REPOST Bella has been Dr Carlise Cullen Nurse for several years. He announces that his sons will be joining his practice. Bellas first meeting with Dr. Edward Cullen is a huge disaster. Things aren't always as they appear. AH cannon couples Rat

Practice makes perfect take two

by

mathisson

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On: 2/24/2016
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This story is dedicated to the most amazing cheerleader on the planet...ERCommando...you so rock! She was entirely responsible for the title for that I could not come up with and it took her all of thirty seconds...so this one is for you my friend!

Bella Swan is a strong, independent woman who has worked her ass off to get where she is. She was able to secure her current job as a respected nurse for Dr. Carlisle Cullen, Chief of Staff, through hours of excellent service and dedication to her job. Dr. Cullen announces his sons are returning home to expand his practice. When she's first introduced to Dr. Edward Cullen, it's a colossal disaster. Can she look past his playboy persona? Can she prove to him she's more than just another nurse? What happens when you let your guard down and allow yourself to feel? Bella soon discovers that things aren't always as they appear and learns that "practice makes perfect."

Prelude

One year.

A lot could happen in one year. A baby could be conceived and born, a year of school completed, a house could be built. And last but not least, you could lose out on the man of your dreams.

I stared intently at my half-empty wine glass, swirling the crimson liquid I had poured myself earlier before taking another sip. I buried my face in my hands as I tried to forget the day's events. How could I have been so stupid? How could I have thought for one second he would feel the slightest bit of attraction for me that I clearly felt for him? Why couldn't I have just continued to hate him as I had in the beginning? Why did he have to be so perfect? And most of all, why did he have to be with her?

Grasping the glass in my hand and bringing it to my lips, I welcomed the burn of the wine down the back of my throat. I knew that after a while, the burn would be gone and so would the pain I was currently feeling. Tonight, I wouldn't think about him and his perfect Barbie girlfriend. I wouldn't think about his hands that were caressing her cute, perfect little body. I wouldn't think about his full perfect
lips devouring her pink, plump, perfect model lips. I wouldn't imagine his muscular arms, his absolutely perfect chest, or his chiseled abs that he kept hidden behind his Ralph Lauren shirts, or his eyes that reminded me of the rarest emeralds. Least of all, I wouldn't think about his thick, silky hair that I longed to run my fingers through. Tonight, I would forget all of that.

As I swallowed the last of my wine, I slowly sat the glass down on the table. One glass down, who knew how many left to go. Monday, I would wake up and go to work and act as if nothing had happened. He would never know how I felt.

The sound of my doorbell roused me from my pep talk to myself. I made my way to my front door, not really caring who it was waiting for me on the other side. It was late; a smart girl would have demanded to know who was on the other side. This girl just didn't care. As I opened the door without even looking through the peep hole, I froze. Just when I thought my night couldn't suck any further...there he stood.

"Bella, can we talk?"

Well...that was what I got for thinking.

As you can clearly see the perfect beta make all the difference!

2. Chapter 2

Practice Makes Perfect

Chapter 2 –

June 2008

Beep Beep Beep

Fucking alarm clock!

I would really love to meet the sadistic son of a bitch who invented that goddamn sound. I would punch his ass square in the balls. Monday morning and it was time to pull my ass out of bed. After taking a shower and brushing my teeth, I almost felt human again. It was a good thing I had time for coffee before I left the house. Trust me; it was just safer for the general public.

I donned my uniform and made my bed before venturing into my kitchen
for said coffee. With travel mug in hand, I made my way toward the door. As I passed my living room, I noticed a rather large lump sprawled across my couch. Apparently, Jacob had chosen to spend the night last night. He really needed to stop coming in unannounced. Jacob was, well...he was kind of my boyfriend; I needed more coffee before I could go down that road.

I made my way out my front door and into my car. For the past few years, I had worked as Dr. Carlisle Cullen's nurse. Dr. Cullen was my hero, he truly saved me. When I was six weeks from graduating nursing school, the State of Washington had just completed an investigation on our nursing program and had placed the program under suspension. The board advised all of the students who were about to graduate that if they could find a physician who would supervise their final clinical, they could graduate on time. My clinical partner, Jane, and I didn't have a clue what to do. We found ourselves in the stairwell at the hospital in hysterical tears.

Dr. Cullen, who happened to be taking the same set of stairs to another floor, found us there bawling. He volunteered to help us and after graduation, he offered me a job and Jane got a wonderful letter of recommendation. She accepted a job at Northwestern Memorial hospital in Chicago. His generosity didn't stop there, though. Every year, he bought Esme, his beautiful wife, a new Mercedes and he gave me her old one, and he also took care of all the costs associated with it.

My salary was way above the average for a private practice nurse here in Seattle. When I was able to buy my first house two years ago, Esme insisted on helping me decorate it. Esme owned her own design firm and gave me most of the furnishings I had in my house. Needless to say, when either of them asked me for something, I never questioned, I just did it. That brought us to today; Dr. Cullen wanted to meet me early this morning to discuss some news he and Esme had.

I pulled my car into my designated space and made my way to the back entrance. I unlock the back door, making sure to check out my surroundings. My dad was a cop, so I'd gotten this lecture countless times. One inside the building, I punched my code into the alarm pad and made my way to my office. I stowed my purse in my filing cabinet and fired up the office computers. I retrieved the messages off the machine and made sure nothing was urgent. I was making a fresh pot of coffee as Dr. Cullen made his way into the office. Before I could acknowledge him, the door opened and in walked Esme.

"Good morning, Bella."

Dr. Cullen was an extremely handsome man. His blonde, perfectly-styled hair and bright blue eyes were just the tip of the iceberg. He was also extremely kind. I had never once heard him raise his voice to
anyone, and Esme was truly the most beautiful woman to walk the planet. With her auburn hair, deep green eyes, and perfect body, they were a perfect match.

"Morning, Dr. Cullen, Esme."

Esme headed directly for me, wrapping me in a tight hug. "Oh, Bella, sweetheart, I've missed you. We need to have dinner together soon."

I loved Esme's hugs, they were warm and genuine and she smelled like sugar cookies.

"I've missed you, too, and you know how I feel about sponging off you guys."

I had been invited countless times to dinner at their house and had repeatedly refused. I just couldn't take anything more from them. I felt like I already owed them more than I could ever repay. They both knew this, but they still kept asking.

Esme gave me her standard speech about me being one of her children and I gave her my standard thank you.

We all made our way into Dr. Cullen's office; I had the coffeepot in hand as we settled into his office.

"Well, Bella, we wanted you to be the first to share our joy with us." The smile on his face was one of pure joy and Esme's was a mirror image.

"Bella, as you're aware, we haven't been able to accept any new patients in nearly two years. That's always bothered me."

Dr. Cullen was an amazing physician and I knew he had been hounded for years from other physicians wanting to join his practice, but he had always declined. I had never understood this, as I knew he had to stop taking new patients in order to keep up with his current load.

"Recently, I've been in negotiations with a few physicians that I have on good authority are the best in the country. They've agreed to relocate here and join me," his face lit up with a huge smile as he continued. "Bella, you know I don't speak of my family much. It's hard having my boys across the country. I miss them."

I knew they had three boys. I knew they hadn't seen them very much since the oldest had gotten married four years ago. Dr. Cullen never really spoke of his boys and I never really asked. I knew they were all adopted, as Esme was born without a uterus.

"My sons have all decided to come to Seattle. My boys are coming
home." The look of pride on his face was enough to light up the room, and I could have sworn I saw a tear slide down his cheek.

"Anyway, Bella, I'll need your help. We need to hire more staff and we need to get this place ready for my sons."

"Absolutely, Dr. Cullen. I'll get an ad in the paper, and since it's nearly time for graduation, we may get some good new nurses fresh out of school."

Dr. Cullen actually preferred to have someone who was just starting out; he said it was easier to train them to do things the way he wanted.

"We'll need to get announcements out to the community and make sure we have patients waiting for them."

I would need to get as much information about each of them as I could to put their profiles on the doctor search boards as well. I had no doubt we would have no trouble having enough patients for his sons given how busy we were. Dr. Cullen handed me an envelope with information on each of his sons. I opened the envelope and saw names and dates.

"My oldest son, Emmett, is a general practitioner, but he also does sports medicine. Jasper is my middle son and he's our OB/GYN, and my youngest son is Edward and he's a pediatrician. They're currently at Northwestern Memorial in Chicago and will arrive here in three weeks."

Three weeks? Was he fucking crazy? That was really cutting it close.

"No problem, Dr. Cullen."

I left his office and made my way to mine. I closed my door and slumped into my chair.

"Fuck," I said in a whisper.

I opened the envelope again and just stared at the names on the pages. The words began to blur as I continued to stare. Suddenly, it hit me.

I picked up my phone and called the one person who could possibly help me. The phone rang three times before she answered.

"Jane Volturi."

"Hey, Jane, it's Bella Swan."

"Bella, how the hell are you, beautiful?"
"Really good, thanks, and you?"

"Oh, babe, same shit, different day. To what do I owe the honor?"

"Well, I'm actually calling about a professional matter."

"Oh, well, then let me put on my professional panties."

We both giggled. Jane was the HR director and dealt with the credentialing of all the physicians and interns on staff.

"I need information on three physicians that you currently have on staff."

"Let me guess, Dr. Cullen's sons?"

"Yep, what have you got for me?"

"Well, let me just save you all the semantics and tell you that all the standard bullshit applies to all three. Now let me shut the door and give you the juicy stuff."

For the next forty minutes, Jane gave me detailed information on all three of Dr. Cullen's sons. I was impressed to say the least with Emmett and Jasper.

"Now, Bella, what I'm about to tell you is only rumor. I don't have a firsthand account, but I would be careful in dealing with Edward; he was voted the doctor with the best panty-dropping smile by my fellow nurses. Like I said, I don't know the details or even if it's true or not. I can tell you that he recently had a very bad breakup with one of the nurses and it caused a bit of a ruckus. Also, it's my understanding that Emmett just went through a very nasty divorce. Apparently, his ex-wife, Charlotte, cheated on him with a fellow colleague."

I thanked Jane for all of the information and told her I would pass her congratulations on to Dr. Cullen. I hung up the phone and tried to digest all the information she had given me. I decided to go one step further and typed each of their names into Google. More information popped up and I was even more impressed, this time even with what I read about Edward.

By the end of the day, I had placed an ad in the paper for three new nurses and two more front office workers and did a full write up on each doctor for the boards. I had all of the credentialing done and called it a night, locking up the office and making my way home.

When I reached my house, I noticed nearly every light was on inside. Fucking Jacob. I parked the car and made my way up the walkway and
into the house. Jacob had definitely been here. Empty beer bottles and takeout containers were scattered from the living room to the kitchen. The TV was still on and his dirty clothes lay abandoned on the floor. Fucking slob.

I made my way into my bedroom to change. As much as I loved my job, I could hardly wait to get out of my uniform at the end of the day. Tossing my dirty clothes into the hamper and slipping into my pajamas, I made my way back into the living room to begin the clean up.

Jacob and I had known each other since we were little. Our fathers had been best friends and thus we were shoved together at an early age. We were thick as thieves while growing up. I would honestly say he had been my very best friend. During my junior year of high school, Jacob decided we needed to be more than just friends and asked me to be his girlfriend. It was more of an honorary role, as we didn't change anything; we didn't kiss, hold hands, or anything else. The only difference was that all the other boys in town left me alone.

Jacob did eventually become my first kiss and he taught me how to play guitar. Things really changed when I announced I was headed to college. Jacob felt we should just get married after high school, but I wanted more for myself, not to mention I wasn't particularly in love with him. When I bought my house, Jacob just assumed he would be moving in with me. That assumption led to the largest argument we had ever had, and were still having two years later.

Honestly, Jacob was convenient for me. He didn't ask for more than I could give. When I needed a date to an event, he was there, when I needed my sink unclogged, he was there. There was no passion between us. In fact, in the ten years we had been together, I could honestly count on one hand how many times we had kissed. Again, he was convenient.

Two years ago when he quit his full-time job and started a band, he just assumed he could live off me. He made a whopping sixty bucks a week at a local bar playing with his band. I understood this was his dream, but come on; bills had to get paid somehow.

Jacob did give me one thing...his love of music. I grabbed my Ovation guitar and began to strum a song I had heard on the radio the other day. The words seemed to grab my attention, making me long to feel this kind of passion for someone.

If you only knew

I'm hanging by a thread

The web I spin for you
If you only knew
I'd sacrifice my beating heart
Before I'd lose you
I still hold onto
The letters you returned
I swear I've lived and learned"
It's 4:03 and I can't sleep
Without you next to me
I toss and turn like the sea
If I drown tonight B
Bring me back to life
Breathe your breath in me
The only thing that I still believe in is you
If you only knew
I did believe there was someone out there for everyone, and I had serious doubts that Jacob was that someone for me.

The next morning, I headed into the office to find fifteen emails waiting for me from the newspaper. I printed off all fifteen resumes and begin to set up interviews. I only had three weeks to hire and train these people. The first five were a total waste of time as it seemed they didn't even read the qualifications portion of the announcement. I had contacted the college and discovered that my search for some good nurses was a popular search, as I was the fifth office that had called looking. So with the remaining ten applicants, I began to set up times for them to come in.

My first interview was with a young lady that I instantly felt would fit in around here. Angela Webber had recently moved to Seattle and graduated from business school. She was currently working at a local bar as a waitress. I spent over an hour just talking with her and then decided to bring in Dr. Cullen. Angela was a very beautiful woman, dark brown hair with ice blue eyes. Her peaches and cream complexion was by far her best feature. I was hesitant with only one area, as she was single and I worried about Dr. Panty-Dropper making moves on my staff. Carlisle agreed she would be perfect to run the front office
and hired her on the spot.

That afternoon, I interviewed Alice Brandon; a nurse who had actually been working in a small town just south of here and had decided Seattle was where she needed to be. Alice was bursting with energy and I felt as if I had known her my whole life. Carlisle agreed and felt she would be perfect to work with Jasper. Alice was also able to give me the name of a close friend of hers that was also a nurse that might be looking for a better job.

The next several nurses I interviewed really rubbed me the wrong way and I told each of them I would get back to them. I was down to my last two interviews and had a huge headache. I wanted nothing more than to head home and soak in a hot bath with a glass of wine.

My next candidate was a bubbly girl named Jessica Stanley. She had just finished nursing school and was dumb as dirt. She was more interested in what the doctors looked like than what her responsibilities would be. In simple terms, she annoyed the hell out of me, so she just might annoy Dr. Panties. Carlisle was on the fence about her and we decided to sleep on it.

My final candidate was a girl named Bree St. John. She was a little gruff, but she knew her stuff around the office. Carlisle decided to sleep on the decision about her as well.

So, with Alice and Angela hired, I headed home to a hot bath and a bottle of wine. I just hoped that Jacob hadn't been there for me to have to clean up after again.

I really needed to put my foot down with him, or change the locks.

3. Chapter 3

Mrs. Meyer owns the toy box...thankfully she lets us play with her action figures!

Dollybigmomma was here with her beta dustpan and broom, just sayin'...

Chapter 3 – Dressing Up for a Dressing Down

BELLA

The sun was shining brightly and I took it as a sign of new things to come. I had asked Alice for her friend's information and had scheduled a time to meet with her as soon as I got into the office. I made my
way to my favorite coffee shop that was just down the street from the office. When I entered, the place was surprisingly deserted. I placed my order and made my way to an empty table with my hot cup of coffee in hand. I had barely taken two sips from my cup when he spoke.

"Hello, beautiful."

I looked up to find a very tall, slender man standing in front of me. His eyes were blue and his unruly hair was an odd shade of blonde, his cocky grin ever-present on his face. Dr. James was one of the anesthesiologists on staff and thought he was god's gift to women. I wished he would get a life and get the hell over himself.

"Dr. James, you look happy. What happened, did you scare a small child or something?"

"Ah, Bella, your wit astounds me. No, I'm happy because I got to see you first thing this morning."

"You're so full of shit that I'm surprised your eyes aren't brown, Dr. James."

I didn't give him the chance to respond as I rose from my chair and made my way out of the cafe and to my office. The guy seriously gave me the creeps and I couldn't wait to get away from him.

Alice's friend, Rosalie Hale, was waiting for me when I arrived. She looked more like a runway model than a nurse. Seriously speaking, if I ever decided to play for the other team, I would be all over her. She was very beautiful with her long blonde hair and ice blue eyes. Just looking at her, I figured she wouldn't know the first thing about medicine, but once she opened her mouth and began to tell me about her experiences with diabetic patients, I was floored. Diabetes was a difficult disease at times to regulate. I would admit this wasn't one of my strong suits. As the old saying goes, never judge a book by its cover. Truer words had never been spoken in regards to Nurse Hale, who we readily hired.

When it came time to make the final decisions regarding the new staff, Carlisle decided to give Jessica a chance and hired her as Edward's nurse. Since she was a new graduate, she still had to sit for boards, and since she would be Edward's nurse, he required her to have additional training as his surgical assistant. Luckily, she had already taken the extra classes for this certification. However, her parents had given her a trip to Europe as a graduation gift. She had left yesterday, so we had someone filling in until she returned. Truth be told, I would have been on the first plane out as soon as graduation was over, too.

Esme felt it would be a great idea to have all the new and current
staff get to know each other at a sit-down dinner. All of the staff would be there with the exception of Jessica...lucky bitch. Again, when Esme told me to jump, I jumped.

Saturday evening came quicker than I wanted. Since I was going to be meeting the new doctors, I wanted to make a good impression so I put some extra effort into my hair and makeup. I chose an elegantly classic but daring little black dress that I had found on sale and had never had an opportunity to wear. When Esme had helped me to decorate my house, I had noticed several pairs of new heels in my closet and decided to wear a pair of them. They weren't my usual style, but the tall, spiky black heels did amazing things for my legs, or at least I thought they did.

This past week, Jacob and I hadn't spoken two words to each other. I wasn't necessarily angry with him, just...ugh! He honestly was beginning to wear on my last damn nerve. I failed to understand why it was so hard for him to pick up after himself, and he wondered why I hadn't asked him to move in with me. For the last few months, it seemed like he had felt as if he could do whatever he wanted in regards to my home. He had no problem inviting his friends over, eating everything in my damn house, and having parties all day, but ask him to get a job and, well...yeah, no.

I made my way to the restaurant Esme had chosen. It was a nice, fine-dining restaurant that ironically I had asked Jacob to take me to, unsuccessfully of course. Jacob felt that a taco and a six pack was a seven course meal. I made my way to the podium and told the host the name of my waiting party. As I made my way to the back room, I silently prayed Edward Cullen would be bald and overweight. I noticed Esme first as I walked into the room. She was surrounded by four very handsome men. It seemed I was the last to arrive and I quickly took the last seat beside Angela.

I looked around the table and found that all conversation had stopped when I joined the group. I looked to Esme and tried to smile. Carlisle wasted no time in beginning to go around the table and introduce everyone. When he introduced Edward, I glanced up to find the most handsome man I had ever laid eyes upon. His eyes were this amazing shade of green, not quite emerald, but also not as pale as limes. His brownish hair appeared to have red highlights, but that might just have been the lighting in the room. Jane was right; his smile could cause panties to drop. I remained polite and simply smiled as I extended my hand. His hand was warm and soft, as if he hadn't done any hard labor a day in his life. Carlisle continued the introductions until everyone was introduced.

"This lovely lady on the end is Rosalie Hale and she'll be working with you, Emmett. Next is Alice Brandon and she'll be Jasper's nurse. Next to her is Victoria Jones and she and Angela Webber will be our
front office staff for now, and finally, this is my nurse, Bella Swan."

Conversations continued as dinner was being served. I had done my homework and knew most of the information being passed around the table. Things seemed to be moving smoothly until my cell phone began to indicate a text message. Jacob had been texting me all night to bring him food. Up until this point, I had ignored him, but he was getting nastier and more insistent in his comments. Apparently, my vibrating phone was annoying the good Dr. Edward as he began to sigh. Carlisle began to explain to Edward that I would be handling patients for the both of them until Jessica returned and was properly trained. This apparently didn't set well with Dr. Panties.

"Are you serious, Dad? Can she handle that? I mean she's just a nurse."

He now had my full attention...just a nurse? Was he fucking for real? Not many things offended me; I could handle most words in the English language. But not for one minute would I allow this son of a bitch to refer to being a nurse as nothing more than a piece of gum on the bottom of his shoe.

"Excuse me, Dr. Cullen, did I hear you correctly? Did you just say I was 'just' a nurse?"

"Yes...Bella, is it? That's exactly what I said."

"Alright, I just wanted to make certain I'd heard you correctly. Now, Dr. Cullen, let me take just a minute to clear up some obvious confusion you seem to have about my profession."

I tossed my napkin down next to my plate, my dinner no longer holding any interest for me. I extended my index finger and pointed it directly at him.

"First off, did you even bother to come by the office to see where you would be practicing? No, you did not. Second, have you taken even thirty minutes of your time since you arrived to come by and see what kind of patients you'll be dealing with? Again, no, you have not."

I could feel the anger beginning to rise in my chest. I knew I would need to give my resignation to Carlisle on Monday after the tongue lashing I was about to give his son.

"Let me tell you something, Dr. Cullen, the mother of your first patient will drive two hours just so her son can see you. She will have had to work an extra shift just to be able to pay for the gas to get there. Once you've seen her son, you'll tell her that our credit
card machine is broken and that we'll send her a bill. Furthermore, you will make certain you prescribe her son drugs that we either have samples of or that are on the pharmacy's four dollar list. Your second patient of the day will be in for a yearly physical. You will tell her mother that she needs to stay on her birth control pills to help her cramping and aches and since her mother believes she's a virgin, you'll ask her mother to leave the room while you do her pap smear. Your third patient of the day is a drug seeker and uses her child to get pain meds, she'll offer you sex in exchange...you can do what you want with that."

Truth be told, the only reason I even needed him in the office was to sign the goddamn prescriptions...I could do the rest in my sleep.

"Furthermore, let me tell you a little about you. No, scratch that, Dr. Cullen, I'll come back to you." I quickly turned my attention to his left, "Jasper Whitlock Cullen, you, Sir, are famous. Jasper here graduated Valedictorian of not only high school, but of Harvard Medical School as well. You currently are considered the country's most-respected authority on all things Civil War. You've written five books on the matter and have the highest number of the rarest collectables in your possession. You've been on Oprah and David Letterman. Lastly, you've been considered a southern boy, even though you were born a Yankee.

"Next we have Emmett McCarthy Cullen, All-American three years in a row. You were awarded the Heisman trophy and yet turned down not one, not two, but three NFL teams in order to become a physician.

"Now back to you, Edward. Edward Anthony Cullen, Valedictorian and Summa Cum Laude, captain of your high school football team. Graduated with a 4.2 because a simple 4.0 wasn't good enough...oh, and you took Kristen Stewart to the prom, just not the one from Panic Room. President of your College fraternity, Sigma Chi Epsilon, resident of the year two years in a row at Northwestern in Chicago, and last but not least...voted doctor with the most panty-dropping smile.

"Sadly, Dr. Cullen, I've made a huge effort to learn as much about you as I possibly could. I'll bet you can't even tell me if I'm wearing a dress or pants. You, however, have on a black Armani Suit, Ralph Lauren shirt, and Cole Haun dress shoes."

Oh, god, that felt good. Take that, Dr. Feel Good! I knew that although everything I had just said was true, I also knew it was out of line and disrespectful. The table was silent and if looks could kill, the daggers that were coming from Edward would kill me in my seat.

Carlisle broke the silence smirking. "That, my boy, is why you may only borrow my nurse."
Okay, so...the inspiration for this chapter came from an actual conversation I once witnessed between a fellow nurse and one of the residents. In the middle of the confrontation, the Chief of Staff stopped by and reminded the resident that nurses are the ones that are really in charge.

Don't worry...our good Dr. Edward has some words for our Bella...next chapter.

4. Chapter 4
As always, I own my plot only...
Please read the A/N at the bottom as I have a challenge for you...
Chapter 3 - Telling it Like it Is
EDWARD
BEEP...BEEP...BEEP

Jesus Christ, I hated that motherfucking sound. If I ever met the fucker that invented it, I would knock him the hell out. As my feet hit the floor, I mentally began to prepare myself for the day. In less than an hour, I would begin my last shift here in Chicago. I couldn't say I would miss this place. After a quick shower and a stop at my corner coffee shop, I made my way to Northwest Hospital.

"Hey, Bro, you ready for this?" Emmett yelled as he passed me in the hall.

"As I'll ever be," I returned over my shoulder.

A few months ago, Emmett and Jasper approached me with the idea of moving home to Seattle to join our father's busy practice. I made it appear as if I wasn't interested at first. Truth be told, I was sick of the bullshit here in Chicago. My colleagues all thought I had the world at my feet; that I was a lucky bastard that had everything I'd ever wanted.

How wrong they were.

Yes, I had a successful career and had won award after award. I had money in the bank and an impressive apartment on Michigan Avenue. But every time I climbed into bed in that impressive apartment, I did it
alone. I was a good looking guy and I could, without a doubt, get any woman I wanted. The big problem was that I was tired of the brainless, gold-digging women who flocked around me looking for a free ride and a pretty face next to theirs on the society page.

I didn't want a woman who would drop to her knees just because I told her to, although that did come in hand at times. I also didn't want a woman who claimed to like everything I liked because she wanted to impress me. I wanted a girl who had a backbone and wasn't afraid to use it, one that didn't take my bullshit, one that would tell me I was being an ass when I was. I wanted a strong, confident girl who was her own person.

Unfortunately, I was beginning to think such a girl didn't exist.

I was due to meet my brothers for lunch in the cafeteria to discuss the final details of our move. The nurses wanted to throw us a going away party at one of the local bars, but we had all declined. We all remembered the last time we let them convince us to go out with them. My brothers and I referred to it as 'Tanya-gate.' We were so not going down that road again...ever.

"So, I talked to Mom yesterday and she said they have everything set up for us," Jasper spoke over the lip of his coffee cup.

