, because his hands were shaky and he was fumbling. I laughed, trying to help him out, but he swatted my hand away playfully and tossed it into the trash.

"I'll have to empty that before your Mom comes in."

"She knows we have sex, Bella. In fact, I think she'll be pleased we're being careful," he sighed proudly.

I nuzzled his chest, breathing in his spicy scent.

"I doubt it. She's very taken with Gracie."

"Very true," he rumbled into my ear. "But I don't want to talk about my Mom. I want to say thanks for staying the night. I know it's difficult, but I really appreciate it."

"I don't want thanks." I rested my chin on his chest, looking at him. "I wanted to be here, and I think we needed to get this back. I've missed it as much as you have."

His hand ghosted up my back, making me shiver. My heart had only just started to slow, and I was sticky. I needed a shower. Images burst into my head all fixated on what we could get up to in there. Just the thought of Edward and I fucking in the shower made me wet all over again. I squirmed.

"Problem?" Edward questioned, the corner of his mouth tilting up as if he knew exactly what I was thinking.

"Nope. What time is it?" I asked, changing the subject.

He stretched, retrieving his watch from the bedside cabinet. His exposed neck was too good to resist, so I lifted myself up and began devouring the flesh there. His hand tightened on my waist, and I felt his groan on my lips as it reverberated down his throat.

"Are we planning on doing this for the rest of the day then? Not that I have any complaints, because the teeth thing is making me hard again."

He picked my hand from his chest, entwining our fingers and brought them back down to cup his cock.

"Knock, knock. Are you guys decent? Well, at least covered, because after what your neighbors said I doubt you're decent."

We both whined. Seth's voice was like a cold shower, and our blissful morning bubble was popped. The thin curtain that divided Edward's bedroom from the rest of the loft was pushed open revealing Seth. I remained resting on my front, leaving my bare back exposed to him. It wasn't like he was interested in me anyway, but I covered my ass, and Edward's cock out of decency. I smiled at him, not really feeling it because I'd been enjoying our time alone. I could forget the accident, his leg and the problems with his dad, and we could be a normal couple.

"Well, well, well, aren't you two a sight? Have you slept at all? Or have you rubbed yourselves raw?"

I winced, as Edward snorted.

"You have a way with words, dude." He combed his fingers through my hair, making me hum in contentment. "What can I do for you and your mouth at this time in the morning?"

Seth flashed his teeth, puffing out his chest playfully.

"Jake liked my dirty mouth last night. Just thought I'd share that, sweetie, given how much your darling is sharing of her delicious ass."

He slapped my buttock, and flopped onto the mattress. I blinked at Edward. This was too bizarre, but the confusing thing was it wasn't uncomfortable. I knew it should be, but there was no attraction from Seth. I could be completely naked in front of him and I was certain he wouldn't bat an eye. It just felt odd having him in the bed where we'd spent the last twelve hours having sex. It felt a little sleazy.

"Oh Christ, Seth!" Edward complained. "Do I really want to know what you two got up to?"

"Now, sweetcheeks, you know what a good boy I can be, though the same can't always be said for Seth Jr."

"Don't!" Edward shouted, holding his other hand up for him to stop.

Seth howled with laughter.

"Why so shy?"

"I'm not shy, Seth. I just don't want to hear what my two best friends were doing while I was romancing my girlfriend."

I held back my amusement. I loved watching them interact. It wasn't like any relationship I'd experienced. They were truly comfortable with what they had together, no matter what anyone thought of it. If they felt like hugging, they would. If they wanted to sleep in the same bed, they would, and if they needed to talk while one was still naked, then right now was proof that they'd do that too. It was rare to find that level of acceptance. I bet most married couples weren't this comfortable around each other.

They were a beautiful anomaly.

One I was growing used to being a part of.

"Romancing?" Seth questioned. "The neighbors sure as hell didn't call it that!"

"Will you fuck off with *'the neighbors'* garbage? Jake is my only neighbor..."

Edward's words trailed off as something dawned on him.

"You were in Jake's apartment last night?"

"You got it, hotness! And boy, were there some interesting sounds coming from this little hidey-hole last night. You two don't believe that less is more, do you?"

I blushed, shuffling uncomfortably on the mattress. I wanted to turn onto my back, but that would pull the sheet from Edward. I was startled when Edward spoke while I was debating it.

"Seth, man, could you grab my robe so that Bella can go shower?"

I stared at him, amazed that he'd basically read my thoughts. Seth even went into the kitchen, allowing us a moment after he tossed the blue robe towards me. I sat up, tugging it on quickly and climbing off the bed. Edward wouldn't let go of my hand, and before I could pull away, he tugged me back. I bounced on the bed, as he swept me into his arms and spoke into my ear.

"I guess our sleepover has ended then?"

His voice gave me goosebumps, and made me squeeze my thighs together.

"I guess so, though I don't want it to be," I replied honestly.

"Can we do it again? I mean, I know you have Gracie, and I know it's difficult but I just--"

"Stop rambling. Yes, I'll see what I can do. I...um... I need to talk to Jasper. He's been a bit off with me, and I think it's because of you."

Edward stilled against me, his grip getting tighter. I was going to tell him to calm down, when he got a hold of himself and let go. He smoothed the hair from my face, staring at me with an intensity I'd never seen from him before.

"It matters to you that Jasper and I get along, doesn't it?"

I nodded solemnly, not really sure of what to say next. I couldn't deny the truth of his statement.

"Then, I'll do whatever I can to make that happen. I promise, baby."

I tried to stop a smile at the endearment, but couldn't, so, hoping to disguise it, I kissed the tip of his nose and climbed off the bed.

"Hey!" he pouted. "I haven't given you a proper morning kiss."

"Ergh! Morning breath. I adore you, but not that much."

I stalked backwards, enjoying the smug look on his face.

"You adore me?"

"I wouldn't be able to put up with you if I didn't. You're really hard work," I teased.

I closed the bathroom door before he could respond, laughing quietly to myself as I switched on the shower. My muscles felt deliciously achy, the kind of ache you only get after a night of sex. It had been so long since I'd felt this kind excitement. I was wide awake, and practically vibrating for more. My pussy still throbbed for attention, every cell demanding more of Edward. I'd never felt like this, even after Jasper, so this was shocking and new.

I liked it.

I soaped my body, opting to use Edward's shower gel rather than the one I'd brought. I was turning sappy, but I wanted to still smell of him when I left. I even used his shampoo, and had to stop before I grew really stalker crazy and used his toothbrush. That would be disgusting. Eye rolling at the levels I was sinking to, I rinsed my hair and shut the water off. I pulled the shower screen and yelped when I saw Edward standing in the doorway on his crutches. His eyes prowled slowly from my head, all the way down to my toes. I shivered, and didn't try to hide myself from his perusal.

"Anything of interest there, Mr. Cullen?" I purred, tossing his earlier words back at him.

"Oh, hell yes, and if it wasn't for this fucking thing I'd show you just how interesting it is."

He stepped inside and shut the door behind him with the base of his crutch, using the wood as support. He was still watching me, drinking in my naked, wet body. It was wonderfully arousing.

"Where's Seth?"

"Kitchen."

"Then you know this is definitely not going to happen, right?" I pointed out.

He handed me a towel, moaning in defeat. I wrapped it around my body and reached for my toothbrush at the same time he did. Silence filled the small room as we stood side by side at the sink, brushing our teeth and gazing at each other in the mirror. It was incredibly domesticated.

His hair was a mess, and stubble marred his jaw, but he was still devastatingly attractive. I wanted touch to him, remembering how complete I felt with his arms around me. So on instinct I rinsed my mouth and placed my arm around his waist. He hummed, resting his head on top of mine. He tossed his toothbrush into the sink, and shuffled around, so that he could wrap his arms around me.

"I wish you could stay," he muttered.

I sighed, looking up at him.

"I know, but I have to collect Gracie, and I have a meeting with my manager at the library later. I wish I could promise to come back this evening, but I can't."

"I understand. Really, I do. I never thought I would. In fact, you having a kid scared the shit out of me, but it's not been as daunting as I thought. I just want this thing off my damn leg, and then maybe we can get back to some normality."

I kissed his chin, and before I could pull away his lips met mine in a burning caress. His tongue slipped into my mouth, stroking seductively against mine, and making my legs turn to jelly. He tasted of toothpaste, his tongue cool from the mint flavor, but I couldn't stop him. In fact, I urged him on by digging my nails into his back and groaning into his mouth. His knee nudged at my thighs, demanding just like before, but a loud knock on the door interrupted us.

I hated Seth.

"Eddie-boy, I ain't waiting out here all morning! Your mom will be here in about half an hour, and I have to open the store. Move that hot little tush of yours, and I don't mean closer to Bella."

We pulled apart, giggling at Seth's rant. Edward lifted his hand, skimming his thumb across my lower lip.

"Call me?" he asked.

"Without a doubt. What time's your appointment?"

I watched his Adams apple bob as he swallowed nervously. He'd avoided talking about his trip to hospital, and I didn't want to push too hard.

"Two. I'll call you as soon as I can, OK?"

I nodded, and leaned around Edward to open the door. Seth stood, hands on hips, glaring at us.

"Get out of here!" he snapped, but the smile on his face gave him away. "I have a certain someone coming to the store for lunch, and I will need some time in this room to beautify myself for him."

I snorted at Seth, and kept an arm around Edward's waist, helping him from the bathroom. He sat on the bed as I dressed in the spare set of clothes I'd brought. I knew he was sad that I was leaving, and truth be told, I was too, but we both had a life outside of these four walls. I didn't want reality to seep in anymore than he did. I hated seeing the melancholy look on his face and wanted to do something for him to make him smile again.

I tossed last night's bustier and panties at him, and cupped his face in my hands, kissing him quickly.

"You can keep those. I bought them for you anyway. Do you think your mom could drop you at mine tonight? Maybe you could stay?"

"Gracie?"

I exhaled. I'd never had anyone sleep over at my house. Edward would be a first.

"Gracie will be there, but my dad won't. I'm not saying we can have a night like last night, but we can be together..."

"Yes!" He interrupted.

We hugged, saying our goodbyes when all I wanted to do was rewind time and be horizontal in the bed with him again. I reluctantly let go and walked backwards towards the front door.

"Bye bye, Bella!" Seth shouted from the bathroom.

"Have fun, Seth!" I yelled back, kissing my fingers and waving them in Edward's direction.

As I closed the door I heard Edward shout, "I'll miss you!"

I virtually skipped to my car, my face aching from the smile that filled my face.

End Notes:
<p>Aww, how cute are these two now?</p> <p>Thank you so much for every single review!</p> <p>I adore you all!</p>



[Back to index](#)

Chapter 17 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>Hello!</p> <p>Huge thanks to my beta Maylin, along with my fic wife/ prereader Elusivekoolaid.</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

EPOV

"Eddie. Eddie, Eddie, Eddie! Wake up!"

I huffed, flinging my arm over my eyes and trying to block out the annoyance that was waking me from the bliss of sleep. Bella and I had had a rough night. She'd been tossing and turning, keeping me awake because I wanted to make sure she was settled before I drifted off. It had taken until three this morning.

"Please, Eddie." My intruder whined. " I have someone to show you!"

I grunted, trying to turn away from the noise, but unable to move because of my leg. I opened one eye, and tried to focus on the owner of the annoying voice.

Gracie.

"Yay! You shouldn't be sleeping, you know. It's morning," she stated.

I closed my eyes again, hoping she'd go away. Last night had been difficult and I wasn't in the mood. I doubted Bella was either, and wished I could take Gracie from the room to give Bella some extra sleep.

She'd had her meeting at the library, and they were having to let her go. They simply couldn't afford her anymore and had to make cuts. She'd been very upset, and it made me feel useless. I'd tried to console her, explaining she had a job at the bookstore for as long as she needed it. She'd argued, trying to tell me as soon as I was well I wouldn't need her. It was complete bullshit, of course. Seth had never really wanted to care for the store, so keeping Bella on was perfectly reasonable.

I'd thought about it a lot.

Bella had been so upset that I'd never gotten a chance to explain what had happened at my hospital appointment. But it hadn't mattered, because all I'd wanted to do was comfort her anyway.

"Momma's making breakfast, you know?"

I turned quickly to my side, checking out the empty space beside me. I reached, out feeling the cold sheets and knowing that she'd been gone a while. Gracie hopped up, sitting in the space and ginning down at me.

"Morning, Eddie!"

"Morning, Gracie," I croaked, making sure I was adequately covered.

Not that I'd slept naked, but I felt as if I needed to cover my bare chest anyway.

"Ooo, you looks angry. Why?"

I cleared my throat and tried to sit up.

"I'm not angry, princess. I just woke up. I'm sorry, I'm a grouch in the mornings."

"Like Oscar?"

I blinked. I had no idea who the hell Oscar was. Most of the time it was as if she spoke an entirely different language, and I briefly wondered if there was a *Deciphering Kids for Dummies* book. Maybe that would help?

She was staring at me, patiently waiting for my answer. I really didn't know what to say, so gave a quick nod, hoping that would be all right for her.

"I understand," she smiled, placing her small hand on my forearm. "Grandpa Charlie is like Oscar too."

"Your Grandpa's home?" I asked anxiously.

"Nope," she exhaled loudly. "But Daddy's here."

Holy Fuck!

I pulled the sheets right up to my chin, and stared at her. Was she serious? What the hell was I supposed to do now? I couldn't walk downstairs without help, but waiting here seemed way too intimate when your girlfriends ex was downstairs.

"Are you worried about my Daddy? It's OK I told him about Max. Told Ali too."

Now who was she talking about?

"Max?"

"Edwarrddd," she pouted. "Max is going to be my brother. Don't you member anything I tells you?"

I opened my mouth as I heard shuffling in the doorway.

"Morning."

I grinned at the sound of her voice and turned my head to face her. She was wearing my shirt and I had to shift my hips to stop my ever growing arousal becoming evident. It felt dirty being aroused while Gracie was in the room, but seeing her in nothing but my clothes drove me crazy.

"Morning to you too."

"Gracie, you shouldn't have come in here. I told you to leave Edward alone. Downstairs. Breakfast."

Gracie scooted from the bed and waved as she skipped towards the stairs. Bella apologized, but prowled slowly up the mattress towards me, eventually straddling my hips. It made my shirt ride up on her thighs, giving me one hell of a view. I placed my hands on her hips, underneath the shirt and squeezed slightly. She was so warm and inviting, and I immediately began to replay the night at my apartment. Her presence was one big tease, and it was beyond frustrating.

"Sorry about that," she said softly, wincing.

"No bother, though I do have one question. Who the hell is Oscar?"

Bella giggled, leaning down and kissing my nose.

"She called you that, huh?"

"She did." I kissed her chin. "She also mentioned that Jasper was downstairs."

"Hmm." Bella sighed, nuzzling my throat and nipping at my collarbone.

My balls grew tight, and it only got worse when she rocked in my lap. I was fairly certain she was trying to distract me, and although I wanted it to work I couldn't shift the thought of Jasper from my head.

"Bella."

"Hmm, Edward."

Kiss.

"Bella. Jasper."

Kiss.

I gripped her hips, about to put some distance between us when she stopped and pouted at me. She reminded me of Gracie earlier, and she looked just as adorable.

"Are you going to tell me why he's here?"

"Don't get whiny about him, OK? He's here to make sure I'm feeling better. I called him last night to tell him about my job."

"Does he know I'm here? In your bed?"

She quirked an eyebrow at me, the corner of her mouth lifting in a small smirk.

"Is it important that he knows *exactly* where you are?"

Her fingers walked down my chest towards my crotch. It tickled as she teased the hairs surrounding my cock, and it made me squirm, chuckling lowly. I could hear Gracie singing downstairs, along with someone I assumed to be Alice. It was more than a little off putting.

"Just tell me, baby."

"I love it when you call me that," she sighed, cupping my face in her hands.

"Your powers of distraction are shit. What's going on?"

"Nothing."

I raised my hands, locking her wrists together, and wanting nothing more than to be able to stretch her out underneath me and trap her arms above her head. I fucking hated the frame and couldn't get it off quick enough.

"You lie. Tell me, or I don't tell you what happened at the hospital."

I shot her a huge grin, knowing I was about to win. Her shoulders slumped in defeat, and she was about to climb off me when I stopped her, holding her steadfast.

"Ergh, fine I give in. Jasper wants to meet you. He and Alice think it's time, whatever that's supposed to mean."

"Don't you want them to meet me? Am I an embarrassment?" I teased, but she glared at me, obviously not appreciating humor at this moment in time.

"I just hate them coming around without calling. I was kinda hoping Gracie would sleep in and we could have a little fun before breakfast."

She circled her hips, and I tried to stop a guttural groan. I failed. It rolled up in my chest and filled the room as it left my lips. It made Bella giggle, easing the slight tension that Jasper's appearance had caused.

"Your turn," she mumbled into my neck.

I didn't feel like playing anymore, so told her about my hospital appointment.

"They X-rayed it. It's good, baby, real good! I start physiotherapy on Friday and they reckon a month of that and it will be ready to come off."

"A month!"

Bella bounced in my lap, her whole face lighting up in happiness.

"You're so fucking beautiful," I blurted out.

Her cheeks tinged pink, and she took her lower lip between her teeth. I let go of her wrists and wrapped my arms around her, reveling in the feel of her body so close to mine. She placed her head over my heart, and I was certain she could hear just how excited I was.

"Why do you hate compliments?" I whispered into the top of her head.

"I don't hate them. I just don't know-"

"MOMMA!"

We both sagged at the mini interruption.

"I love your daughter. I really do, but you need to teach her about *adult time*."

She pulled back, startled.

"What?"

"You love Gracie?" she uttered in disbelief.

Now it was my turn to blush. I felt like a silly schoolboy, but I couldn't really deny it. Bella's daughter had taken half of my heart. So I nodded, and waited for her response. I didn't really know what to expect, because I hadn't planned on verbalizing it. As it was she demanded I get out of bed and go downstairs for breakfast. I suddenly felt very nervous, and had to continually tell myself that I could do this. Jasper was nothing to me, and all I had to do was smile and play nice. Wasn't it?

/ FE \

Bella had managed to get me down the stairs relatively easily, but had complained when I insisted on using my crutches instead of the damn wheelchair. It wasn't like the room was huge, in fact it was six hobbles until I reached the table. I was going to have to do this once I started physiotherapy anyway. Alice and Jasper had been in the kitchen; I could hear their low chatter, and only Gracie sat at the table. She grinned, spooning cereal from a pink bowl.

"Are you going to be OK?" She whispered into my ear.

"I promise, baby. I know what this means to you."

She nodded, sliding me into a chair and warning Gracie not to swing her legs.

"...I don't want you catching Edward's leg under the table."

"How's the invalid?" Alice shouted, skipping in from the kitchen.

I smiled at her, bracing myself for Jasper's appearance. He concerned me more than I cared to admit. If I wanted this to continue with Bella, then I knew I had to be on good terms with him. He was Gracie's father, and he was still very close with Bella; they were a family. Even if it was an unusual one.

"I'm good, thank you, Alice."

"Do you want toast, Eddie?" Gracie interrupted, gaining a scowl from Bella.

This was awfully domesticated.

"Gracie," came a low warning in a southern twang.

I turned to see the man I assumed to be Jasper standing in the doorway. I was amazed by just how much Gracie resembled him. Sure, she had Bella's eyes, but everything else was pure Jasper. I braced myself, unsure what to expect, but it certainly wasn't what happened. Jasper stalked forward, placing his coffee and a small bowl of chopped fruit on table, before holding his hand out for me to shake. I took it, taking note of his strong grip and said, "Hi."

"You doing OK, man? Bella's told me what happened. Not cool."

I blinked. This wasn't what I'd expected. We'd spoken twice on the phone and both times he'd been abrupt and rather rude. I'd prepared myself for the same reaction this time, so his ease startled me a little.

"Um, I'm good. Better. Won't be long before it's off."

"You getting a new bike?" he inquired, taking a seat across from me at the table.

I could feel Bella's stare burning into my shoulder. Had she thought the accident would have me buying a nice safe Volvo?

I tried to ignore her gaze and answered.

"Yeah, probably. I loved that bike."

"Ninja?"

"Yup. Cost me far too much, but it's the only thing I've ever wanted."

"I get you. I'm a Suzuki fan myself, but I understand. B was always giving me stick for my love of bikes, but at least she'd ride 'em. Ali won't get on one at all."

"Liar!" Alice pouted. "Remember the time-"

Bella cleared her throat loudly. "Gracie."

I smirked, clearly something had happened on Jasper's bike and it wasn't for Gracie's ears.

An awkward silence filled the table, each of us pretending to eat. I was trying to think of a single thing I could say to him. Just one, when I blurted out, "So you're getting married, huh?"

Bella groaned and rolled her eyes, Jasper repeating the process, and I wondered what I'd said that could be so wrong when both Alice and Gracie started bouncing with excitement in their seats.

"I'm gonna be a beautiful flowergirl. Ali has a very pretty dress that she says Hannah Montana would totally wear. Wouldn't she?"

Alice stroked Gracie's hair and began to babble about wedding cake, disposable cameras and bubbles. I didn't hear all that much, because I simply couldn't keep track, but I found a well placed nod did wonders. It was like talking to my mom. I felt rather pleased with myself.

"Give Edward a break Ali." Bella asked, as she picked up Gracie's empty bowl.

Alice stood, picking up the empty glasses and followed her into the kitchen with the excuse of pouring coffee. I knew without a doubt they were off to talk about me, and it made me chuckle.

Gracie asked if she could go and watch the T.V.

It left Jasper and I alone.

"OK," he started. "Goin' to be straight with you. Just goin' to come right out and say it."

I nodded cautiously.

"I love my girls, *all* of them. I won't allow any of them to be hurt, because I've done that too much already. B and I really tried, but there wasn't enough between us to make it last. I hated what I did to her, especially when she finally drew the line and told me to go. I couldn't help who I fell for. I've done everything I could from that day to make things up to her, and I continue to keep trying. I fucked up. I'd really hate for you to do the same, because I can tell they both adore you."

"Really?" I asked, trying not to sound too smug.

"Bella has never brought anyone back here. Don't get me wrong, I'm not stupid, I know she's been on... *dates*, but not a one made it through the front door, even before Charlie moved in. I know what that means, even if you're a little slow on the uptake."

"Huh?"

"Exactly! Don't worry about it, man. You'll get there," he said smirking.

I frowned, still not understanding.

"Just don't fuck this up. I'm being nice now, purely because I see what they see, but if that changes then I do too. Yeah?"

I nodded, swallowing, but needed to say something too. I couldn't just let him push his soldiers forward and not respond in some way. Not that this was a war.

"Can I say a few things?"

"I really hope so," he snickered.

"This isn't what I thought it would be. Bella...she..."

"Makes your head spin? Gets you giddy?" he interjected.

I nodded. "Yeah, she does. I wasn't looking for her, you know? And I never dreamed she'd have a kid, so we're fumbling through. This is new to me. Gimme a break."

I leaned back in my chair, wincing a little at the strain on my leg, but bit it down so I could meet his eyes. There was humor in them, but I couldn't avoid the intensity, He was checking me out, making sure I was good enough.

"Goin' to say one last thing, then quits, OK? I'm goin' nowhere. Gracie is my daughter and I have no intention of stepping away. B and I share her care, so if you can't handle me here, then I suggest you leave because it won't change anytime soon."

I'd expected this part of his speech earlier, but even with the harshness of his statement I couldn't be annoyed at him. He was looking out for his family. I was certain Bella didn't feel anything for him anymore,

but she was still his family - a part of his life. He was right, if I couldn't accept him as a part of that then it would be fairer for me to split now.

But I couldn't.

The thought of never seeing Bella, touching her, kissing her, made my stomach roil. Added to that never hearing Gracie giggle or call me Eddie, then I was sure to lose my breakfast. I didn't see Jasper as a threat, and I knew he didn't see me as an issue, so this was no more than a pissing contest. Seth would be hysterical if he could see me now.

I snorted, realizing that Jasper was eying me curiously.

"Sorry. I was thinking of something else. Look, Jasper, I'm not intending to go anywhere soon, and as long as you don't get involved in anything that is solely between me and Bella, then I have no problem with you."

"Then we have a truce, of sorts," he drawled, quirking his brow as Alice and Bella returned.

Bella came to a stop behind my chair, wrapping her arms around my shoulders and lowering her lips to my ear.

"You boys playing nice?"

"Just swapping stories about how much of a pain in the ass you are." Jasper laughed, standing and enveloping Alice in his embrace.

They seemed to hold a silent conversation, communicating in ways I didn't understand. Bella's breaths against my ear were distracting me. I leaned against her, closing my eyes and drifting off - completely forgetting where I was. I vaguely heard shuffling feet, and a tiny giggle, so I assumed Alice and Jasper had left the room.

Wanting her closer, I looped my arm around her neck, tilting my head so that her mouth met mine. My kiss was deep and thorough, always demanding more, but I couldn't have that until my damn leg was fixed.

On a whim, not having thought of it until that very moment, I pulled away, demanding, "Come away with me."

"What?" she snapped.

"When my leg is better, let's have sometime alone. Even if it's a weekend. Please?"

She sat down on the chair next to me, still holding my hand, but looking very serious.

"Can we compromise? Tit for tat?"

"Hmm, sure..."

She took a heartbeat to build up the courage, before spitting it out.

"Come to Jasper & Alice's wedding with me. Gracie is actually going on honeymoon with them - they're going to Disney. We could go away then."

I could almost hear Seth howling with laughter. One thing I'd always said was it was serious if you escorted a woman to a wedding.

I grinned.

"Yes, baby. I'd love to."

I guess I'd been right all along. It did mean things were serious.

End Notes:

I swear, Bookward just gets cuter and cuter!

**First Edition, along with TILT have been nominated for Gold Lemon awards.
Voting [HERE](#).**

THANK YOU!

xx

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 18 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>*Waves*</p> <p>Thanks to my beta, Maylin and my prereader Elusivekoolaid</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

BPOV

The last couple of weeks had flown by. I'd started working full time at the bookstore, ending my shift at three, when Gracie finished school. It worked much better for Seth, because he only needed to be at the store for two hours each day.

Edward had started his intensive physiotherapy, and had even spent a few days at the store with me. We hadn't been together since my sleepover at his loft; we hadn't even been alone long enough to be able to steal a quick fumble. We'd certainly tried, but had been interrupted every single time.

Customers.

Seth.

Gracie.

The weekend away that we'd talked about looked more appealing every day.

We'd settled into an odd routine, and one I didn't want to analyze too much, because then I'd have to assess my feelings for Edward. I was doing a great job of avoiding that at the moment, and that was the way I wanted it to stay for now.

Edward had been my *Jasper moment*, but it had turned into so much more than I'd ever considered. I'd never wondered what would happen next when I'd walked into the bookstore, intent on getting what I wanted. I'd certainly never assumed we would integrate ourselves into every aspect of each others' lives. Gracie adored, not only Edward, but Seth too. It still startled me that even Jasper approved.

My father hadn't stopped asking about Edward, wanting to know why he was the only one who hadn't met him. I was stalling, but I knew I couldn't do it forever. I'd been internally cheering when he'd told me his house would finally be ready to move back to in three weeks.

The weekend of Jasper's wedding.

It would mean Edward and I didn't really need to go away to have a weekend together. We could stay at my house without interruption. However, I knew he wanted to get away and just have some time where we could be alone.

I grinned. I couldn't deny that I wanted that too. The thought of Edward naked on a sandy beach was all I needed to get my nipples tightening, and my thighs clenching.

"What're you smiling at, Puss?"

I looked up to see Seth standing at the bottom of the stairs that led to his apartment. He was holding a mug of coffee out to me, his torso bare and sporting nothing but a pair of loose jeans.

"Well, hello there, hottie!"

I took the mug from him, setting it down next to the cash register.

"Hello, yourself. It's nice to know you want me, but come on, spill," he prompted.

"It's nothing really," I replied. "I was just thinking about how everything has turned out. It's kinda shocking."

"You and my sweetie?"

I scrunched up my nose, shaking my head.

"Not just Edward, but everything. The accident, my job here, hell even you and Jake."

He wiggled his brows and stalked towards me. He placed his hand on my hip, smiling at me through his long dark lashes.

"You been checking out my boyfriend?"

"No, you goof," I laughed, flattening my palm against his chest. "I just mean that when I finally decided to have a piece of Edward's delectable tush I never expected to end up here. Like this."

Seth hugged me close, his musky cologne itching my nostrils, and when he spoke it rumbled through his chest.

"I get that, but I'm so pleased you shook his world up. He needed it. Can I say something and not get your back up?"

I moved back a little, frowning but nodded cautiously.

"He hasn't been with anyone since you, you know. And fuck me, that's saying something for Eddie."

"Ok..."

"I know you don't understand just how significant that is, but I wanted you to know," he added.

"I get why you've told me, and just to make it clear, I haven't been with anyone else either. I just don't understand what the big deal is. I mean, he hasn't exactly had the opportunity to meet anyone else, has he?"

He grinned, pulling away and walking around the counter top. He lifted the delivery box full of new books and put it near the stockroom door, before returning to me.

"Seth..." I sighed impatiently.

"What?" he answered innocently.

I pouted at him, waiting for him to continue. This subject mattered to me. Edward was already very different than any other guy I'd been with, and I had a feeling Seth was really trying to make me see something - something very few people were aware of.

"OK, I'm sure Esme told you he wasn't...*exclusive* when it came to women."

"Seth, I know he's never really had a steady relationship. He told me, and if you're trying to say he slept around, then save it. I know."

"So you see the significance of *you*, then?"

I blinked.

"Bella, my darlin', he hasn't *ever* been with the same girl more than twice. You guys are the fucking most beautiful thing to watch. I see it with each of you, and yet you're both still oblivious. It's so cute!"

I moaned, shaking my head at his giddy little rant, and followed him with my eyes as he came back around the counter. At the same time I watched Jake descend the stairs. I hadn't even been aware that Jake was in Seth's apartment. Edward would be very interested in that little gem, because Seth had still to confirm they'd gone further than a kiss.

Jake placed his finger across his lips, silently telling me not to alert Seth. He wrapped his arms around Seth's waist, whispering, "Boo!" into his ear. Seth's face lit up, making me momentarily jealous. I could see the love shining in his eyes, and if I wasn't mistaken, it was reflected in Jake's.

It felt like I was intruding, but I couldn't look away when Seth turned, folding his arms around Jake's shoulders and pressed their lips together. I heard a low hum, but had no idea which person it came from.

I was mentally telling myself to turn around, but I was transfixed with the way Jake's hands skimmed Seth's back, lowering slowly until they cupped his ass. The murmur of approval came again, followed by words mumbled so low I couldn't decipher them. Their lips meshed together again, it was slow, soft and beautiful to watch.

"Heelllooo?"

I blinked rapidly, trying to orientate myself, and twisting towards the owner of the voice. The delivery guy stood impatiently holding out a clipboard and pen.

"Someone gonna sign for this?"

I took it from him, blushing furiously and tossed it back as quickly as possible. He shot Jake and Seth a look, grimacing as he left the store.

"Moron," I mumbled, hearing the guys chuckle behind me.

However, when I spun to face them they were walking hand in hand towards the stairs and up to the apartment.

"Is that it then? You're leaving me alone to get busy with each other?"

There was no reply, and I had a feeling today was going to be a very long day.

/ FE \

I checked my watch for the millionth time today, noting it was only ten minutes from the last time I'd checked. There was only thirty left until closing, but it was dragging. I pondered what to have for dinner, while I placed the new books onto the shelf at the back of the store. Gracie was having a dress fitting with Alice tonight, so I didn't need to cook, nor did I need to rush home. I thought about calling Edward, or maybe stopping by his place to see how he was.

I was next to the Mythology aisle, smiling and remembering that here is where it had all started.

We'd also had our McDonald's picnic here.

I flicked my fingers against the spines of the books, recalling every title that used to be here. They'd been sold now, replaced by other titles or newer copies. I'd sat in this aisle and watched him every Thursday, sometimes he wasn't even aware of my stalking tendencies. I'd gotten used to his mannerisms before I'd really known him, understood what the cadence of his voice did to my insides, and had erotic dreams about how those fingers would feel as they caressed my skin. None of that had been exactly right, though, because Edward was so much more than I'd ever perceived.

I'd been thinking about our relationship an awful lot lately. I'd felt a shift, something had changed and even though it was for the better, I couldn't quite work out what it was. I'd considered talking to him about it, but had no clue how to start a conversation about a random sensation.

I slumped to the floor and pulled a book from the shelf. I started to flick through the pages, not actually seeing anything, because I was still thinking about Edward. I was confused, worried even, about where we were heading. My life had already been turned upside down by him, but it wasn't as if I hadn't been searching for him. I'd wanted something, *someone* who was there for me. I wanted those stolen kisses and intimate little touches that I read about in my secret romance book collection.

I just *wanted*.

"What're you doing on the floor, baby?"

I jumped in shock, but swooned at his endearment. I hadn't heard the bell above the door ring, because I'd been absorbed in thought. Thoughts about Edward, and yet here he was, wobbling on his crutches but looking utterly stunning. His hair was damp, and his face clean shaven, as if he'd only just showered. He wore a simple white polo shirt, and beige cargo shorts, but they suited him perfectly, and it was a change from sweats. The butterflies in my stomach went crazy, as I eyed him lazily.

"Sorry, I didn't hear you come in. I was just reading." I shrugged. "Slow afternoon."

He grinned, lighting up his entire face.

"I brought us dinner."

I looked at his hands, wondering how he could possibly carry dinner while holding onto the crutches.

"Hello, Bella."

Esme popped her head around the bookshelf, holding out a McDonald's paper bag. I burst out laughing, taking in her confused expression. Edward shook his head, alerting his Mom to our private joke. Esme nodded, and waved goodbye. I hadn't even composed myself enough to wave when the bell above the door tingled.

"Oh, I'm sorry. She must think I'm a bitch. She helps bring you here with dinner and I roll around the floor laughing."

He chuckled.

"Nah, she's OK." He jostled a little on the crutches, resting back against the cash counter. "So you liked my McDonald's touch, did you?"

"It was just funny. I'm sitting in the damn Mythology aisle and you have McDonald's. Sums up our first two dates, right?"

"Why, yes, Miss Swan, I guess it does."

I took that as my cue to tease. I moved onto all fours and prowled towards him, licking my lips and gazing at him through hooded eyes.

"Bella," he said thickly.

"Remember this, Edward?" I purred, crawling closer. "I always wondered what you were thinking when I did this."

I knelt up, my face millimeters from his crotch, just like that first day. He wobbled, unstable with what I hoped was anticipation.

"I..." he started, clearing his throat. "I thought *Holy fuck*, or something very similar."

"Hmmm..." I mumbled, taking hold of the button fastening of his shorts.