"Never thought for one second I'd be moving back home again," Emmett mumbled to no one in particular, "But, I'd gladly trade living by Mom's rules for having to see Dr. Abernathy every day."

Dr. Abernathy had been one of Emmett's closest friends during medical school. When Emmett and Charlotte had married several years ago, he was a groomsman in their wedding. Last year, Emmett came home early from a shift to find Charlotte fucking the shit out of him in Emmett's bed. Needless to say, the divorce was nasty and the friendship severed. We later learned they had been sleeping together for years. It seemed to have started around the time Emmett and Charlotte had first met. Emmett hadn't really dated since the divorce.

"I'm sure you're going to miss Tanya."

"Shut the fuck up, Emmett. I can't wait to be fucking rid of that entire nightmare."

"Sorry, Bro, just busting your chops," Emmett punched my arm as he chuckled.

"Does Kate know your leaving?" Jasper questioned.

"Um, no, I haven't had the chance to call her yet."
"What the fuck, Edward, you haven't told Kate? You've been together for years, man."

"Emmett, you really don't know anything about me and Kate so shut the hell up."

"Just saying, Bro..."

"Thanks, Em, but I got it."

******

When our plane touched down in Seattle, I felt as if the weight of the world was lifted off my shoulders. I was home. Mom had gone into full mom mode and made all of our favorite dishes. When my head hit the pillow my first night home, I literally slept for twelve hours. For the first time in years, I felt like things were going to be okay.

"Edward, dear, I laid out your suit for tomorrow's dinner."

"Thanks, Mom," I told her as I kissed her cheek. "I'm going to take a drive around town and check things out."

"Okay, sweetheart, I'll see you later."

The morning after we had arrived, I made my first purchase, my new car. When we lived in Chicago, I never found it practical to own one. But living here, it would be a necessity. I drove by our old high school and pulled into the empty parking lot. As I exited my car, a rush of memories overtook my mind.

My junior year, Emmett was a senior and quarterback, he passed for a total of seven touchdowns. I assisted on four of them.

Senior year was my turn to play quarterback. I led our team to win the state championship as Emmett had done last year.

Playing my guitar on the bleachers while Emmett drummed along was something we did regularly.

Jasper was constantly reading something and always with his faithful followers, like he was their commander or something.

Senior prom...Kristen Stewart, I found her crying under the bleachers after a game one Friday night. She asked me if I ever had a secret that wasn't mine to tell. I never could resist a girl that needed my help...should have rethought that one when it came to Tanya.

Kristen and Kate were sisters. Kate was, well, my best friend and the one girl besides my mom I could count on. Kate meant the world to me,
and I loved her. Kristen had told me that fateful Friday night that she was a lesbian and was afraid what her family would think. I told her I'd take her secret to the grave. I told her I would be happy to take her to senior prom so that no one else would suspect anything. Once Kate found out, she told me she would always be in my debt. Kate had repaid me over and over for keeping Kristen's secret.

When I told Kate I was moving home, she told me she was happy for me and that nothing would change between us. We promised to visit each other and talk daily; things would just have to work out.

Time seemed to stand still as I continued to relive my high school years. I finally made myself climb back into my car and head back to my parent's home. Home...that sounded nice.

******

Mom had planned a dinner party for all of the office staff as a chance to get to know each other outside of the office. I was looking forward to meeting everyone while not having to remain professional the entire time. She informed us that dad's nurse, Bella, was the last person we were waiting on. Dad had told me a little about his nurse and I had a picture in my head of what she would look like. Considering my father was in his fifties and spoke so highly of her skills, I had pictured a middle-aged lady with short hair and cat-eyed glasses. I imagined she would treat each of us as her children, and I secretly hoped she could bake cookies. However, I had never been more wrong in my life.

When Bella walked into the dining room, I was literally left speechless. She was by far the most beautiful woman I had ever seen, and the dress she was wearing was positively sinful on her womanly figure. Her dark hair and eyes set off her ethereal complexion and I was mesmerized. I had never been a guy who went after the tanned, blue-eyed blondes, that was definitely Emmett's thing, so this girl had my full attention. When my dad made his way around the room introducing everyone, I waited with baited breath to hear her voice. Now this was only my first mistake of the evening. When she smiled and said hello, I nearly had an orgasm just sitting there. I barely registered the names of the other nurses as my dad introduced them.

Earlier in the day, I had begun to receive text messages from Tanya. I had ignored them and she had stopped after a while. I was taken from my current fantasy with Bella as my phone began to vibrate again. I didn't have to even look to know who it was. I sighed and decided I would change my number in the morning.

My dad began to explain that Bella would be handling both his and my patients until my nurse was back from some trip she was currently on. I knew my father had a heavy patent load and he had told me my schedule was full for several weeks. I began to worry that this would
be too much for one person to handle, regardless of their skill level. This was when I opened my mouth and made my second mistake of the evening and spoke the words that no physician should ever utter..."Just a nurse."

Bella wasted no time in handing my ass to me on a very pretty platter. She obviously had done her homework and knew quite a lot about my brothers and myself. I couldn't respond when she pointed her finger and plowed into me. She was right on several points and I wondered how she had gotten some of her information. I remembered when I had gotten the title of "Panty Dropper."

Samantha had been a sixteen year old Leukemia patient who literally had the entire staff in stitches most of the time. Her spirits had remained high until she took her last breath. I had just finished making my rounds and I always saved Samantha for last. When I entered her room, several nurses were laughing right along with Sam. I made everyone leave the room, as I wanted my time with her. She always told me what was on her mind and held nothing back. She told me that I should use my power over women for good and not evil, and that someday I would meet the girl who wasn't dazzled by my "panty-dropping" smile. Those were the last words she ever spoke to me. She died in the night.

Well, Sam, you were right...Bella Swan isn't dazzled by my smile or my looks.

My father was right when he told me she was an excellent nurse. By the time she had finished telling me about my patients for the day, I found myself wondering why I even needed to show up, as if she needed my help at all. It was obvious that she was passionate about her job and truly loved each of her patients.

She was wrong, however, when she told me that she doubted if I had noticed whether she was wearing pants or a skirt. Trust me when I say that both I and my dick noticed her gorgeous legs in those black "fuck me" heels.

Esme excused herself from the table and asked Bella to follow. Mom had told me she and Bella had a very close relationship. I took a long pull from my beer that I had been nursing the entire evening and tried not to be too obvious as I watched her ass as she exited the room. This was definitely a first for me. Historically, woman never acted the way Bella had and if I was going to be honest...I loved it.

"So, Bro, how does it feel?" Emmett questioned with a chuckle in his voice.

"How does what feel?"

"Having your ass handed to you by the girl of your dreams."
"Bella, dear, can I have a moment with you?"

"Certainly, Esme."

Shit, I just had to open my big mouth didn't I? I could have just smiled and agreed with everything that was said. But no, I had to grow a set and chew out the son of the two most generous people on the planet. She had every right to be mad at me and to demand my resignation, and I undoubtedly would hand it to her willingly. I followed Esme to the small bar that was located just outside the main dining room. She motioned for me to have the seat beside her. With tears begging to be released, I took the seat and awaited the tongue lashing that was certain to follow.

"Bella, honey, you know Carlisle and I consider you the daughter we never had don't you?"

Shit.

Shit.

"Yes, Ma'am."

"You know you can talk to me about anything that's on your mind, right?"

Shit.

Shit.

Shit.

"Yes, Ma'am. I'm so sorry, Esme. I just don't know what happened in there..."

"Bella, that's not what I wanted to talk to you about."

What?

"Everything you said in there was absolutely the truth. My son deserved every word. Well done, dear."

I was now totally confused. Wasn't she pissed at me for tearing down her very handsome son?

"I'm speaking about you and Jacob. You've seemed very unhappy lately and I'm pretty sure I know why."
She and Carlisle had met Jacob, and while they were cordial, I could tell Esme's opinion of him was guarded and she was trying to be open-minded for my sake. I guessed my bad mood of late where Jacob was concerned was starting to show, though, and Esme was too perceptive for my own good sometimes.

"Oh," I whimpered.

"Bella, honey, you can't make yourself feel something that isn't there. You deserve more."

"How did...?"

"I've known about your lack of feeling for that boy for a long time. It's been pretty obvious. Honey, you can't make yourself love someone. Love isn't a choice, but staying with someone for the wrong reasons is."

"But, Esme, I've known him for so long. And our fathers—"

"Would want the best for you both," she interrupted. "Ask yourself this, dear. Does the thought of him not being around make your heart stop?"

I shook my head no after a moment's thought.

"Do you think about him constantly?"

Again, I had to shake my head no.

"Do you see yourself in his eyes?"

"Hardly," I admitted with a sigh.

"Remember, sweetheart, I'm here if you need me."

With her final word, she patted my hand and kissed my cheek. I arose from my barstool and made my way back into the dining room. Only the wait staff remained in the room and I asked one of them to box up my nearly-untouched food. Once I was in my car, I began to consider Esme's questions once again. Jacob had always been a part of my life for as long as I could remember, and I had chosen to keep him around even after it no longer made sense.

Love was not a choice.

Neither was Jacob anymore.

I walked into my house to find the man of the hour draped across my
sofa sucking down the bottle of wine I had planned to enjoy next week during my baths. Bastard.

"Bella, tell me you didn't wear that dress in public," Jacob questioned as I walked into the living room.

"Yes, I did. Why?"

"Because, babe, it isn't working for you. You don't have the legs for it."

"What's wrong with my legs?"

"Oh, hell, there aren't enough hours in the day to name them all. But for starters, you're too fucking pale. When was the last time you got out in the sun?"

Asshole.

"Well, Jacob, for your information, some of us don't have the luxury of lying around all day in the sun. Some of us have to work."

Lately, it seemed Jacob was enjoying taking little jabs at me. Picking on me and making fun of me had become his newest hobby.

"Whatever, Bella."

I tossed the container that held my leftover dinner on the coffee table in front of him. "Here."

"What the hell is this?" he questioned as he began to lift the lid.

"It's food, dumb ass."

"No, Bella, this is shit. Why the fuck didn't you order me food like I told you to?" he yelled, tossing the container on the floor as he rose from the couch. Damn, that was going to be a mess to clean up. "I'm out of here," he spat. "Give me some money for gas," he demanded holding out his hand towards me.

"No."

"Fucking hell, Isabella, give me some fucking money for gas!"

"No, Jacob, I just gave you gas money the other day. What the hell did you do with it?"

"I had shit to buy and now I need gas. Give me some damn money!"

"Not my problem, Jake. Try getting a fucking job."
"Get off my ass, Bella. Just give me some fucking money or give me your gas card. I've got places to go."

"Tough shit, Jacob. It's not my gas card and you fucking know it."

"Oh, that's right. It's daddy Cullen's. Like he'll give a fuck what you charge. Just fuck him longer next time, maybe throw in a blow job and he'll be fine."

I was beyond pissed at this point. I knew I should have just dropped it and retreated to my bedroom. However, when in my life had I ever backed down? I was certainly not starting today.

"Listen up and listen up good, fuck stick," my finger was pointing directly at him as I pounded my bare feet across my hardwood floors, closing the distance in three brisk strides, "Not everyone sucks and fucks their way through life. You fucking know I'm not fucking my goddamn boss!"

"No, Bella, the only thing I know for sure is that you aren't fucking me."

So...

I was reading the other day and I was trying to find a really great story that didn't have the typical format of boy and girl meet, finally like each other, someone screws it up, they make up and blah blah bah.

My challenge to all of you reading is to tell me what fiction you could read over and over. I'll be honest and tell you I have two that I've read over and over.

Illegal Contact and the Ex-Factor...both can be found in my favorites. If you haven't read them, you're missing out.

5. Chapter 5

Hello, everyone!

First, let me thank everyone who is reading and responding. Second, thank you to everyone who is adding me to their favorites.

OH, YES...Stephenie owns everything...like we didn't already know.
Chapter 4 - Installing a Revolving Door

BELLA

I would love to have been able to say that the first week of having the new staff went off without a hitch. It would be a lie...a big, huge, hairy-assed lie. Our new nurses turned out to be sensational and I had to pat myself on the back for being so picky. The biggest problem was of course Edward. I knew the honorable thing to do would have been to try to be nice to him, but I just didn't have it in me. I had spoken with Jessica and she advised me she would be back in time to start on Monday. As it turned out, Edward's birthday was at the end of the week and Esme had planned a surprise birthday party for him. I had planned to spend time with my dad in Forks and so I would be missing his party.

Yeah, I was all broken up over that.

Dad and I made plans to spend most of the weekend together, minus the few hours he would be off fishing which I would use to catch up on sleep. I chose to leave work early on Friday afternoon and made the three hour drive while the sun was still out. When I arrived at my childhood home, several cars were present in the driveway.

Upon entering the house, I noticed a large amount of laughter coming from the back of the house. I silently prayed that Jacob would not be sitting on the back patio. To my relief, he wasn't there. Apparently, my dad had invited his fellow deputies over for a barbeque. I had known each of them since I was a little girl and quickly joined in on their conversations, enjoying their banter immensely.

As the evening wore down and after the last deputy had gone, I bid my dad goodnight and made my way up the stairs to my old room. I was exhausted, both mentally and physically, and I really needed some time to just rest. I climbed into my old bed with the intention of reading for a while, but I was out like a light before I got past the first page.

As expected, my dad was already gone when I awoke the next morning and I soon found myself cleaning the only bathroom so that I could enjoy a hot bath in his antique ball-and-claw bathtub. I sank my entire body into the hot sudsy water and allowed my mind to go blank, just enjoying the peace and quiet. The water had gone cold by the time I made myself get out and get dressed.

My dad made it home just after three o'clock and we made plans for dinner at the only diner in town. As we took our seats in my dad's usual booth, I took the opportunity to look around. Things in Forks were so much slower and calmer. As a child, I had often joked that the sidewalks rolled up by six o'clock in the evening. In Seattle, things
were much more hurried and it was nothing to find several twenty-four hour places open in the same neighborhood.

My father cleared his throat, interrupting my daydreaming.

"So, um, Bells, care to tell me why you didn't bring Jacob along?"

My dad loved Jacob like the son he'd never had. I never had to ask for permission to hang out longer with him when I was growing up.

"We had a fight. He said some pretty nasty things."

"Oh."

That was the thing about Charlie; he didn't push and he tried not to pry. The key word here being tried...

"Bells, this is Jacob we're talking about. It couldn't have been too bad, right?"

"It depends on your definition of bad."

He made a gesture of rolling his hand, encouraging me to continue.

"He accused me of sleeping with Dr. Cullen for money."

I watched as his eyes showed ten different silent emotions, anger, disbelief...

"So, how are Carlisle and Esme?"

And just like that, he changed the subject. This time I decided to do something I had never done.

"Dad, did you hear me? He said I was whoring myself out to my boss!"

His face quickly changed as he glanced around the restaurant to see if anyone was looking.

"Yes, Isabella. I clearly heard you. I just find that hard to believe about Jacob, I mean he loves you..."

Now I was pissed. My fucking father was taking Jacob's side.

"Really, Dad, you think Jacob loves me? Did he tell you this? Because he sure as fuck didn't tell me."

"Isabella Marie," my father hissed my name through clinched teeth. I held up my hand as I quickly grabbed my purse. I was too pissed off
to be hungry and I just wanted to go home.

"Save it. You don't even believe a word I say if it puts him in a bad light. If you like Jacob so much, then you date him."

With angry steps, I marched out of the restaurant and walked home. I had hoped the short walk would have calmed me down, but it only gave me time alone with my thoughts. By the time I had reached Charlie's house, it was just getting dark. I decided it would be a bad idea if I stayed the night, so I packed my things and left my dad a note that I was heading home.

Three hours later, I pulled into my driveway. I sighed loudly as I noticed most of the lights were on in the house again.

Fucking Jacob!

I grabbed my bag and made my way up my steps to find that my door was locked. Well, at least he secured the place before leaving it shining like a beacon in the night. Sliding my key into the lock, I pushed my front door open to find that my television was still on, as well as all of the lights in my living room. My coffee table was covered with empty containers, dripped food, and beer bottles. I made my way into my kitchen to find my refrigerator door left standing wide open, empty containers and food lying all over my counters.

Shutting the fridge door, I began cleaning up Jacob's latest mess. I was still so pissed off from not only my dad but now Jacob as well that I hardly noticed it was well after midnight by the time I was done. I thought taking a hot shower would help, but it did nothing to calm me down. I dug through my pantry and refrigerator and was surprised to discover I still had enough of the ingredients left to make a batch of my famous chocolate chip cookies. By the time I had finished, I was a little calmer and my house definitely smelled a hell of a lot better. I decided that I had better try to get some sleep since it was nearly four o'clock in the morning. I made sure the dead bolt was locked and made my way to my bed.

I think I may have dozed off just as the sun was peeking through the clouds. It was around noon when the sun came shining through my windows and finally woke me up all the way. I made my way to my shower and stayed under the hot water until it was too cold to stand, then got out and dried off and threw on a little pair of denim shorts and a tank top. I made my way to my kitchen where I made myself a pot of coffee. Since it was Sunday and I hadn't even planned to drive back until later, I found myself with a ton of free time. I had decided to play around with my guitar when I remembered that Esme had invited me to Edward's birthday party this afternoon. I knew that when, and not if, she found out that I had been in town and skipped it, I would be in serious trouble. So I grabbed a few dozen of the cookies I had made
and headed to the Cullen's.

When I arrived, I decided to park away from the other cars so that if I needed to leave early, I wouldn't be boxed in. I could hear music and laughter coming from the back yard, so I placed my purse in the trunk and locked the car and made my way around to the party. Once I opened the gate, I found that nearly the entire staff was here. Angela and a very handsome man sat under one of the umbrellas. He was holding her hand and had just placed a kiss on her cheek. I would talk to her later about how cute they were. Rosalie and Alice were lying on lounge chairs soaking up the summer sun. Emmett, Edward, and Jasper seemed to be playing some kind of game in the pool. Esme noticed me first and came over to meet me.

"Bella! Oh, sweetheart, I'm so glad you made it."

"Yes, Ma'am," I replied as she gave me her warm hug, "I had an argument with my dad, so..."

"None the matter, dear. Let me take these and you go relax."

Esme removed the plate of cookies from my hand and made her way over to a table that was covered in wrapped gifts. I began to walk closer to where Angela and the handsome man were sitting. Before I could even say hello to them, the loud and bounding voice of Emmett shouted my name.

"BELLA!"

I noticed that Angela was now looking behind me with wide eyes. I didn't have time to even turn around before I felt a pair of wet arms circle my waist, trapping my arms to my side. I was so shocked that I dropped my car keys and felt them hit my toe. I was so startled that I clinched my cell phone tighter as I felt my feet leaving the ground. I felt myself being pulled quickly backwards and as a reaction, I gasped in air. I suddenly felt a burning sensation along the left side of my face, shoulder, and leg as I found myself submerged and sucking in pool water. The hands that had grabbed me still had me caged tightly. I opened my eyes to find that I was definitely underwater and began trying to get to the surface. The arms that held me finally let go and I made my way to the surface. Once my face was above water, I began to cough and choke; my throat and nose feeling as if they were on fire. I made my way to the edge of the pool and continued to cough. I felt two hands reach under my arms, but I yanked my body away. When I was finally able to open my eyes, I found my way to the ladder and stepped out of the pool.

"Edward Anthony Cullen! What the hell is wrong with you?"

The sound of Esme's voice was enough to scare me into never doing
anything wrong ever again in my life. She always had such a gentle voice and I had never witnessed this side of her. I turned and looked back at the pool to find my cell phone and sunglasses lying at the bottom. My sunglasses were clearly broken and my Blackberry was surely dead. Fuck, my life was on that phone.

Angela handed me a towel as I began to look for my keys. My throat and eyes were still burning and I could feel the tightness in my chest from having aspirated so much chlorinated pool water. Alice handed me my keys and I quickly turned on my bare feet and ran for the gate. I could hear several people calling after me, but I chose to ignore all of them as I quickly made my way to my car. I slammed the car into gear and sped all the way home. As I pulled into my driveway, I silently prayed Jacob would be nowhere in sight. Luckily, he wasn't.

I tossed my keys and purse on my coffee table and headed straight for my shower. I stood motionless under the steaming hot water that pelted down on me. What had I ever done to make Edward hate me so much as to attempt to drown me in their pool? I would admit that I did give him a verbal scolding. However, everything I had said was the truth.

When the water turned cold, I turned it off and climbed out. I grabbed clean clothes out of my dresser, not really caring what I put on and made my way into my living room. I grabbed my guitar and began playing random cords, trying to finish calming the fuck down.

I still could not figure out for the life of me why he had done something so mean.

*****

The second week started off with the staff discussing the events of Edward's party. Jessica finally pounced in twenty minutes late and then proceeded to shamelessly flirt with all of the doctors. That needed to be addressed immediately.

"Ms. Stanley, can I have a word with you?" I needed to remind her she was here to do a job, not a doctor.

"Sure, Bella," Jessica smacked her gum as she entered my office.

"Listen, Ms. Stanley, you're here to work, not to flirt. We have many children that pass through here and I don't want their parents to have reason to question the conversations that go on in this office."

"Not a problem; won't happen again. But can I say something?" she leaned in as the volume of her voice decreased.

"Certainly," I gestured for her to continue.
"Do you know if Dr. Cullen is single?"

"Yes, Ms. Stanley, I do believe all the sons are single."

Honestly, I didn't give two shits if she were to go into Edward's office and fuck him seven ways from Sunday. What I did care about was that she kept it quiet. Before I could convey this information to her, there was a knock at my office door.

"Come in," I responded annoyed.

Angela poked her head in. "Ms. Swan, I'm so sorry to interrupt, but there's a very handsome gentleman who insists on seeing you. He says it's urgent."

"Send him back please." I stood and made my way across the room toward the door.

"Ms. Stanley, this conversation is tabled for the moment. I'll come and find you when I'm finished and we can get started on your training."

As I went to open the door, it swung open to reveal a large bouquet of flowers. I took two steps back and waited while the person caring the flowers passed. I was shocked beyond belief to find the person responsible was none other than Jacob.

"Jacob?"

Jacob placed the flowers on my desk and turned around to face me. God, he was so handsome...and an ass.

"Bella, care to introduce me to your friend?" Jessica sounded more like a twelve year old girl than a fully-grown, professional woman.

"Hello, I'm Jacob Black," Jacob said smoothly, extending his hand to Jessica.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, I'm Jessica Stanley," she cooed, practically purring at Jacob.

"Jacob, why are you here?" I was annoyed as fuck at him for just showing up like this.

"Oh, well, I'll just leave you two alone," Jessica began to take small steps backwards in an attempt to leave the room while still shamelessly ogling Jacob.

Once she was gone, I closed my office door then slowly turned my body towards Jacob as I crossed my arms in front of my chest.
"Listen, Bells, I've been the world's worst boyfriend. And I'm sorry for what I said about you and Dr. Cullen..."

Before he could finish, there was another knock at my office door. I uncrossed my arms and held up one finger to Jacob and opened the door. Angela was poised on the opposite side with a rather large FedEx box in her hand.

"Sorry, Bella, it says urgent."

"Thanks, Angela."

I took the box from her hand and crossed the room to my desk. I placed the large box down and returned to my conversation with Jacob.

"Okay, Jacob, you were saying?"

Truth be told here...I could not give two shits about what he had to say. I somehow suspected Charlie had asked some questions and Billy had lit a fire under his ass to apologize. Come to think of it, my father owed me one himself and I had yet to hear from him, either.

Jake shoved the flowers toward me as he rambled on and I had to control my eye roll. The first and foremost thing to know as a boyfriend about me was that I hated to get flowers. You spent a shit ton of money and the fuckers died in a couple of days, and then you were left with the cheap-ass glass vase that you stuck under the sink until you decided to throw the old thing out.

"...I've been taking total advantage of you and just expecting you to take care of me..."

I continued to half-listen to what Jacob was saying...I really did.

"...I've just always thought you would be there for..."

Yep, good thing he was good to look at because let's be honest, once he opened his mouth, he usually just stuck his foot right in there every time.

"...Yeah...so, um, I'm like, really sorry..."

I knew I should have been listening to the entire one-sided conversation. But again, I just didn't give a flying fuck...men really just sucked.

Before I'd had any time to respond to Jacob's ranting, he was out the door. I shook my head as I made my way around my desk and sat down in my chair. I still hadn't seen or heard from Edward, not that I was
complaining mind you. I started to open the box and was interrupted once again by a knock on the door.

"Go away!" I shouted as I tore the tape away from the box.

The door opened and in walked all of my nurses. Fuck, what had Edward done now?

Alice plopped herself down in one of the two chairs facing me and crossed her legs. I could honestly admit that the look that was currently plastered on her face was making my skin crawl.

"Bella, we have a very important question to ask you," Alice began to bounce in her chair.

"Alright, lay it on me."

"Okay. What is the office policy on dating?"

How in the hell was I supposed to know this? It wasn't like I dated Dr. Cullen or anything.

"Um, ladies, why are you asking me this question and not Carlisle? I mean he's the boss after all."

They all began to giggle and looked around at each other.

"Yes, well, I'd agree whole-heartedly with you, and believe me when I say we asked him first. He said that...and I quote here...'Esme runs my home and Bella runs my office, so go ask her.'"

Jesus Christ...thanks a fucking lot, Carlisle.

I thought for several seconds and could not come up with one single reason why dating would be a bad idea. Then it hit me that if Jessica was to perhaps start dating Edward then they could both leave me the hell alone. She could deal with Dr. Panty Dropper and it would be a win-win situation all around. Maybe a little action would chill his ass out and I was certain Jessica was more than willing to give it to him.

"Okay, the policy is that until I find that dating is causing a problem within the operations of this office, I don't care. However, if I find that you're sneaking off to fuck around in the exam rooms or touching each other inappropriately when you shouldn't be, I'll ban it. Any questions?"