He watched as I popped it open and began sliding the zipper down.

"Baby, dinner?"

"Fuck it. I'm kinda needy, Edward."

He cursed quietly, letting a crutch drop to the floor and pushing his fingers into my hair.

"I wish... Damn, I want to be able to..."

I hushed him and nuzzled his stomach. My nose skimmed his navel, the small hairs tickling my nostrils. His hand tightened in my hair, when I began to kiss my way along the waistband of his boxers.

"The door," he gasped. "The door's open."

"Really?"

"Seth?" He asked weakly.

I nipped at the thin skin above his now bulging erection, and was rewarded with his sharp intake of breath.

"Went to Jake's place hours ago..."

"So things are getting-"

"Edward? Shut up."

I didn't wait for him to respond. I dipped my hand into his underwear and gripped his cock. I felt him tremble, as he gave a guttural groan. My pussy tightened at the sound, and my breasts tingled with need. I stroked him slowly, watching as his eyes turned from a brilliant green to a much darker shade as he became more aroused. I adored the intensity of his expression, and held him tighter just to hear another groan slip from his lips. His knuckles grew white as he held tightly onto the counter. I was determined to make him snarl as he came. I was desperate for him to lose it. The power that gave me was exhilarating.

The head of his erection was glistening, beckoning for me to lap at it. I gazed up at him, making sure he could see me licking my lips lazily.

"Baby, didn't your Daddy ever tell you it's mean to tease?" Edward choked out.

"What's wrong? Is this what you want?" I questioned, engulfing his cock in my mouth.

His salty tang buzzed on my tongue, as I swirled it around his shaft. I massaged his balls, feeling them tighten under my touch. Edward's hand was so tight as it gripped my hair that I whimpered. However, that made Edward moan and thrust his hips forward. His leg buckled, almost making him fall.

"Shit!" I snapped, pulling away, and standing up. "I'm so fucking stupid. Lemme get you a chair."

He gasped and shook his head, holding his hand out for me to take. We linked fingers, Edward bringing me into his embrace and kissing my nose.

"I shouldn't have pounced. I feel silly. I could've really hurt you."

"I'm perfectly fine," he soothed. "I just lost my footing. I wasn't concentrating. I had other things on my m-"

"Dick?" I interrupted, making him chuckle.

"Yeah. Definitely that."

He kissed my lips; a slow, soft massage, but one that left me electrified.

"You have the most delicious mouth. Have I told you that recently?"

I shook my head, nibbling his chin, before reaching over to collect the paper sack of food.

"Let's get you seated, and you can tell me again while we eat."

He grumbled, but let me help him towards the reading nook at the back of the store, and we were half way through our burgers before he spoke again.

"We seem to be on a continuous cycle," he snickered.

"Huh?" I replied pushing a fry into my mouth.

"Takeout and this reading nook. Turned out really well the first time, if I recall correctly."

"For you," I pointed out, laughing.

His expression sobered, before he said, "Baby, I ache to be able to have you exactly how I really want to. I hate the way this thing constantly comes between us and cannot wait until they remove it."

I gulped at the seriousness to his tone. His eyes were boring intensely into mine, desperate for me to understand. I stood, and moved to kneel at his feet, maneuvering around the frame and resting my head in his lap. His fingers instantly began to comb through my hair, pulling out the band that held my ponytail.

"Seems like I'm being very nostalgic today. I have no idea why," I said quietly into his thigh.

"What've you been thinking about?"

I shrugged, closing my eyes and embracing the comfort that flooded my system from his gentle touch.

"Just remembering everything that we've been through, and how it all started here."

"It sure did. You blew my fucking mind that day. Seth found me sitting on the floor, head in hands and trying to grasp what the hell had just happened."

"Really?"

"Yeah, I was a mess. Seth hasn't let me forget it since."

I took a deep breath and changed the subject.

"How're things with your Dad?"

I felt him tense underneath me, and I was about to say something else when he spoke.

"We've met once since we had it out. I really can't understand his excuse so it makes communication difficult, know what I mean? Mom wanted me to ask you and Gracie around for dinner..."

"Would there be an atmosphere?" I asked cautiously.

"Nope. I promise."

"Then we'll come." I turned my head to look up at him. "Tell your Mom we'd love to."

We remained like that for the next hour, just talking about his day, the store and Seth. Edward's face had lit up with happiness when I'd told him about the incident earlier with Jake. He questioned me so much, wanting to know Seth's every reaction.

"You guys are adorable. I can see why people would assume-"

"Bella, we're-" he started.

"I know nothing has happened. Well, apart from the kiss. I trust you, but I'm just saying that there aren't many straight men that would have that kind of relationship with a gay man. I adore watching you with him." I took a moment before admitting, "I adore being a part of your life."

Edward's hands framed my face; his eyes fixed to mine.

"You got me through this," he whispered.

"It was my fault you were hurt in the first place-"

"No. No, it wasn't. If you hadn't have taken on the store, kicked my depressed ass into shape, and basically gave me something to get better for, I think I would have languished."

I was going to rebuff him. Seth wouldn't have let the store, or Edward crumble, but I was lost in his eyes. He believed what he was telling me, and it was important to him that I accept his thanks. I turned my face into his palm, closing my eyes and kissing the skin.

"By the time you had the accident I'd already realized you were different."

"Different?"

This wasn't the conversation I'd intended to have, but it felt right to have it now. We were changing, and I'd resolved months ago to go wherever this took me. So in the interest of full disclosure, I kissed his palm again and stated, "Different from the other guys I'd slept with."

To his credit, he didn't balk at the idea of me being with more than him and Jasper. He couldn't really, given what I knew about his past.

"Many?" he queried, a small smirk teasing the corner of his lips.

"Problem?" I shot back, cocking a brow at him.

"Not at all. Just need to know what I'm up against."

I smiled, moving up so that I could kiss him on the lips. It was slow and gentle; a seduction with our mouths, and one which still left me breathless.

"Four," I breathed, pulling away.

"Including..."

"Four in addition to," I corrected.

"And?"

I wasn't sure what he was asking, not until I noticed the crestfallen look on his face.

"Is this where I massage your ego?" I giggled. "Where I tell you that you were better than all of them?"

He pursed his lips and nodded.

"Well," I purred, placing my lips against his. "I never actually *slept* with those four, and certainly never fucked in a bookstore before."

"Never?"

His one word questions where making me giggle, but the proximity of his lips against mine were clouding my reactions, because they were all centered on him.

"Never wanted to stay with them. You, though, you were different from the start. I was kinda lost the second you kissed me."

I underlined it by pecking him softly on the lips, and only pulled away when I started to become lightheaded.

"Good to know." He took a moment, and I watched his Adams apple bob slowly, as if he was having difficulty swallowing. "While we're confessing, I have something to tell you. It's something that only dawned on me this morning."

"And that would be?"

He laced his fingers into mine, and squeezed gently as he spoke his next words.

"I love you."

End Notes:
Thank you!
xx

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 19 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>Early update :D</p> <p>Huge thanks to my beta Maylin, and gentle snuggles to my prereader Elusivekoolaid because she's sick :(</p> <p>Thanks to everyone on Twitter for deciding the lemon location :D</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

BPOV

"So what did you say back?" Alice asked excitedly.

I rolled my eyes, knowing she was going to dislike my response.

"I said thanks."

"You did what?" she shouted.

The whole of the diner turned to face us, and I felt the need to smile an apology. I turned to Gracie, making sure she still had my earbuds in. She was humming away, coloring in a picture in her Hannah Montana magazine.

"Alice! Tone it down," I pleaded.

She lowered her head, but sure as hell didn't lower her voice.

"Whatever possessed you to say thanks? Really, Bella?"

"It came out of nowhere, Alice! We were just remembering how everything had started with us and then *Wham!* He said he didn't expect me to say it back. He just needed me to know."

"And?"

I cringed. I'd been trying to analyze it since he'd left the bookstore. Only moments after his confession Esme had come to take him back home. It felt like we were teenagers and we'd reached our curfew. It was rather embarrassing.

Edward had kissed me, lingering for a while, before leaving. He hadn't repeated the words, and I'd actually felt saddened by that.

"And what?" I groaned.

"Christ, this is like getting blood from a stone! Which shows me this guy is different. You're normally not as guarded; in fact I remember the phone call after that first time with him. You were ready to spill then. Why not now?"

I shrugged, toying with one of Gracie's crayons. Why was I avoiding this? Why didn't I want to think about Edward's confession?

"I don't-"

"You do, and so do I." She softened her tone, taking my hands in hers. "Why are you denying yourself?"

I swallowed thickly, trying to dislodge a huge lump that had formed in my throat. My eyes began to sting with tears that I didn't want to cry. I lowered my head, trying to hide my face with a curtain of hair, but she wasn't having it.

"Bella, look at me."

I gulped, glaring up at her and waiting.

"I don't believe he'd hurt you, for what it's worth. I promised I'd never overstep my boundaries, but I think I need to say this, otherwise you're going to let him go." She inhaled sharply before continuing. "I know Jasper really hurt you. I know it was you that told him to go and be happy with me. You've made sacrifices but you need to stop, and for once you need to be selfish! That man loves you and I know you feel the same, but you're scared. Edward is not Jasper."

"I know that..."

"I don't think you do. You put guys into two boxes: one night stands and forever. Jasper ruined that for you because the one night stand altered to a forever, only for it to go wrong further down the line. That wasn't your fault, and from what I know it wasn't Jasper's either. You guys were never meant to be together as a couple, but that shouldn't tarnish your outlook with Edward. I've never known two people deal with their child as wonderfully as you two do. Gracie is happy and that's because you're not together. Don't keep torturing yourself with silly what ifs."

A small whimper slipped from my lips, and I averted my eyes from Alice. It was only to make sure Gracie was still oblivious. Alice squeezed my hands tighter in comfort and waited for me regroup.

"I hate talking to you about what happened between you and Jasper, but it's really clouded your view of relationships."

"Sometimes," I all but whispered. "I think I was wrong in sending him to you. I feel as if I should have tried more."

"But you never loved each other," she pointed out.

"True, and I can see that Gracie is happy and well adjusted. I'm just...I'm..."

"Scared. I understand that, but Edward adores you. He's confessed his love for you and for Gracie. Please don't flush this away."

"I just-"

"Momma, did you see my picture? Look at her pretty shoes!" Gracie interrupted.

I pulled my hands from Alice's and turned to my daughter. She thrust the magazine at me, and I spent the next twenty minutes focusing on her. I caught the odd glance from Alice, alerting me to the fact that she knew I was avoiding again.

I managed to divert all conversation and kept it light for another hour after that. It was only when we were entering the bridal store for our final fittings that she whispered in my ear, "This isn't finished, Bella."

I smiled, flouncing past her, adding, "Sure it is."

She gave a small sigh, before skipping excitedly towards the counter. Gracie followed, both desperate to play princess and try their dresses on again. It wasn't that I didn't like what Alice had chosen, because they were both stunning. They were both made of silver satin, and complemented each other perfectly. I just wasn't in the *happy ever after* mood.

I had too many questions racing around in my head.

"Momma, look at this pretty crown! Ali can I has this? Please!"

"It's *have* this, Gracie."

"Can I?"

Alice stepped closer, taking the tiara from her and placing it on top of her head.

"Why, Princess Gracie, that looks positively charming! I think it's a must."

"Ali," I complained. "You shouldn't spoil her."

"I'm not! You guys have to have something pretty on your heads, and this is perfect for Gracie. Stop moaning and let's have some girly fun."

The shop assistant came out with three clothes bags, hanging them up and unzipping the first one.

"Oh, Gracie, that one's yours. Let's go and try it on," I said, trying to stir up enough enthusiasm to get Alice off my back.

It worked, with the help of the sales assistant, because moments later she was too busy trying on her own dress to worry about me. I thought back to my reaction, and how utterly surprised I'd been. It would be naive of me to think he wasn't developing feelings, because only a few days prior he'd told me he loved my daughter. Plus, I knew this felt different to me, so why not to Edward?

I'd tried hiding from the truth, too scared to verbalize it in case it hurt, but now I really did have to evaluate those feelings. Once those three words were spoken it would change everything, wouldn't it?

The ringing of my cell diverted my inner turmoil. I pulled it from the back pocket of my shorts, moving towards the back of the store before I answered it.

"*Hey, there hotness.*"

I grinned.

"Hi, Seth."

"*I'm bored,*" he groaned into the receiver. "*The store is dead, and I wanna know what you've done to Priscilla.*"

"Huh?"

"*Eddie-boy, what've you done to him? I dropped by the loft this morning, and he looked about ready to slit his wrists. Did you guys have a little tiff?*"

His tone was light, but I could tell he was worried. We'd all grown close over the past few months and anything severe happening with Edward and I would affect him as well. Seth was a good friend, and not just to Edward.

"What did he tell you?"

"He was actually kinda cryptic, which pissed me off no end. Said he'd scared you, but how'd he do that, babes?"

"I...I don't know if I should..." I replied cautiously.

"I understand, it's between you guys, but please just tell me you can make it better. I hate it when he pouts. He's a miserable pain in the ass today, Bells. Sort it?"

I slumped onto the little chintz stool, pulling off my hat and running my hand through my hair. Seth stayed quiet while I tried to work out whether to tell him or not. The need to do the right thing won over.

"He told me he loved me."

"HE DID WHAT?" he screamed.

I pulled the phone from my ear, still hearing a series of whoops and screams. It was my turn to wait, because there was no talking to him and getting anything coherent right now. I watched Gracie twirl like a princess in her dress, as Seth calmed down.

"Sweets, I know he's never said those words to a woman before! Was it terribly exciting? Did your heart literally skip a beat?"

"I..well...hmm."

"You didn't do anything. Did you? That's why he's pissed."

"I was stunned," I groaned. "I didn't expect it, and it just shocked me. Then Esme came to take him home and...well, I don't know, Seth."

"You need to go and talk to him," he shot back. *"I've removed all the sharp objects, but he's pretty resourceful."*

I snorted, unable to stop myself. I could actually imagine Seth removing all the scissors and knives from Edward's apartment.

"What am I supposed to say to him?"

"You're kidding me, right?"

When he got no response he continued.

"You tell him how you feel!"

"I'm not sure I have an answer to that. Is he different? Yes, completely. Do I miss him when I'm not with him? Of course. Is he the first person I want to call when something good happens? Totally. But is that love?"

"If it's not then we're all screwed." Seth interjected.

"I'm not saying I don't, because it's obvious I feel something for him, but I need time to think about it. To me, it's more than three words."

"It is to Edward."

I had no response to that, because he was right. Edward had had to bare his soul and I'd basically rejected him. What the fuck was wrong with me?

I moaned loudly and heard a short chuckle from Seth.

"That's it, sweetie. You see it now, huh? You guys have been the most clueless people ever. Are you gonna sort it now?"

I nodded, catching myself before saying, "Yes."

I went to hang up when he stopped me by saying, *"Don't break his heart, Bella. I know you feel the same way he does."*

He sounded so serious. So un-Seth-like. He was protecting his friend, and I couldn't be annoyed at that.

How was I going to make this right?

/ FE \

I waited until Gracie was asleep, and my dad had returned from work. I'd explained to him that I'd messed up with Edward and needed to go and talk to him. It'd been him who said there was no need to rush back - he was off work tomorrow. So I'd placed a few items in a small overnight bag, kissed Gracie and drove to Edward's loft.

I'd tried calling him, but he wasn't answering. I had no idea how he was going to react to my appearance, but I'd promised I was going to try and make this right.

I rushed up the stairs, having no patience to wait for the elevator, and used my key to enter. My heart was now thundering in my chest, and as much as I tried to tell myself it was because of the exertion, it simply wasn't working.

I knew the truth.

I wanted to see him -needed to be near him.

"Hello?" I called into the dark. "Edward?"

I dropped my bag onto the floor, stepping inside and trying to catch my breath. He wasn't on the couch, and after peering into the kitchen I knew he could only be in the bathroom, or in bed. I listened as I stepped further into the room and heard running water. He was obviously showering.

I grinned, shrugging out of my jacket and tossing it onto the couch. On my way to the bathroom I kicked off my Ugg boots and pulled my slouchy sweater over my head. It left me in a black tank and toffee colored shorts. I was going to make it up to him. I was going to show him how I felt.

I opened the door, clouds of steam floating out from the heat of the water, and focused instantly on Edward. He was sitting on the small tiled ledge, rubbing soap into his chest. His hair was slick against his scalp, darkened from the moisture and his whole body glistened. I swallowed, taking in the intensity of his green gaze.

"Hey," I said lightly, shutting the door behind me and locking us in a steamy bubble.

"Hi."

"I tried calling you."

"I turned my cell off," he stated, still scrubbing at his chest.

He was acting as if the rubbing was soothing an ache, and I understood that because my chest felt like it was in a vice.

"Edward, I'm here to apologize. I fucked up. You said those words and I basically ran. I'm sorry."

He closed his eyes for a moment, absorbing the words, and lowered his hands to grip the ledge. I started to undo my shorts, shimmying them to the floor and making it clear what I wanted from him.

"Baby, I never expected you to say them back. I just expected...*something*, you know?"

"I do."

"I've never said those words to anyone other than Seth, and I wanted-"

I halted his words by tugging my tank and panties off and stepping into the shower. The hot water pummeled my skin, making me shiver and my nipples bud. Edward licked his lips, trying to keep a small smirk hidden. It wasn't working.

I cupped his stubbled cheeks in my hands and kissed his lips lightly.