I received an overwhelming no and so I dismissed everyone. Once they were all gone, I again began to open the box. Once all the tape was removed, I opened the flaps and began to remove smaller boxes. Finally
at the very bottom was an envelope with my name elegantly scrolled across the front. The first box I pulled out contained a new iPhone. The second was a new pair of Ray-Bans. I sat at my desk just staring at the remaining envelope. I had begun to think it was Esme who had sent this box, but the handwriting wasn't hers. Slowly and carefully, I tore open the envelope to reveal a handwritten note and a Starbucks card with one hundred dollars on it. I scrolled down the letter to discover who the sender of the box was. The shock of who was responsible and their words written on the page was enough to cause me to drop the letter and clasp my hand tightly over my mouth.

Oh, my god...

Okay, so...

I like a little suspense every now and again. I just want to remind everyone that things aren't always as they appear

Thanks for reading, my pretties, and please let me know what you think!

Also thank you to my Beta you make this rock!

6. Chapter 6

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

The amount of people who responded to the last chapter was overwhelming. I'm so happy to hear that so many people are enjoying this.

I hope that you enjoy this chapter as well. I really want to remind you that everything is not as it appears.

Again, SM owns the characters, but I have a really great time playing with them.

Chapter 5 - Of Boys and Men

EDWARD

I made my way home after the enlightening dinner I'd had with my new office staff. I folded myself into my childhood bed and prayed sleep would come quickly. Sadly, this did not happen. I lay there staring endlessly at the ceiling above me. I could hear my brothers laughing in the next room; I caught bits and pieces of their conversation.
Apparently, I wasn't the only one that was knocked on my ass this evening by a beautiful nurse. Jasper was sounding much like a school girl with their first crush over Nurse Brandon, and Emmett was surprisingly quite taken with Nurse Hale. I thought for certain Em would still be leery of woman; however, by the words he was using, things looked to be changing on that front.

Then there was Nurse Swan. She seriously had to be the most beautiful woman I had ever laid eyes on...ever. She was smart and quick-witted, and she had won my parents over. That alone was huge in my book. My mother was an excellent judge of character and she had spoken so highly of Bella. I closed my eyes and tried to sleep, but Samantha's final words kept playing over and over in my head..."Someday, you'll find a girl who isn't dazzled by your panty-dropping smile."

Yes, Sam was right; she just forgot to tell me that the girl would positively loathe me.

I tried to forget Bella's words; I tried to tell myself that she didn't have the entire story. The more I thought about it, though, the more I realized she was right. I threw the covers off and threw on my clothes. I made my way to the office and arrived just as the sun was beginning to break through the clouds. Bella's words from last night were right on target. I hadn't taken the time to familiarize myself with my new patients. I was about to change all that.

I made my way into the office and began to explore every room. I opened all of the doors and took a quick look around each one. Finally, I came to the last office and knew immediately who this one belonged to. Her desk was clean and organized, with three stacks of charts piled on the corner. I took a seat in her chair, nearly falling to the floor as I recalled she was nearly a foot shorter than I was. Once I collected myself and began to review the charts, I was astonished to find just how organized Bella really was. Each chart had all the new lab results attached with a paperclip. Secondly, they were all in time order, and finally, I noticed that some of them had prescriptions written out and ready for a signature. Why did Bella even need me here again?

I returned the charts to their original order and began to leave. I then noticed a picture on the corner of her desk. Bella's face was posed next to an older man who looked too similar to be anyone but her father. They had the same deep chocolate eyes. That was the only picture in her office and a question suddenly popped into my head. Did Bella have a boyfriend or even a husband? She had to; she was far too beautiful not to have some lucky son of a bitch taking care of her.

Honestly, I was jealous at the thought of someone touching Bella. But then why did I care? I had to admit to myself that it was because she had most of the qualities that I had ever wanted in a woman, that was
why, and I would likely never find another woman like her again.

Big problem, asshat...she fucking hates you!

Monday morning arrived and I told myself I would impress Bella by being in the office early and ready to go. I would give her just enough of my charm to make her smile. I would try my darnedest to redeem myself in her eyes.

As I pulled my car into my designated spot, I noticed a black Mercedes parked at the end of the row. I wondered to myself what my mom was doing here so early. I locked my car and made my way to the back entrance. Once inside, I was hit by the smell of fresh coffee and something very sweet, like vanilla and warm spices. I made my way to the back of the office expecting to be greeted by my mom. However, I was shocked to find Bella coming out of one of the exam rooms. Her hair was neatly pulled back into a tight ponytail and her scrubs were freshly ironed. In her left hand was a box of large gloves and under her arm was a box of tissue. Her right hand contained what appeared to be a bag of suckers. She looked me up and down and then disappeared into another exam room.

I made my way to my office and placed my thighs on my desk. I needed to at least say good morning to her and make an attempt to change her gray opinion of me. I slipped on my lab coat and made my way back down the hall to the staff lounge. There she stood with a cup of coffee in hand. I recognized it immediately as being from Starbucks. The girl had taste. As I grew closer to her, I noticed she was drinking what smelled like a caramel macchiato. She definitely had good taste.

I cleared my throat before I spoke, "Good morning, Nurse Swan."

Her eyes never left her cup as she responded, "Good morning, Dr. Cullen."

I made a mental note to wait until after the macchiato was finished in the future before saying a single word to Bella Swan. Caffeine was obviously a must for her in the morning.

Dad had told me that Bella was a good nurse. By the end of the first day, I knew my father was a huge liar. Bella was the most amazing nurse I had ever witnessed. I had worked in one of the country's busiest hospitals and had watched nurses that I thought were pretty good. They weren't shit compared to Bella. I could barely keep up with her and she had no problem telling me exactly what to do with her patients as she fondly called them.

As she had told me at dinner, my first patient was a little boy who suffered with terrible asthma. Bella handed me his chart and told me he'd had a rough time last night. I opened the chart to find that he
was currently taking several inhalers, but that his mom hadn't been able to afford a home nebulizer for him. I recalled Bella telling me that his mom would have had to drive for several hours to get here on time and that she would have had to work overtime to afford the gas.

Bella followed me into the room as I made my exam. The boy's mom stood beside him, stroking his brown hair as he sat on the exam table. She was dressed in a uniform that looked as if she worked in a diner. The look of exhaustion was evident on her face.

When I finished my exam, I took a seat at the corner desk and began to formulate a plan. I informed her that we really needed to have the boy on a nebulizer and that I had just been given information about a trial program where a major drug company was having consumers try out a particular brand of nebulizer free of charge. I told her I would do all of the paperwork for her and asked her to simply go by the pharmacy and pick it up. I noticed the questionable look on Bella's face, but luckily she remained silent.

I made a few notes in the boy's chart and then informed his mother that since this was our first visit, there was no charge. I shook her hand and made my way into the hall. I walked into my office and closed my door. I picked up the phone and called the pharmacy that was documented in the boy's chart. I spoke with the pharmacist and gave him my credit card information and instructed him not to tell her that I had paid. He agreed and said he would make sure his staff kept quiet as well. I made my way back to the exam room to find that the boy's mom had left her purse in the corner. I quickly grabbed the purse and retrieved my wallet. I removed all the cash I had and slipped it into the change portion of her purse, where she only had eleven cents in there. Well, she had four hundred dollars and eleven cents now.

I made my way out to the lobby where I found Bella hugging the little boy after handing him a sucker. I got his mom's attention and handed her the purse. She thanked me and returned her attention to Bella and her son.

At the end of the day, my father called me into his office to discuss a few patients. As I sat down, I let out a deep sigh and my father's eyes settled back on mine.

"Rough day, Son?"

"Not really, Dad, I just learned a very valuable lesson from Nurse Swan."

"Oh, really, how to keep your mouth shut and head down?" he chuckled as he continued to make notes in the chart in front of him.

"No, Dad. She reminded me why I decided to become a doctor in the
first place."

Really? Care to elaborate?"

"Well, when we were growing up, I thought you could do anything, and save everyone. I wanted to be just like you. Then when I started my residency, I was surrounded with people whose reasons for becoming physicians ranged from saving the world to owning it. I guess somewhere along the way, my reasons changed, too, until today when I was reminded why I wanted this so much."

"I'm glad to hear it, Son. Just remember, though, she's only on loan."

The remainder of the week was much the same. Bella was always several steps ahead of me and had no problem putting me and the rest of the staff in our places. My mom invited the entire office to my birthday party and I would admit that I was pissed when I discovered that Bella would be out of town.

Sunday arrived, as did the mass chaos that surrounded my parent's pool. When most everyone had arrived, my dad fired up the grill and my brothers and I began to goof off in the pool. We had been tossing the ball around when I heard the latch to the side gate open and close. When I turned my attention to the side of the house, I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw Bella walk in. It was as if everything went into slow motion as I watched her walk beside the pool. I couldn't remove my eyes from her, and as she stood talking to Angela and Ben, I took a long hard look at her. Her slender legs went on for days, and her ass was so round and utterly fucking perfect in those tiny denim shorts. I wanted to sink my teeth into each of her ass cheeks. Her soft pale shoulders seemed to glow in the sunlight, and her breasts seemed to call to my hands like a magnet to steel.

Now, in my defense, I would argue that I really was a very well-educated, mature man. However, I would have to admit that what happened next was to be blamed directly on my inner twelve year old. That was right...every man breathing had one; most of the time we could control him, but every once in a while, the little fucker escaped. Just like mine did as he dragged my ass out of the pool and toward Bella...

It was as if I was watching myself as I saw my arms wrap around her tiny waist. I felt myself pick her up and tuck her into my side and run for the pool. I would be the first to admit that I, Edward Anthony Cullen, grabbed a handful of Bella Swan's breast, and just like it looked, it felt perfect.

Then all hell broke loose.

I suddenly became conscious of the fact that I had just thrown myself
and her, fully-clothed, into the pool. What I hadn't realized was that she'd had her Blackberry still in her hand and that I had managed to jostle her so roughly that I had managed to break her flip-flops and her sunglasses.

Fuck. My. Life.

Just when I thought things couldn't get any worse, I heard it.

"Edward Anthony Cullen!"

As a child, you know you're in really deep trouble when all three of your names come out of your mother's mouth at the top of her lungs. I would have had to say that would be an understatement in this case.

I sat at my parent's kitchen island with my head planted firmly in my hands. Why in the hell did I let myself do such a disrespectful, childish, moronic thing? I had no rational excuses; my inner twelve year old was doing summersaults behind me. The loud bang of my mother slamming the back door brought me out of my mental meltdown. Here I sat, a grown man with huge responsibilities, and I was absolutely terrified of my mother.

"Edward," her voice was now calm but cautious. I was really scared now. My father had once told me that when women were yelling and screaming at you that you really had nothing to worry about. However, if they were ever really calm...be afraid, be very afraid.

"Y-Yes, Ma'am?"

"Did you forget how to treat guest in your home while you were away in Chicago?"

"N-No, Ma'am."

"Edward, can you please look at me."

I didn't want to. I didn't want to see the disappointment that was certainly written all over her face. But to my surprise, that wasn't what I found. Instead of disappointment, I found concern. Her warm eyes bore into mine. Her hand was now lying over top of my forearm. My mother's touch was the one thing that could calm me. When I was a little boy and I didn't feel well or had had a bad day, I knew that if I could just get to her and have her hug me, everything would be okay. This time was no different as I felt the tension leave my body.

"Mom, I can't begin to tell you how sorry I am..."

"I know, dear."
Of course she knew; she was my mother, she always knew. Truth was my only avenue with her.

"Edward, I need you to listen to me for a few minutes, can you do that?"

"Of course."

Like I had a choice.

I leaned back on in the stool and gave her my undivided attention.

"Son, you need to understand that Bella isn't just your father's nurse." She slid out the chair next to me and took a seat. "Bella is family. She's been here for your father and me for the past several years. She's the daughter that I just didn't get a chance to give birth to.

"Bella's loyal, and she's honest to a fault. She's worked her butt off to get to where she is now. She owns her own home and takes care of herself. She hasn't been without heartache, but she hasn't let that stop her.

"What you did today was inexcusable. You will apologize."

I knew that before she told me, though I knew she was about to tell me how much I would be apologizing.

"Do you care to explain your actions?"

Oh, shit.

"Mom..."

"Son, it was a rhetorical question. I know why you did it."

Huh?

How the fuck did she know if I hadn't a clue?

"Don't think for one second that I didn't catch you copping a feel of my Bella's left breast."

Holy fucking mother of shit! Fucking called out by my own mother.

The smug look on her face made my balls crawl up inside my stomach. Yeah, a look like that from your mother was natural birth control.

"See, my son, you've never had to really work for the attention of the young ladies. You're like your father in that regard. However, just
like your father, you've finally come to the stage in your life where you want more than a flirty smile and a short skirt."

Holy shit, my mother could read fucking minds.

"Bella doesn't fall for your crooked little smile, and she won't be dazzled by your wealth or expensive, meaningless tokens. She's an uncomplicated, yet much deeper person than that and she won't put up with your shenanigans. How can I say this? She'll hand you your ass with a pretty little bow tied around it if given a reason. That night in the restaurant, I saw how she left you speechless, and with the truth no less. Listen, Edward, I know you didn't mean to nearly drown her today. However, you've met your match. Apologize."

My mother was right, as always. I gave her a big hug and left her sitting at the island. I made my way up to my room. I changed into dry clothes and sat down at my desk. The words my mother had used came back to me. Bella was the first girl who had not thrown herself at me. The opposite was true as she had made it quite clear that she didn't care for me. I knew Bella was a good person...and fuck me if she wasn't beautiful.

Now, how to fix this?

First thing I needed to do was to replace the items that my actions had caused to become damaged. I remembered the girl from the cell phone store had been affected by my smile and so I headed out to get Bella a new phone. Afterwards, I stopped by the mall and purchased new sunglasses and flip-flops for her, picking up a Starbucks gift card on the way home for her as well.

But that was just the beginning, though; I needed to undo the damage I had caused.

As my mother had warned, Bella was a simple person with simple tastes. Unlike the women I was accustomed to, she wasn't the kind of girl that was impressed by money. Bella needed to have proof of my sincerity. She needed to understand that I did have honorable intentions when it came to her. Perhaps Bella was just like me, I was what many people referred to as old-fashioned. I liked to be romantic and to romance. It was a lost art in my opinion and highly underrated these days.

My mother was fortunately just like me in her old-fashioned, romantic ways and had made it a point to always have stationary in the house. I decided to use what I already knew about Bella to my advantage. First, she was a closet Starbuck addict. Second, she was uncomplicated, and this was evident by the way she dressed and kept her office. Third, and this was odd to me for a woman, but I didn't get the feeling Bella would be happy about flowers being sent to her. I couldn't explain it, but I knew she would be more receptive to a hot cup of Starbucks, a
new iPhone, and some nice Ray-Bans and new flip-flops. Finally, I just knew she would welcome an old-fashioned gesture.

With a deep breath, I clicked my ink pen and began to write:

Dear Isabella,

Please let me begin by apologizing to you for my rude behavior. The way I treated you was inexcusable. You have been nothing but loyal and trustworthy to my family and I thank you.

I won't begin to insult you by sending you generic flowers or trinkets. Enclosed you will find a replacement for the phone I ruined as well as the sunglasses and shoes I broke. I hope that you will enjoy the enclosed gift card and use it to satisfy your cravings for caramel macchiato, may each and every sip warm and comfort you.

I took the liberty of having all of your contact information transferred to the new phone and have been assured everything transferred successfully. I hope it is a satisfactory replacement.

Some of the things that you said about me the other night at dinner were true; however, I would like the opportunity to clarify a few. I also want to apologize to you for my brassiness when I said that you were only a nurse. On the contrary, you are a wonderful nurse and I am only a doctor, as you are already aware, you can do your job without me, but I cannot do mine without you.

I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive my actions and I hope to gain not only your friendship but your trust as well.

I am so sorry.

Edward A. Cullen

I couldn't be certain of how she would receive the gesture, but I had high hopes that at least she wouldn't continue to hate me forever and would eventually forgive me enough to consider being friends.

At this point, that was the best I dared hope for.

7. Chapter 7

Mrs. Meyer still owns it, and thankfully she's a good neighbor that lets us play in her backyard.
This chapter is dedicated to my muse...you know who you are.

Enjoy!

Chapter 6 - Deceiving Appearances

BELLA

The top drawer to my desk was the only one that locked and that was where I kept Edward's note. I must have read it a thousand times since he had given it to me. I could not for the life of me figure him out. I was positive I'd had his kind pegged as being arrogant and self-centered. However, the Edward Cullen that had been in my presence during the past few weeks was anything but. He astonished me that he actually knew my secret love of caramel macchiato and my silent wish for an iPhone.

But what truly floored me was the idea that he had actually taken the time to study me. I felt ashamed that I had only concentrated on the negative things I could find out about him. Not a day went by that I didn't regret my braiding him at the dinner table. No matter what his comment had been, he was still my boss's son and my co-worker, and he was owed more respect than what I had given him.

I would admit that I did have a really great chuckle at his expense when he stormed into my office after Jessica had made it clear to him that she was open to explore the new office dating policy I had passed. Honestly, I thought he would be overjoyed that he had open access to all of Jessica's...assets. Apparently, that was not the case given the tantrum he'd had that day...

"Bella!"

My door slammed open and Edward barged into my office.

"What the...?"

My attention was now completely on him. His eyes were dark with anger and his face was red. His chest was rising and falling quickly as his breathing labored.

"Please explain to me what I ever....scratch that. Bella, please tell me why you told Jessica it was open season for dating...me?"

I couldn't help but chuckle at his current appearance. It was cute really. I was having too much fun at his expense and I was certain I would be bare backing on the bus to hell.

"First off, Dr. Cullen, when we attempt to enter a closed door, it's customary to knock first. I can assure you that your lovely mother..."
would smack you silly if she could see you now. Second...

"Cut the sarcasm, Swan, you need to tell your little man-eater out there to keep her fucking hands to herself. Understand?"

"Seriously? Dr. Cullen, Jessica weighs maybe a buck fifteen and you, you're nearly twice her weight. I fail to see why..."

"Because I find her vile and women like her disgust me! When I want the attention of a lady, I'll ask for it. Aren't we here to work and not fuck around? Deal with her, Swan, or else."

With that, he had spun on his heels and slammed my office door behind him. If I hadn't been giggling so hard, I might have been pissed.

Friday was my birthday and in the past, I had always been able to keep it on the down-low. My dad would usually call me, but I was doubtful that he would this year as we still hadn't spoken since my visit to Forks. Jacob had never made a big deal of it, either. Come to think of it, I wasn't entirely certain he even knew when it was. Today was Wednesday and Jacob's band mates wanted to have dinner together to "celebrate" my birthday early. They had a show to do at a local bar Friday evening and wouldn't be able to hang out on my actual birthday and that was okay with me. Alice had begged me for weeks to have a girls' night out with her, Rosalie, and Angela so I was corned into doing that this Friday. No one knew it was my birthday and I planned to keep it that way.

I was about to head out for the day when Angela buzzed me that Bree Tanner was holding on the line for me and said it was urgent. We hadn't seen much of Bree and her son, Riley, since Edward had placed him on the nebulizer. I silently prayed that nothing was seriously wrong as I reached for the phone.

"Thank you for holding, this is Bella, how can I help you?"

"Oh, thank god, Bella, I'm so sorry to be bothering you, but..."

Bree was not a complainer and I knew she would never call unless she had to. She was a single mom who worked her ass off to provide for her little boy. Riley's dad wasn't really in the picture. My heart was literally in my chest as I typed Riley's name into the computer to look up his chart. I knew Edward was still in the building, as I could hear him talking to someone on his phone. I knew I could count on him to jump in the car with me if we needed to.

"Bree, it's okay, what's up? Is everything okay?"

"Oh, shit. Oh, I'm sorry, Bella."
I chucked at her choice of words. "It's okay, Bree."

"Okay, so, well, do you remember when Dr. Cullen placed Riley on that breathing machine thing?"

"Yes, Bree, I think we'd tried to get one for a while. Please, go on, is he okay?"

"Oh, shit...no, no, he's fine. Um, see, the problem is that yesterday I got a letter in the mail that Riley's machine had a recall and it told me to take it back to the pharmacy and so I did. The pharmacist called the company and they told him to give me a new one, which was great because Dr. Cullen was right when he said it would really help him. Anyway, I was signing the paperwork for the new machine when I noticed that the paper said that the first machine was purchased with a credit card. I was kind of confused because I don't have one of those and so I looked at the copy of the receipt and noticed that it had a line of numbers like the credit card receipts we have at the diner. Under the numbers was the name Edward Cullen and American Express."

I was speechless. Edward had paid for Riley's nebulizer.

"That's not all, Bella. When I left your office last time, I had to stop off at the electric company to make arrangements to pay my bill. I had to show them ID and when I took out my wallet to get my driver's license, I noticed a piece of paper hanging out of my change compartment so I opened it up. Bella, I hadn't planned on being able to pay any money at the time. I just wanted them to give me three more days until I got my paycheck.

"But when I opened up that change pocket, I found a wad of money there. I pulled it out and there was four hundred dollars. I nearly shit myself. At first, I thought I had the wrong wallet and I had someone else's purse, but I removed the money and a dry cleaning ticket fell out. The name on the ticket read Edward Cullen. Bella, for the first time in months, I was able to pay my entire electric bill and buy groceries."

I was so glad Bree couldn't see me right now as I sat at my desk with my mouth hanging wide open. This could not be real. There was no way in hell that Edward Cullen had a heart. He was an ass. He was self-centered. He thought every woman wanted him. FUCK! How was I supposed to hate him now?

"Bella, the reason I called was that I wanted to thank you and Dr. Cullen for all you've done for my son and me, and to let Dr. Cullen know about the credit card slip thing, to make sure they didn't charge him again."
I knew the cost of just the machine alone was nearly one hundred fifty dollars, and then to add replacement masks and hoses, not to mention the cost of the medication, and it was a lot of money. I held my head in my hands as I hung up the phone. I was an ass. No, I was a royal bitch.

Dinner that night was simply spaghetti. It was easy and quick, and at this point, I was in no mood to fuss with much more. I was expecting Jacob and the guys at any moment. I was hoping after dinner we could sit around and play a little. Jacob had been the one to teach me how to play guitar. At first, it was just something to do. Then when Jacob joined the band, it was work and money. Now, for me at least, it was still a fun stress release. I would admit that Jacob was one hell of a guitar player; however, I was better. The sound of the doorbell brought a smile to my face, my boys were here.

After dinner was done, we were still sitting around my dining table just talking about random shit. Sitting with my guys was like home for me, comfortable, easy. Jacob kept checking his phone and answering what appeared to be text messages. He didn't bring in his guitar and I suspected that he wouldn't be up for playing tonight. Sam had brought his, as well as Eric and Tyler.

"Hey, Jacob, what the fuck? It's your girl's night. Put the fucking phone away." Sam had obviously witnessed Jacob's continued texting.

"Fuck off, Sam. It's about a job."

"Well, in that case, Jacob, keep up the texting," I encouraged. It had been way too long since Jacob had had a steady income.

"Speaking of your girl, how long has it been for you guys, five, six years?"

"Um..." Jacob didn't even look up as he grunted the words.

"Try eight," I offered.

"Holy shit, Jacob, you guys have been together for eight fucking years? When are you gonna make an honest woman out of her?"

"What the hell is that supposed to mean? I'm already an honest woman," I defended.

The thought of marrying Jacob wasn't even on the table. I firmly believed that I could do fine all by myself. I didn't need Jacob to be a complete person.

"Not what I meant, Bella, and you know it." Tyler had been unusually quiet during dinner and he had said maybe two words since he had
walked through the door, until now. "You know, Jacob, you should just
be glad that Bella didn't kick your sorry ass to the curb when she
found out you only asked her out after losing a bet."

Tyler words caused the entire table to go silent. All eyes turned to
me.

"What the hell are you talking about? What bet?" I questioned
incredulously.

"Oh, come on, Bella, it was a long time ago, but you have to remember
the bet he lost against Quil?"

"No, Tyler, I have no fucking clue what you're talking about."

"Yes, you fucking do. It was right before that dance he took you to.
If I remember it right, the bet was about you chickening out when we
took you cliff diving. He bet you would dive and he lost the bet
because you chickened out, so he had to ask you to that dance."

"No, I fucking don't remember this, and I didn't chicken out. I wasn't
allowed to go if you'll remember correctly. Charlie found out and
forbid me to go."

"Fuck, Bella, what the fuck does it matter? I lost the fucking bet and
had to ask you out, big fucking deal. You just kind of grew on me
after that so I kept you around," Jacob said dismissively while still
texting.

"Kind of grew on you? You've got to be fucking kidding me! I'm not a
fucking zit on your ass, Jacob! It's a fucking big deal to me!"

"Jesus fucking Christ, Bella, it's no big fucking deal! So I forgot to
tell you about some stupid bet. You're still my fucking girlfriend."
Jacob stood abruptly from his chair as he snapped his cell phone shut.
"I .don't fucking need this, I'm outta here."

Jacob stormed toward the door and slammed it behind him as he stomped
out of the house.

I stood there angry as hell, embarrassed, and feeling like a complete
fucking idiot.

Fucking Jacob!

*****

Thursday morning, I arrived at the office to find Edward and Carlisle
already behind closed doors. I pondered briefly if I should make sure
they didn't need anything. Before I could even take a step, the office
door opened and Edward appeared.

"Good, you're finally here. Grab your coffee, we need to talk."

I made my way into my office and put my purse in my desk drawer. I was honestly nervous at this sudden meeting. I tried for the life of me to think of anything that I could have possibly done wrong and came up empty. I chose to forgo my morning coffee, as I thought that perhaps Edward could possibly just want to bitch about something and if that was the case, then non-caffeinated Bella was a mean Bella and would be ready to go toe-to-toe with him. If that were the case then yep, I would definitely be better for battle to go without my caffeine fix.

I made my way into Carlisle's office to find the two of them in hushed conversation...strike one.

"Good morning, Bella," Carlisle, ever the gentleman, rose from his chair when I entered the room. I noticed that Edward followed suit.

"Good morning, Dr. Cullen," turning to Edward, "Dr. Cullen."

"Bella, Edward has brought some things to my attention that I think you should be aware of as well."

Carlisle had a number of patient charts on his desk, as well as several pieces of paper that had handwritten lines on them. From my angle, I couldn't make them out.

"Edward tells me that he's already shared with you his dislike of Nurse Stanley's advances."

"Yes, Sir, he did, yesterday evening."

I couldn't look at Edward. I wasn't certain if he was trying to throw me under the bus yet or not.

"Edward has brought to my attention several patients' charts where Nurse Stanley has made major errors, including incorrectly filing away two severely abnormal test results."

Carlisle handed me the charts and Edward was correct; three serious medication errors had been made and two labs that had major abnormal values had been filed away under normal. This could have been fatal, not to mention ruined our practice.

"I'm sorry, Bella, but Nurse Stanley will need to be written up for this and placed on performance probation." He then handed me the official write up. "Furthermore, Edward would like to make a formal complaint of sexual harassment against her."
Holy shit...

"Perhaps I should start looking to replace her?" I directed that question to Edward.

"Let's just see how the written warning goes first," Carlisle responded, "However, I do think we need to hire at least one more person, as Edward has informed me that he has a friend of his from school that's looking at moving to the area. He's an amazing cardiologist and I hope to sway him our way."

"What's his name, if I could be so bold?"

"You're not being bold at all. His name is Alex Tristan and he and our Edward go way back so I'm certain Edward can tell you anything you want to know about him."

With my morning officially in the toilet, as Jessica had chosen today to call in sick, I jumped in feet first and began my day of juggling two very busy physicians. By lunchtime, I was mentally and physically drained. Rosalie and Alice demanded that we girls go to lunch together, and Carlisle demanded he be allowed to foot the bill. So here I sat at Marcy's diner with a double bacon cheeseburger and a side of extra crispy fries. For the first fifteen minutes, no one said a word as we all just ate our food. The diner was surprisingly empty for the time of day and its location, but I didn't question it; I just soaked up the calm.

"Okay, so I need your help with something," I broke the silence at the table.

"Okay. What's up?" Alice chimed from her chair.

"I need to find a good nurse, someone like another one of the two of you."

"Oh, god, Bella, why don't you ask for something hard?"

I knew I was asking a lot. I knew the entire country was in a nursing shortage. That certainly didn't help my situation. The table became quiet again as we were all pondering my dilemma.

"Excuse me. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to eavesdrop on your conversation, but are you really looking for a nurse?"

I turned in my seat to come face to face with by far the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. Her long brown hair was about the same length as mine and she had the most intense amber-colored eyes. She was sitting alone in the booth beside us. She quickly extended her hand out to me.
"I'm sorry, let me introduce myself. My name is Dominique. I've been a nurse for six years. I currently work in the ER at Virginia Mason, but I'm getting burned out. I'd love to at least give you my resume."

Dominique's hand was warm and firm. Her skin was like porcelain and cream. Her eyelashes were so thick they framed her eyes. Her smile was so bright you could have done surgery by it.

"Well, Dominique, come by the office and let's have you fill out some paperwork and see if we can talk a little more formally."

She agreed and I gave her the address. She questioned if this was Dr. Cullen's office and I advised her it was. This made her smile to herself. I had a good feeling about her.

"Hey, Bella, why are you looking for a new nurse anyway? Do we have something to worry about?" Alice questioned concerned.

"No, no, Alice, you guys are fine. Unofficially, Carlisle is trying to get another physician."

"Anybody we know?" Rosalie questioned.

"Not one that I've heard of. His name is Alex Tristan."

"Holy fucking shit!" Alice shouted while pulling out her iPhone.

"Jesus Christ, Alice, I don't think they quite heard you in Tacoma."

"Bite me, Bella. You'll be shouting, too, when you see what he looks like."

Alice made quick work of bringing up his picture. She quickly thrust her phone into my hand. I took the phone and looked at the screen. I began to laugh as I looked the picture.

"Alice, you're such a moron. This is a picture of Steven Strait." I tossed her phone back at her.

"Don't be such a bitch, Bella. I know he looks just like him, but I swear it's him. He's a major hottie. He's also very fucking brilliant. Hell, Mayo clinic offered him major bucks last year to join them and he turned them down. Apparently, he has family around here and has been trying to get back into the area."

I pulled out my own phone and quickly Googled him. Sure enough, the same picture appeared. He was definitely fucking hot, and I had only two words...Jacob who?
So, Steven Strait is a real person, and yes, he's definitely fucking hot, Google him. The picture I'm using in this story is from when he played Caleb Danvers in The Covenant, which didn't get great reviews, but I really liked it.

Before I get any hate mail about Bella falling for Dr. Tristan...it isn't going to happen.

I have to give you a REC this week. Remember when I asked for a story that wasn't your typical boy-meets-girl-they-fall-in-like angstfest? Well, I finally found one – Cotton Creek by rtgirl. Read it, you'll love it!

8. Chapter 8

So, this chapter is long and I t about to apologize for it. I couldn't stop once the words began to fall out of me. Thank you so much to all of you that are reviewing and saving me to your favorites. Dollybigmomma gave this a good scrubbing

As always, I own nothing. SM is the holder of it all.

Chapter 7 – Boardrooms to Bar Rooms

EDWARD

The pool incident seemed to magically disappear after Bella had received my note, and for that I was grateful. I waited patiently in my office when I saw that the box had been delivered. I wanted so badly for Bella to come running into my office and throw her arms around my neck and thank me over and over for my heartfelt, old-fashioned apology. I knew this wouldn't happen, though. Bella wasn't that type of girl. She was the type that calculated everything. I would be willing to bet she had never made a rash decision in her life. In some twisted way, the more she hated me, the closer I wanted to be to her.

My brothers had been pursuing their nurses romantically and I was fairly certain that Emmett and Rosalie had become intimate based on the sounds coming from his room. I, on the other hand, had attracted the attention of my nurse, Jessica. She had wasted little time in informing me that Bella had given her blessing in her pursuit of dating me. What Jessica failed to notice was that I couldn't stand her. I had spent most of my adult life avoiding women like her. She wore her clothes too tight and used far too much makeup. Nothing turned me off more than having makeup smeared all over me when I
hugged a girl. Even if she were to change all of that, her voice was like nails on a chalkboard, and her personality was totally off-putting. I watched as Jessica was called into Bella's office. I knew Bella would handle the situation of Jessica's advances.

I was convinced that Bella Swan hated me with a passion when she chose Jessica as my nurse. I noticed the large lanky guy that made his way into Bella's office with flowers in hand. What the hell was he thinking? Did this douche really think that the lame-assed flowers he had picked up on the off ramp would get Bella's attention? I heard him introduce himself to Jessica as Jacob Black. I watched as Jessica batted her fake eyelashes at him. I silently prayed he would take her off my hands; they looked like they would be perfect for each other.

When Bella closed the door with him in her office, I felt my heart drop slightly. I knew that I had begun to develop some strong feelings for Bella, and seeing her actually close that door with him behind it caused my heart to hurt. When the door reopened and Jacob walked out only a few moments later, I noticed Jessica once again making eyes at him. He paused at her desk and made several comments to her. She squealed with laughter that made my skin crawl. I watched as they exchanged cell phones and began to exchange numbers. Again, what a douche.

I decided I needed to know more about this Jacob guy and I knew the one person who could give me that information.

"Hello?"

"Hey, Mom."

"Edward?"

"Yes, who else?"

"Sorry, Son, I just didn't expect to hear from you in the middle of the day."

"Yes, well, I have a question for you. It's about Bella."

"Okay, Son, what is it?"

"Who is Jacob Black?"

"Well, first I have to ask you a question."

"I expected that. Ask away, Mom."

"Did you meet him?"
"No, well, not formally. He brought Bella flowers to the office and then exchanged numbers with Jessica before he left."

"Sounds like Jacob. Anyway, to answer your question, Jacob is...well, Son, Bella says he's her boyfriend."

Boyfriend? Seriously? Why was I so shocked? She was fucking beautiful and completely wonderful, why wouldn't she have a boyfriend?

"Son, before you overanalyze what I just said, hear me out."

My mother knew me better than anyone. She knew the moment the word boyfriend came from her mouth that I had already begun to doubt myself.

"Let me tell you a few things about Bella and Jacob. Bella and Jacob grew up together. Their fathers are best friends. Jacob asked her to be his girlfriend eight years ago. Eight years, Edward."

Shit, this was worse than I thought.

"After eight years, don't you think they would be married or at least be living together by now?"

"Well...yes. Are they?"

"No, Edward, they aren't. They aren't even engaged. They're never together. She admitted to me that they've never even told each other they love each other."

Huh?

"Eight years is a long time for a girl to stay in a loveless relationship. But Bella is loyal, Edward."

It was crystal clear. I had a chance.

"So maybe the sex is really good, Mom. I mean maybe he's fantastic in the sack..."

"Edward, Bella and Jacob aren't sleeping together."

"How the hell...?"

"She told me, Edward. She won't sleep with someone she doesn't love."

I couldn't believe it. I couldn't help myself; I started to do the happy dance in my office. I had a chance, I had to change the way she looked at me. For the first time ever, I wanted a girl to fall for my charm.
I ended my call with my mother with a new focus. I was going to win Bella. I was going to make her mine. I began to formulate a plan. I had to appear to remain the same. I wanted this to be all on Bella's terms. The ringing of my phone brought me out of my daydreaming.

"Dr. Cullen."

"Hey, honey."

"Kate! How are you, sweetheart?"

"I miss you, but otherwise I'm fine."

"I miss you, too. What's up?"

"Not much, I just thought I'd give you a call. We haven't gotten to talk much since you moved."

"I'm sorry, Kate. I've been so busy just adjusting to things here. I love being back home."

"You sound very happy. I'm glad you're settling in. I can't wait to visit you, though."

"Yeah, I'm looking forward to that as well. It seems like forever since we saw each other."

"So, tell me everything. Oh, shit...wow, um...yeah, I'll see what I can do. Tell him to call me. Anyway, as far as what's going on here, I'm finally in a place where I feel like I'm doing something positive. I love working with my dad. For the most part, the staff is great."

"So, how cute is your nurse?"

"Not cute at all. Jessica is horrid. I had my father's nurse, Bella, working with me at first and she's without a doubt the most amazing, wonderful..."

"Edward, I'm not certain if I like the way you say her name...Bella...like she's a breath of fresh air. Do I have a reason to worry?"

"Not in the least, she hates me, actually," I answered with a chuckle.
"Hates you? I'm shocked, Edward Cullen, is your charm fading?"

"No, she just doesn't fall for my antics. She's smart as hell. She doesn't even really need me."

"Maybe I should visit sooner."

Kate coming to visit? Hmm, that could prove...interesting.

*****

I hadn't spoken with Alex Tristan in a long time. He and I had been partnered in a lab class and had been friends ever since. I had assumed he would have been all over the offer from Mayo Clinic, but to my surprise, he turned them down. He had been working with Doctors without Borders since the last time I had seen him. We had exchanged a few emails and I was aware that he wanted to be closer to his family. He had told me that his sister had just had a baby and that he didn't want to miss out on his new niece growing up. I knew exactly how he felt. I really wanted to settle down and start a family myself, thus my decision to pursue Bella.

Tristan called me when I got home that night. He told me he would be back in Seattle in two days. I told my family and my father insisted on having drinks with him. I advised my dad that Tristan was in the market for a position and he informed me that even with the added staff, he still was turning away patients. I also told my dad about Jessica's recent advances and the fact that I had found several serious errors in her work. We decided to sit down and discuss this with Bella.

It was Thursday before we had everything together to present to Bella. I wanted nothing more than to fire Jessica. However, I knew my father and I knew he would give her enough rope to hang herself. It couldn't come soon enough for my liking.

Tristan was due to arrive this afternoon and my brothers had arranged for us to go to a local bar where they had an open mic night. My brothers and I had always sang and played guitar together. Emmett had arranged for a spot for the three of us to play. I had once used my music to get girls; maybe that could work again.

I knew I had to kick up my efforts to change the way Bella saw me. I would admit I was using all my avenues, including my access to her personnel file. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that tomorrow was her birthday. Knowing my Bella...yes, I said my Bella...she didn't want a huge fuss made. I knew the best way to approach this was to keep my gift to her low-key. I would make it seem like it was just me being nice to her, only she wouldn't be aware of my true intentions.
I felt so bad for Bella when we were informed that Jessica had called out sick today. I knew we were double-booked and that Bella would have to work up both Carlisle's and my patients. I knew how to work up my own patients and had no problem in going the extra mile to impress her.

When the morning was finally over and all the patients had left, my father insisted on the girls leaving the office and having a nice long quiet lunch, giving Bella a much-needed break. Inside, I was protesting not being able to go with them, as my father had asked me to hang back and see a patient that was currently in the hospital.

I hated to miss the opportunity to spend some out of office time with Bella, but duty called.

******

I was finally able to check my phone once rounds were done to discover I had several missed calls. I checked my voicemail to find that Alex was actually waiting for me in my office.

I informed my dad and we hurriedly made our way back to the office. My dad had actually looked very closely at Alex Tristan's credentials. He wanted him, I could tell. Alex was an amazing cardiologist and I had no doubt he could get into any hospital anywhere he wanted.

We finally arrived back at the office. I was a little disappointed that the girls weren't back yet, but we didn't have a schedule this afternoon. I opened the back door and made my way to my office. The smell of Bella's perfume hit me as I passed her office and I had to adjust myself just from that. Damn, I was a horny bastard for her.

Alex had made himself comfortable with his feet propped up on my desk. He had his phone in his hand and looked to be texting away.

"Hey, dickface," I called out to him as I entered my office.

"What's up, Edwina?" he replied as we hugged each other.

"Dad, this is my good friend, Dr. Alex Tristan. Dr. Tristan, this is my father, Dr. Carlisle Cullen."

Handshakes ensued and we settled in and began to catch up.

"So, Alex, Edward tells me you're considering moving back to the area."

"Well, that's half correct. I'm already here and I'm currently looking for a place to practice."
"Any luck yet? I mean with your background, you should have lots of options," Carlisle was baiting him.

"I don't want just any place to work. I want to work somewhere that I can really help people. I want a life also. My sister just had a baby and I want to be able to see her grow up. Honestly, I'd like to find a girl that would put up with my sorry ass and have a few kids of my own." Alex had that far-off look when he said the last part.

"Well, Alex, based on what I know about your background and the kind of company you kept in medical school," my dad winked at me, "I'm definitely interested. I don't know what kind of terms you're looking for, but I would love to have you on my staff."

"Carlisle, honestly, the only term I'm really looking at is that I get to actually practice medicine. Oh, and a cute nurse would be a bonus."

"Well, Dr. Tristan, I can't guarantee a cute nurse, but I can guarantee you can practice the kind of medicine you're hoping to. However, when you meet my nurse, just remember, she's MY nurse."

Dr. Tristan and my father extended their hands out to each other once again. A gentleman's agreement had just been made.

"So, you have my curiosity piqued in regards to your nurse. What's so special about her? Is she a Victoria's Secret model or something?"

My father and I glanced at each other and began to chuckle. I shook my head and pinched the bridge of my nose.

"No, she isn't a model, although I'm certain she could be if she wanted to. No, she's just really good at what she does and she takes care of all of us. She even handed Edward's balls to him on a silver platter."

"What? The Cullen charm failed you?"

"Shut it, and Dad, could you please never discuss my balls again?"

"Oh, Edwina, lighten up, your dad saw your balls long before you started playing with them."

Oh, god, kill me now...

My father took Alex to his office and began to work out all of the details of him working here. He told me to hang around, as he was going to call a staff meeting as soon as the girls got back from lunch. I went to my office and began to catch up on paperwork. I heard the back door open and was blessed with the most pleasant sound in the
world...Bella's laughter. I chuckled to myself and continued to work.

BELLA

Fatty, greasy food was just what I needed after my morning from hell. Meeting Dominique at the diner I was certain would be a blessing in disguise. The longer I spoke with her, the more I liked her. I was glad she had already given her notice at Virginia Mason. She had said she'd just had a feeling the time was right to do that, so she had followed her instincts, which I was glad for. I had instructed her to come by the office this afternoon. I wanted to talk further with her and have Carlisle meet her. I hoped he liked her as much as I did.

"Okay, Bella, we're still on for tomorrow night, right?" Alice spoke from my backseat.

"Yes, definitely, I could so use a night of bad beer and lousy music."

The bar we had agreed to meet at had an open mic night every Friday night. I had gone several times and had endured many people who thought they could sing. I had never attempted to play at this particular bar. I had filled in many times for the band that Jacob played in, however, at other venues. Seth had told me over and over that I should quit nursing and go pro. Jacob always rolled his eyes and snickered condescendingly. He truly believed he was a better guitar player than me.

Whatever.

"So, I'll be at your house at six to help you dress."

"The hell you will, Alice. I'm wearing jeans and a shirt. This is a bar, not a club. I am NOT there to impress anyone," I glanced in my rearview mirror as I responded.

"But, Bella..."

"Alice, what part of no do you not understand?"

"Ugh, you suck, Bella."

"Not on the first date, Alice."

We all busted into laughter as we entered the back door of the office. I went to my office and noticed that Carlisle's door was closed. I tried not to think anything of it, but this was odd as he never closed it. Angela buzzed me a few minutes later to inform me that Dominique was waiting for me. I asked her to send her back.

Once inside my office, we spent the next half hour just learning about
one another. Dominique asked that I call her "Nicki". I told her that I could feel her pain on that one and shared with her that my name was actually Isabella. Nicki was twenty-seven and had lived in Seattle all of her life. She lived alone with her dog, Rufus, a cocker spaniel. She had a grandmother in Tacoma, but her parents lived in Florida near Palm Beach. She was single, had never been married, and had no children. She admitted that she did want to get married and start a family soon. She admitted that she hadn't found a guy that could get past her ability to take care of herself.

I invited Alice and Rosalie to join us in our discussion. Rosalie fell in love with her when she discovered they both knew far too much about cars. I was lost to the conversation when they started discussing limited slip differential. Alice fell in love when Nicki admitted to being a Jimmy Choo shoe whore. She would fit in here well. Now if only Carlisle liked her.

I finally left the room and crossed the hall to discover Carlisle's door was now open and all of the doctors were standing around his desk. Carlisle noticed me immediately.

"Bella, I'm glad you're back. I want to have a quick staff meeting to announce our new doctor."

I smiled as I turned to my right and looked wide-eyed into the face of none other than Dr. Alex Tristan.

Oh, fuck me! His picture did not do him justice.

"Dr. Tristan, this is my nurse, Bella Swan."

Dr. Tristan extended his hand out to meet mine. His grip was firm yet gentle. His hands, like Edward's, felt as if they had never done a hard day's work in their life, but they were nice. His finger weren't as long as Edward's, but his skin was definitely darker, though not as dark as Jacob's. Suddenly, I caught myself as I wondered why the hell I was comparing him to Edward.

"So, this is the infamous Bella," Dr. Tristan voice was pleasant, not husky and sexy like...ugh!

My attention turned back to Carlisle as I shot him a quick glare. "What the hell have you been telling people?"

Laughter suddenly broke out in the room.

"Only that you were my nurse and that he could only borrow you."

"Oh, hell no, Dr. Cullen, I'm a nurse, not a Nickelback CD that you can lend out to your friends."
"That's not what I meant and you know it, young lady."

Dr. Tristan broke the tension. "Well, now I see what you meant, Carlisle. You really are a little ball-breaker."

I just smirked at him. He had no idea...

"Dr. Cullen, I have someone I'd like you to meet. She's currently a nurse at Virginia Mason and she's interested in joining our little circus."

"Well, by all means bring her to the meeting then."

I made my way back to my office to gather the rest of the staff. I advised everyone that Carlisle had just hired another new physician. I decided not to tell them who it was just yet, as I wanted to see Alice pee her pants. Yeah, I knew I was going to hell for that one.

As usual, I was one of the last to enter the boardroom. I had wanted a cup of coffee, but there just wasn't time to go across the street and get one. With Nicki in tow, I entered the door and began to look for a couple of chairs.

"Dr. Cullen this is..."

"Nicky Cavaletti! Oh, my goodness, how are you, sweetheart?"

What the fuck?

"Dr. Cullen, it's been too long. You look great, I swear you never age."

Nicky and Carlisle embraced in a heartwarming hug and I instantly knew there was a long history there.

"Oh, gosh, well...Nicky, I'm glad to have you on staff finally, this is definitely long overdue."

Even though I felt like I had been the butt end of a bad joke, I was still elated that Carlisle obviously like Nicki. I noticed there were two empty chairs between Alex and Edward. I made my way over to have a seat and get this meeting underway. As I reached for the back of a chair, Edward arose from his seat and pulled the chair next to him out for me. I simply smiled at him and sat down. I had never had a man pull out a chair for me before...it was nice. As I sat down and placed my notepad on the table in front of me, I noticed a tall cup of coffee being slid across the table from Edward's direction. I turned to my left to face him as he winked at me. How did he know I was craving a caramel macchiato right then? I mouthed a quick thank you. He quietly
replied, "Anytime". I turned back to my left just in time to witness Dr. Tristan pulling out a chair for Nicki.

The meeting was essentially fairly boring. Carlisle advised us of the staff changes and had each of the new staff members formally introduce themselves. Next he was discussing getting ideas for the holiday parties that he and Esme had wanted to have. I would be honest and fully admit that I totally zoned out at one point. I began to feel this strangely wonderful chill in the room. It was hard to really describe, but it wasn't like a cold air chill. No, it was almost like static electricity. To any avail, it was really nice. Towards the end of the meeting, Nicki leaned her entire body in my direction and whispered in my ear, "One question, Swan."

"Ask away," I whispered to her.

"Do you even bother to wear panties to work anymore?"

I could only chuckle at her. However, that was an interesting question. It was bad enough that all of the Cullen men looked like they were carved from white chocolate. Now we had Dr. Tristan to admire all day.

Did I mention I loved my job?

I woke the next morning before my alarm. I hated when I did that. I mean sleep for me was a serious issue. To top it off, today was my birthday. I tossed back my covers and jumped into the shower. I quickly dressed and made my bed before I made my way to my kitchen. I chanced a glance at my living room; thankfully, Jacob was nowhere to be found. The day that Jacob had brought me flowers to my office, he had told me he was going to be a better boyfriend. Little did I know that meant he would stay away. I hadn't gotten a phone call or text since that day in my office. I guess I should have been really upset. I mean he was my boyfriend and I was supposed to be pissed off right now, right? I, however, being the person I was, only smiled as I took my first sip of coffee...oh, god, that was good.

I made my way to my office as usual. I found that both Carlisle and Edward's cars were already in the parking lot. I made my way to my office where I found a steaming hot cup of coffee and a blueberry muffin waiting on my desk. I smiled silently to myself. I tossed my purse in my desk drawer and took a big whiff of the golden hot goodness of my favorite drink on the planet...caramel macchiato. I lifted the blueberry muffin to find a small business card-sized note that only had one simple statement:

...Your secret is safe with me...

I had no clue what that meant, but I was positive that Edward was
responsible for my early morning treat.

Friday was a good catch-up day for us. I had Nicki come by and fill out her paperwork and showed her around. I was so thankful that it took less than an hour to completely train her. She was as good a nurse, if not better, than I was. Carlisle had Dr. Tristan in his office as well today. I silently thanked the birthday god for the Levi's button-fly jeans that Dr. Tristan was wearing so fucking well today. They certainly did a body good.

The girls and I liked Nicki so much that we all agreed she should join us later for our girls' night out. When nearly everyone had left, Nicki asked if she could have a word in private.

"Okay, Bella, I need to ask you a question that I don't want spread around the entire office."

"I'm not like that, Nicki. You can ask me anything."

"Well, it's more like I don't want to put my job on the line..."

"Nicki, stop...okay, look, this is off the record. Now, what's up?"

"Dr. Tristan. Is he...are you...oh, god. Okay, are you interested in him...sexually?"

"Are you serious?"

"Very. Bella, I really like him. But if you're trying for him, then I'll respect that."

"No, no, he's all yours. I'm actually in a relationship."

"So, are there any office policies against dating him? I mean will Carlisle be pissed?"

"Not at all, just keep it professional while you're here or else there'll be a ban imposed on intra-office dating."

I locked up the office as the cleaning crew was arriving. I jumped in my car and made my way across town to the bar we had agreed to. I pulled into the parking lot to find Rosalie and Alice's cars already here. I parked my car near a street light...my dad would be so proud. I was sad at the thought of my father, he still hadn't called me and he had always called me on my birthday.

I entered the bar only to be stopped by Bruno, the bouncer. He checked my ID and motioned for me to go ahead. I stopped by the bar and ordered myself a Miller Lite in a bottle. Another thing I had been taught, always drink from a bottle when you were at a bar and make
sure you watched the bartender open it. I went a step further and told him I would open it myself. I quickly found Alice and Rose sitting at a table near the stage area. I took an open seat and began to slowly relax. We sat and chatted about absolutely nothing for a good forty-five minutes before Nicki finally joined us.

"Sorry I'm late, guys. I had to turn in my ID and final paperwork to Virginia Mason. I'm now officially free of that place and ready to celebrate."

The bartender brought another round of drinks and even brought me an unopened bottle again. It really was so nice to just sit back and talk about stupid shit. I didn't really get to do this kind of stuff very often. On the occasional night I filled in for one of the band members, I was always drinking water. I couldn't really relax when I was on stage with the guys. For one, some guys found it very stimulating for a girl to play a kick ass guitar so I needed my wits about me to defend myself if need be. I was not saying I was the best guitar player in the world, but I did set my standards high. Second, I was always concentrating on the songs that were being played, so a clear head was crucial for me. Sam liked to show off his vocal skills. Not to say Sam couldn't sing, he could, he just sometimes tried to sing over the music and not with it, so I needed to be able to counter him.

We must have sat and talked for three hours before I heard the first performer take the stage for open mic night. It was a young girl who couldn't have been more than twenty-one. She had her guitar that had cute little stickers plastered all over it. Her guitar strap was Hello Kitty and a few drunken idiots made a few lewd comments. She took her seat on the wooden barstool and began to sing some Kelly Clarkson song. She had a decent enough voice and with a little more practice and some new strings, she could be a decent guitar player.