"I'm sorry. I pissed all over your euphoria because I was scared. I still am. I'm just asking for a little time."

"I'm totally willing to give you that, but now I've said it I don't think I can take it back," he muttered against my lips.

"I don't want you too," I replied, shocking myself by verbalizing that.

His lips crashed against mine, making me groan, and I climbed carefully onto his lap. His hands gripped my ass, pulling my body as close as physically possible. I could feel the goose bumps on his skin, alerting me to the fact that even though the water was hot, Edward was as shaken as me.

Our tongues caressed heatedly, twirling around and skimming across teeth. His taste was intoxicating and I wanted more.

I wanted him closer.

I wanted him inside of me.

His cock was nestled against my sex, and each time his tongue slid against mine I rolled my hips. It made his grip tighter - fiercer. Gasping, I pulled my lips away from his mouth, only to trail them slowly across his jaw and down his neck. Edward hummed in approval when I nipped at his skin; little bites across his collar bone. I lapped at the water droplets and combed my fingers into the back of his head when he decided to feast on my throat. I adored how hungry he was for me.

He growled and began licking languidly across my breasts, sucking up every drop of water as it hit me. My nipples were begging for his attention, and even though I thrust them closer to his face he denied me. I whimpered, tugging on his hair but receiving only a chuckle. I needed him so bad, and yet wanted to prolong this moment forever. Something inside of me was ready to snap, ready to give in, but I fought it.

"Edward," I panted, rocking my hips against his.

He swirled his tongue on the underside of my chin and hummed.

"I need you."

"Yes," he sighed, moving his hand to my breast and flicking at my nipple.

"Oh, God, yes!"

I tossed my head back, pushed my breasts at him, and then whimpering when his teeth grazed them. I could barely hear his murmurings over the cascading water, but felt them against my skin. He was as consumed as I was by the situation. I'd expected him to reject me, but he was always surprising me, so why not now?

I adjusted myself on his lap, moving his erection so that it nestled between my folds.

"Baby, I don't have a condom in-"

I placed my finger across his lips, stopping him mid sentence.

"I got the shot. I'm OK. *We're* OK."

"But you-" he tried.

I cut him off with a searing kiss, making him growl low in his throat. His cock was pressing at my entrance, and with each roll of my hips it became harder and harder not to impale myself on him.

Edward gasped, tearing his lips from mine and scorching me with his gaze.

"I love you, Bella."

"I know," was the best response I could muster.

It seemed to be enough, because seconds later he'd lifted me up and entered me in one quick hard thrust as he lowered me back down. We moaned in unison, my head flopping onto his slick shoulder. I could still smell his musky scent, only it was now diluted by the spray. I nuzzled his skin, drowning in him as he filled my every sense. His hips lifted to push himself in to me, slowly at first but then with increasing speed.

"I love us like this..." he whispered against my ear.

He laved around the rim of it, before taking the lobe between his teeth and pulling.

"Hmm," I agreed, scratching my nails down his back and making him buck hard against me.

His cock filled me completely, but I wanted more. I tried to speed up our thrusts, tried to be more forceful, pressing my knees into the tiles behind him for leverage. Our moans echoed around the bathroom and collected into the droplets of water. We rocked against each other; our pants and slapping skin filling the shower. I kissed him slowly, it was a direct contrast to our hips, and when I rested my forehead against Edward's he closed his eyes, our breaths mingling. I felt him frown, and moved back, cupping his face.

"Tell me," I gasped.

He tried to shake his head, but my hands stopped it, and hoping to force his confession, I slowed my hips.

"I w-want to say it again," he whispered sadly. "I need..."

I kissed his nose, my heart swelling in my chest.

"Don't hide it, Edward. I'd never want you to do that."

He swallowed hard, followed by a very short nod.

"I wish I could carry you to bed now. I just want to have you underneath me; to feel your legs wrapped around my hips. I miss that."

"I know, but we'll have it soon. Don't be sad. I'm here, and I want you the same as I did that day I walked into the bookstore."

On those words he increased his thrusts, his hands gripping harshly into my hips and his face buried in my neck. My skin heated, my breaths nothing but short gasps and both were made worse each time he pushed to the hilt. I could see the flush to his skin, as his stroke faltered. His abdomen spasmed at the same time mine did, and we clung to each other as our orgasms began to sear our systems. I pulled my head back, screaming when my body burned.

"Holy fuck! Edward, yes...yes...oh, yes!"

He snarled, his face in my chest as he spilled into me and free fell into oblivion.

"I love you," he uttered, as the last tremors wracked his body.

I closed my eyes, not wanting anything to encroach on the intensity of the moment. This was beautiful.

This was us.

He was showing me day by day that relationships did work and that there was someone for me.

Him.

With each tender kiss he righted past wrongs. With each gentle touch I began to feel whole, and I knew I really was losing my heart to this man.

He wrapped his arms around me, holding me tightly to his chest. Our hearts raced, pounding against each other as our chests met. His chin rested on top of my head, and he stroked my back tenderly, each of us trying to calm down.

"We didn't hurt your leg did we?" I asked quietly into his wet chest.

He reached up to shut the now cold water off, rumbling, "No. It's fine."

His hands were skimming either side of my rib cage; his thumbs caressing the underside of my breasts when he reached them. It elicited a sigh of contentment from me, and I rubbed my cheek again his chest, just enjoying the connection.

"Who's caring for Gracie?"

I laughed, even now when we were at our most intimate he was still concerned about my daughter. It was another reason he was perfect for me.

"My Dad. He told me not to rush home..." I replied, letting it linger in the air.

I felt his hum of approval as it rumbled through his chest.

"Does that mean I have you all night?"

I tilted my face and nibbled at his jaw.

"If you want me."

"Totally," he affirmed, as I shivered. "Come on. Bed. You're cold and I'm sure we can think of one or two activities that'll warm you up."

I giggled, climbing off him.

"Still so cheesy, Edward."

He winced, standing up and using me as support to maneuver around the slippery shower stall. We walked wet and naked towards the bed. I carried a huge, fluffy towel with us and when we'd gotten Edward onto the bed I began to dry him.

"You don't need to do that," he sighed, floating a finger up and down my arm.

"But you're wet," I protested.

Edward cupped my pussy, making me moan and push into his palm.

"That makes two of us."

I laughed, covering his hand with my own in a silent demand for him to continue. His finger slipped against my clit, pressing firmly and driving me crazy. He swirled around it, his finger sliding easily in my aroused state.

"Yes...oh, yes," I breathed, rolling my hips for more friction.

Edward added another finger, smirking at me when a guttural groan exited my mouth.

"I'm good with my hands, but do you know something else, baby?" he crooned against my lips.

I swallowed when he traced my lowered one with his tongue.

"I'm even better with my mouth."

"Show me," I demanded, pulling back and exposing myself to him.

The side of his mouth lifted in a cute little smirk.

"It's no wonder I fucking fell for you."

I giggled, threading my fingers into his hair, as he began licking and nipping his way up my thigh. However, before he reached his goal he peered up at me, waiting until our eyes locked before he spoke.

"When this thing is off my leg I'm going to fuck you so hard, you'll be begging for me to stop, baby."

I whimpered, quickly catching myself and shooting back, "Is that a challenge, Mr. Cullen?"

"Nope. It's the truth."

I didn't have a chance to respond, because he placed his tongue against my pussy and licked slowly.

"Fuck!" I snarled, lifting from the mattress.

Edward pulled me back towards his mouth, laughing at my outburst.

"You're sure you don't need to go home?" he questioned.

"Nope. Why?"

"Because I have plans, Miss Swan, and they all include you screaming my name."

End Notes:
<p>I know I kinda faded to black, but it's not like there wasn't a lemon...and then there's the weekend away to come, kwim?</p> <p>Outfits on Polyvore.</p> <p>THANK YOU!</p>



[Back to index](#)

Chapter 20 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>HUGE thanks to my beta, Maylin & my prereader, Elusivekoolaid.</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

EPOV

"I still don't understand why you haven't told her." Seth stated, flopping onto the couch next to me and cringing at the state of my leg.

"Because I want to walk towards her tomorrow without the damn thing getting in my way. I want to surprise her."

He leaned across and kissed my cheek.

"You're such a sappy, romantic Edward, and I *never* thought I'd ever say that about you!"

I shrugged, saying the only thing that sprang to mind when I thought of Bella.

"I love her."

"Aw, now you're making me cry," he teased, wiping an imagery tear from his eye.

"Shut up and gimme that lotion."

He lowered his face, scrunching his nose in disgust, as he prodded the places where the rods had entered my flesh.

"Did it hurt getting rid of it?"

"He wailed like a baby."

I turned to see my dad, as he exited the kitchen. Seth lowered his head, saying nothing in acknowledgment. The air became instantly oppressive with tension. I hadn't wanted my dad to take me to the hospital, but I'd had little choice. He'd been the only one available.

The drive to the hospital had been relatively silent, but I couldn't argue about the support he'd given me. My dad surprised me by holding my hand while the doctor had taken the rods from my leg.

He was trying.

We still had a lot of ground to cover, but it was actually looking good. I just hoped he could find a way to be on speaking terms with Seth.

"I did not wail!" I protested, nudging Seth.

He handed me the lotion, pulling a strange face that basically told me to back off. I knew him too well. The conversation ended there, leaving my stomach churning with both anxiety and annoyance.

It was my dad that eventually spoke first. He cleared his throat and patted me on the shoulder.

"I better go. I...um...proud of you today, son."

I froze, stunned at his words. My mouth hung open, as I stared at him and nodded. Seth snickered and shook his head.

"Playing it well..."

"What?"

"Your dad. He's playing the role well."

He stood up, pulling his cell from his pocket and tapping away on the keypad.

"Seth, don't be like this. He's trying."

"Maybe. Look I'm going. Jake's home and we were gonna go eat."

I nodded, understanding the need to be with that perfect person.

Damn, he was right. I was a sap.

"I'm not ditching you. I just need..."

"I get you, Seth. Go tumble in the sheets, but do it quietly. I don't want my ears to bleed from the cowboy roleplay again, OK?"

Seth snorted.

"I'll be back later. You gonna be good, stumbling around here on your own?"

I nodded, wagging my cell at him.

"Gonna call Bella."

He grinned, waved and left, leaving me in a very quiet apartment with an extremely sore leg. I was about to dial Bella when her face flashed onto my screen, and I couldn't stop the huge grin that spread across my face. My heart pounded fiercely against my chest, as my body longed to be with her.

"Hey there, baby. You missing me so soon? I promise my complete attention this weekend."

There was a small laugh, but no words were spoken.

"Are you teasing me? Do you want me to talk dirty to you, Bella?"

"How do you talks dirty, Eddie?"

"Fuck!" I snapped, realizing immediately what I'd done. "Sorry, princess. I thought you were your Momma. Don't go telling her I said that word again, OK? I'm bad and I'll take a time out for it."

Gracie giggled again, making my smile grow.

"Is your Momma there, sweetie?"

"She's with Aunt Ali. They're drinking that fizzy gross stuff and laughing. They're rolling around on the floor."

"Oh? Are they excited?"

I got comfier on the couch, trying to turn my leg underneath me, but stopping when I winced.

"Aunt Ali had her silly net thingy ons her head, and Momma tried her pretty princess dress on, but fell over in the shoes. Grandpa Charlie keeps shaking his head at them. He had to give me a bath 'cause Momma couldn't stop laughing. Aren't they silly, Eddie?"

"Sure are, Gracie. So did you try your dress on?"

I listened to her chat about nonsense for the next twenty minutes. I hated talking to her on the phone. I wanted to see the expressions on her perfect little face, and feel her excitement as she vibrated with it. She was a tiny ball of happiness, and her mere presence made me smile.

I still had no idea what to do with her, but then Gracie seemed to do the directing so it wasn't really an issue.

She began telling me about her last day at school before she went to Disney with her Daddy and Ali. I closed my eyes, letting her chatter ease the ache I felt whenever I wasn't with Bella.

It was getting ridiculous how much I pined for her.

"...So Lisbeth called me a liar! I'm not a liar, am I?"

"No, princess. You ignore her. She'll be sorry when you get back home with all that Mickey stuff, right?"

"Yup-"

"*Graccciiiiieee...who're you talking to?*"

"Eddie. I called Eddie to tell him that you an Ali are silly!"

There was a muffled mumble, before Gracie said a quick goodbye. A man's voice - Charlie? - told her to go to bed and he'd read her a story, shortly after Bella came onto the phone, giggling just like Gracie had said she was doing.

"Hey, baby. Having fun?"

"Kinda. I've had far too much to drink and have no idea how I'm gonna walk in those heels tomorrow. How long have you been talking to Gracie?"

"'Bout a half hour," I sighed, her voice feeling like balm to my needy heart.

"Sorry, she shouldn't have called you."

"No need to apologize. I like talking to her. I've missed her," I admitted, wishing she was with me.

"I miss *you*." Bella muttered.

I quirked a brow, trying to reason with myself that she was drunk. Declarations meant shit when intoxicated. But no matter what I said to myself, it wasn't working. I was still getting excited over her small admission.

"I packed some very naughty panties for our week of fun, you know?"

Her words slurred slightly, but it didn't matter, I got what she was trying to do. I just wasn't about to dirty talk on the phone with a drunk who wouldn't remember it tomorrow.

"You need to sleep, baby. Go," I stated, smiling.

She grumbled, but agreed.

"I'll see you tomorrow for the wedding. I'll have a little surprise for you. Night, Bella. I love you."

"I love you too, Edward."

My jaw hit the floor, at the same time my heart stopped, but by the time I had formed a coherent thought all I could hear on the other end of the line was the dial tone.

Bella had hung up.

Fuck.

/ FE \

I hadn't slept a wink.

All night I kept replaying those three words that had tumbled from her lips.

I wanted to believe them, because they made me wanting to stand on the street and scream to the world that my girlfriend loved me. I kept repeating that she'd been drunk, but my heart wouldn't listen.

I was in love. Head over fucking heels. And my heart refused to believe that Bella didn't mean it.

I just had to get her to say it again.

I'd taken my time getting dressed, wanting to look as good as possible for her. I'd kept it simple: black pinstripe pants, with a white button down and thin black tie, and even though I didn't need to get there until after the ceremony I was ready and waiting for my ride by one.

I took a single crutch with me, but fully intended on standing without it, if only for a few moments while I showed Bella. She'd be annoyed, because she'd wanted to be there when the frame was removed. But, on reflection, and given just how much pain I'd been in, I'd made the best choice. She didn't need to see that.

My nerves were getting the better of me, as I entered the reception room, and after scanning the room and seeing no one I recognized I was about to step back out.

"EDDIE!" Gracie bellowed.

I turned to see her racing towards me, her blond curls bouncing and her face alight with happiness. Her adorable silver bridesmaid dress floated around her ankles, and her little basket was tossed aside as she held her arms out to me.

"Hello, princess," I smiled, lifting her up and kissing her forehead.

I rested my hip against the nearest table, feeling my leg protest but refusing to put her down.

"Aunt Ali is now kinda my Momma Ali now, you knows?"

I blinked, trying to wrap my brain around her little declaration. However, she didn't pause a moment before she continued.

"Momma says I don't call Aunt Ali Momma, though. She's still Aunt Ali. Isn't that funny, Eddie?"

"Um, yes?" I replied, hoping I got the right answer.

"Ali bought me Mini Mouse ears for on the plane. How cool is that?"

"Awesome!"

I winced again, trying to adjust her on my hip, when I heard a low gasp. I broke my gaze with Gracie and met Bella's.

My heart began to beat double time, and swelled to three times its usual size.

She was mesmerizing.

Her hair was piled up extravagantly, with random curls escaping the tiara. Her shoulders were bare; the strapless silver satin showing off her creamy flesh. I smirked when I saw the high heels Gracie had alluded to in her call last night. I had to admit though, her legs looked amazing in them, and my crotch was responding.

"Gracie! Get down! Edward can't have you climbing all over him." Bella scolded.

Gracie kissed my nose, and wiggled until I placed her on the floor. She waved as she skipped off in the direction of the dance floor.

"You got it off," she whispered, only taking one step towards me. "You never told me."

She sounded hurt. I was pissed at myself for making her feel that way; it hadn't been intended that way.

"I wanted to surprise you."

"Well, you have."

I took a step closer, placing my hand on her hip and trying to pull her close. She lowered her eyes, looking at my chest, but did come closer.

"You look beautiful, baby," I breathed against her ear, only to feel her shrug dismissively.

I cupped her chin with my fingers, tilting her head up towards me.

"What's wrong? I'm sorry I didn't tell you, but Bella, it hurt. Bad. And I didn't think you needed to see me like that."

"It's not that. It's...I said-"

"Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Bride and Groom, Mr and Mrs Whitlock, onto the dance floor for their first dance."

I fought an eye roll at the interruption, and shuffled us around so that I could sit. Bella tried to move away, but I kept my hold firm until she sat on my lap.

The song started, and we watched Alice and Jasper start to sway slowly to the music. I stroked Bella's neck absently with a finger, feeling her hum of acceptance.

So give me your forever.

Please your forever

Not a day less will do from you .

I brought my head closer, nuzzling her ear with my nose.

People spend so much time,

Every single day.

Running 'round all over town, giving their forever away

But no not me.

I won't let my forever roam, and now I hope I can find,

My forever a home .

She leaned her head closer to mine, and I whispered the next words of the song to her.

"So give me your forever. Please your forever. Not a day less will do from you."

"Sap," she giggled.

"I know, but you love it."