I turned my attention back to the table and we continued to laugh and talk. Nicki was telling us about the time she had to hold a baby's head off its umbilical cord as they wheeled the mom into surgery for an emergency C-section. I commented to her that they baby would never know that by her having her hand stuffed inside it mother's cooch, she had saved it's life. Not to mention it gave the male attendants new spunk file material.

We laugh so hard we nearly missed the next performers that had taken the stage. I was in the middle of telling Nicki about how I met Carlisle when I heard the first strum of guitar strings. I turned my attention back to the stage. What I found nearly knocked me off my chair.

Three chairs now graced the stage. The lights in the room had been turned down and the stage had been illuminated. The main spotlight was
casting light directly on the three new performers. They had their heads bowed, causing their faces to remain in the shadow. You could tell that they were males by the size of them; their body structures were definitely male. The man on the left began to strum his guitar. He was good, I'd give him that. I didn't recognize the song at first. His voice was this wonderful warm and husky tone. I closed my eyes just to enjoy that voice.

I hung up the phone tonight

Something happened for the first time

Deep inside it was a rush, what a rush

Cause the possibility

That you would ever feel the same way

About me, just too much, just too much

I opened my eyes to come face to face with the most piercing set of green eyes.

Edward.

Why do I keep running from the truth?

All I ever think about is you

You got me hypnotized, so mesmerized

And I just got to know

Do you ever think when you're all alone

All that we can be, where this thing can go?

Am I crazy or falling in love?

Is it really just another crush?

His eyes were locked with mine. My heart began to pound in my chest. If I didn't know better, I would think he was singing to me.

Do you catch a breath when I look at you?

Are you holding back like the way I do?

Cause I've tried and tried to walk away
But I know this crush ain't going away-ay-ay
Going away-ay-ay
Has it ever crossed your mind
When we're hanging, spending time, girl?
Are we just friends? Is there more? Is there more?
See it's a chance we've gotta take
'Cause I believe that we can make this into
Something that will last, last forever, forever!
My eyes drifted to his fingers that were skillfully tabbing the notes on the neck of the guitar. I watched as his long fingers slid effortlessly across the strings. His eyes never left my face.
Why do I keep running from the truth?
All I ever think about is you
You got me hypnotized, so mesmerized
And I just got to know
Do you ever think when you're all alone
All that we could be, where this thing could go?
Am I crazy or falling in love?
Is it really just another crush?
Do you catch a breath when I look at you?
Are you holding back like the way I do?
'Cause I've tried and tried to walk away
But I know this crush ain't going away-ay-ay
This crush ain't going away-ay-ay
Going away
Going away-ay-ay
Going away-ay-ay

When the song was over, the entire bar erupted in applause. I could only sit there and stare back at him. Was he singing to me? Did I want him to be?

I knew at that moment, if Edward Cullen had indeed been singing to me, everything had just changed...

I told you not to worry about Bella and Alex. I have to admit that I am both excited and terrified of the next chapter, though, as something big is about to happen. Thanks for reading, and please show me some love if you like what you're reading!

'I'm no

9. Chapter 9

Hello (tap) (tap) (tap) is this thing on?

Here we are again...

I wanted to thank all of you who are reviewing and saving to favorites.

I also wanted to let you guys know I have a new fiction in the works. It is going to be a sampling of all of my favorite love scenes from my favorite movies. It's called Prince Charming Syndrome. Give it a try, I think you'll like it.

As we all know, I do not own Stephanie's characters, but I do own my plot...enjoy!

EDWARD

"Question for you."

Alex sat opposite me in my office after our little meeting. Honestly, I had no idea what the hell had even happened in that meeting. I was far too focused on the beautiful brunette that was sitting beside me. Something in the air had definitely changed between us.

"Shoot," I responded to Alex.

"How in the fuck do you not walk around here with a hard-on all day? I mean seriously, Rosalie..."
I knew I had to stop him dead in his tracks before Emmett ripped him a new one.

"Let me stop you right there, Romeo," my hand rose into the air, "Rosalie is with Emmett and I can guarantee you he'll rip your balls off if he heard you right now."

"Okay, okay, forget Rosalie. Let's talk about Bella..." he smirked as he leaned back into his chair.

"Nope, she's in a relationship." The word relationship nearly made me sick. I didn't even know Jacob, but I was certain he didn't deserve her.

"Okay, not where I was going with that. I'm actually more interested in Nicki, so back to my question."

"Sorry, man, can't help you with that one. I don't seem to have any problems in that department."

It was a lie. I was constantly in a state of erection. Even when she cut me down to size, I wanted her.

"Bullshit, Cullen. You get a hard-on when the wind blows in the right direction."

"Pfff, whatever." I began to collect my things. I had only a few more charts to finish, but I had more pressing matters to attend to, namely the current hard-on I had residing in my jeans.

"Not so fast, bro...does Kate know?" He was playing with me. He knew the answer to his question before he even asked it. I was better at this game, though.

"Does Kate know what?"

"That you're fucking Bella."

Okay, Alex and I went way back and we had been through a ton of shit together. I always knew that if I needed Alex, he would be there for me. I also knew he loved Kate as much as I did. During medical school, we were the three musketeers. This, however, he didn't know shit about.

"First off, Alex, watch your fucking mouth. Second, I'm NOT fucking Bella."

"Maybe not, my friend, but you want to and that makes it my business."
"I'll say this again. I'm not fucking Bella." I wanted so much more from her. I wanted to be her everything. I wanted to sneak in kisses in one of our offices. I wanted to touch her softly as we passed in the hall. I wanted to curl up with her as we watched TV. I wanted to make mad passionate love to her as often as possible.

"Promise me that you'll keep up your end of the bargain when it comes to Kate," his eyes were fixed on mine.

"I've never let Kate down in my life."

"Let's keep it that way."

I knew enough about Alex to know he was serious and he knew I would never hurt Kate.

"Listen, my brothers and I are heading over to a local bar later for open mic night, care to join us?"

Alex and I had played around for open mic nights when we were in med school. He was a fairly decent guitar player and he had some mad vocals. It just wasn't his passion, though.

"Alright, I'll meet you guys there."

I was running late to meet the guys at the bar. Emmett wanted a few minutes to run through the music one more time. However, I got lost in my thoughts while taking a shower. Needless to say, my thoughts were all about Bella.

I grabbed my guitar and headed into the back entrance as Jasper had instructed me. Once inside, I found Emmett about to have kittens.

"It's about fucking time, dude! They just called for us."

"Sorry, man," I hissed back at him as I took my guitar out of the case.

I followed my brothers down the long dark hallway behind the main stage. Once we stepped onto the platform, I noticed the three barstools sitting empty under the lights. I could hear the sounds of people laughing and glasses clinking. I made my way over to the empty stools and slid atop one. I had the strangest sensation running through me. I wasn't nervous; hell, I loved to play in front of a crowd. No, this was different. I looked to my left and noticed that Jasper was still getting settled. I chose to take a quick look around the room. What I found nearly knocked me off my barstool...Bella was here.

I couldn't take my eyes away from her. She was so beautiful she
literally took my breath away. I watched as she laughed at what was being said at the table, as if she hadn't a care in the world. I watched as she brought her beer up to her pink lips and took a long slow drink. I watched as she swallowed her drink and licked her lips after.

"Hey, guys, can you follow my lead for a second?"

My brothers and I had always been able to pick up on each other. They knew something was up. I took a deep breath and began to play the first thing that came to mind. The first time I had heard the song, I wondered to myself what the poor sap was feeling when he wrote it. Now, here looking at Bella, I knew.

My eyes never left hers as I continued to play. I prayed that she would listen to the lyrics and understand that she had a choice. She didn't have to stay in a loveless relationship. I could give her all the love and attention she deserved. All she had to do was let me.

The song ended and I noticed that Alex had joined their table. I made eye contact with him and he gave me a head nod. I wouldn't be able to deny my feeling for Bella now. Alex seemed to send me the 'I've got my eye on you' look as he took his seat beside Bella. She turned to him and appeared to say hello. Jasper got my attention and reminded me that we needed to continue with our set. I watched Bella as she seemed to stare off into the distance as if in deep thought. Was she thinking of me? Of us?

Suddenly, she looked back at me as I continued to play the next song. Her eyes were so deep with emotion. I wanted nothing more than to jump off this stage and throw her over my shoulder and take her home with me. Shit! I lived with my fucking parents. I needed to rectify that situation asap!

Just as we were finishing our song, Bella stood from her chair and made her way to the door. I wanted to go after her and tell her how I felt. However, the rational side of me knew that wouldn't be the smartest thing to do right now. Bella was the type of girl who always did the right thing. She would never start a relationship with me when she was still with Jacob. I would bide my time, I would show her how relationships were supposed to be...then I would make my move and she would be mine.

BELLA

I could feel my heart beating in my chest. This was crazy! I had a fucking boyfriend, why was I even thinking about Edward Cullen? I would admit I had begun to look at him in a different light. But, this...
This was crazy. I didn't fucking do crazy. I had a boyfriend. I had a fucking boyfriend! I couldn't do this. I couldn't fucking do this.

With my mind made up, I got up from the table and made my way to the door. I didn't even say goodbye to my friends. I had to get out of there. I needed to get home and get back on track with my boyfriend. Jacob loved me, he had to. I jumped into my car and floored the gas pedal as far as it would go. I had to get home to Jacob.

I had never told Jacob that I loved him...you don't.

But I could learn to love him...but you want Edward.

I did not want Edward...keep telling yourself that.

I did not want Edward...denial isn't just a river in Egypt.

I pulled my car into my driveway. I noticed that most of the lights in my house were on, but I didn't see Jacob's car. I grabbed my purse and cell phone and made my way into my front door. As I turned the door handle, I noticed the door was unlocked and David Bowie's Fame 90 was blaring over my stereo speakers. I quietly closed the door behind me. I noticed several empty beer bottles sitting on my coffee table along with the usual mess Jacob always left. I continued walking toward my kitchen when I began to hear voices coming from my bedroom. I stopped in my tracks as I noticed the door was only slightly ajar. With the music still blaring from my speakers, I made my way to my bedroom door.

I placed my hand on the edge of the door and slowly began to open it. What I saw was enough to make my skin crawl. I gasped and then quickly covered my mouth with my hand. There in the middle of my beautiful bed was my boyfriend. He was naked and fucking the shit out of some guy's ass while said guy had his face buried in none other than Jessica Stanley's crotch. Jessica was beneath the guy and was suckling his dick for all it was worth. She had Jacob's balls in one hand while the other held what appeared to be a dildo stuck in Jacob's ass. They were so caught up in each other they failed to notice me standing there. I could not believe what I was seeing. No one would ever believe this. My father would never believe that Jacob was capable of doing something like this. Jacob would certainly deny this ever happened. Jessica...well, fuck me, so much for her wanting to be with Edward.

I didn't know how long I stood there watching them going at each other. It was like a really bad car accident that you really shouldn't be looking at, but you just couldn't turn away. I wanted to turn and run. I wanted to get so far away from the lot of them. But damn it, that was my fucking bed and this was my fucking house, and that was my fucking supposed boyfriend! Anger boiled from deep within me as the idea presented itself. I stuck my hand into my purse and retrieved my
cell phone. I pressed a couple of buttons and began to record Jacob and his fuck fest, making damn sure his face was clear in the recording as well as Jessica's. I took several pictures as well, and once I felt like I had enough, I turned and walked out of the house.

I made my way back to my car and started up the engine. I drove around for a while, not really caring where I went. Before I realized it, I found myself sitting in front of the Cullen's house. I needed to talk to Esme, she would believe me. I opened my car door and made my way up to the massive double wooden doors. I pressed the doorbell and then patiently waited. I knew that once I spoke to Esme, everything would be clear.

Suddenly, the lights above my head turned on and the door opened to reveal a half-dressed Edward.

"Bella?" his voice sounded surprised.

I was so accustomed to seeing him in dress pants and a tie that I nearly lost my train of thought as I looked at him standing in the open doorway. He was dressed for bed in his lounge pants and was bare-chested. He was also barefoot...and totally hot.

"I'm sorry to disturb you so late....um...Dr. Cullen. Is your mother home?"

"Don't be silly, Bella. You aren't disturbing me. Um...Esme isn't here. She and my dad are still out."

"Oh...um...shit...I..."

"Bella," he spoke with a concerned tone as his eyes searched mine. "You're upset. Come on in."

Edward didn't give me a chance to respond as he grabbed my hand and pulled me into the foyer. He quickly shut the door behind us and then proceeded to walk toward the kitchen. Once inside the kitchen, he motioned for me to sit at the bar. I wordlessly agreed and took a seat.

"So, Bella, what brings your out at this late hour?"

He lifted the top of a pizza box that was sitting on the counter and took a large bite out of one of the slices of pizza. I watched as a tiny bit of sauce lingered in the corner of his mouth. I wanted to lick it off...

"Well...I...um...do you know how long Esme will be? I really need to talk to her."
"I'm sorry, Bella. I have no idea. Is there something I can help with? I'm a very good listener."

I really wanted to talk to Esme, but what the hell.

"Okay, but you asked for it."

I propped my elbows on the counter and placed my face in my hands. I moved my fingers into my hairline as I stared blankly at the granite counter below me. How did I not see this coming? How had I let Jacob fool me into believing we were really a couple?

"I found Jacob in bed with..." I took a deep breath and closed my eyes as I felt my anger making a comeback, "I found him in bed with another guy and your nurse, Jessica."

Silence filled the room. Neither one of us said a single word. I feared he wouldn't believe me. Just like my dad wouldn't. Before he could ask me any questions, I pulled my phone from my back pocket and handed it to him.

"See for yourself if you don't believe me."

With my eyes still downcast looking at the empty counter, I waited for Edward to pick up the phone from the counter. He never did. I raised my eyes to his face to find him looking directly at me.

"Aren't you going to check?"

"Why? I believe you."

"You believe me?"

"Yes," he chuckled, "Why the hell wouldn't I?"

"I don't fucking know." I leaned back in my chair and crossed my arms in front of my chest.

"You want to talk about it or do you just want me to go kick his ass now?"

His words took me by surprise.

"Why would you want to kick his ass?" I asked him dumbfounded.

"Because he hurt you. He betrayed your trust." He mimicked my actions by crossing his arms as well.

I thought about his words for a moment. The sad thing was I wasn't
really hurt. I was more pissed than anything. Jacob had definitely betrayed my trust.

"Do you have anything to drink?"

"Certainly, what would you like?"

"Jack and Coke, hold the Coke."

Edward chuckled and made his way to a far cabinet. He opened the door and reached inside to retrieve a tall bottle of Jack Daniels. Closing that door, he stepped over and took out two glasses from another cabinet. He made his way back to the bar and sat both glasses down, one in front of each of us. He began to fill each glass halfway with the brown liquid. Once he was finished, he sat the bottle down and lifted his glass and directed me to lift mine as well.

"To threesomes."

I couldn't help but chuckle as I raised my glass and tapped it to his.

"To threesomes, may I never see one again."

We both downed our drinks and set our glasses rather harshly on the counter. Edward lifted the tall bottle and began to fill our glasses again. Once they were again half full, he raised his glass and I followed.

"Happy birthday, Bella."

I gasped. How the hell did he know?

"What the hell, Edward? How the hell did you know?"

With his half grin, he lowered his glass and raised his eyes back to mine.

"Bella, I know lots of things about you. But don't worry...I'll keep your secret."

Holy. Shit. The coffee and muffin...it was from Edward. Still, how did he know?

"Now, I do believe it's very rude not to respond to a toast that's been made in your honor, so drink up, birthday girl."

I raised my glass back to my lips and tipped it back, never once lowering my gaze from his eyes.

"So, Bella, do you want to talk about Jacob or do you just want to
drink away the pain?"

"Edward?"

I had to really concentrate on how to word what I had to say next. I didn't want to come across as a totally cold-hearted bitch.

"How fucked up is it when I'm more pissed about having to get rid of my bed than dumping my boyfriend?"

"Sounds like you loved your bed. What about Jacob? Did you love him?"

"No, I never loved him, and that's even more fucked up."

This time I took the bottle and poured the Jack into our glasses.

"Why would you say that's fucked up?"

I quickly swallowed the drink and placed the glass back on the counter.

"Would you call being in a relationship for eight years and never telling the other that you love them fucked up? How about having the thought of getting married to that person make you so sick that you literally want to bleach out your brain? Well, here's the creme de la creme: How about never having slept with your boyfriend of eight years...not even a single blow job? Is that fucked up to you yet?"

I watched as Edward's long fingers wrapped around the bottle of Jack. I remembered how they had looked wrapped around the neck of his guitar as he played earlier.

"Actually, Bella, I find what you did for the past eight year rather refreshing. If I could say one thing about you, it would be that you're without a doubt loyal to a fault. You stayed in a relationship out of a sense of loyalty. You stayed true to a promise you made."

That was it in a nut shell. I had made a promise to Jacob that I would be his girlfriend and I had kept that promise.

"You want to know what's really fucked up?"

"Sure."

"He was only with me because he lost a bet."

"Now that, Bella, really is fucked up." He again filled our glasses. "However, it's not so on your part, but rather on his. No honorable man would ever make a bet with a young girl's heart on the line."
I was speechless. His words kept echoing in my mind.

The Jack continued to flow as we continued to talk. We talked about everything, from our favorite movies to what we wanted to be when we grew up. I was surprised at how easy he was to talk to. I remembered at one point I was having a hard time focusing and I decided I needed to leave and let Edward go to bed. Big mistake on my part, as the room began to spin and I felt certain I would hit the hard floor at any moment. However, instead of cold marble, I felt warm strong arms wrap around me. Apparently, Edward had caught me before I hit the ground. I vaguely remembered him carrying me bridal style and placing me on the most comfortable surface I had ever felt. I knew I had to be dreaming as I felt his lips brush against mine...it had to be a dream.

And if it was, I didn't want to wake up...ever.

So, for all of you who've begged me to kick Jacob to the curb...you're welcome!

For those who want to know if Kate and Edward are together...keep reading.

10. Chapter 10

Hey, gang!

First order of business:

I need to let everyone know that I cannot tell you the status of Kate and Edward's relationship, just keep reading! :)

Second:

I'm just as thrilled to have Jacob out of the picture as you are and no, he won't be returning.

Thank you to all of you who are reading and responding to this little idea that I have running around in my head. Dollybigmomma is my literary janitor!

EDWARD

Continuing to play as I watched Bella leave the bar was a true test of patience for me. I wanted to blow off my brothers and run after her, but I didn't. I knew Bella was different than most women. I had to take my time and get her to see the real me. This, I could do.
Emmett and Jasper left me alone about my impromptu song change. They also didn't question me when I told them I was heading home instead of hanging out after our set. Even Alex left me the hell alone. I made my way home and into my room, placing my guitar on my couch. I decided against jumping into the shower as I was fucking starving. I quickly changed my clothes and ordered a pizza.

I had barely taken a bite out of my cheesy goodness when I heard the doorbell ringing. I chucked my slice of pizza back into the container and made my way to the front door.

I was speechless as I opened the door to find Bella standing on the other side. She was the last person I ever expected to see standing there. Yet there she stood, simply beautiful. The look of pure surprise encompassed her beautiful face. Her eyes immediately turned downcast as she realized I was not who she had expected. I motioned for her to come in and led her to the kitchen. I knew from conversations with my mother that she and my Bella were close. I offered her a piece of pizza which she declined; I was still so hungry, so I dove straight back into my slice, albeit a bit sloppily, getting a dollop of sauce on my face. I noticed Bella's eyes darken as she noticed the sauce. I offered her a drink and was quite surprised when she wanted straight Jack. Thank god in heaven my mother only kept the good shit in the house as I began to pour each of us a glass.

As I metaphorically sat back and let Bella spill her guts, I would wholeheartedly admit that when Bella confided in me that she had caught Jessica and Jacob doing the nasty, I could feel my inner twelve year old doing a little mental happy dance. I knew that my father, above all else, was a very smart and upstanding man and had insisted on all his employees signing a morality clause when they went to work for him, even my brothers and myself, as a way of protecting myself and the hospital from potential embarrassment, liability, and bad publicity. Just by being with a man in a known committed relationship, Jessica had sealed her fate...she was history.

Ding dong, the witch is dead. The motherfucking wicked witch is dead...

Bella offered to let me see the pictures from her cell phone and I declined for two reasons. One, there was no way in hell that I want to see Jessica naked. Bella, on the other hand...Second, I wanted her to know that I believed her by her word only.

Next came her admission that she had never been intimate with Jacob. My mother had alluded to the fact, but hearing it from Bella's lips made me question two things. First, I wanted to know why. What was so wrong in the relationship that made Bella not want to take it to that level? I mean seriously, eight years was a long fucking time. Second,
if she had never reached that level with him, then had she reach it with someone prior to being involved with Jacob? If not, was Bella still a virgin?

As I continued to refill Bella's glass and watched as she chugged down each and every drop, she began to become more relaxed. I noticed after about four drinks that her speech began to slur. When I had first asked Bella to sit at the bar and talk to me, I had silently promised myself that I would remain a gentleman and be her friend tonight. So far, I had been doing really well. However, when she decided to stand and go home was when my willpower began to crumble.

I knew she had overdone it and her body was about to betray her. I barely made it to her when her legs gave way. I cradled her up into my arms bridal style and began to make my way to the stairs. I knew that my mother would beat my ass if I laid her on any couch in this house. As I gently made my way to the guest room at the top of the stairs, I took a long look into her beautiful face. She looked so relaxed, so innocent; hell, maybe she was. I gently laid her on the bed and reached down and removed her shoes. As I placed a spare blanket over her, I gently brought the blanket up to her neck. I slowly swiped a section of her hair away that was close to falling into her face. When the fragrance of her hair caught me square in the face, I closed my eyes and inhaled deeply; it was the most amazing scent I had ever experienced. Before I could stop myself, I found myself leaning over her, my lips pressed gently to hers.

BELLA

I awoke to the wonderful smell of fresh brewed coffee and the sweet smell of cinnamon. Once my eyes were open and I was able to focus, I knew immediately that I wasn't in my own bed. I quickly checked under the white sheets and was relieved to find that I was still in my clothes from yesterday. I began to rub the sleep from my eyes and then threw back the covers and began to get out of bed. While dangling my feet over the side, my face buried in my hands, I began to recall the events of last night.

I was surprised that for one, I didn't have a hangover, and that instead of feeling hurt and betrayed, I was pissed. Not because I had found Jacob fucking someone else. No, that didn't seem to affect me whatsoever. My current malfunction was that I would have to find another bed. That was going to be neither cheap nor easy given that Esme had helped me acquire my current bed from one of her many contacts. Pushing myself from the bed and making my way over to the bathroom, I noticed that fresh towels and new toothbrush were waiting for me...gotta love Esme.

Once showered, I threw back on my clothes from yesterday, sans my dirty underwear, and made my way downstairs. If I didn't know better,
I would have sworn there was a party going on in the kitchen. Once I rounded the corner, I found that I wasn't far off in my assumption. The first person I noticed was Esme. She was standing beside the sink rinsing what appeared to be fresh strawberries. Next to her was Carlisle, who was in the middle of filling his coffee cup. Sitting around the same bar that I had sat with Edward was the remaining Cullen's. Upon further inspection, I was shocked to see Alice sitting beside Jasper. His arms were wrapped tightly around her. She was dressed in what appeared to be his clothes. Next to Jasper were Emmett and Rosalie. At first, I thought she was dressed until she walked around the bar to help Esme and I was able to see that she was wearing what looked to be Emmett's boxers. Edward noticed me before anyone else and turned to face me from his place at the end of the bar.

"Well, good morning, beautiful." His voice was like warm smooth chocolate.

Something was different about Edward today. I had seen him nearly every day for the past few months, but today he just looked different. It had to be the fact that he was still in his pajamas. His white long-sleeved Henley and blue plaid sleep pants had to be the reason.

I made my way over to the bar and took the seat that was between Edward and Alice. Sitting on the table was a large cup of what appeared to be a caramel macchiato. As I sat down, Edward scooted the cup toward me.

"Try this out and tell me if you like it. It's not Starbucks, but the barista told me how to make it."

The look on his face was priceless. His perfect smile and dazzling green eyes that...Holy shit, what am I doing?

I gingerly took a sip the hot golden goodness. I closed my eyes and let out a true-to-life porn star moan.

"Oh, god, Edward...um...Dr. Cullen, this is so good."

"Bella, you had it right. I'm Edward to you. Please, call me Edward."

"Alright, Edward. This is the best macchiato I've ever had. You did this yourself?"

"Yes, I did. I thought you might enjoy it this morning."

"Thank you." My voice for no rational reason was very soft.

I noticed a smug little grin appear across his face right before he continued to drink from his coffee cup. I refused to read anything into this. Edward Cullen was handsome, smart, charming, and he
actually was a really nice guy.

"Bella, dear, Edward told me that you came over last night looking for me," Esme's voice broke my internal rambling.

"Um, yeah, Esme, something happened last night that I needed your help on."

"Is everything alright? Do we need to talk privately?"

I knew that even if I spoke with her alone, eventually the word would get around. Not by Esme herself, but that was how things just seemed to happen.

"No, but Edward was able to help out a lot."

Then it hit me. Edward had been an amazing friend when I'd really needed one. He didn't know that I knew about the helping hand he had extended to Bree and her son. It was high time that I got off my holier-than-thou pedestal and made amends. Without much thought, I placed my right hand on Edward's shoulder.

Okay, so I had to take a moment and be really honest. Since I was about seventeen, I'd had this...problem...if you will. I was what would be deemed to be a closet muscle girl. I loved to see guys with definition.

Unfortunately, just by placing my hand on Edward deltoid muscle, I found that he was definitely spending some time in the gym. I couldn't help myself as I gave a tight squeeze to his arm, allowing my fingers to enjoy the feel of his nicely-toned bicep. Despite my current predicament, I pushed my inner muscle whore to the side and looked him square in the eye.

"Edward, thank you for being such a great friend to me last night, I'll try to be a better friend to you in the future. I know you didn't have to be so nice to me, as I wasn't exactly the nicest to you when we first met, and for that I'm so sorry, you didn't deserve my harsh words."

His smile was genuine as his right hand crossed his body and covered my hand that was still attached to his arm. The moment his hand landed on mine, I was reminded of the time he had thrown me into the swimming pool. The sudden jolt that I had felt that day; it was there again...not an unpleasant feeling. No, this was different.

"Actually, most of what you said about me was the truth...well, except for the panty-dropping comment. I'd like to tell you the story behind that one day."
"I'm still sorry. I know you're a really good person. I owe you one."
His hand was still covering mine, his eyes bright green and gleaming.

"How about we agree to get to know each other better? We all need good friends on occasion to vent to."

"Thank you, Edward, I'd love that, especially after the conversation I still need to have with Jacob."

"Would you like me to go with you?"

Honestly, I wanted to be a big bitch and simply send Jacob an email that had the disgusting pictures attached and a short little note that told him in ten words or less where he could shove his dick next. But that wasn't how I did things. I wasn't afraid of Jacob; I knew he would never do anything stupid to piss off my dad.

"No, thank you. This is something that's been brewing for...god, years. I just never thought he would do that to me, you know?"

His hand was still covering mine and he had wrapped his long fingers around my hand.

"Bella, don't let one stupid guy make you think you don't deserve happiness. Not all of us are jerks."

"I know, Edward, and again, thank you."

I flashed him the first genuine smile I think I'd had in a very long time.

"Okay, wait, I thought Bella and Edward hated each other?" Emmett bellowed from across the bar.

I chuckled as I felt Edward remove his hand from mine. I removed my attention from ogling Edward to laughing at Emmett.

"Em, hate is such a strong word. No, Bella and I never hated each other; we just both have very strong personalities. Besides, I'd rather have her on my team than Jacob's," Edward smiled and winked at me...cue the wet panties, if I were wearing any that is.

"Okay, so you two are besties now. But why did she spend the night?"

"Emmett McCarthy Cullen, Bella is a member of this family and if she wants to move into this house and take over your room, I'll help her pack," Esme's finger repeatedly pounded into the center of Emmett's chest.

"Not that it's any of your business, since Rosalie and Alice have
spent the night over here in bed with the two of you..." Edward said
now gesturing between Emmett and Jasper, "But Bella needed a friend
last night and came looking for Mom. She wasn't available so I helped
her out."

"Is everything okay, Bella?" Esme's soft motherly voice sent me nearly
to tears.

"It will be," I spoke while exhaling.

I decided that I would just put it all out there, let everyone know
what was going on. I crossed the room and retrieved my cell phone.
Looking at the screen, I noticed I had several text messages and two
voicemails. I checked my missed call list and noticed that one of them
was my father...He did call me.

I made my way back to the bar and took my seat. Taking a deep breath,
I began to tell the whole story.

"Last night after I heard you guys play, I decided that I wasn't being
a good girlfriend to Jacob. After hearing the song that Edward sang, I
felt so...ugh. Anyway, Jacob had told me that he was playing with his
band last night. As I continued to listen to Edward sing his heart out
to some girl, I thought what if Jacob was across town singing his
heart out to me? I decided to have a long talk with him and even try
to give us a chance. However, when I pulled up to my house, I noticed
all the lights in my house were on. Once I was inside, I noticed my
bedroom door was mostly closed and I heard someone in there. When I
opened it, I found this." I opened my media folder and set my phone on
the counter.

I was shocked to find that Esme beat everyone to the phone. I was
further shocked when she slowly passed the phone to Carlisle and made
her way over to me. She wasted no time in engulfing me in a hug. I
closed my eyes fighting tears and just enjoyed the feeling of
unconditional love.

"Is that...how is she doing that? Is he...oh, god, Bella, your
boyfriend is bisexual!"

I was still wrapped in Esme's cocooning arms as I answered, "He's not
my boyfriend anymore."

"Well, thank god for that. He has...is that a fucking dildo hanging
out of his ass?"

"Emmett!" Esme's voice was stern.

"Sorry, Bella; I know this must be upsetting and I'm sorry..."
I dropped my arms from Esme. I spun myself to look directly at Emmett.

"No, Emmett, you want to know what's really fucked up in this situation? It's not even that my ex-boyfriend has his dick shoved up some guy's ass, or the fact that he has a vibrator shoved in his...not even the fact that Edward's nurse is flat on her back sucking dick like its candy. The thing that bothers me the most is that now I have to find a new bed. I couldn't give a rat's ass about my cheating ex-boyfriend. No, I'm pissed off because I really loved my bed and now I have to burn it."

"Wait, what?" Emmett was now snatching the phone out of Alice's hand. "Holy shit, that is Jessica," he laughed as he continued to look at the phone.

I immediately turned to Esme. Shit, I had really fucked up this time.

"Oh, Esme, I'm so sorry for my language..."

"What's the difference between a vibrator and a dildo?" Alice questioned. Just when I didn't think things could get any more awkward...they did.

First Esme shocked all of us by answering Alice. "A vibrator vibrates. A dildo doesn't."

Second, Dr. Tristan chose that very moment to walk in. "Um....maybe I should come back another time?"

While pretty much everyone in the room was rolling in laughter, I found my hands very interesting. I picked up my coffee and began to try and enjoy it again.

God, that was awkward!

After my epic embarrassment, we continued our morning. I had barely gotten two bites of my eggs down when the doorbell sounded. Carlisle made his way to the foyer. When he returned, he wasn't alone. Standing behind Carlisle was my father.

"Daddy?"

I made my way across the kitchen as quickly as I could. I felt like a small child as I flung my entire body into his waiting arms.

"Bells, are you okay?"

"I am now."

"Sweetheart, what's wrong?"
"You were mad at me. I thought you forgot my birthday." I had tears spilling down my cheeks.

"Oh, Bells, didn't you check your phone? I called you last night once I was within cell phone range again."

I sniffled and wiped my tears with the backs of my hands. "No, Dad, I haven't had a chance to check my phone.

"I called Jacob and he said you didn't come home last night so I got worried and jumped in the truck and came up here to find you. Jacob was still in bed when I got to your house so I came over here to see if the Cullen's had any idea where you might be."

"I doubt Jacob even noticed I was gone," I said sarcastically.

"Things still not good with Jake?"

"I don't know, Dad," I brought up the video and handed him my cell phone, "You tell me." Charlie's eyes widened at what he was seeing.

Before he could answer, the doorbell rang again. This time, Esme made her way to the door. My father just kept shaking his head as he watched Jacob's debauchery, "I'm so sorry, Bells."

Esme was now back in the kitchen with such a perplexed look on her face. "Edward?"

"Yeah, Mom?"

"You have a young lady here. She says she's your girlfriend."

Everyone's eyes were now fixed on the kitchen door. Standing proudly was a very beautiful blonde with an hourglass figure. Her clothes were definitely designer and expensive.

"Hi, baby, miss me?" the leggy blonde purred out.

"Oh, god...Tanya? What the hell..."

Several things seemed to happen at once. First, Edward got the most terrified look on his face. Second, Jasper and Emmett began walking toward the Victoria's Secret model. Third, Carlisle made it a point of grabbing Esme and myself and shoved us behind his back.

EDWARD

It only took two tenth of a second for my morning of pure bliss to go straight to hell with Tanya's appearance. Finally having not only
Bella's tiny hand in mine, sort of, and seeing her smile that was meant only for me had just made my day. I would gladly take this over anything else in the world...until Satan walked through the door. Never in a million years did I ever think I would lay eyes on her ever again.

It all started when I was in my residency in Chicago. Tanya was a relatively new nurse in the Pediatric wing that I was rotating through. My father had told me and my brothers that we should always make it a point to be nice to the nurses, not necessarily to flirt with them, just to be nice.

Anyway, Tanya had been the nurse of one of my patients and I had just gotten on the floor and was about to do rounds. I asked the charge nurse where Tanya was and she told me she was changing a dressing on my patient. I thanked her and then made my way to my patient's room. Once I entered the room, I found Tanya finishing up the dressing change and I began to question her as to the latest on the patient. Following my father's advice, I was nice and very polite to her. She left the room shortly after and I soon followed.

While I was charting, I remembered a question that I had forgotten to ask her and so I sought her out. I found her sobbing at the end of the hallway and when I asked her what was wrong, she told me it was nothing. I accepted this and continued with my question. Several days later, I again found her crying in an empty room and again asked her what was wrong. She finally broke down and told me her husband was abusing her and that she had been trying to get away from him, but he always found her. She stated they had been legally separated for several years and she was saving up money to finalize the divorce. She'd said she had been able to avoid him for the past year, but he had apparently found out where she was living. She said she had been sleeping in the nurses' lounge for the past several weeks.

My heart broke for her and I wanted nothing more than to help her. When her shift was over, I took her to a nice hotel and told her I would be happy to help her stay there as long as it took her to get back on her feet. I gave her my personal cell number and even the number of an attorney that I knew that worked for legal aid. It was about this time that Emmett and Charlotte were getting married and so soon after I got her settled, I took off for a few weeks. While I was gone, I checked on her several times and made certain she was doing okay. Upon my return was when the "Tanya-gate" incident began.

When I got back into town, it was late and all I wanted to do was crawl into my bed and sleep for days. I staggered my tired, jet-lagged body into my condo only to find a very naked Tanya waiting in my bed. To make a very long and painful story short, she had bribed one of the hotel clerks with a blow job for my credit card information. Once she knew my address, she managed to con the security desk with some
bullshit story and most likely a blow job, and got into my condo. She tried to seduce me and when that failed, she began to scream and shout that I was trying to rape her. She ran into the hall and began to pound on my neighbor's doors. Luckily for me, my condo had really great security cameras and her breaking in was caught on tape. I had her arrested and really thought that was the end of it. But I was so wrong.

When I returned to work, I found out that she had told the entire hospital that we were engaged, and she even went as far as to buy herself an engagement ring, with my credit card number no less. As her story started to unravel, it turned out she was never married, she had made the whole story up. She had apparently studied up on all of the doctors in the hospital and had been baiting each of us, only I took the hook, being the softy I was.

I had no clue what to do so I called my father. He in turn called the Chief of Staff for the hospital and he ordered a full investigation. Turned out Tanya had even faked her Nursing license. Amazing what you could do online these days. My father flew to Chicago and we had an emergency hearing to get a restraining order against Tanya. The judge took all of thirty seconds to issue a permanent one after he had reviewed her file. The hospital without question did everything they could to make things right, including footing the bill for my attorney and Tanya's credit card charges. Tanya had been convicted of fraud and it looked like she would spend some time locked away.

Once the story got out, I was constantly finding people talking about me. I tried not to let it bother me too much. I also tried not to let it change me in my desire to help people. I would admit it was during this time that Kate and I got closer, but that was a story for another day.

To say I was pissed would be an understatement. Where the fuck did this crazy bitch get off interrupting my perfect morning? My first question was what in the hell was she doing out of jail, and second, how in the fuck did she find me? I also knew I had to get her out of this house and away from my family, and more importantly, my Bella. Any hint of my attraction to Bella would surely unhinge her further.

Thank god for my dad who immediately recognized Tanya and shielded my mother and Bella. I knew my brothers had my back. What shocked me at first was the way Bella's dad took in the situation. Then it hit me...Bella's dad was a cop. Holy shit, Bella's dad was a fucking cop.

"Baby, aren't you going to introduce me to your family? I mean we are engaged after all."

"Tanya, we are not nor have we ever been engaged."
I began to make my way toward her. This bitch was going back to jail.

"Oopsie! I'm sorry, baby. That was supposed to be a secret!" She was giggling like a school girl. "Are you going to punish me later?"

I had heard enough and apparently so had my father.

"Chief Swan?"

Bella's dad had remained quiet during the exchange. He was taking it all in, being a cop.

"Yes, Dr. Cullen?"

"I'd like your help with an issue that seems to have risen." My father began to move toward Chief Swan, his body still shielding Bella and my mother as he never removed his eyes from Tanya. "Chief, this is Tanya Denali, a young woman who tricked my son, Edward, into trying to help her several years ago. She's a dangerous con artist with obviously questionable mental faculties. She stole from my son and tried to turn things around on him when she was confronted. We had her arrested, but she seems to have gotten free. There's a permanent restraining order against her and I'm fairly certain she's less than fifty yards from my son."

Chief Swan began to walk toward Tanya when she turned and tried to run at me.

"Edward! Please, baby, tell them it was all a mistake. I forgive you for leaving me in that room. I love you!"

Before she could get to me, Chief Swan had a set of handcuffs on her. She, of course, tried to resist and that was when I grabbed Bella and my mother and quickly moved to leave the room. Bella didn't need to see this and neither did my mother.

"Who is that, Edward?" Tanya screamed. "Is she trying to take what's mine? I won't allow it!" she continued to rant as I escorted my mother and Bella out into the back yard. Mom motioned for us to sit down on the deck while Charlie dealt with the crazed woman in our kitchen.

It couldn't have been but a few minutes later that I realized I was holding Bella's hand, and she was letting me. I decided to just go with it and enjoy it.

"Well, Edward, you can now join the club," Bella suddenly spoke breaking the pleasant silence, "I thought I was the only one who had a crazy ex."

I couldn't help myself as I began to laugh.
It was nearly lunchtime when Chief Swan called to let us know that Tanya was back behind bars. Apparently, she had broken out before trying to get to me and had been caught. That time and this one would cost her more time behind bars. We were all sitting in the kitchen when Carlisle decided to talk shop.

"Well, since it seems the entire staff is here, I'd like to address a few things."

Before he could get out another word, Alice interrupted. "Wait, Jessica and Angela aren't here."

"Alice, you're right. Get Angela on speaker phone."

I doubted highly that anyone missed him deliberately omitting Jessica's name.

Once Angela was included, he continued. "First, Esme and I want to discuss this year's Christmas party. We normally have it here at our home, but since we have a larger number of staff, we may need to reserve a room somewhere, unless someone else has any ideas?"

To be honest, I would love to see Bella in something tight and strapless...just saying.

"What about having a pajama party?" Alice suggested.

"Ugh...seriously? Pajamas? What are we, five?" Emmett retorted.

"No, dumbass, we have a pajama party and that way we don't have to worry about anyone having too much to drink and getting into trouble trying to get home. We can use the money we would have spent on the room for really cool door prizes and stuff."

I wondered what kind of PJs my Bella wore...

"Anyone else have a suggestion?" Carlisle asked, "Anyone object? No? Well, then, I guess we're having a Christmas slumber party."

As we finished our impromptu staff meeting, I knew my time having Bella here was drawing to a close. It was nearly one o'clock in the afternoon when I noticed she was checking her phone.

"Hey, is everything okay?" I asked as I leaned into her.

"Oh," she gasped, "Yes, I'm sorry, Edward. I just think it's time for me to go, I really need to have that talk with Jacob."

I knew she was right.
"Do you want me to tag along?" Please say yes...

"Thank you, but no. As I said, this has been a long time coming."

"Okay, um, will you at least call me when you're done so I know you're alright?"

"Um...okay?"

"Hey, um, can I ask another favor?"

"Okay?"

"Have dinner with me...as friends, of course. I want to tell you the panty story."

"Can we play it by ear? I mean, I'm not sure how this is going to go."

"Not a problem, whenever."

I couldn't help myself as I slowly wrapped my arms around her in a hug. I buried my nose into her hair and took in the wonderful aroma that was Bella. I closed my eyes and thanked God that things had started to change between us. I knew it was only a little shift, but at this point, I would take anything. I reluctantly let her go and watched her walk down the path to her car. I waved goodbye until her car completely disappeared.

Turning around, I nearly ran into Alex. He had apparently just witnessed my moment with Bella.

"Edward, are you sure you're not tapping that?"

"Shut up, you prick! No, I'm not 'tapping that' as you so crudely put it. However, you might want to check the mirror before you leave Nicki's house next time."

His eyes became huge and his mouth dropped.

"How did..."

"I didn't...you just told me," I said with a smug grin.

I made my way back into the kitchen and sought out my mother.

"Hey, Mom, I need your help."

I had an idea of something I could do for Bella to help take the sting out of this whole situation, and I knew the best person to help me
with it would be Esme Cullen.

11. Chapter 11

Hello, again!

Can you believe it?

I know several of you have asked for a lemon and they're coming eventually, just not in this chapter. You'll understand why once you finish reading.

Now for the BS I hate...

The following is rated M for a bloody reason!

If you're sensitive to strong language, domestic violence, or are easily offended, then you might want to skip this chapter. I DO NOT condone violence, but hey, it's everywhere...

That being said, I hope you enjoy this chapter.

Chapter 10 – Meet My Boyfriend, Mr. Hyde

BELLA

No matter which way you looked at things, everyone had that one crazy relationship that tested our ability to judge the character of other people. I truly thought I had what I had deemed a comfortable relationship. Jacob never asked me for anything other than money and a place to crash once in a while. Regardless of the fact that Edward had never been in a committed relationship with Tanya, he, too, had been taken advantage of in the same respect.

From what I could gather, Edward had handled his situation quite well. Realistically speaking, Jacob hadn't done anything remotely close to warranting a trip to the county jail. However, our relationship was definitely over.

I had been sitting in my car for at least fifteen minutes now. I wasn't dreading the conversation I was about to have with Jacob. No, that I was ready for. My thoughts were back where I had just come from, with Edward. I was trying not to read too much into his actions in the last twenty-four hours. His willingness to just listen to what I had to say and the lack of judgment in his eyes had been...nice. The most surprising part was his lack of need to see the actual pictures.
That really surprised me. Then there was his gentleness with me, the feel of his hand in mine as he ushered Esme and myself out of the house this morning. Finally, there was that hug. Oh, my god in heaven...the feel of him against me was indescribable.

As I slid my key into the lock, I had to make myself quit smiling. How irrational was it for me to want to hurry up and give Jacob the boot so I could rush back to the Cullen's just so I could be near Edward?

Opening the door to my house, I was met with the same mess as I had left last night. Empty beer bottles remained untouched, and the rest of the mess looked even worse in the light of day. The only difference was the stereo was now silent, Jacob having removed his iPod from the dock. Jacob sat motionless on my couch, just staring at the blank screen of my television. Taking in a deep breath, I crossed the room to my favorite chair and sat down with purpose.

"Hey."

"What the fuck, Bella? You think you can just stay out all night fucking around and then come in here like everything is all..."

"Shut the hell up!" I snapped, stopping him short. He was making this easier each time he opened his mouth. I guess I really hadn't disturbed them at all last night, as he had no idea that I even knew. "You're a lying, cheating, conniving snake, Jacob Black!"

I reached into my back pocket for my cell phone, thanking god I'd had the good sense to take pictures. I had even taken the liberty of forwarding everything to Carlisle this morning for his dismissal case against Jessica in case she decided to protest.

"Oh, really? And just where the fuck were you last night?"

I opened my media file and began the slide show. I extended my arm to show him the pictures.

"Oh, no, the real issue here is what you were doing last night, or rather whom. Jessica I know, but who was the guy whose ass you were reaming?"

Jacob took the phone from me. His face was unreadable; he was a pro at being deceitful, a wolf in sheep's clothing.

"Bella, this is totally Photoshopped. Jesus, I thought you were smart."

Now he was just pissing me off. How the fuck dare he?

"Bullshit, Jacob. I stood there watching this shit with my own eyes!"
"Seriously, Bella? I can't believe you would think for one moment this was me. I-I mean it looks nothing like me."

"Really, Jacob? Looks nothing like you? Well, then maybe you can explain why when I came home last night, I found the three of you in my bed doing THIS. Not to mention I'm certain that if I were to turn on your iPod right now, I'll find that you were listening to David Bowie..."

"Fuck!"

"Yes, Jacob, that's what they call it."

Nothing...He could say absolutely nothing.

I let him just sit there. I wanted to allow him time to gather his thoughts. I wanted him to choose his words carefully. For once in our relationship, we were going to be truthful with each other. For the past eight years, we had silently lied to each other, by remaining silent, we had lied.

"You know what?" his hands were now flying up in the air out of frustration, "I'm glad this happened."

"Oh, really, Jacob, care to share with the class?"

"Oh, fuck you, Bella. You're just as guilty as I am; you've been checked out of this relationship for years."

Okay, so he had me there. I had check out of our relationship, about the time I went off to college. Not that it was necessarily a bad thing; it was just a part of growing up. Sadly, I had left Jacob behind.

"You're right, Jacob, I have. The difference is that I chose to remain faithful to you."

"Bullshit, Bella. You've been fucking someone because you have never, EVER fucked me."

"Fuck you, Jacob! You can accuse me of a lot of things, but I've never slept with anyone. Goddamn it, I'm still a fucking virgin!"

I was beyond pissed. I would willingly take responsibility for my bad judgment in continuing a relationship that should have ended years ago. However, I refused to take the blame for something I had yet to do.

"Oh, please, you expect me to believe for one second that you haven't
been warming Dr. Cullen's bed for years? YEARS!"

"I may be many things, Jacob Black, but I have NEVER been an adulteress. I've never been with any man...ever, and I certainly would never sleep with one who was married or in a relationship with someone else. EVER! The Cullen's have been good to me and I could never do something like that to their family!"

"That's right, I forgot, you're a fucking saint. You know, the minute you met the Cullen's, you fucking changed, Bella, and they're fucking behind it. You spend all of your fucking time with those people and they've never done anything but look down their fucking turned-up noses at me! I know damned well they'd have nothing better than to see me out of your life, stuck up fucking assholes. I guess it looks like they're going to fucking get their wish," he growled hatefully.

I wanted to tear him a new one over his comments, but I knew I needed a break. If I didn't pull up now, I was going to start saying things that were hurtful and I didn't want that.

"Jacob, we used to be friends, our fathers still are. Let's take a step back before we both start saying things we'll regret later. I'm going to go make some coffee."

I turned and made my way to the kitchen, doing my best to control my anger. I didn't give him time to object. I needed to distance myself not only from the situation, but also from Jacob. I purposely took a long time to make a pot of coffee, and maybe I had a shot or two of the Jack Daniels that I kept hidden in my pantry to help calm me down. Once the coffee was done and my emotions were again under control, I made my way back to the living room.

Once I crossed the threshold, I noticed Jacob was holding my guitar. I tried not to panic. I just prayed he would put her back unharmed.

I walked across the room and placed our coffee cups on the table. I took a few minutes to pick up the empty beer bottles and garbage that was lying around. I wanted to give him time to get his thoughts together as well.

Jacob began to slowly strum out a tune I had heard him play many times; Green Day's song, Time of Your Life. I patiently waited until he had finished before resuming our talk.

"Bella, can I ask you a question? Will you be totally honest with me?"

"Yes, Jacob, I will," my voice was barely a whisper.

"Did you ever love me?"
I took my time in answering him. He asked for the truth and if I wanted that from him, I had to give it as well.

"Yes, I did love you, and I still do. Just not the way you need me to."

Jacob didn't need me to elaborate; he knew exactly what I meant. We were again silent. He began strumming my guitar again.

"Do you remember when I first started teaching you to play this thing?"

I smiled at the memory. It was a happy time, less stressful; we were more like the friends we had been growing up.

"Yeah, we were so different then; so young and without a care in the world."

We both chuckled at the memory.

"So...um...you're really still a virgin?"

"Ugh...yes, Jacob. I wasn't fucking giving it up to you..."

"But why not me? I was your boyfriend, what was so wrong with us that you couldn't sleep with me?"

Until that moment, I had never given it much thought. Why had I kept that from him?

"Because, Jacob..."

"The truth, Bella, please, only the truth."

I sighed and lowered my head.

"Jacob, it's because I didn't love you like you needed me to." I took in another deep breath. He deserved to know the entire truth. "When we first got together as a couple, I didn't really even notice a difference from when we were just friends. I mean, we still acted the same way as before. The only difference was no other guys approached me because I was 'taken.' I can't really say that it bothered me, either. I couldn't really see myself with anyone at that time anyway. Then when I went off to college, I had literally no time for guys. And you were always there when I needed someone so it never seemed to matter. You never asked anything of me and you never pressured me about it. Before I knew it, I was looking at you differently, not in a romantic way, but I didn't feel the need to do anything about it."

It was as if a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. Honestly, I
hadn't physically cheated on Jacob, but emotionally, I guess I had.

Jacob began to shake his head incredulously as he placed my guitar back on the stand. Taking his coffee cup in hand, he slowly took a sip. I simply watched him; waiting to see what he would do next. He looked pensive as he stared at the blank screen of the television.

After all the years we had spent together, both of us sat here and said nothing. I knew I had to give him time to think; that was just how Jacob was. But after what felt like hours, I just couldn't take it anymore.

"Jacob, can I ask you a question?"

He never looked at me, he only nodded.

"Was Jessica the first?"

"The first what?" his raspy voice answered.

"Don't be a shit, Jacob; you know first what."

He leaned over, placing his forearms on his thighs and his face in in hands.

"No, Bella, she wasn't the first."

I couldn't say I was surprised. I knew he was a man, and a handsome man at that, so it really wasn't all that shocking to hear.

"How many, Jacob?"

Again, he didn't look at me. He kept his previous position. "Too many to count."

Hearing his words and understanding the truth of it all did nothing to soften the blow. In fact, it seriously pissed me off.

"Are you fucking serious? How fucking many? Tell me the goddamn truth, Jacob!" my voice raised with each word.

Suddenly and without warning, Jacob rose to his feet. There was fire in his eyes, hate radiating off his skin, and pure anger in his clenched jaw.

"Fuck you, Bella! You really want to know how many girls I brought back here and fucked in your house? Let's see..." He began pacing back and forth like a caged animal. I had never been afraid of him in my life...until now. "First was Leah. You remember her, right?" Leah and I had grown up together. She and I had gone off at the same time to
college. "Then there was Vanessa and Gianna...yes, Bella, I fucked them both at the same time...in YOUR fucking bed. Then there was Gavin...you know, the guy from the photos? Again, in your bed, many times I might add. Oh, yeah, and in your shower. He likes your shower a lot. Momma Cullen did a nice job in there."