I closed my eyes, waiting for her to pull away. I'd resolved not to mention her drunken declaration, but my mouth had other ideas. To my surprise she didn't stiffen, or deny it. She stood, tugging me up and led me slowly to the dance floor. Alice smiled and waggled her fingers in a short wave, before resting her cheek on her new husband's chest.

My arms came around Bella's waist, hers around my neck. She chewed her lower lip a moment before she finally spoke.

"I never meant to say it, but the moment it came out I couldn't deny it. That's why I hung up on you. I'm sorry."

So give me your forever. Please your forever.

I squeezed her hips, hating how much she was fighting this. But then, all I could do to prove I was serious was to stick around.

I turned us around, twirling us across the floor and making her smile.

"I don't want you to say it again, baby. I'm not pressuring you. I'm here and all ears when you're ready."

She kissed my chin, her brown eyes wide and cautious, but she nodded, accepting what I'd said and mirrored Alice's earlier actions and rested against my chest. My leg began to ache, but I refused to be separated from her. I'd waited months for something as simple as this and wouldn't have it ruined now.

"I can't believe your frame is really gone. Is it hurting now?"

"Painkillers," I stated, placing my chin on top of her head. "I still have to go to physio, but it's looking good."

"Perfect," she sighed, before suddenly bursting into laughter.

Gracie pushed between us, standing on my feet and wrapping her arms around my thighs. I took a few steps with her, wincing each time I lifted my leg. Gracie didn't seem to notice. She was too busy sticking her tongue out at Bella; teasing her because she was dancing with me. Bella did see it though, and lifted Gracie from me.

"Sweetie, Edward's leg still isn't better. We have to be careful with him, so standing on his feet and getting him to dance with you isn't a good idea."

"Sorry, Eddie."

"It's OK," I said smoothing her hair. "I just need a little rest."

Bella helped me into a seat, and I tried to get her to sit on my lap again.

"No way. You need to be careful with that leg."

"Bossy! We have three whole days of R and R starting in only a couple of hours."

She hummed, cupping my face in her hands and bringing her mouth to mine. Her lips caressed mine slowly as she spoke.

"And I can't wait, but I don't want three days of you in pain."

I couldn't reply, because the temptation became too much. I kissed her languidly, my tongue dipping into her mouth and stroking hers tenderly. Her hand moved down to my tie, and she held it tightly as if it was the only thing keeping her from falling.

"Blergh! Why does everyone kissy kissy?"

We both chuckled, turning our attention back to Gracie.

"I thought you liked kissing?" Bella asked her daughter.

"Nope." She placed her hands on her hips and pouted. "And where is Seth? I needs him to dance with me!"

"You do not *needs* him for anything, Gracie. I told you Seth wouldn't be coming. You'll be leaving with Daddy and Ali soon, anyway."

"Anyhoodle."

I bit back a grin.

"What?" Bella asked utterly confused.

"It's *anyhoodle*. Seth told me so."

Bella groaned, waving at Jasper to get his attention, and then glaring at me.

"It's your fault."

I couldn't hide my smirk of amusement.

"Why?"

"I have no idea. He's your friend, so it's your fault."

I kissed her fiercely.

"I love your logic. I love you."

She kissed me back, uttering, "I know."

Jasper walked over, holding Alice around the waist. He nodded, shaking my hand and listening to Bella repeat Gracie's sass. I watched them all, amazed that I was a part of this very unique little family. Each one of them had put the little girl in the center at the top of their priorities, and even though it was unconventional, it was clearly working.

I actually felt proud to be involved in it, even if my role was small.

The next couple of hours flew by, and I managed another short dance with Bella before Gracie forced her way between us again. However, only moments later she ended up passed out on the small couch in the corner of the room. I had no idea how she could sleep through all the noise of the party. Jasper ended up carrying her to the car, and she started to cry when he had to turn her to strap her in. The sound of Alice screaming, "Mickey Mouse!" soon staunched the flow of tears, and after a few short kisses and hugs they were on their way, leaving Bella and I in the car park.

"How can I miss her already?" she questioned quietly.

I enveloped her in my embrace, rubbing her bare shoulders warm, and trying to soothe her upset.

"She'll have a blast, and you know it."

She tried to burrow further into my chest, shivering as the wind picked up.

"I know. I'm being silly."

We started to hobble over to her car, my leg protesting with each and every step. I yelped as I sat down, trying to tuck myself into the vehicle.

"You've done too much tonight. You should be resting."

I cringed as a wave of pain hit me again.

"Can we go to my place first?" I gasped a little. "I know the plan was to go to yours, but..."

"We can totally do that. Sure."

She started up the car, but didn't pull away. She was frowning, her hands gripping the steering wheel tightly.

"What's wr-"

"I love you."

My heart stopped, just as it had done when she was drunk, and I couldn't think of a fucking thing to say. I just gawked at her,

"I didn't just say it because I'd been drinking, that only gave me the courage." She looked me in the eyes, a small tear clinging to her eyelashes. "I love you, and I just thought I'd tell you that before we went away. I know you said when I was ready. I am."

I placed my hand on her knee, squeezing it and pulling until her body shifted towards me. My fingers walked underneath the silky material; the heat from her pussy almost singeing my skin. The front of her panties was wet, and I cupped her, never losing eye contact. My lips kissed her full lower one, before I sucked it into my mouth, grazing it with my teeth.

She moaned, thrusting herself further into my palm.

Every instinct I had screamed for me to take her; to claim her as mine, even though I knew she already was.

"Tell me again," I demanded against her mouth.

I stroked a finger across her when she didn't hesitate.

"I love you."

"Well, thank fuck for that! Now, get this car moving and we can really start to have some fun!"

She giggled and shifted her legs, as she started to drive off. I was just pleased she was focusing on the road, because that way she wouldn't see the pain etched across my face.

End Notes:
<p>Song was Ben Harper - Forever</p> <p>As always, clothes are on Polyvore.</p> <p>Thank you!</p> <p>xx</p>



[Back to index](#)

Chapter 21 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>No, you're not seeing things... this is an early update.</p> <p>Huge thanks to my beta, Maylin & Pre reader Elusivekoolaid. I adore you both.</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

BPOV

The breeze floated over my skin, stirring me from sleep. I blinked, gazing at the opened glass doors and the landscape beyond. The thin curtain floated in the breeze as I stretched; my muscles aching in the most delicious of places. They were the muscles that only hurt after a night of sex. A lot of sex.

I grinned at the memory, as my legs continued to slide against Edward's bare ones. He gave a low grunt, making me giggle, before he started to rouse. I twisted onto my side, watching him as he woke. His hair was stuck up in random spikes, and my hand lifted to smooth it of its own volition.

"Hmm," he sighed, quickly grabbing my wrist and dragging my body as close to his as possible.

I laughed, wriggling when his breath began to tickle my collarbone.

"Ticklish, baby?" he asked softly, his voice so gravelly that it made my pussy clench.

I squeezed my thighs, feeling the tightness of the muscles and moaned softly. His hand moved to cup my ass, kneading and stroking, until I wrapped my leg around his hip. It brought his erection into direct contact with my pussy, and I couldn't help but roll my hips against it.

"Mean," he groaned, and began nipping at my shoulder. "Unless of course you're ready for round two."

"Two? Seriously? This would be like, round five by my calculation."

"Meh, just numbers, Bella. Do you want me or not?"

I laughed loudly, as he wiggled his eyebrows playfully. The night's scruff marred his cheeks, and no matter how much I'd smoothed it, his hair still stood on end.

He was stunning.

I pushed him onto his back, straddling his hips and enclosing us when my hair fell forward in a dark curtain. He kissed my chin, scraping his teeth along the flesh.

"You seem to be stalling. Problem?"

I was a little sore, but my whole body was buzzing with desire for him. This was exactly what we needed; a complete reconnection. I'd never realized just how much I missed this until we'd gained it back. I actually felt carefree and...*in love*.

"Not stalling at all," I purred, pulling my hips from his, and circling them gently until he slipped inside of me.

We moaned in unison.

"Just waiting for the opportune moment."

His hands gripped my hips fiercely, pulling as I pushed.

"Fuck, baby. This...*fuck*, this!" He exclaimed.

I sat up, gazing down at him, as I rested my palms flat on his chest. It pushed him to the hilt, and my eyes fluttered closed as I reveled in the intrusion. His hands tightened on my hips, showing me he felt it too. He stilled only for a moment, before he growled low and began to roll his hips.

"Damn, you feel so good."

I hummed, trying to keep pace, as he sped up a little, but the position clearly frustrated him, because he flipped us over, blanketing me with his hot body.

"Kiss me," he demanded, but gave me little chance to act, as his lips crashed to mine.

It was instantly rough and passionate, and utterly all consuming.

I purred, as his hand cupped the back of my neck, holding me harshly to his mouth. Our tongues met, and Edward growled. His thrusts became short but fierce, and with each one we moved further up the bed until my head thunked against the headboard. Edward laughed, receiving a slap on his back from me.

"Sorry. It was funny."

He scooted us down the bed, and I gasped when he began sucking on my collarbone. His teeth grazed, marking the skin, but then he lapped at the flesh, soothing it. My hips bucked closer to him, as my fingers clenched in his hair.

I wanted more.

I wanted it faster.

I wanted it now.

He chuckled, and my skin tingled with awareness. His eyes dripped with lust; my nipples tightened in response and thighs tightened on his hips.

"What're you stopping for?" I asked, teasing him.

He licked his lips slowly and I shook my head in exasperation.

"So demanding. I should've known the second you strutted into the store."

I opened my mouth to protest, but he grabbed hold of my hands and raised them above my head, pinning them onto the mattress. I smirked at him, arching my back and silently begging for more of what he was giving.

He looked down at me, his green eyes glinting in appreciation as he drank in my breasts.

"Come on!"

His mouth came back to mine, effectively stopping my taunting. His tongue took mine, dancing deliciously, before pulling away, leaving me gasping for air and fumbling for coherent words.

"I fucking love you."

Again, I tried to speak, but he kissed me again, rougher, much more demanding. Teeth clashed and tongues swirled. He nibbled at my lips, but then he licked them better, just as he'd done moments earlier. All the while his erection pushed into my pussy, heightening my lust and taking me to the brink of begging. I began

to whimper and pull at his grasp, but wailed when he sat up, kneeling between my opened thighs, and letting go of my wrists.

"Don't stop now!"

He quirked a single brow.

"Say please."

"Edward!" I whined.

"Say *please*."

He nestled himself comfortably, stroking the head of his erection across my clit, and I had to grit my teeth to stop from snarling. He was an evil tease, but fucking hell, I'd forgotten how amazing we were together.

"Please?" I whispered, hating myself for giving in.

Edward chuckled, before moving his head to my breast and licking my nipple languidly.

"Oh...Oh, yes," I sighed.

"Yes?" he asked huskily.

I nodded, arching my back towards him. I wanted more and didn't need to ask this time, because he closed his lips around a nipple and sucked. I could feel the thundering of his heartbeat as it crashed against his chest.

Edward wasn't as confident as he was making out, and I adored that knowledge.

We were both panting now, needing more. It was a divine torture; his teasing of my nipples was sending little sparks to my pussy, making me wetter by the minute.

I was getting desperate, and the marks I was currently scouring into his back only underlined that.

"Please. Edward. Please!"

He hissed and licked at my lips, as he rocked his cock across my clit again. My thighs quaked when he traced his finger around my navel, but then moments later he ended my suffering by reentering my sex.

I blinked as I saw stars, on the brink of exploding, and he only added to it when he placed his thumb on my clit. I shuddered, pushing my hips up to him. He was still kneeling, and opted to pull my hips towards him, rather than lie over me. My ass was elevated, giving him full view of my naked body, but I wasn't embarrassed. I knew it turned him on.

I knew *I* turned him on.

I moaned, meeting him thrust for thrust, as he watched his erection enter me. That was arousing me as much as his thumb was. He knew just how to tip me over the edge. He knew the exact thing that would get me to beg.

Edward's eyes fixed on mine. His dark lashes casting shadows across his cheeks. I gazed back, licking my lips seductively, but all the air left my lungs when he lifted his thumb to his mouth, licking it slowly of my juices, before placing it back on my needy clit.

"Fuck!" I yelled.

My scream made him pump faster, and grip my hips tighter, tugging my lower half closer to him. All the while his thumb teased my clit. I began groaning and writhing against him, and I could hear his breaths

coming in short, sharp pants. Our bodies were slick with sweat, slapping against each other as we fucked harder. Faster.

My whole body began to buzz with electricity. My orgasm was racing towards a peak. I could sense Edward was ready too. His thighs began slamming harshly against me, as he pounded into my body.

All it took was one final swirl on my clit for me to scream out. The sound ripped through my throat, as I snarled loudly. I wasn't the only one screaming, because Edward's came only moments later. He flopped on top of me and buried his face into my neck, growling softly. His erection pulsed, and his orgasm took him into his own ecstasy.

"Fuck," he groaned, rolling off me but pulling my back to his chest.

I began to giggle, my toes still curling from the most amazing morning sex of my life.

"If that was funny, then I didn't try hard enough."

I apologized, and tried to stop my amusement. His hands continued to ghost across my sensitive skin, as we lay entwined together, listening to our breathing slow.

I adjusted slightly, wincing when I moved my legs.

"Sore? Sorry, baby."

He moved his hand to my face, holding my jaw and turning it towards him. He kissed my lips softly, his tongue dipping in once, to gently slide against mine, before breaking apart. I hummed, turning so that I could meet his gaze.

"How's the leg?"

"Ergh. I woke up a couple of hours ago to take some pain killers, and they're still working right now but ask me again in a while."

He palmed my ass again, tugging me as close as he could to his body. He stroked his nose across my forehead, sighing when I began to comb my fingers through the back of his hair. His eyes fluttered closed, as he leaned fully into my touch.

"I missed this," he sighed.

"I missed *you*," I admitted.

"It's been a roller coaster, right?"

I gave a short laugh and kissed his nose.

"I never expected anything more than a quick fuck, so to be here eight months later is a little shocking in itself."

"We're doing OK, though," he stated rather than asked, squeezing my ass playfully.

"Looks that way, doesn't it." I grinned smugly at him, feeling my chest swell with emotion for him. "Are you planning on keeping us in bed all weekend?"

"No."

Edward shook his head firmly, kissing my forehead and moving to sit on the edge of the bed. He ran his fingers through his hair, and shot me a crooked little grin.

"There's still the shower, the pool and that rug by the fireplace to try out."

I snorted, and picked up my cell.

"I'm gonna call Gracie, and then we can have some breakfast."

Edward nodded, strolling from the bedroom completely naked. My mouth salivated at the sight of his muscled ass, and a loud sigh slipped from my lips. He clenched them in a cheeky little dance before disappearing from view.

I smiled, dialed Jasper's number and tried to put the image of Edward's limp out of my mind.

/ FE \

"Bellllaaa!" Edward shouted from the pool.

I rolled my eyes, checking my tiny bikini in the mirror before stepping out onto the porch.

Edward was in the water, lounging against the far side, his arms stretched out across the edge. The sun was shining down, giving his hair faceted highlights, but almost as soon as I noticed he slicked it back with a wet hand.

"How is she?" he asked, cocking a brow.

"I didn't speak to her," I replied sadly. "She was sleeping. I talked to Alice, who was excited enough for them all."

"Try later," he almost demanded.

I frowned at the firmness to his tone.

"You miss her already, and I hate to see you sad. Call her later; it'll make us all happy."

"I shouldn't really interrupt, after all it is their honeymoon," I reasoned, walking around the pool towards him, and feeling the sun warm my exposed skin. "Maybe I should just leave them alone? Gracie would ask if she wanted to speak to me."

He huffed and shook his head.

"Besides the fact that I'm not staying here with you if you don't speak to your daughter soon, I don't think Jasper would ever expect you to leave them alone. The honeymoon is at Disney for fuck's sake! Disney!"

He made me smile, and the baffled look on his face made it grow wider.

"It's a very Alice place to go, and Jasper will do anything for her. It's kinda sweet."

Edward's hand shot to my ankle, wrapping his fingers around it and staring up at me. His eyes were fierce, scaring me a little and I wondered what I'd said to cause such a reaction.

"I'd do anything for you."

"Edward, I-"

"No. There's no need for you to be envious of what they have, baby. I'd do anything to make you happy. I love you."

I dropped down, sitting on the edge of the pool and dangling my legs into the water beside Edward. He turned, parting my thighs and stepping between them, as my hands instantly went to comb into his hair.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean for you to think I was jealous. I'm not. It's just that for so long I've watched them with each other, wondering whether that could've been me if I'd tried harder with Jasper."

He shook his head in denial.

"You and I both know that would never have been you, and it wouldn't have worked. You're meant for me," he purred, dazzling me with his smile.

I tugged his hair, mirroring his expression as my heart swelled with love.

"You really are so cheesy. Will that ever stop?"

"I doubt it," he confirmed, placing his hands on my hips and lifting me into the water.

His lips met mine, as my feet touched the bottom of the pool. It was a slow, seductive kiss, and one that really did make my knees weak. His tongue caressed mine, as his hands moved to the tie on the back of my bikini top.

I pulled away slightly, eyeing him warily.

"What do you think you're up to, Mr. Cullen?"

"There's no one but us here, so no need for the formality," he shrugged.

My laughter echoed off the side of the house, as Edward removed my top, tossing it across the water. It was only then that I realized he was naked.

"See. You don't see me dressing for the non-occasion."

I pushed at his chest, only to have him grasp my wrists and pull me to his body. My legs wrapped around his hips, feeling the press of his erection against my bikini bottoms, but his face grew solemn again.