Jacob continued on and on, naming name after name and always telling me what part of my house he had defiled. I listened and waited as he confessed to all of the women and men he had deliberately brought back here and fucked in every room and on every surface I owned.

"Why Jessica?" I finally shouted and his rant suddenly stopped as my voice brought him up short.

"Why not? Why not Jessica? You know, she isn't who you think she is."

I was bewildered by his statement. What did he mean she wasn't who I thought she was?

"I doubt she's even really a nurse knowing her. She only got a job working for Cullen because wants to marry a doctor. She wants one of the Cullen's. I couldn't believe it. I didn't know how to respond to his words. "She wants to be a doctor's wife, damned obsessed with it I'd say. She told me she had her sights set on one of the Cullen's, had it all worked out. She planned on seducing him and getting pregnant, and then she was going to make him marry her, stupid cunt."

I was shocked. Did she really think her plan would work? None of them even remotely liked her!

His eyes suddenly hardened as he stopped in front of me. "She said she really wanted Edward, but..."

"But what, Jacob? What the fuck happened?" Had Edward slept with Jessica?

What happened next was one of the scariest and most terrifying things to ever happen in all my life. I didn't even see him pick up the coffee cup. I felt the hot liquid hit my arm, and the sound of the cup shattering beside my head made my heart jump.

"Don't you fucking get it, Bella? Cullen wants you, not her! And I know goddamn well you want him, too, just like every other fucking woman on the goddamn planet, that's what's really going on! Dr. High-and-Mighty Moneybags wants what he wants, and he always gets what he wants. He could have had his pick, but he dared to set his sights on you knowing you're mine, fucking conceited bastard! Fucking Jessica wouldn't fucking shut up about how he moons over you every fucking day, bitching and whining every time I fucked her about how he treats her like dirt and brings you goddamn coffees and shit! I fucking
Jessica just because I could, but now I'm going to fuck you so he can feel just like me!" he growled viciously, looking positively feral.

Before I could even gasp, he had grabbed me and thrown me against the wall, pressing his body up against me, my feet dangling above the floor. His hand was gripped around my throat, slamming my head into the wall behind me.

"Jake--" I couldn't get any more words to leave my mouth. I was gasping for air, but I wasn't getting any.

"No, Bella, the Cullen's have taken enough from me...now I'm going to take what always should have been mine!"

I felt his mouth on my earlobe as he bit through the tender flesh, warm blood running down my neck. I began to kick and fight as hard as I could. I wasn't going down without a fight.

He wasn't even making coherent sentences as he began violently kneading my breasts while ripping my clothes away from my body, keeping me pinned to the wall with his hand around my throat. I began to pray that he would come to his senses before it was too late.

He slowly began to lessen his grip on my neck as he fought to remove my clothes, enough so that I was able to get a small amount of air into my lungs. It still wasn't enough, though, and I began to feel the room getting smaller and smaller.

I could faintly hear the sound of pounding. I thought it was just my heart and I tried to concentrate on the sound, but then it was gone. Jacob continued not to make sense as he began pushing himself between my knees while he had me pinned to the wall. The things he was saying I couldn't understand and I continued to pray as he got closer to his goal.

Just when I was about to give up hope, Jacob's body was suddenly gone and I dropped to the floor in a heap. I just lay there stunned, not moving.

For the first time in my life, I was totally scared of Jacob Black. I kept still, my eyes tightly closed. I was too terrified to even look at him.

All around me, I could hear glass shattering, things breaking, and the heavy sounds of things being turned over as what sounded like fighting raged around me. I could still hear Jacob's voice as he cursed and screamed, and then suddenly...nothing.

I waited...still nothing.
"Bella," a soft velvet voice called to me, "Honey, it's alright, he's gone."

I still couldn't open my eyes. I was too frightened Jacob would be on the other side of my eyelids.

"Bella, it's me, Edward. Honey, you're safe now. Open your eyes, Bella. Open those beautiful eyes for me."

Very slowly, I opened my eyes. There kneeling in front of me was Edward.

I didn't blink, I didn't swallow, I didn't even think. I simply threw myself into his arms. I buried my face in the crook of his neck sobbing. His arms quickly encircled me. I again shut my eyes as I let the sobs overtake me.

"Shhh, I've got you. You're safe now, Bella."

EDWARD

My mother was by far the most intelligent woman I knew. Literally nothing got past her eagle eye. I shouldn't have been so surprised when she called me out on my feelings for Bella. I had wanted to talk to her about replacing Bella's bed. Bella had made it abundantly clear that she was most upset about it having been defiled. From what I could gather, she was more upset about the bed than the demise of her relationship with Black. I would have been more than happy to let her sleep in mine...with me, of course. I knew Bella wasn't like that, though, but I still had hope.

I had asked for my mother's help in getting Bella a new bed. I wanted her to sleep in comfort and not have the constant reminder of Jacobs's betrayal. My mom made several calls and within the hour, she had Bella a new bedroom suit acquired, including one thousand thread-count sheets. I honestly didn't understand the relevance of the thread count of the sheets, but I would have been happy to help Bella break a few strands.

Less than an hour after my mom had gotten off the phone, I had the entire set loaded into a rental truck, and with the help of my two brothers, we were on our way to deliver it personally. As we made our way to her house, I envisioned Bella being so grateful that she would simply throw her arms around my neck and thank me properly...with her sweet lips.

Geez, I really needed to do something to put my overactive Bella-crazed libido out of its misery!

We pulled into the driveway and found Bella's car parked there as
well. We made our way to her front door and Jasper began to knock. After several rounds of knocking, I began to worry. Emmett made his way around the house to see if he could look in an open window. Before I could blink, Emmett came barreling around the side of the house in an absolute rage.

"FUCKING MOVE!" Emmett roared as he charged past me in a blur. It was like watching an episode of COPS as I watched Emmett lean into his left shoulder and ram into her front door. Splinters of wood rained down behind him. The door slammed into the wall and stayed, the handle making a huge hole in the drywall.

Jasper was blocking my view from what was transpiring inside the house. I began to push and shove, trying to get inside. My heart was now in my throat with the thought of something happening to my Bella. I continued to try and get around Jasper.

Suddenly, I felt Jasper's open hand in the middle of my chest, abruptly halting my attempts to get into the house.

"Edward, hold up, man!"

His eyes locked with mine. I didn't want to think about what he was trying to keep me from.

"Emmett has him. Let him get him out of the house."

"What the...?"

Suddenly, all of my questions were answered as Emmett dragged a battered and beaten Jacob out the door. Blood was running down his face and he was having a hard time breathing.

I couldn't take it anymore as I pushed past Jasper. Once inside her house, I quickly looked around the room. Broken glass was littered on the floor everywhere. Her furniture was tossed about, some of it broken, and nothing was left standing as it should have been. The blinds were hanging hap-hazard in her windows, many slats having been broken, and there were body-sized holes in the drywall around the room. However, that was nothing compared to the sight of Bella slumped on the floor near an overturned chair.

I quickly made my way over to her lifeless body. Bella was laid half on her side, her eyes closed and what little clothing she still had on was shredded. It looked like blood had run down her body, staining her skin red. There were angry-looking raised welts across her throat and her bare chest was red, bruised, and swollen, and I wanted to kill Jacob all over again as I saw the marks his fingernails had left on her breasts. I silently began to pray that she wasn't dead. I would surely kill Jacob Black with my bare hands if she was. Hell, I still
might kill him just for touching her.

I begged her to open her eyes. I didn't want to touch her...in case he had...I could even think the word.

I began to thank the good Lord above as I saw her finally move and watched her beautiful eyes slowly open.

I would never forget the feeling as she threw her arms around my neck and began to sob. I would have sat here forever if it would make her better. I vowed at that moment I would spend the rest of my life making sure she felt safe again.

It was at that moment I knew I had fallen hopelessly in love with Bella Swan.

I quickly pulled off my shirt and slipped it on her. Once she was able to talk again, I carried her out of the house. Waiting outside was my mother and Carlisle. Dad insisted on checking her over. He was the only one besides myself I would trust to touch her right now. I refused to leave her side as my dad examined her. The wound to her earlobe wasn't deep enough to need stitches, but Bella asked Carlisle for a shot of penicillin as she told him Jacob had bitten her.

Mom refused to let her stay alone in the house tonight. Carlisle called Charlie and told him the entire story. Charlie went and bailed Jacob out of jail, which honestly surprised me, that was until he said he would be letting the elders of the tribe know what Jacob had done. Evidently, they didn't look too kindly on his actions and he would be punished.

Mom insisted that I take Bella back to their house and make sure she was comfortable. I loaded her into my father's car. Bella wrapped her upper body around my arm and I rested my hand on her leg. There was nothing sexual about it. I couldn't have gotten a hard-on right now if I tried. No words were spoken as we drove to my parent home.

Once I parked in the garage, Bella refused to allow me to carry her any further. She told me she was feeling better now that she was away from her house. She still clung to my arm, not that I minded. Bella said she wanted to have a seat at the kitchen bar and asked for her favorite drink...Jack and Coke, hold the Coke.

As Bella sipped her drink, I slowly ran my fingers up and down her back...again, nothing sexual.

"Do you want to hear something fucked up?"

Her choice of words surprised me. I wanted to hear anything she had to say.
"Absolutely."

"Jessica wants to get you to knock her up so that you have to marry her." We sat there for several minutes not saying a single word. Suddenly, she just started laughing, gut-splitting laughter, and I was concerned that maybe shock was finally setting in. "I know it isn't even funny, but the thought of you actually having sex with her...I just know how much you hate her!" she said still laughing hysterically.

I drew her entire body into mine in a tight hug, closing my eyes and taking a deep breath as I held her close until she began to relax in my arms. She finally calmed down and looked up at me smiling.

"You're right; it actually is funny," I said smiling down at her, "There isn't enough alcohol in the world to get me that drunk."

BELLA

First thing Monday morning, Carlisle called a staff meeting. Edward, Emmett, Jasper, Alex, Esme, and me all sat at the large conference table. Jessica was told to meet us in there as soon as she arrived. Not shocking for Jessica, she arrived fifteen minutes late. She had to have known something was up when she walked in the door.

Carlisle asked her very nicely to have a seat as he passed a folder across the table to her.

"Jessica, if you would, please flip open that folder and tell me what you see."

Jessica did as Carlisle asked never looking up.

"Jessica, I believe if you look at the bottom of that paper, you'll find your signature."

"Yeah, I signed that when I first started."

"Did you bother to read it?"

"Yeah, I guess."

"Well, then..." Carlisle then passed her several eight by ten copies of the photos I had taken of her and Jacob in bed together. "Care to explain this?"

"No. This was on my own time, Dr. Cullen. You can't tell me who I can and can't sleep with."
"Oh, but I can. See, Ms. Stanley, you willingly signed the morality clause I require as a condition of employment in my office. It clearly states that by signing, you agree to avoid knowingly engaging in any type of immoral relationship with anyone involved in a committed relationship with someone else. I can assure you that at the time those photos were taken, Jacob Black was very much in a committed relationship, with your co-worker no less, a fact of which you were fully aware."

"Okay, so what," she sneered and flippantly tossed the files back toward my father.

"Well, Ms. Stanley, due to the fact that you've knowingly violated your contract, you're hereby terminated, effective immediately."

Jessica stood abruptly and shouted, "The fuck I am! You'll be hearing from my attorney!"

With a huge smile on his face, Carlisle responded, "I look forward to speaking with him." His smile dropped as he pointed toward the door, "Now get out of my office."

What a ride the past forty-eight hours had been. I had gone from feeling guilty about being a shitty girlfriend to finding my boyfriend having sex in my bed, not only with another girl, but with a guy, too! I found out that Jacob had a dark side to him; a side that I never wanted to see again.

Honestly, I was fine with being done with Jacob. He and I were honest with each other for the first time ever, but that still did not excuse his attacking me. That was going to take some time to get over on more than one level. I'd had plenty of time to really think last night as I lay in Esme's guest bedroom. So many things that I had chalked up to coincidence were really important clues that I had chosen to ignore. I had let Jacob get away with so much, and my complacency had allowed everything to escalate. I suppose in a way I was to blame for a lot of our problems, but in no way was I deserving of nearly being raped. That insanity was all on Jacob.

And then there was Edward. I couldn't help but believe that something was there between us that had been slowly growing into something more since after his birthday party. He had been going out of his way to be nice to me, just little things, like my coffee. I never saw or heard that he was seeing anyone, so it was possible he was just lonely. No one had ever mentioned him having a girlfriend...well, until Psycho Barbie showed up. However, I remembered him singing that song at the club as he looked right at me. Could he have been singing to me? The way he had helped me when I need a shoulder to cry on also had me wondering if maybe he had felt that something as well. He didn't try to make an agenda for himself; he had just really seemed to care.
He had picked me up and dusted me off not once, but twice, and as hard as it was to admit even to myself, I had no choice but to acknowledge what that something was for me.

I was starting to fall for Edward Cullen.

Well, well, well...

Our characters are finally getting somewhere. The next chapter is going to be the Christmas party. Everyone get your footed jammies on and join us! Again, thank you for reading and please let me hear from you!

12. Chapter 12

Thanks to everyone who has been following me and reviewing! We're getting close to a really good part, so keep reading! I hope you enjoy this chapter.

I do not own Twilight...just my little twist on their world. Dollybigmomma works her magic on this story.

Chapter 11 - Karaoke Confessions

BELLA

The weeks that followed my horrific breakup with Jacob were blessedly calm. Edward and Emmett delivered a new bedroom set, including new sheets, and Esme made sure the damage that had been done was repaired and my broken belongs repaired or replaced before she would let me go back into my house. I still had a bit of a hard time being there knowing what Jacob had done in my home, but a thorough scrubbing and top-to-bottom disinfecting helped ease my mind somewhat.

Edward and I actually started to become friends. The entire office was like one big happy family. For the first time in months, I found myself smiling, a lot. Jacob pled guilty to assault charges and Esme had encouraged me to attended counseling sessions. My dreams were all nightmares at first and they were horrible, but they had slowly begun to lessen and turn in another direction, for which I was thankful.

After the news of Jacob's hearing, Edward and I decided to have our friendly dinner. I insisted that we make it super casual and he agreed. We ended up ordering pizza and eating it in his office. He told me all about his patient, Samantha, and the title she had given
It had taken everything I had not to launch myself into his lap that night. He really was such a wonderful man and an even better doctor. We sat and laughed and ate like two old friends. It was nice to really laugh for once. It was also nice to have someone else insist on paying and help clean up. By the time we finished our pizza, it was after midnight. Edward insisted on following me home and even made sure my house was safe before he would leave me for the night. I think the whole thing with Jacob had rattled him almost as much as it had me.

Around Thanksgiving, Esme announced that she would be having a huge feast at their home. I had to decline, saying that I would be spending the holiday with my dad. During the time I was in counseling, I had made a point of placing my newfound feelings for Edward on the back burner. I wanted to be a whole person again before I explored a relationship with him. That was what my mind had decided; my body, on the other hand, had its own agenda.

I had just finished putting away the pumpkin pie when my cell phone indicated a text message.

Happy Turkey Day, Turkey ~E

I giggled to myself as I read his text. This was the type of bantering we had been doing since the Jacob incident.

Happy TD to you, too. Eating some pie as I type ~B

I didn't even make it up the stairs before he responded.

Pie? What kind? Can I have a bite? ~E

No way, dude, get your own. It's pumpkin with whipped cream...yummy ~B

Didn't your dad teach you to share? ~E

Nope, but he taught me how to throw a right hook ~B

I made it to my bed as I continued to eat my pie. Several minutes later, I received another text.

Well, since you refused to share, I had to settle for my mother's killer cheesecake...and I'm not sharing with you, either ~E

Oh, now that's playing dirty Dr. C... I'd cut a bitch for your mother's cheesecake ~B

Good to know, Swan. Sweet dreams ~E
Goodnight, Dr. C ~ B

I finished my pie and then proceeded to pull out a book I had been trying to read. I quickly realized that I was too tired to try and finish. I put the book down and snuggled into my childhood bed before I turned out the lights. I barely remembered my head hitting the pillow.

I was sleeping so soundly that I nearly missed the pounding on the front door. Opening my eyes, I glanced at the clock which told me it was just after three o'clock in the morning, way too early, or late, for normal visitors. I tossed back the covers and made my way down the stairs. I flipped on the entryway light and grabbed the baseball bat that was behind the door. As I cautiously glanced out the peephole, I discovered Edward standing on the front porch. What was he doing in Forks? Cautiously, I opened the front door.

"Edward? What the hell are you doing here in Forks at this hour?" I questioned.

Edward stood before me in low-rise jeans and a sweatshirt. His hair was a mess and it looked as if he had just crawled out of bed. His eyes were staring at his shoes.

"I...um...sorry, Bella, but I-I had to talk to you. I'm sorry for it being so late. I just..."

Suddenly, his eyes were locked with mine. Before I could blink, he had cleared the distance between us, taking my face in his hands. His eyes were jet black as he claimed my lips with his. I was so stunned at first that I didn't respond. I felt my feet leave the floor as I heard the door slam shut. His lips parted as he ran the tip of his tongue across my top lip. My mouth decided to finally work as I parted my lips and began to kiss him back. I dropped the bat and laced my fingers into the hair at the nape of his neck. His lips left mine only to find the skin of my neck. I moaned at the sensation coming from his hot breath.

"I'm sorry, Bella, but I've fought this for so long."

I didn't want to talk. I wanted him. I wanted his hands on my bare skin. I wanted him inside me. This time, I closed the distance between our lips. I knew that being with him like this would change our relationship, but I couldn't find it in me to care. I let go of his hair and fumbled my way to the middle of his shirt, tugging at it. I wanted him naked and I wanted it now. Edward was quick to respond as he reached behind him and removed his shirt. I didn't want to waste any more time as I quickly reached down and removed my own shirt before dragging him up to my room. Edward's eyes were now fixed on my naked breasts. His hands were quickly palming them, his mouth hungrily
sucking my nipples. I threw my head back and arched toward him. I wanted more, I needed more.

"Please, Edward...oh...I need more."

He didn't disappoint as he continued to suck and nip at my breasts. His hands were now traveling down my hips. I hadn't even realized that my panties had been removed until I saw Edward toss them behind his shoulder. He continued to kiss my lips and fondle my breasts. I could feel his hard erection on my stomach. Our breathing was labored and our hands were now frantically touching each other's hot skin. Finally, when I just couldn't take it anymore, I began to thrust my hips into his.

Edward broke the kiss as he positioned himself at my entrance. I opened my eyes and gazed into his now green orbs. God...how I wanted this; I would deal with the after-effects later.

"Please, Edward...oh..."

BEEP...BEEP...BEEP

My eyes flew open. I glanced around the room. Frustrated, I flung the covers back. It had all been a damn dream, a fucking hot dream, but still only a dream.

Once I returned to Seattle, the steamy dreams continued. I tried everything to get them to stop. It wasn't always the same dream, sometimes we would be at the office or in my house. The one thing that did stay the same was that they were always hot.

December finally arrived and so did our office Christmas party. Alice had taken the bull by the horns and began the planning. Carlisle had given her full reign and financing. Alice had mentioned that she wanted it to be more about what happened than where it happened.

Since the whole Jacob incident, I had begun to notice the couplings of the office staff a lot more. Nicki and Alex always remained professional, although I knew he was spending several nights a week at her apartment. Alice and Jasper were joined at the hip the moment the last patient left. As for Rosalie and Emmett, they barely made it out of the office most days with their clothes still on.

As for Edward and I, we were just happy being friends. There was no pressure in our relationship. We could easily tease and joke back and forth with each other. Still, every Friday he would leave my favorite coffee sitting on my desk.

Alice had taken a vote in the office and we had all agreed that a Saturday night would be the best night for the party. She had had been
the one to suggest having a sleepover, so it was her baby. She said it would kill two birds with one stone. One, it would be the safest thing in case anyone of us had too much to drink. Second, it would give us time to really get to know each other out of the office.

Quicker than I thought possible, the date for the party had arrived. We were scheduled to meet at the Cullen's house at six o'clock. Alice had given us strict instructions that we were to be dressed in pajamas that didn't reveal too much. After all, Esme and Carlisle would be there and anything skimpy would have just made things awkward. To be honest, I had been really hoping to see a half-naked Edward.

By the time I got there, everyone was there except for Nicki. She had called Alex and told us not to wait for her. Once we all got comfortable, Alice began to tell us what she had planned.

"Okay, so first I want to remind everyone that tonight is all about having fun and getting to know each other a little better. I won't waste anyone's time by making everyone go around and introduce themselves. However, I am going to give everyone a few minutes to come up with one thing that no one else knows about you. Second, I want to let you all know the things we have planned for this evening. We aren't going to have a sit-down meal; however, during the entire night, we'll have different fun foods and drinks to enjoy. We'll also have a talent show and even play a few games."

Since we were having the majority of the party in the Cullen's game room that was located in the basement, Alice had most of the bar covered in what I called bar food; chicken wings, chips, dips, and raw veggies.

The room was big enough that it housed a pool table, air hockey, and a rather large home theater. Alice had arranged the four sofas so that they now formed a square. It wasn't long before Nicki finally showed up and it was cute to see Alex's face light up. At this point, I hadn't really spoken very much to Edward, as Alice had taken control.

"Okay, people, let's take a seat and get this party started."

We all took our drinks and made our way to the couches. I sat in a corner of one of the couches while Edward sat on the couch next to mine. As he walked by, he reached out and squeezed my shoulder.

"Okay, so to make this fair, I've placed everyone's name on a piece of paper and will draw to see who goes first."

She had a large plastic bowl in her hands. She held it above her head and began to draw names.

"Alex! Okay, you get to tell us something that no one else knows about
Alex patted Nicki's thigh and smiled a devilish smile.

"Let's see? Well, no one in this room knows that I failed biology in middle school. I had to take it in the summer while my friends played in the pool all day."

We all giggled at his admission.

"Emmett!"

"Hmm, let's see," he was tapping his chin, "Okay, I got it, there was this one time that Mom and Dad went out of town for the weekend and I wanted to throw a party, but I wasn't old enough to buy booze. So I jimmed open the lock on the liquor cabinet and took out a bottle of rum. I poured the rum in an empty two liter bottle. Then I refilled the rum bottle with ice tea."

Not that his admission surprised me, but it was good for a chuckle.

"Edward!"

I didn't give two shits as to what he was about to admit, I just wanted to hear him talk.

"Alright, something no one else in this room knows..." He had a far off look in his eyes as he finally chuckled and spoke, "I nearly passed out during my first surgery."

"Seriously?" Rosalie questioned.

"Yep, I had to concentrate on breathing and luckily it passed quickly. I nearly changed careers."

Alice began to shake the names and then pulled out my name. "Bella!"

I rolled my eyes and began to ponder. There was so much stuff about me that no one knew. The question was what did I want to share?

"Okay, so I'm going to be the brave one and tell something that's truly embarrassing. The thing that no one knows about me is that...I've never made out with a guy before."

The room was quiet for what seemed like forever. Finally, Nicki spoke up.

"I'm sorry, Bella, but I call bullshit on that one."

The room remained quiet. I took a quick look around the room to find
that all eyes were still on me, including Edward's.

"Why do you call bullshit?" I questioned Nicki.

"Do you really think we believe that you were in a relationship with...he who shall not be named..."

"Jacob, Nicki, his fucking name is Jacob, not Voldemort, and I kissed him like five times in total..."

"Oh, please! You were with him for forever. You had to get a little hot and heavy when you two were fucking."

"Well, that would be true if I had ever fucked him..." I lifted my hand to suggest I wasn't done speaking. "...which I never did. So I stand behind my prior admission."

The room became quiet again as people now began looking at each other instead of me. Alex finally stood up and began to walk toward me.

"Well, shit, Bella, I'll take one for the team and make out with you."

I quickly jumped to my feet and took a defensive stance.

"Need I remind you that my dad's a cop? He did teach me a thing or two."

"Just pulling your chain, sister," Alex's hands were now in the surrender position as he began to back away. I turned to look in Edward's direction and found him to be looking at me with a perplexed look on his face.

Alice continued to pull names out of the bowl and the admissions seemed to be getting sillier and sillier. Finally, Alice called Esme's name and what she revealed caused her sons to abruptly get up and take several shots of Jack.

"Well, when I was in college, I really needed money, so I took a job in an adult toy store."

"Oh, god, my ears!" Emmett wailed.

"Oh, Son, grow up. How did you think I knew the difference between a dildo and a vibrator?"

No one even tried to challenge her after that.

"So, I gotta ask. Since guys don't really have slumber parties, what kind of things do you girls normally do at these things?" Alex questioned from behind the bar. Emmett, Edward, and Jasper were
sitting facing him on barstools.

Now given the fact that I was a natural-born smartass, I just couldn't resist. I only hoped the other girls would follow along.

"Well, first off, we would do the usual boring stuff like paint our toenails and tell secrets." I kept my face relaxed as I began to draw him in. "Then, depending on what we were able to sneak into our bedroom to drink, that would set the tone of the evening."

Alex's eyes never left my face as I continued my story.

"If we were able to get alcohol, things usually got...interesting."

With that, the guys turned around and began to listen more intently.

"First, we would start dancing; just silly dancing to begin with, then once we got a good buzz going..." By the looks on their faces, you would think I was unlocking the key to the Holy Grail, "...we would start to take each other's clothes off while we danced together and then have naked pillow fights. Then we would sometimes practice kissing on each other."

Five sets of mouths hung open as I told my tale with a completely straight face. This was beyond fun.

"Okay...um...so I realize that I more than likely have a fishhook in my cheek right now. However, can you please show us how to pillow fight naked?" Jasper questioned.

I couldn't help myself. I knew I was evil and I would pay for this later.

"Oh, gosh, Jasper, I'd be more than happy to...help pull that fishhook out of all of your mouths. That was pure bullshit."

All the girls began to laugh so hard we had tears running down out faces. The guys, however, didn't appreciate my humor very much. Ah, men were so easy...