"Can I ask you something?"

I nodded.

"I want the truth, OK?"

This time I gulped and nodded.

"Are you happy with me?"

"Yes!" I replied, kissing him quickly and feeling the anxiety dissipate...that was until I saw his expression was still serious.

He took my hands in his under the water, his fingers toying with mine.

"It's just that...Shit! I hate feeling like this."

"Like what?"

"Insecure," he whispered, confusing the fuck out of me.

I lifted our hands to cup his face, and as my palms flattened against the stubble his hands covered mine. I wasn't exactly sure where this was coming from, but I wasn't going to let him feel this way. He looked sullen, and as cute as he was when he was pouty it made my stomach sink.

"You have nothing to feel insecure about. I'm here with you because I want to be, and because you make me happy, Edward. What's really wrong?"

"I've said it a few times now, but...well, you don't and I never thought I'd be this damn needy but I am. Seth would be splitting his sides laughing right now."

"Is that all?"

His hands moved slowly along my arms, leaving goosebumps in their wake. He skimmed them down my torso and cupped my ass, holding me close to him. He didn't reply, and I knew he was waiting for my response.

"I'm sorry, but you can't guilt me into saying it. I *do* love you, but would it mean more if I said it a hundred times a day? I won't always say it back, but then neither will you. I want you to know I mean it every single time I say it."

He groaned audibly, and his fingers flexed on my ass.

"I've fucked up, haven't I? Shit, I'm sorry. I have no idea what I'm doing-"

"Edward, I love you. Now shut up and kiss me" I interrupted.

"Would I make it worse if I asked you something else?" he questioned sheepishly.

"Depends..."

"When was the last time you cried at night, baby?"

I relaxed, laughing loudly as I pushed away from him. I swam across to the other side of the pool, and waited for him to follow me. He charged after me, the water almost creating a wave from the force of his strokes.

I squealed when he closed in; his smile taking on a sinister edge.

"I recall you playing chase before, and I also remember catching you."

"In more ways than one," I muttered, folding my arms around his neck as he embraced me.

His nose glided along my cheek, and he made me shiver when he whispered into my ear.

"Are you going to answer my question?"

"I haven't cried in months."

I pulled my head back, so that I could see the look in his eyes.

"I have no need to. I have you, and you make me very happy. Thank you."

Edward rocked his hips against mine, looking at me through hooded eyes and crooned, "Care to thank me another way?"

"You can't be serious?"

"Deadly. I told you we had to try the pool out, and since you're naked."

I was about to protest that I wasn't, that I still had my bikini bottoms on, when he pulled at the ties and whipped them off. I squealed, and tried to get away from him, but he had me caged in. His arms bracketed my body, as they held the edge of the pool, and when his teeth began to nibble on my shoulder and along my collarbone I gave in.

"Are you planning on devouring me?" I breathed.

He gave a maniacal laugh, flashing his teeth at me and saying in a rather odd accent, "I vant to suck your blood."

"Vampires? Seriously?"

Edward shrugged, "Why not? The Mythology aisle will always be our special place, baby."

The rapture that he exuded had the words spilling from my lips and clearly made his morning.

"I love you so fucking much, Edward."

"Good!"

"But at the risk of repeating myself, shut up and kiss me!"

He grunted as he pounced, and before long the pool had been thoroughly tested.

End Notes:
<p>I know nothing much happened, BUT they needed one HOT reconnection, Yes? Yes?</p> <p>HUGE thanks to everyone who voted in the Golden Lemon Awards. First Edition was crowd Best CockBlock!</p> <p>Thank you for reading!</p> <p>xx</p>

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 22 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:

Hey!

Huge thanks to my beta, Maylin & prereader Elusivekoolaid.

SM owns all things Twilight.

Bpov

"I don't want to go home." Edward sighed, as we walked hand in hand along the beach.

We'd been out for dinner, and he'd decided on a midnight stroll back to the cabin. He held my flip flops in his hand. A small action, but for me it was huge.

Edward was holding my shoes.

It was like high school when a guy you liked held your books. It was perfect.

"I know. It's been wonderful," I whispered dreamily.

I gazed out across the ocean. It was a stunning azure blue during the day, but the night made it appear like a sea of black ink. The wind was picking up, making me wish I'd brought a jacket. My long floaty skirt billowed around my ankles, and the sides of Edward's shirt flapped at our hands because he'd left it unfastened. That sight alone had made me salivate.

He must've seen my shiver, because he wrapped his arm around me, bringing me into the warmth of his body.

"How long before the princess is back?"

"Another week. I'll be home alone," I pouted. "But at least that means I can reorganize a few things at the store."

"Charlie?"

"He's back in his own house, so it's just me."

He lifted my hand to his lips, kissing each finger quickly.

"Don't you like being alone?"

I shrugged.

"Never really been in the house without anyone. I moved there when I was pregnant, so there's always been either Jasper or Gracie...and then Charlie."

"Well, all you needed to do was ask! Consider yourself no longer alone."

He wiggled his brows playfully, and I tossed my head back, laughing loudly.

"If that's all it takes for you to move in I can see I'll have to watch myself."

I was joking, but Edward's face became serious. I chose to ignore it. I was not going to have that kind of conversation here, and it needed more thought than that.

I wasn't sure when I'd want it, but it was definitely not now. Distraction always worked best when it came to Edward, and I knew exactly what would do that.

I stopped walking, and placed my hand through the open sides of his shirt, onto his bare chest. I looked him in the eyes, as my fingers flicked over his nipple, across his abdomen and towards the top of his pants.

A lazy smile began to tease his lips, when I popped the button open.

"I know what you're doing, Miss Swan, and I won't stop you because I'm actually liking the path you're choosing. However, I will be bringing the conversation back up, just so you know."

Again, I avoided it and pushed my fingers into his pants. He gave a guttural groan, and pushed me down onto the sand. I giggled, as my back hit the gritty ground, but it swiftly turned into a moan when his lips met my neck. My fingers delved into his hair, holding him close and keeping his lips connected with my flesh.

"Edward!" I gasped, his tongue skimming below the edge of my tube top. "I don't think..."

"Hmm, yes don't. Switch that brain off and just feel, baby."

I whimpered, as he cupped my pussy over my skirt.

"Here?" he asked.

I nodded slowly, his gaze fixed on my tits, and I knew there was no going back.

It was definitely going to be here.

He licked his lips, before lowering his head and placing his mouth on my nipple over my top. I hummed as excitement coursed through me. He swirled his tongue, slowly slipping it below the hem of my top, and eventually lapping at my taut nipple. It felt amazing being this way with Edward. I hadn't been expecting this when I'd entered the store on my *Jasper day*, but I wouldn't change it.

Edward was now a huge part of my life.

His tongue was gently stroking my breast, swiftly making my thoughts disperse. His hand trailed down my neck, his fingers replacing his tongue. He rolled my nipple gently between his fingers, watching my reaction to his touch; a touch so feather light it made me shiver. I caressed the planes of his back underneath his open shirt, reveling in the heat of his skin under my fingers. I pushed at the fabric and tried to drag it up his body, needing the skin on skin contact. Edward groaned as we broke apart to rip the shirt from his body. He tossed it onto the sand, and was back seconds later, his lean torso blanketing mine.

"Oh, Bella," he crooned.

I smiled up at him, smoothing his hair back from his forehead, and kissing his lips softly. However, I wasn't going to give him all the power, so I turned the tables, rolling us over so that he was the one with his back on the sand. He gave a grunt, but that halted in his throat, when I took hold of my top and pulled it over my head. I threw it towards Edward's discarded shirt and placed my hands on his chest. I heard him moan as he drank me in, his eyes glinting with lust. His thumbs stroked my skin, where they grasped at my hips.

I moved down his body, eventually straddling his knees. Edward watched, as I undid the zipper on his pants and ran the back of my fingers down his erection.

"Are you certain?" I smiled down at him.

He glanced up, chuckling, "Bella, there isn't a hope in hell that I'm stopping now."

"Even though anyone can catch us?"

"Jake did that day in my garage," he pointed out.

"That feels like so long ago, doesn't it? We've been through a lot."

He nodded slowly.

"But we've gotten through it all. I guess we're destined."

A huge grin spread across my face; my fingers teasing him out of his pants. He groaned as I ran my fingers up and down his cock, feeling him quiver underneath me. I didn't take hold of him; I wanted to tease, but Edward was eager. His hands were moving underneath my skirt, and his fingers toying with the edge of my panties.

I gulped audibly, the only other sound encroaching on our lust was the gentle lapping of the sea against the beach. I felt a bit silly in the skirt, but we were on a public beach and this way there would be a small amount of modesty. We never broke eye contact, and it made me shudder with anticipation.

He moaned as his fingers skimmed my pussy, and I tossed my head back, moaning. I pushed against his hand, feeling him slip between my folds.

"Fuck," he snarled, continuing his strokes.

I took hold of his erection, enjoying the smoothness of his skin. It was like velvet; the tip was glistening with a droplet of his cum. I leaned forward and gently licked it, and instantly felt Edward's hand in my hair, as he let out a strangled, "Bella."

My eyes met his, as I licked at the head again.

"Fuck, baby!"

I laughed, but didn't respond. I lowered my head taking his cock into my mouth, tasting his salty arousal. His groan was so guttural it made my pussy clench. I hummed, swirling my tongue around his rigid length and sucked gently, eliciting noises of approval from him. My nipples were stroking against the hairs on his legs, and it only intensified my lust. The wetness of my own arousal was rubbing against his shin, as I rocked against him. I began moving my mouth tortuously up and down, wanting him to groan louder. I loved the power I felt when I took him in my mouth. It was addicting.

I ached with desire now, desperately wanting him inside of me, but also wanting to continue pleasing him. My tongue stroked the full length of him, humming and gaining a strangled, "Bella."

I released his erection, our eyes still locked together. His cheeks were flushed and he was biting on his lower lip, almost painfully. His hands moved to link his fingers in mine, as I shuffled further up to straddle his hips. My skirt billowed around us, hiding the sight of our intimate connection. His cock pushed against my pussy, demanding entry, and all it took was one swirl of my hips for him to fill me.

We both stilled, his fingers squeezing mine, as incoherent whimpers spilled from his lips.

"Oh Christ, baby," Edward moaned, and I whimpered in response.

I could already feel the embers of my orgasm building, and it stunned me. Unable to hold back anymore, I began rocking against his hips. I needed the friction. Our fingers remained linked the whole time, along with our eyes.

We were connected in every way. It was so intimate, so beautiful that I couldn't hold the words back even if I'd wanted to.

"I love you."

He grinned, mouthing the words back at me. I felt complete.

He tugged on my hand bringing my torso into contact with his. I kissed his lips fiercely, savoring his taste, as we continued to move in unison. He pushed repeatedly into my body easily, my arousal evident. It made me hiss and whine in pleasure.

I began grinding my hips faster into his, as he bucked back. All the while, our eyes and hands never parted.

"Bella," he said huskily.

I nodded my head, still lost in his vibrant green eyes.

"I love you."

My heart pounded with his declaration; it always did, and the more he said it the more I was accepting it. I adored this man, and I was getting the sneaky suspicion I always would. None of our relationship had been conventional, but it was working for us, and I was starting to want it all.

Everything, including the white picket fence.

I rose up, bringing him with me, as I pulled on his hands. I wrapped my legs around his hips, my ass resting in his lap. It felt so intense being connected to him in this way; he filled me completely. I kissed him urgently, nipping at his lower lip, as he hissed, while thrusting harder into me. I was losing control, and I couldn't hold on much longer; my stomach was beginning to spasm with each thrust. I peppered open mouth kisses down his neck, and back up along his jaw. I loved his jaw; it was so sharp and chiseled, with just a smattering of stubble.

"I'll miss you," Edward muttered through gritted teeth. He was close too. He continued to piston into me and grunted with the force.

"I'm not going anywhere," I panted.

He sighed, "You're going home. Without me."

He sounded so sad, and yet was gritting his teeth, holding his orgasm at bay.

"Don't, Edward. Not now. We'll talk, OK?"

He nodded, lapping at my bottom lip and thrusting his skin tingled and I began to shudder.

"Oh...yes..."

"Bella, I..."

We came together aggressively, each of us finally breaking eye contact as we were consumed by a great burst of light. Our screams spilling out into the isolated beach, our heavy breaths mingling with them. My skin was on fire, my chest was heaving. I could feel his erratic heartbeat against my skin. We were both covered in sweat, but I couldn't move.

I wanted to stay here in his arms.

I focused on his heartbeat, and the gentle way he was stroking my back. Each time we came together like this it became more intense, and I'd now lost so much of my heart to this man that I should be scared.

But I wasn't.

I was going to give this relationship everything I had, because we deserved it. *I* deserved it.

It had taken me far too long to see this as permanent, but now I felt foolish. I'd known it was different, but my insecurities had always gotten in the way.

"You OK?" Edward asked.

I kissed his nose, smiling and nodding.

"More than OK. I guess I had an epiphany of sorts."

I smoothed his hair from his forehead, watching his eyebrow cock. I adjusted my position in his lap, already feeling my muscles protest.

"Can you trust me? I promise to tell you about it as soon as I can. I just need a little time," I continued.

"Will I like it?" he hedged.

"Yes. Totally."

"Then I'll wait, but not too long. I'm needy."

"I realize that!" I laughed.

"Only with you!" he protested. "I was never needy before you."

A crowd of people walked past, laughing, and Edward did his best to keep my nakedness hidden from them.

"We better go," he chuckled, reaching out for our discarded clothes.

We dressed quickly and silently, and it was only when he slipped his hand back into mine that I confessed, "This has been amazing, Edward. I don't want it to end."

He hugged me close, telling me he felt the same, before tugging me back towards our cabin for our last night alone.

/ FE \

The journey home was a sad one, neither one of us wanting to say goodbye to our little haven. It was strange how a few days away could change so much.

Because it really had.

I still had a few things to sort out, and that was why I was reluctant to talk to Edward about it at the moment.

I groaned internally when I pulled up outside my house, because my father's car was parked outside. I knew I'd have to introduce them to each other at some point, but I wasn't intending for that point to be today.

"Is that your dad?"

I nodded, climbing out of the car and tried to hide a grimace.

"Should I be afraid?" He linked his fingers into mine. "He has a gun, right?"

I swatted his stomach, watching my dad carry a small box down the steps.

"Hey, Bells."

He placed the box on the ground, holding out his hand for Edward to shake.

"Mr. Swan." Edward nodded, shaking my dad's hand.

Awkward.

"I'm assuming you're Edward, since my daughter seems reluctant to introduce us."

"Dad!" I interrupted, but he ignored my protest.

"How's the leg?"

Edward looked down, pointing at a couple of scars just below the hem of his shorts, near his knee.

"Still not quite right. Just gotta be careful, Sir."

Charlie gave a low huff.

"I was one of the ones that dealt with the aftermath. Did Bells ever tell you that?"

"No." Edward frowned, glancing at me.

"I didn't think it was relevant, and we didn't even know it was you to begin with," I shrugged.

"Um, so did you guys have a good time? Have you heard from Gracie?"

I gestured towards the house, and only answered his question when we were sitting in the living room.

"I've spoken to her a few times. She's having a blast. As for us, well, it was fun."

Edward chuckled, running a solitary finger along my thigh and leaving goosebumps in its wake.

"Huh uh. I can see that."

I scowled at him, but he didn't comment further.

"And how was the wedding? Jasper finally married off then?"

"Dad! Jasper and I were never meant to be together like that. So now he's married, can you stop?"

"I can now I see you're happy."

"I was happy before," I protested.

Charlie shook his head.

"No you weren't, but that doesn't matter now. This guy's put that sparkle back in your eyes."

I grumbled. Edward knew I hadn't been happy before. He knew I cried at night, but I was pretty sure my dad had no idea, and I wanted it to stay that way. He didn't need the real truth of just how lonely I'd felt.

Edward took my hand in his, lifting them to his lips and kissing my knuckles. Charlie shifted uncomfortably, but smiled before standing up.

"I didn't mean to interrupt. I forgot a few things when I moved back home and came to get them. I'd hoped to be out of here before you got back."

I stood and hugged him, whispering thanks in his ear.

"No thanks needed, Bells. Just keep that smile on your face and I'll be happy. As for this guy..." he point at Edward. "He knows I have a gun, right?"

"Sure do, Sir." Edward nodded, shaking my father's hand again.

My cell rang, and I moved to the other side of the room so that I could talk.

"Hello?"

"Momma!"

My heart melted at the sound of my daughter's excited voice.

"Hey, princess. Are you having fun?"

"Yes! Ali gots me a dress that makes me pretty like Ariel."

"Wow! I can't wait to see that. I miss you, baby."

"I miss you too, Momma. Can I talk to Seth?"

I laughed into my cell.

"He's not here. I'm at *our* house, Gracie..."

"Then cans I talk to Eddie?"

I turned, watching as my dad patted Edward on the back and left.

"Erm, Edward? Gracie wants to talk to you."

He virtually skipped towards me, taking the phone from me and grinning as he said, "Hello."

From that moment I could only hear one side of the conversation, and it seemed as if Edward was being guarded. I wondered what they were cooking up, because there was definitely something going on.

I watched how animated he was with my daughter, unable to stop the sigh of contentment that slipped from my lips.

"Ok, Gracie, see you soon."

He stalked back to me, passing my cell back. She was shouting at Alice when I placed it back against my ear.

"Gracie, is everything OK?"

"Ali was playing smoochy with Daddy. Ergh!"

I giggled. She was adorable.

"Ah, all right, princess, I'm going to let you go back to having fun, but I wanted to ask you something first."

"What, Momma?"

I turned, and walked into the kitchen. I needed to be alone with my daughter to discuss this. I took a deep breath, knowing this could change so much, and mustered the courage to speak.

"I need to talk to you about, Edward."

End Notes:
<p>HUGE thank to everyone that's still reading and reviewing.</p> <p>Muah!</p>



[Back to index](#)

Chapter 23 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:

Ooo another early one!

**HUGE thanks to my wonderful beta Maylin, and my awesome pre reader
Elusivekoolaid.**

I love you both!

SM owns all things Twilight.

EPOV

"You'll need to stretch a little further, baby."

I stood back, eyeing up my girl, as she tried to hang some promotional decorations from the ceiling of the store. I felt a little cruel not helping her, but I was enjoying the view far too much. Each time she reached a little higher her top rose up. My mouth salivated at the sight of the pale flesh on her stomach. I knew exactly what it felt like to run my nose along that very piece of skin; knew what it tasted like because I'd run my tongue across it so many times.

I was torturing myself with the memory of how amazing it was to nuzzle that soft skin. It'd been a week since we'd returned from our wonderful weekend away...and a week since I'd had her to myself.

I hadn't even seen Gracie.

That first night alone in my bed had been torture, and I'd barely slept at all. I was turning into a female – so terribly needy when it came to my girls. Jasper would probably hate that term, but that was how I saw them now.

I loved them both.

"I know what you're doing!" she giggled, balancing on the ladder.

"I cocked a brow.

"And that would be?"

"You're perving, Edward Cullen."

"Uh huh," I nodded. "You don't normally complain."

She took hold of the hem of her top, licking her lips, before adding, "Who's complaining?"

The size of my smile made my cheeks hurt, and I leaned on the counter at the exact moment she lifted her top and flashed her breasts at me. I gawked, as someone gasped, and we both turned to see Seth in the doorway.

It could've been worse.

"Sugar, those are a fine set of tits, but if you haven't realized it yet, I prefer a different kind of appendage. You get me?"

I snorted. Seth certainly had a way with words.

"Are you eyeing up my girl, Seth?"

His face became serious for a second, but the glint in his eyes gave him away.

"Didn't you just hear me, E? I like stiffies!"

I feigned a shocked expression and a gasp of surprise, holding my chest as if he'd really stunned me.

"I...I just don't know what to say. All those years. All those lies! Why Seth, why?"

Bella climbed down the ladder, giggling.

"You guys as so childish."

She came to stand beside me, placing her arm around my waist and her hand on my ass. Seth tossed me a set of keys and winked at me.

"Was it OK?" I asked him, kissing Bella's forehead.

"Yeah, it's out front. Nice ride."

I nodded, feeling Bella tense next to me.

"You bought another bike? Are you serious?"

She pulled away, her eyes flaring with anger.

"You bought another bike?" she repeated when I didn't reply.

I was tempted to tease her, because she was incredibly sexy when she was angry, but Seth was about to spill it anyway.

"No, baby, I didn't. I bought a car."

This news seemed to shock her more, because now her mouth hung open.

"You bought a car?"

I nodded, placing my hands on her hips and pulling her close to me. I stroked my nose along the side of her face, inhaling her scent and reveling in the proximity of her body. She still vibrated anger, but as her arms circled my neck I slowly began to feel it disperse.

"You bought a car?" she repeated.

"Yes. I did. I take it I did the right thing," I breathed against her skin.

"B-but you loved that bike..."

"I did, but I thought a car would make it easier for us. Besides, I can get a less expensive bike and use that when my leg is fully healed."

Her hands toyed with the hair on the back of my head, as she kissed my chin.

"What do you mean us? I already have a car."

"Maybe I don't want you to drive all the time. Maybe I want to take Gracie out on my own. I couldn't take her on a bike, could I?"

"You'd want to take her out alone?"

This conversation was getting annoying. It was a series of cautious questions, because both of us were unsure of where we were heading. I was tired of the baby steps. I kissed her nose, and confessed, "Yes, I want to spend time with her. I love her too. The car was the best decision for us all."

Her lips met mine at the exact moment Seth spoke.

"Well, as adorable as you two lovebirds are I have stuff, or rather *Jake* to do, so I'll be off. Remember...you have customers! Toodles."

We both waved, but were locked tightly in each others' embrace. I barely heard the bell tinkle above the door as he left.

"You're a wonderful man Edward Cullen."

"Nah," I shrugged. "Just in love."

Her lips crushed against mine and moved in a slow, delicious dance. I shoved her against the far wall, pushing my hands underneath her top and skimming my thumbs across her cotton covered nipples. She groaned, her knees giving out, before she pulled away.

"I want to, fuck me, I want to, but the store's open. Rain check?"

"Hell yes, baby."

I kissed her quickly one last time, and then went to make coffee. It gave me time to talk my erection down.

I didn't think people purchasing books would like the added extra.

/FE\

The rest of the day seemed to drag, but whenever I'd tried to kiss Bella, or steal a quick grope, she'd avoided me. I began to worry, even though she'd seemed excited about the car there appeared to be something on her mind. She seemed even more distracted after a muffled conversation on the phone to Gracie. I'd tried to ignore it, but it wasn't easy.

I told myself I was being stupid when she asked me to dinner. It was just going to be the three of us, so clearly I was imagining her avoidance.

We closed the store together, and walked towards my new car. Bella seemed impressed with it, especially the little pink booster seat for Gracie that I had Seth purchase earlier. He'd also gone a little crazy and bought her a glittery lilac seat belt cover, and a headrest to match. Seth was all about the overkill.

I'd let her take the wheel and drive it around the block, but I'd insisted on driving back to her house. I was glad it wasn't too far, because my leg started to ache as we pulled up in her driveway.

The house had been deserted, and so as we walked into the living room, I decided to take my chances and pulled Bella towards me by the collar of her jacket. She licked her lips in anticipation; her tongue moving slowly and leaving her lips slick and inviting.

I pushed her harshly against the wall for the second time today, capturing her sharp exhale of breath in my mouth. Her fingers delved into my hair, pulling at the strands and moving my head where she wanted it. I ended up devouring her neck, and desperately trying to lift her so that I could align my cock with her pussy. She wasn't complying though; her feet staying firming on the floor. I gripped her thigh, tugging on it lightly, but the most I got was for her leg to fold around my knee.

She was giving me mixed signals, and I didn't know which one was real.

"What's wrong?" I gasped.

"Nothing."

I frowned at her, knowing with certainty that I wasn't imagining our earlier interaction at the store.

"I call bullshit, but you're not gonna tell me, are you? What've I done wrong?"

"You..."

"I'd much rather you just tell me. That way, I can apologize and we can move on."

"You haven't done anything," she shot back, pushing past me and shrugging off her coat.

I watched her as she threw it onto the couch and walked towards the kitchen. I stared at her, wanting way more than she was fucking giving.

"I just have a lot on my mind, Edward, and Gracie will be here any minute. I don't think my father and daughter will be very happy to find you grinding up against me. Do you?"

"You never seem to care when it's in the store," I spat, regretting it as soon as the words left my mouth.

Her eyes darkened with annoyance, but her tone was civil when she spoke.

"I'm gonna pretend I didn't just hear that. There's a huge fucking difference between customers and my family, and you know it."

The silence was deadly, as she started to prepare the spaghetti for dinner. I stood near her, not exactly sure what I should be doing. I was positive if I offered to help that she'd shoot me down, but if I didn't offer she'd be irritated that I'd just stood watched her.

I couldn't win.

But I couldn't leave things like this. I didn't want us to argue about nothing, because that's what we were doing, and it was pulling other subjects into the angry vortex. It was down to me to stop it, as I was the one that had started it. I walked towards her while she chopped an onion. She was swiping at her eyes with the back of her hand and sniveling. I stood behind her, wrapping my arms around her waist and resting my chin on her shoulder.

"Are we having our first real argument?" I asked softly.

She gave a short snort, but continued to chop the vegetable.

"Baby, I'm sorry, but it feels as if you have something to tell me but you don't know how. It's like you're avoiding something."

"You're imagining it," she replied shortly. "I have nothing to avoid. I told you I have things on my mind, and I really don't want Gracie walking in to find us fucking against a wall. You can't expect me to drop my panties whenever you feel the urge."

I stepped back, letting my arms drop to my sides.

"That's unfair."

She shrugged, and needing a little space, I went into the living room and sat down on the couch. Did she really believe I was that shallow? That the only thing of interest to me was sex? I thought that I'd been more than clear on where I wanted this to go.

Moaning, I rested my elbows on my knees and threaded my fingers into my hair. I replayed the day, wondering where everything had gone wrong.

That was when I felt her.

She was kneeling before me, and about to wrap her hands around my wrists.

"I'm sorry," she sighed. "I really do have something on my mind, but that doesn't excuse the way I've been with you."

"It hurts, Bella," I confessed, meeting her sad brown eyes.

"I'm being a moron."

She kissed my forehead lightly, and tried to get me to stand. I moved grudgingly.

"I promise to confess all when Gracie has gone to bed, OK?"

I nodded, still reluctant to let it go, but I had to once the front door opened and Gracie burst into the room.

"Eddie!" she cheered, hugging my legs. "Grandpa Charlie took me shopping. I got a new dolly. She has pink hair!"

I grinned, any anger I still held quickly fading with her appearance. Bella kissed my cheek, giving my hand a quick squeeze and then started to walk back to the kitchen. I stopped her, bringing her back to me and kissing her lips – telling her we were good again.

"Gracie, you forgot your jacket...Oh, hi, Edward."

Charlie filled the doorway, Gracie's jacket in hand. I nodded at him in greeting, still trying to admire Gracie's new doll. I could see he felt somewhat uncomfortable by the way he started shuffling on his feet.

"Are you staying for dinner?" I questioned, hoping to ease the situation a little.

Today had been one huge fuck up, and I wanted a do over badly.

"No. I'm going out myself. Gotta game."

"Game?"

"Bowling," he added.

I bit back a small smile, nodding.

"Erm, well I'll be going then." He kissed Gracie. "Nice to see you again, Edward."

"Don't you want to talk to Bella? She's only in the kitchen."

"No, it's fine. I've gotta go."

With that he left.

Gracie was chattering, walking her new doll across the floor.

"Erm, Bella, your dad just dropped Gracie off," I yelled, hoping she could hear me.

She stepped out of the kitchen, wiping her hands on a cloth and scowling.

"Didn't he stay?"

"No. He saw me and said he was going *bowling*."

Bella laughed loudly, tossing her head back and opening her mouth.

"What?"

"He has a date. He always says that when he's around her. I have no idea why. It's not like Gracie is sheltered – her dad's married to my best friend!"

"True."

"Gracie, go and wash up. Dinner will be ready soon."

I stood, following Bella back into the kitchen and offering my help. The atmosphere didn't seem as fractured, and we worked in unison, plating up the food and taking it to the table. I felt a little better as I took my seat facing Gracie.

Bella placed some garlic rolls onto the table, Gracie immediately reaching out to snatch one. She giggled and shot me a cheeky little smile. It was as if I was her partner in crime. I could admit, being around her still scared me, because I usually had no idea what I was doing, but it was getting better.

"Help yourself, Edward. If you don't then this little monster will eat them all." Bella smiled, taking a seat next to me.

I took hold of her hand, bringing her knuckles to my lips. She gazed at me again, that strange look on her face she'd given me earlier. It was starting to scare me, and as much as I tried to ignore it, I couldn't. The apprehension made my stomach heavy, and I wished she'd just spit out whatever it was on her mind.

"Is your leg better now, Eddie?" Gracie asked around a mouthful of bread.

Bella sighed, and asked her to finish chewing before she spoke. I nodded, kissing Bella's hand again and grinning.

"It's much better, princess. The vacation with your Momma helped."

"Did you see my pictures? I had breakfast with Cinderella!"

Her face was alight with happiness, her cheeks rosy with her excitement. I loved this little girl; from the moment I'd met her she'd captured my heart, just like her mom.

"I saw them!" I replied, with just as much passion. "You looked like you had a lot of fun."

Gracie began to jabber on about her time with Jasper and Alice, as I watched Bella pour some wine into our glasses. Her hands were shaking, confirming even more that there was something going on here. I hated feeling this anxious and needy, but I knew there was a reason for this meal...and it wasn't to catch up.

I opened my mouth to speak, as Bella sat down, but I didn't get the chance to say anything.

"Can I ask, Momma? Can I?" Gracie bounced.

Bella frowned, before exhaling loudly.

"Gracie! I told you to wait."

She twisted in her seat, looking me directly in the eyes. She was upset, or at least I assumed that was the reason for the unshed tears. Was this what she was struggling to tell me? My stomach sank, knowing it must be bad if it was causing tears. She wouldn't break up with me in front of Gracie, though. Would she?

"Bella?" I croaked.

She took my hands in hers, and swallowed.

"I love you."

"I know, baby. I love you too, but you're scaring me. I don't want us to argue, and today has sucked because of it."

"It's OK," she breathed, squeezing my hands. "I'm sorry; I never meant to scare you. I've gone about this all wrong."

It did nothing to calm my frayed nerves.

"I wanted to ask you before now, but as it's so important I needed to speak to Gracie. I thought of it whilst we were on vacation, but again, I needed to wait for Gracie."

"I don't..." I started, confused.

"I think it'll be better coming from Gracie."

She smiled, turning to look at her daughter, who was grinning excitedly. She was clearly desperate to ask me something. I reasoned that if it was coming from her, then it couldn't be as bad as I was thinking. I held my breath, and tried to keep all my assumptions at bay. I prepared myself, even though I wasn't sure what for...but I could've never been ready for the words that left Gracie's lips.

"Eddie? Do you wanna live here with me and Momma?"

My jaw virtually hit the floor, and my heart stopped beating.

I was completely floored.

However, my brain quickly caught up, and within seconds I was screaming, "Yes!"

End Notes:
<p>Aww cuteness.</p> <p>It's no surprise to most of you that the next chapter is the last. There will be a short Epilogue too.</p> <p>Thank you so much to everyone that's still with me and this story.</p> <p>xxx</p>

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 24 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>Hello, well this is the last chapter - though there is an Epilogue that I'll upload tomorrow.</p> <p>All my thank you's will be at the bottom.</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight.</p>

BPOV

"You shouldn't be carrying that," I snapped at Edward, as he hobbled into the house, huge box in his hands.

He pouted but handed the box to me. I'd always thought his loft seemed empty, but the boxes kept arriving.

It was moving day.

The day Edward became a real part of my family.

Gracie hadn't stopped talking about it for the last three weeks. She'd systematically started to reserve things for him. A special plate, a specific mug, and at one point, a fork was even set to one side. I'd drawn the line at that, and reminded her that Edward had his own utensils. It didn't stop her, because only this morning, I found more bits and pieces all placed on a bottom shelf in the kitchen. It was encouraging to see her so excited about such a huge change, but from the moment I'd asked her about it she'd been on board. Gracie loved Edward, and the only stumbling block had been the fact that she wanted Seth to move in too. There had been no consoling her the night I'd told her that wasn't possible.

Edward had placed the loft up for sale, but he'd decided he wanted to move in before it was bought. He wanted our life together to start as soon as possible, so today was that day and I was struggling to keep a lid on my own happiness.

I'd been cautious telling Jasper, but he'd hugged me tightly, whispering into my ear. He'd said he was sorry, and at first I didn't understand what he was apologizing for. I braced myself for an argument with him, but the anger never came. That's when I comprehended what the sorry was for.

His apologies were no longer necessary. If he hadn't have fallen in love with Alice, then I'd never have met Edward. Everything had happened for a reason...no matter how painful it had been at the time.

"I'm the man of the house now," he teased. "And I should be allowed to carry my own damn boxes."

"Really? What if I told you that if you ended up in another frame then I'd leave you."

"Ouch! Harsh, but effective. The boxes are yours, baby."

I put the box down, and placed my hand on his forearm, stopping him from walking away.

"I just don't want you hurting yourself again. I worry about you, and hauling all of those boxes in here isn't going to help your leg. It's still healing, Edward!"

He pressed his forehead against mine, and his hair flopped forward, tickling my nostrils. I scrunched my nose, as he stated, "I love you."

I snorted, pushing at his chest.

"Do you think those sorts of endearments are going to make me change my mind?"

He kissed my lips quickly and pinched my ass.

"Maybe."

"It didn't work," I retorted, trying not to smile. "You're relegated to the floor."

His eyes bulged, and I bit my lip.

"Gracie has her jigsaws out and needs someone to help out. I'm reconsidering that thought, though."

"Why?" he sighed, standing upright and placing his hands on his hips.

"They may be a little *old* for you."

"You're such a tease."

I dropped my tone a little, tracing little paths with my finger across his chest.

"But that's the way you like it, and if you're a good boy and stay off that leg, I'll show you just how rewarding a tease can be in the end."

He hissed, but I caught a glint of heat in his stare. My skin began to burn under his scrutiny. I started to long for Gracie's bedtime, but then felt mean for thinking such things. The whole issue of spending time with Gracie and Edward was going to be a juggling act. But I knew we were going to do this. Everything was finally slotting into place.

"Damn, I love it when you talk dirty."

I turned, making sure to wiggle my ass a little, as I smiled over my shoulder.

"I know."

He gave a low chuckle, and went to sit down with Gracie. I was fairly certain he wouldn't try to help again, so I went outside to see if I could help Seth and Jake.

I stepped out onto the porch and looked over to the where they stood at the back of the van. Jake was tickling Seth, making him wriggle and howl with laughter. I giggled, stopping where I was. I didn't want to interrupt their little bit of fun. However, as I watched I saw it turn. It went from funny and carefree to intimate and loving. Seth's arms wove around Jake's neck, and Jake stopped his little torture, placing his hands on Seth's ass. They hugged tightly, before Jake began to pepper Seth's neck with kisses. He grazed his teeth down the fleshy column, Seth exposing his throat, silently demanding more.

It was beautiful to watch, and it was exhilarating to no longer feel envious when I watched two people in love. I was just happy for them both.

"Voyeur!" Seth shouted, as his eyes fixed on mine.

I smiled and started to walk across to them, noting that they barely separated.

"You know how much I like to watch you," I purred.

They both chuckled, knowing I was just playing along.

"So, how'd you get Priscilla to stop lifting boxes?" Seth asked.

I shrugged.

"Offered him sex."

"I'll have to remember that." Jake whispered into Seth's ear.

"It worked. He's currently playing with Gracie. What else do we have to move?"

"Nada. All done. We were just tossing for who's gonna drive this piece of crap home."

Seth wagged his brows as he declared that, making me snort at his choice of words. Everything was an innuendo to him, and he was never dull to be around.

"Are you guys still coming over for dinner tomorrow. You know my dad will be there, right?"

"Does that mean no groping?"

"It sure does," I agreed, watching Seth's eye flicker to look behind me.

At the exact same time, the hairs on the back of my neck stood on end and Edward's arms wrapped around my waist. I sighed, as his chin rested on top of my head and his musky scent surrounded me.

"You're all moved in, Eddie. Sure you don't wanna change your mind?" Seth asked.

Edward hugged me tighter, stating, "Positive."

I tried not to focus on the way his breath floated through my hair, because I could already feel my nipples bud from his proximity. I remained silent, as they all talked about the loft, the store, and the new motorcycle Jake had bought. Edward never let me go, nor did I want him to. I relaxed into his arms and reveled in the moment.

Jake was kissing Seth goodbye, when Gracie came charging from out of the house.

"Eddie!"

"What's up, princess?" he responded, letting go of me to pick my daughter up.

"You said you'd only be a minute! You've been gone ages!"

"Sorry, sweets. I was just saying goodbye to Jake and Seth."

She frowned, tilting her head and looking at Seth.

"Are you going home?"

Her tone was sad, as she pouted at Seth.

"I have to go, Little Miss Gracie. But I'll be back tomorrow. We're all having dinner, remember?"

She looked from me to Edward, and then to Seth, before saying, "Can Seth sleepover?"

I rolled my eyes; she'd been trying everything she could to get Seth in the house, but Edward dealt with it very well. He placed her back onto her feet and lowered himself down to her level, before speaking to her.

I remembered his fear at the start of the relationship. He'd been certain he'd be useless with a child, and yet, I'd never had to teach him a thing. He'd been so receptive to Gracie, right from the beginning, and that had been the start of my changing feelings.

How could I not fall for a man that fell so easily for my daughter?

I watched as he explained why it wasn't possible for Seth to move in, or even sleepover, and this time, Gracie really did seem to understand.

"As much as I adore watching this fine example of a modern American family, I need to go."

Edward stood, hugging Seth close.

"See you tomorrow?" he asked.

Seth slapped his ass playfully and kissed him.

"You're damn right, hotness. Now go and play house."

He kissed me and Gracie, before walking over to his car. Edward stopped him as he was about to open the door.

"Hey, Seth? I love you, man."

Seth's grin was dazzling.

"What's not to love?"

We all started laughing, Edward bringing both myself and Gracie into the warmth of his body.

I supposed moving days didn't all have to be sad.

/ FE \

The rest of the afternoon was taken up with unpacking Edward's boxes, and trying to find space for his possessions. By the time Gracie was snuggled up in bed I was exhausted. I showered and was gazing at the bed longingly, while I dressed in some simple leggings and a tank.

I walked downstairs, taking note of how differently the house looked already. It even smelled different, which was intriguing. Edward had only been living here a few short hours.

I stepped into the living room, as Edward was exiting the kitchen. He held a glass of red wine in each hand, and smiled warmly as I approached.

"Feel better now?" He asked, quirking a brow.

I nodded, taking both the glasses and setting them aside so that I could hug him. I wound my arms around his neck and brought his mouth to mine in a searing kiss. I could taste the sharpness of the wine on his tongue, and stroked mine against it, demanding more. Edward gave a low growl, toying with the hem of my tank, as he dotted small kisses along my lower lip.

"Gracie sleeping?" he whispered.

"She sure is." I paused. "Care to christen your new home, Mr. Cullen?"

The right side of his mouth lifted, as he pulled away. He began slowly unbuttoning his shirt, and my pussy began to throb as I watched his fingers tease the little discs from their nooses.

"Edward, we'll still have to be quiet," I warned.

The room seemed to be getting warmer, and my skin started to tingle.

He took his shirt off completely and tossed it aside, adding, "You better keep your mouth busy then," before he pounced, kissing me fiercely.

He pushed me up against the dining table, my thighs pressing into the ledge, as his body came into contact with mine. His fingers were pushing up my tank, and stroking the underside of my breasts.

I sighed, pushing my chest closer to him, and wanting more from his touch. He slowly released me from his soft lips, and uttered, "This needs to go. Now."

He didn't need to ask twice. I was about to remove it myself when he shook his head. The butterflies in my stomach went wild, as he lifted it over my head, leaving my breasts naked for his perusal. I shivered, but it wasn't from the cold, and I felt my nipples pucker in response. I raised my hands up to his face, feeling the coarse stubble under my touch. He rubbed back, his eyes focused solely on me.

"Edward, aren't you tired? It's been a long day."

"Are you turning down sex with me, baby?"

I shook my head, skimming my thumb across his lower lip.

"Turn around, Bella," he demanded, his jaw setting hard.

I blinked in surprise, but clenched my thighs at his drop in tone. I slowly did as he asked, placing my hands on the table, and sticking my ass out a little. He began to place kisses along my shoulder and up my neck to my ear, it was enough to have me grinding my ass against his crotch.

I heard him gulp, as his hands came around my waist, pushed at my leggings and slid them quickly down my legs. I shimmied out of them, knowing the movement was causing him a delicious discomfort. His hands touched the skin of my thighs, and eventually palmed my ass. His lips remained at my ear, making me shiver every time his hot breath caressed the skin.

"I want you, baby."

I bit my lip and continued to grind against him.

Edward traced a finger down my arm, leaving goose flesh in its wake, as he repeated, "I want you. Hard."

I whined.

He cupped my breast, weighing it in his palm. I moaned as his finger flicked across my erect nipple. "My cock is aching from your little sounds. Tell me you want me."

I nodded, and he quickly spun me around, picking me up and sitting me on the table top.

He started to unbuckle his belt, and I could see his hands shaking. He couldn't get them off quick enough.

It made me giggle, and lightened the intensity a little. Edward lowered his jeans to the floor and kicked them off, looking at me through hooded eyes. His smirk was wolfish and made me swallow thickly. He came forward, gripping my hips and moaning. I brought my lips to his in a slow kiss, however he had other ideas and began sucking on my lower lip, his tongue sweeping across the swollen flesh. He let go, but before I could steady my breathing, he swooped and took my nipple in his mouth.

I squealed in surprise. He was making me squirm, lust flooding my entire system. The smooth surface of the table gave me no friction, and I was desperate for my release.

I lifted my hands and threaded them into his messy bronze hair, gripping it a little too tightly.

"Edward, please."

He ignored me and continued his torture of my breasts; licking and nipping at the sensitive flesh. My groans were coming louder, and I held his hair tighter. I felt him wince a little, and he teased my fingers open, before standing upright and rubbing his head.

The air around us crackled, and I couldn't help but tease him.

"Edward, I thought you wanted me *hard*."

His mouth claimed mine and stopped any further words. His hands cupped my ass and he pulled me to the very edge. I open my legs further, my silent invitation, and he stepped in between them, his cock resting against my wet pussy.

I stroked my hands up and down his back, and he hummed into my mouth, making me grind my hips towards him. We finally stopped tormenting each other, and his tongue entered my mouth at the same time his cock slid into me.

We both moaned in desire. When Edward was inside of me nothing else mattered, my only thoughts were of him and the sensations he caused.

My nails began to dig into his shoulders, as he rocked us fiercely. He thrust into me harshly, making me shiver and purr in pleasure. I was gasping for air now, and he only made it worse when he moved his hand and started to stroke my clit. My orgasm began to build quickly, and I felt my stomach begin to clench, my skin tingling.

Edward was watching me as he pushed himself to the hilt, filling me completely, and he gritted his teeth. I knew he was close. He started to pound harder, faster as the sound of our heavy breathing, and skin slapping against skin, filled the room.

My incoherent words were turning into screams, and I could hear Edward grunting as he pushed himself harder into me.

"Uh...Edward, please!" I begged; we were both so close to our release.

He began to tremble, as he rested his head in the crook of my neck, whispering words I couldn't decipher.

My pussy began to clench around his cock, as the white heat of our orgasms enveloped us both, making my ears ring and our breathing shallow.

Edward began to kiss my collar bone, and I giggled with each touch of his lips. I was very ticklish now; my skin hypersensitive.

"Baby," he said, his voice hoarse from the orgasm. I lifted my hand and cupped his face. "I thought you said we needed to be quiet."

"You didn't allow me to keep my mouth busy," I complained. "You were too busy pounding me into next week."

"Problem?"

I grinned. "Not at all."

"I love you," he stated, kissing my lips slowly.

"I love you too."

He kissed me again, as he lifted me off the table and tried to set me on my feet. My legs were wobbly, and I had to steady myself by resting a hand on his chest. He was sweaty from the exertion, and the flush to his skin was adorable.

"A bit unsteady there..." he pointed out, smirking.

I burst into fits of laughter, bracing myself on his body as I leaned down to pick up some clothes. The first thing I grabbed was his shirt, and shrugging I quickly put it on. Edward walked into the kitchen, bringing out a cloth and pointing to the floor.

We'd smashed a wine glass, knocking its contents across the floor and I hadn't even heard it.

"Fuck, you look sexy in my shirt."

He moved in front of me, lifting his hands to smooth the collar. "You hair all messed up and you're wearing my clothes. I love how you look after I've fucked you."

I groaned again, leading him over to the couch and snuggling down with him. The cleaning up could wait. I wanted to enjoy our first night here together.

We kissed and stroked, each of us coming down from our lusty high.

"I love you, baby. From the moment you walked into the store that day, you've turned my world upside down. You've given me things I never knew I wanted, but I do now. I want it all, and I want it with you."

I cupped his face in my hands and kissed him.

"You restored my hope, Edward..."

"I know," he sighed.

"I love you."

We sat in silence for a short while, and I knew we were both remembering that day.

The day where it all began.

What started out as sex had developed into love. All because I decided I wanted more.

I wanted the man in the bookstore...and now he was all mine.

A good book has no ending. ~R.D. Cumming

End Notes:
<p style="text-align: center;">Awww, bless them!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I have so many people to thank it's not even funny!</p> <p>Firstly, to my support team, Maylin (my beta) and Elusivekoolaid (my fic wife/bestie & prereader) I cannot thank you enough for everything you do for me. I love you both with a passion, and wouldn't want to do this with anyone else. THANK YOU!</p> <p>HUGE thanks to RoseArcadia for the banner and Twi thread. Chica, you beautify the fandom like no one else.</p> <p>To bitemypillows, who started the ball rolling with this fic, because she bought the one shot for the FGB.</p> <p>...and to every single reader & reviewer! You guys are awesome, and I appreciate each comment you leave far more than you know.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">THANK YOU!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">XXX</p>

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 25 by lambcullen

Author's Notes:
<p>This is it...the end/the beginning, depending on how you see it.</p> <p>THANK YOU!</p> <p>SM owns all things Twilight. ME? Another completed story.</p>

Epilogue

EPOV

"Hotness, you need to fasten your top button, otherwise your tie won't sit right."

"I can't, Seth. It feels like it's choking me."

He came to sit beside me, patting my knee and resting his head on my shoulder. I hated wearing suits. They always felt so restrictive, but I had no choice today. Not unless I wanted half of my family to publicly disown me.

"You don't need to be nervous, babes." Seth tried to soothe.

"I do! I've never done this before. I'm scared to death."

Seth snorted but didn't say anything further. He just continued to stroke my thigh and allow me the time to calm down.

There had been so many changes during the last year; changes I was still growing accustomed to. But Seth had been there for me every single step of the way.

My leg was as healed as it was ever going to be, though severe cold made it ache, and heat made it swell. There had been an early set back, around the time I moved in with Bella, but it was quickly sorted out. I no longer had to make any allowances for a healing leg.

Obviously, that made my relationship with Gracie so much simpler. I could climb in the park again, and let her dance with me by standing on my feet, all without worry. Bella had also stopped worrying about my every action.

I knew she only did it because she cared, and because she didn't want me to re-injure it, but there were times when I wanted to scream. I'd felt so inadequate.

Bella had stayed with me the whole time.

She'd been my tower of strength, and it was no wonder I'd fallen head over heels for her.

I woke up with her in my arms every morning now, and every day my first thought was what a lucky bastard I was. I hadn't thought that today, though...

She hadn't been with me.

Last night I'd stayed at Jake and Seth's loft.

It was startling how used to Bella's company I'd become, because the moment I had to sleep alone I was lost and lonely. I'd ended up calling her at one this morning and the most unbelievable thing was, she was awake too. We'd talked until we were finally both sleepy. I'd ended up cradling the phone as I slept.

I would forever be a sap when it came to that woman.

The only stumbling block we'd come across in the last year had been Jasper. The issue hadn't even been with us, it was all down to his own insecurities. He'd wanted to know exactly how it was going to work with regards to parenting Gracie. I'd been pissed, and had wanted to scream, but Bella calmed everyone and had snapped that it worked the same way it did for Alice. Jasper still wasn't happy, and as proud as I was that Bella hadn't buckled at his question, I'd been angry for days that he saw me differently to Alice. So when weeks later the topic was raised again, I lost it with him. I'd demanded to know why he had an issue with me, when Bella didn't have one with his wife. We'd ended up snarling and shouting for an hour, before we finally worked through his shit. And even months later he still tried to argue if I chastised Gracie in front of him. I'd grown to ignore him, and Bella was certain that in time he would adapt.

I was more certain than ever that he just wanted his cake, and to be able to eat it too. However, I was used to his stupidity, and now just wrote it off. His outbursts were minimal now anyway.

On the whole, life was far easier than I'd previously suspected it would be.

"Eddie!"

Seth and I both looked up to see Gracie enter the room. I grinned, taking in her scarlet colored bridesmaid dress. It matched the ties both Seth and I wore, and the flowers in her basket were the same shade too.

"What's going on, Princess?" I asked, picking her up and sitting her on my knee.

"Momma wants to know what's going on. She's getting im...im..."

"Impatient?" Seth asked.

"Yup. That's what she said. She looks pretty, Eddie."

"I bet she does." I sighed. "Is she outside?"

"She went to go potty. She said she felt sicky."

I winced, standing up and placing Gracie back onto her feet.

"You go and find her. Tell her I'm coming, OK?"

She nodded and started to skip towards the door, but halted before she exited.

"Oh, Sethie? Jake said I had to tell you that he loves you. Ergh!"

She cringed, and then stuck her tongue out at us both.

"You're all so icky with your kissy kissy."

And with that she left.

I turned to Seth, taking in his rather jittery movements.

"I better go and find Bella. She's been a little nauseous all week."

Seth nodded, but moved closer to hug me.

"Can I just say a couple of things?" I nodded, allowing him to continue, but half my mind was on Bella. "I just wanna say that I know this isn't real. I know I'm not really marrying him, but to me – to *us*, it is. I never thought I'd ever find that one person that made me smile every single day. I fucking adore him, Edward. I thought I loved Peter, but that didn't even come close to the emotions I feel when I look at Jake."

"I know how that feels," I sighed.

"I know you do, but I want to say something to you too." He paused, placing his hands on my shoulders and looking me directly in the eyes. "I love you, man."

I snorted.

"Feeling the love today, aren't you?"

"It's my wedding day!" he laughed, hugging me close.

I kissed his cheek, squeezing him tightly.

"I love you too, even if you are a drama queen. Now sort yourself and go marry your man."

We hugged one more time, and started to walk out of the room.

"How are you liking being a dad, hottie?" Seth asked, patting me on the back.

I frowned, wondering where the question was coming from.

We walked from the room, and I saw Bella at the end of the hallway. She was dressed in the most beautiful ruby red strapless dress, her hair piled high on her head. I could see how pale her skin had become, sickness making her pallor chalk white.

It worried me.

"Erm, it's great...why?"

He snickered, "You'll find out soon enough, and all I have to say is good luck."

We embraced one last time, before he went to find Jake. He was elated and was finally getting his slice of happiness.

He deserved it.

It felt like an end of an era, and a start of a new one, and I didn't really understand the feeling until I took hold of Bella's hand. She leaned in, her hand shaking in mine, and her next words made my world tilt on its axis.

"Edward...I'm pregnant."

Holy Fuck!

End Notes:
<p>Yes, that's it. No there isn't going to be a sequel.</p> <p>I'm gonna miss this fic...esp Seth (who now belongs to Risbee & 2LittleLadies apparently)</p> <p>xxx</p>

[Back to index](#)

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