Alice took a vote and everyone agreed to have the talent show next. We decided that teams were okay and that we could do more than one talent. I was having the best time as we all were enjoying acting like teenagers again. The guys went upstairs to get ready for their performance, as they had decided to do one as a group. I would admit that I was intrigued to see what they had planned. Honestly, I really hoped that Edward would play his guitar.

Several minutes later, Esme came down and announced the guys were now ready. My jaw nearly dropped when I saw them walk back into the room.
They were all dressed in low-rise jeans that were a little bit baggy, and white wife-beaters with white dress shirts that were open in the front. Emmett had his ball cap turned around and all of them had gold chains around their necks.

They lined up with Edward in the middle. Esme was standing beside the stereo and reached over and pressed play. As the music poured from the speakers overhead, the guys began to move.

You're all I ever wanted

You're all I ever needed, yeah

So tell me what to do now

'Cause I want you back

Edward could give Justin a true run for his money. His voice was so close to the actual singer's it was scary. But what was even more amazing was that watching them dance to this song was like watching NSYNC performing I Want You Back in person. They had the moves down perfectly.

It's hard to say I'm sorry

It's hard to make the things I did undone

A lesson I've learned too well, for sure

So don't hang up the phone now

I'm trying to figure out just what to do

I'm going crazy without you

All of the girls began to dance around. Rosalie was whooping, while Alice began to remove articles of clothing and toss them at Jasper.

You're all I ever wanted

You're all I ever needed, yeah

So tell me what to do now

When I want you back

Baby I remember

The way you used to look at me and say
Promises never last forever
I told you not to worry
I said that everything would be alright
I didn't know then that you were right
I want you back

Jasper took over vocals for Edward and again I was blown away by the likeness.

Nothing could have prepared me for what happened next. Edward broke away from the group and made a beeline for me. He stood a mere three feet from me and locked eyes with me as he sang.

You're the one I want
You're the one I need
Girl what can I do
You're the one I want
You're the one I need
Tell me what can I do

Once the song ended, I was pretty sure the other people in the room applauded. I would like to tell you that I did, too. I would like to say that I congratulated them on doing such a good job. I would like to say that I actually said anything; the truth was I didn't move a muscle. I couldn't, he had sang that last verse for me. He said those words to me...did he really feel that way?

I would love to tell you what the remaining talents were. Yes, I would love to say that I watched closely as the remaining acts performed...didn't happen.

Things had calmed down a little as I finally came back to earth. Jasper was sitting on the couch to my right with his guitar in hand. He was playing the same five cords over and over. This finally got my attention as I realized the song he was trying to play as I'll Be by Edwin McCain. Suddenly, he changed the notes and I had to stop him.

"Jasper, wait, please keep playing that song."

"Sorry, Bella, I...um...don't remember the words."
I flashed a smile at him. "That's okay, I do."

I had never shared my music with anyone in this room. Music had always been my safe haven. Sure, I had played numerous times with Jacobs's band, but Jacob always told me my voice was monotone and flat. Then again, I now knew he was full of shit in pretty much everything he ever told me.

Jasper began to strum those familiar notes as I decided to share my talent with the room...well, at least my voice.

The strands in your eyes
that color them wonderful
Stop me and steal my breath
And emeralds from mountains
thrust toward the sky
Never revealing their depth.
Tell me that we belong together,
Dress it up with the trappings of love
I'll be captivated,
I'll hang from your lips,
Instead of the gallows of heartache
that hang from above.

I didn't have to look up to know that everyone was watching me. Jasper continued to play as I let myself just feel the notes. I closed my eyes and just relaxed.

I'll be your crying shoulder,
I'll be love's suicide
I'll be better when I'm older,
I'll be the greatest fan of your life.

My eyes quickly opened as I heard Edward begin to sing with me. I had wanted to hear him play and sing again so I stopped singing and just enjoyed. Jasper had stopped playing as Edward had gotten his guitar
and was now sitting beside me. I noticed that Carlisle and Esme were
dancing and the rest of the couples quickly joined them.

And rain falls angry on the tin roof
As we lie awake in my bed.
You're my survival, you're my living proof.
My love is alive – not dead.
Tell me that we belong together.
Dress it up with the trappings of love.
I'll be captivated,
I'll hang from your lips,
Instead of the gallows of heartache
that hang from above

I looked directly into Edward's green eyes as I began to sing again. I
wanted to say so much to him. I wanted to tell him that I wanted to be
a part of his life, that I wanted to be more than friends. I closed my
eyes and just let the song say what I couldn't.

And I've dropped out, I've burned up,
I've fought my way back from the dead.
I've tuned in, turned on,
remembered the things that you said
Edward joined me again for the final chorus, our eyes now locked.
I'll be your crying shoulder,
I'll be love's suicide
I'll be better when I'm older,
I'll be the greatest fan of your...
I'll be your crying shoulder,
I'll be love's suicide
I'll be better when I'm older,
I'll be the greatest fan of your life
The greatest fan of your life
...greatest fan of your life

Again, I was pretty certain everyone clapped for us. I was pretty certain they were shocked that I could sing. Any other time, I would have given a shit what they had to say

As I looked into Edward's eyes, this just wasn't one of those times.

13. Chapter 13
This chapter wrote itself entirely and this is where the prologue comes in. I had a hard time stopping, and once the words started, they just kept coming. I want to say thank you to everyone who is reading and reviewing and saving to favorites. Okay, guys, fasten your seatbelts, here we go!

Chapter 12 - Thinking is Bad for Your Health

BELLA

Ever wake up and just know that your day was going to suck? For me, that day was today. First, my alarm didn't go off and I woke up nearly an hour late. Then I forgot to iron a uniform and found that my iron had died. Then since I was already so far behind, I didn't get to enjoy my first cup of coffee on my ride to work. For most people, this would have sent them scurrying back home to hide under the covers, but for me, that just wasn't an option.

For the past several months, I had been burning the candle at both ends. The pregnant girlfriend of one of my closest friends had been placed on strict bed rest. Since they already had a two year old running around, this was causing him to need to stay home with her. That was where I came in. His main source of employment was the band he played in with Jacob; that was until Jacobs's recent incarceration. They had a number of steady bookings they relied on heavily to pay the bills and so they couldn't afford to cancel.

So me being the kind, caring person that I was, I took one for the team. I had been playing lead guitar and doing some singing for them to help out. In addition, I was attending band practice several nights
a week. Thank god Maggie had delivered last week, so tomorrow night would be my last performance. I hadn't shared with anyone at the office that I was doing this. I just wasn't ready yet to share this side of me with my co-workers.

Once I got to the office and actually took a sip of my first cup of coffee, I had high hopes that my shitty day would turn around. We had a full schedule booked for the morning, so I downed my coffee and started getting everything ready. What I was already ready for was a nice long vacation.

Edward and I had continued to maintain a friends-only relationship. I had begun to think maybe I had misunderstood his singing to me. He had invited me out to dinner several times, but it was always made clear that we would be going as a group. With my recent band obligations, I had declined every invite.

I was still trying to sort out my own feelings for Edward. I knew without a doubt that I had started falling for him months ago. My heart was now completely his; my head, on the other hand, was still debating, my doubts keeping me distanced. Part of me felt guilty almost at even thinking about getting involved with him, as it really hadn't been that long since my breakup with Jacob. Was there a specific time you had to wait between relationships?

I closed my eyes briefly as I took another sip of my coffee. I wanted nothing more than to finish my work and go straight home and crawl into a hot bath. The band had originally been booked to play a bachelor party tonight, but the groom had gotten caught screwing the maid of honor and the wedding was called off. Tomorrow night, however, was Saint Patrick's Day. The bar we would be playing at was expecting a full house. I was just glad Eric would be back playing next week.

I had barely finished my first few sips of coffee when Rose and Alice came barreling into my office. I knew my shitty day was about to get a little worse as Alice closed the door behind her. It had been my experience that a closed-door meeting was never a good thing.

"Bella, we need to talk."

I leaned forward in my chair, taking another sip of my coffee. My first thought was that they had found better jobs and that they were giving me notice.

"Alright..."

Rose began to wring her fingers together. She was visibly nervous. Rose was never nervous and I was now scared.

"Okay...so...um...well...okay...shit..." The hand twisting only got
worse the more flustered she got. "Oh, hell, Bella, I'm pregnant and I fucking need your help to tell Emmett."

I was shocked. I had no idea what to say. Why did she think she needed my help in telling Emmett? He didn't seem like the kind of guy who would bail out on her.

"Why do you need my help? Is...is it not his?"

"Oh, god...YES, this is so Emmett's baby. I've tried for several weeks and I just haven't been able to tell him. The words just won't come out!"

"Well, Rose, you're going to have to tell him eventually, unless you plan on letting the basketball-sized belly and a baby coming out of your cooch tell him for you."

"That's why I need your help."

I decided to check and see if Alice had any ideas.

"Alice? Any suggestions?"

"Um...no...um...I need your help, too."

Alice had now started her own nervous twitch of bouncing her left leg. Could this day get any worse?

Just a sage word of advice: Never, ever ask if things could get any worse...they could, and they would.

"Alright, Alice, it's your turn to spill."

Alice opened her mouth and then proceeded to speed talk and gesture wildly, none of which I could understand.

I stared at her blankly after her rapid-fire, high-pitched oral dump. "Okay, Alice, even the Chipmunks wouldn't be able to understand what you just said."

She took a deep breath and looked me dead in the face.

"I said, Jasper and I went to Vegas and got married and we haven't told Carlisle and Esme yet," she said still too quickly, but at least this time I understood her.

Well, fuck me running...things had just gotten a shit-ton worse.

I knew she and Jasper had taken a weekend trip last month, but they hadn't said where they had gone. Never in my wildest dream did I
imagine they had taken off to Vegas. I knew immediately why they were worried about telling Jasper's parents, though. Esme was always ecstatic to have a reason to throw a party and I knew without a doubt she was going to be one pissed-off momma.

I closed my eyes tightly and took several deep breaths. I knew I need to handle each situation with great care. I knew it would be okay if I was in the room when Alice and Jasper told his parents. However, I really felt like Rose should talk to Emmett by herself. With one last cleansing breath, I opened my eyes and knew what I had to do.

As I stood and was about to make my way to the door to get this circus started, the sound of someone knocking stopped me. Jesus Christ, what now?

Angela opened the door and poked her head in. "Bella, I'm sorry to interrupt, but..."

"No, Ang, come on in. What's up?"

"Well, two things, actually; first, Bree is one the line, she says Riley is running a high temp and complaining his tummy hurts. She wants Edward to see him because she doesn't trust the ER in her town. Second, Esme is waiting in your office and she looks fit to be tied."

I took another breath as I passed Angela into the hall. I made my way to Edward's office. As I rounded the corner, I found all of the Cullen men sitting in there with him.

"Oh, good, I'm glad you're all here." I pointed my index finger at Edward, "Edward, Bree is bringing in Riley, high fever and abdominal pains so don't even think about leaving for lunch. You know it'll take her a while to get here." I then turned my attention to Jasper, "Jasper...you, in my office, now." My tone was harsh, but I just didn't care right now.

Then I turned my entire body in Emmett's direction. "Emmett, do not even think about leaving this office until I've spoken to you, too."

"Wait a second, I didn't do anything..."

I pointed my finger at him and slanted my eyes, "Oh, yes, you did, mister."

"Bella?" Edward's gentle voice distracted me.

I turned my body in his direction. "Yes?"

"Please make certain Bree has the resources to get here safely; if not, have her take a taxi and I'll cover the cost."
And just when I thought I couldn't love him anymore...

I grabbed Jasper by the arm as I turned to go back to my office. "Carlisle, you'll need to be in on this one, too," I called over my shoulder.

"Ooooh, Dad's in trouble!" Emmett sang out.

Once I had gotten Carlisle, Jasper, and Alice into my office with Esme, I instructed Rose and Emmett to wait in the conference room for me. I honestly hoped that Rose would take the time and just tell him. Walking back into my office, I found Alice and Esme hugging and crying. Well, one down and one to go. It seemed that Alice and Jasper forgot that their marriage license would be mailed to them from Vegas. Apparently, Esme had gotten the mail this morning and didn't pay attention to who the envelope was addressed to until after she had already opened it and discovered its contents.

I quietly stepped away from my office and made my way back to the conference room. As I passed Edward's office, I noticed him smiling and talking quietly into his cell phone. I quickly closed his door so that he could have some privacy. I was so glad I had, as seconds later, the door to the conference room flew open and a very excited Emmett emerged.

"HOLY SHIT! I'M GOING TO BE A DADDY!"

Emmett was running full speed down the hallway. Once he reached me, he threw his arms around me, lifting me into the air and began to spin me around.

All the shouting caused Edward to come out into the hallway. "Emmett, put Bella down," Edward fussed.

Emmett carefully put me back on my feet and then ran toward my office where Carlisle was now standing in the hall.

"DAD! I'M GOING TO BE A DAD!"

I had to laugh at Emmett, he was so excited. I knew he would be. I turned to look at Edward who was now laughing, too.

"Scary thought...my brother actually being a dad," Edward chuckled.

"Oh, I don't know, I think he'll do a great job."

"Oh, I'm sure he will. But as excited as he is, it won't be half of what I'll be when it's my turn."
Well...

As shitty as my day had started, it was beginning to look a little brighter. Esme insisted on having a huge reception for Jasper and Alice. Emmett fussed over Rosalie like a madman. All in all, things had gotten a lot better.

Oh, but my bad day was far from over; actually; the worst had yet to come.

Just after lunch, Bree finally made it into the office with Riley. Poor little Riley, he looked like hell. His hair was matted to his pale face. His temperature was indeed high at one hundred four degrees, and his abdomen was tender. Edward had me draw some blood and get an ultrasound on him. I knew right away what Edward thought was going on. I hand-delivered Riley's blood to the lab and waited for the STAT result. Sure enough, the CBC indicated an elevated white count. Riley had appendicitis and would need surgery immediately. I called the surgery floor and reserved a room. Since this was late on a Friday, only the on-call staff was available. Once I informed Edward of the situation, he was less than thrilled.

"Bella, I know it's technically the weekend, but can you please assist me. I really don't want Lauren to assist me. It's bad enough that the only anesthesiologist available is Dr. James. I swear I'll treat you to dinner after."

I knew how much he hated working with Lauren. Lauren was...well, she was slutty to put it mildly. I honestly believed she came to work every day with the sole intent to land a husband. From what I had been told, the only thing she had landed was chlamydia. Edward hated working with Lauren almost as much as I hated being in the same room with Dr. James.

"Don't worry about it; I've got your back today. I wouldn't let Lauren get anywhere close to my man, Riley."

We made our way to the surgery floor after Edward had explained everything to Bree. Bree told me that she had a new man in her life, an EMT named Garrett. She had been in such a panic that she had forgotten to call him and tell him about Riley. She told me that he was on his way and that she really wanted me to meet him. Minutes after we had all of the consent forms signed, a very tall and handsome man came running down the hall wearing a blue EMT uniform. Bree's eyes lit up as the man came running over to her. I watched as he hugged her tightly and kissed her forehead. My initial impression of Garrett was that he was an amazing guy. Bree had been through so much having Riley so young and she really deserved to be happy.

Garrett made Edward promise to take good care of Riley before we went
into surgery. I could feel the love radiating off the two of them as we stood in the hallway. I was so envious of what they had that I made my mind up. Tonight at dinner, I would confess to Edward my feelings for him.

Dr. James was flirting with one of the pre-op nurses as we made our way into the operating room. Edward passed by him and completely ignored him. I stood beside Edward as we both began to scrub in for the surgery. Dr. James came bounding into the scrub room just as we were finishing.

"Well, it isn't every day that I get the chance to work with you, Isabella."

Oh, god, the way he leered at me had just made me vomit a little in my mouth. I said nothing to him as I walked around him and into the operating room, rolling my eyes as I passed.

Dr. James was known as a womanizer. Frankly, he kind of spooked me and made my skin crawl he gave off such a creepy vibe. I wondered if he was the one who had given Lauren chlamydia. Either way, they were a perfect match.

All during the procedure, Dr. James continued to leer at me and would try and make small talk with me. He completely ignored Edward with the exception of reporting on Riley. I pretended like I couldn't hear him and continued to hand Edward instruments. Finally, after the umpteenth time he had asked me my plans for later, Edward spoke up.

"Dr. James, I'll have to ask that you leave my nurse alone. It's obvious to everyone in this room besides yourself that she finds you irritating, as do I."

Dr. James huffed angrily, but after that, he remained quiet as he continued to glare at Edward. Once the appendix was out and Riley was stitched back up, I began to count the sponges and instruments. Edward had the other nurse in the room report to Bree and Garrett that Riley would be in recovery shortly. I helped the other nurse to clear the room so the cleaning crew could begin sanitization.

Once Edward had written orders for the floor nurse, he made his way over to the desk I was currently using. As his assistant, I had to document that the correct count was done, and as Edward's nurse, I was also busy filing away the labs and office notes.

Edward was seated to my right, signing his part of my count reports. Dr. James decided to make one last-ditch effort to get my attention. He stood at the counter that Edward and I were facing. The ledge wasn't all that high, which was a bad thing, as he was able to lean over the counter and be less than six inches from my face. I
instinctually looked up at him as I sensed his hand fast approaching my face. Since I had removed my surgical cap and mask, my hair was now a fallen mess. Several thick strands were now brushing my face. Dr. James tried to push a piece behind my ear, but my body moved quickly back to avoid his touch.

"Dr. James, you're invading my personal space. I'd appreciate it if you'd keep your hands to yourself."

Dr. James must have gotten the hint, as he raised his hands in the surrender position and backed away from the counter, but the look he gave me made a shiver run up my spine. The guy was seriously starting to freak me out. After he walked away, I let out a long breath, as I was just too tired to deal with him any longer.

I turned to face Edward to find him staring at me. Our eyes fixed on each other and it felt as if time had stood still. Slowly, Edward raised his left hand and gently tucked the loose strands of hair behind my right ear. The feel of his fingers as they touched the side of my face was amazing. I couldn't speak; I tried to open my mouth, but it wouldn't move. I watched Edward's face as his eyes searched mine. I wanted to kiss him so badly and it felt as if he wanted that, too. I watched as the tip of Edward's tongue swept out to wet his lips as his face came closer to mine. I could feel his breath in waves across my face, the warmth intoxicating me. He was so close that I could almost feel his lips on mine. I began to close my eyes as I leaned my body in his direction. This was it, I was about to kiss the man who had been starring in my dreams.

The ringing of the phone caused both of us to back away from each other and scared the shit out of me, making me gasp. I knew the call was for either Edward or myself, as it wasn't a direct line; you had to be transferred to this line. Edward quickly turned away from me and picked up the dictation phone and began his dictation of the surgery.

"B-Bella Swan," I shuddered into the receiver.

"Hey, Bella, it's Angela. I'm so glad I caught you. I wasn't sure if you were done with the procedure or not, but Lauren said it was finished."

"Um, yes, we just finished a few minutes ago. Is everything okay?"

"Yes, everything's fine. I just wanted to let you know before you left to go to dinner with Edward that he has a visitor."

"Oh, who?"

"Um, she says she's his girlfriend. She's waiting in his office. Can you give Dr. Cullen the message?"
"Um, yes, of course. Thanks for calling, Angela. We won't be much longer."

"Okay, I'll let her know he'll be here soon."

Girlfriend?

Edward had gotten a girlfriend?

Of course, you dumb ass, of course he's gotten himself a girlfriend, just look at him.

I took a deep breath and closed my eyes. I could feel the pain widening in my chest. I couldn't believe I had been so stupid to believe he had any interest in me. The song he had sang had been just that...a simple song. He was just a nice guy and I had foolishly mistaken his kindness for something more. I felt so stupid.

Edward was still dictating after I hung up the phone. I jotted down a quick note and stuck it to his cell phone that was resting on the table beside his keys. I rose from my chair and gathered my jacket. I turned to look at Edward who was still dictating, but he had his eyes on me. I made a motion for him to see the note that waited for him and then nodded goodbye.

I quickly turned and got the hell out of there. It took every ounce of energy I had to hold in the tears that wanted to spill down my face. I ran from the hospital back to my office. I had to see her for myself; I had to see the person who had captured his heart.

I made it back into the office and placed Riley's chart on my desk before I went to head down to Edward's office. Angela appeared in my doorway, blocking me from going into the hall.

"Hey, Bella."

I quickly shoved the pain in my chest down a little further. I would wait until I was alone before I totally lost it.

"Hey, Angela, sorry you had to stay so late."

"Oh, it really wasn't a problem. I had a ton of work to catch up on."

"So, Edward has a new girlfriend, huh?" I tried to make my voice sound silly. The last thing I wanted anyone to know was how hurt I was.

"Evidently, she's still waiting in his office."

"Well, Angela, let's go say hello."
I didn't even have to take two steps down the hallway before I could see her through his open doorway, sitting in one of his office chairs. She was simply beautiful. Her creamy long legs draped gracefully down over the front of the chair. Her light chestnut hair hung down her back in long waves with shining golden caramel highlights that practically glowed. From a distance, she looked absolutely perfect. I took in a deep breath and began to make my way toward her.

I gently knocked on the open door. Her eyes turned up to greet me, and I noticed they were a breathtakingly beautiful shade of turquoise blue. I briefly wondered if she wore contacts. Everything about her was pure perfection; her face, her slender, shapely body, her designer clothes. Quickly swallowing my pride, I extended my hand to greet her.

"Hello, I'm so sorry you've had to wait so long. I'm Bella, Dr. Cullen's nurse."

She rose from the chair, graceful as a ballerina. She stood a good five inches taller than me; she was a perfect height for him.

"Nice to meet you, Bella, I'm Kate." Extending her hand to me, she shook mine gently.

Kate...even her name was beautiful.

"Edward was just finishing up his dictation, he shouldn't be much longer."

"Oh, that's okay. I'm in no hurry."

I had nothing left. I didn't want to make small talk with her. I wanted to go home and drink heavily.

"Well, um...Kate, please make yourself comfortable. He shouldn't be but just a few more minutes. It was nice to meet you."

"Oh, the pleasure was all mine. Edward has talked about you several times. I feel like I know you already."

"Oh, well, don't believe everything you hear. Goodnight, Kate."

I smiled my best forced smile and turned from the room. Angela was sitting in her chair in the front office.

"Well, what do you think of Kate?"

What did I think of Kate? She was everything I wasn't...she was perfect for him.
"I think they'll make beautiful babies."

Angela giggled as she responded, "That's very true, Bella."

I had to get out of there. Edward would finish his dictation and read the note soon. I would not be able to face seeing him with her. I knew that eventually I would have to, just not tonight.

"Angela, honey, I hate to do this to you, but I'm so tired. Can you wait with her and lock up?"

"Of course, Bella. I still have work to do anyway. Get some rest and I'll see you on Monday."

I was not sure how I made it home. My body was on autopilot. Once inside my house, I locked the door and let my purse drop to the floor. I crossed the floor to my bedroom and changed my clothes. I made my way to my kitchen, not even bothering to turn on a light. I grabbed a couple of bottles of wine and a glass and headed back into my living room.

I poured myself a glass, downing it straight away before pouring another. I hadn't bothered to eat anything today, so obliterated shouldn't take too long to achieve. The way my chest was aching right now, the numbness would be welcomed.

I allowed my mind to wander back over all that I had been through since I had met Edward, realizing that almost a year had passed since he had come to Seattle and proceeded to both alienate and endear himself to me within such a short period of time. My, how time had flown.

One year.

A lot could happen in one year. A baby could be conceived and born, a year of school completed, a house could be built. And last but not least, you could lose out on the man of your dreams.

I stared intently at my half-empty wine glass, swirling the crimson liquid I had poured myself earlier before taking another sip. I buried my face in my hands as I tried to forget the days' events. How could I have been so stupid? How could I have thought for one second he would feel the slightest bit of the attraction for me that I clearly felt for him? Why couldn't I have just continued to hate him as I had in the beginning? Why did he have to be so perfect? And most of all, why did he have to be with her?

Grasping the glass in my hand and bringing it to my lips, I welcomed the burn of the wine down the back of my throat. I knew that after a while, the burn would be gone and so would the pain I was currently
feeling. Tonight, I wouldn't think about him and his perfect girlfriend. I wouldn't think about his hands that were caressing her cute, perfect little body. I wouldn't think about his full perfect lips devouring her pink, plump, model-perfect lips. I wouldn't imagine his muscular arms around her, his absolutely perfect chest pressing against hers, or his chiseled abs that he kept hidden behind his Ralph Lauren shirts under her hands, or his eyes that reminded me of the rarest emeralds shining as he made love to her. Least of all, I wouldn't think about his thick, silky hair that I longed to run my fingers through being fisted by her as he brought her to ecstasy.

Tonight, with the help of my friend in a bottle, I would forget all of that.

As I swallowed the last of my wine, I slowly sat the glass down on the table. One glass down, who knew how many left to go. Monday, I would wake up and go to work and act as if nothing had happened. He would never know how I felt.

The sound of my doorbell roused me from my pep talk to myself. I made my way to my front door, not really caring who it was waiting for me on the other side. It was late; a smart girl would have demanded to know who was on the other side. This girl just didn't care. As I opened the door without even looking through the peephole, I froze. Just when I thought my night couldn't suck any further...there he stood.

"Bella, can we talk?"

Well...that was what I got for thinking.

Okay, don't you dare get pissed at me. Studies show that a good cliffhanger is good for you!

14. Chapter 14

WOW!

Thank you so much for your reviews!

Okay, since I try to be a woman of my word, here is what EVERONE has been waiting for.

Readability brought to you today by Dollybigmomma.

Chapter 13 - Time to Spill
Patience is a virtue...

Good things come to those who wait....

I had heard those very proverbs all my life. Saying them was one thing, living them was entirely different. Since the day Jacob was arrested, that was what I had been doing. Being patient and waiting was what my mother told me I had to do. We had had numerous talks about the kind of person Bella was. Mom told me she would have to come to terms with her feeling in her own time.

I didn't like being patient. I hated the waiting even more. However, for Bella, I would do just that.

During Thanksgiving, I lost count of how many times I had nearly jumped in my car and drove to Forks to surprise her. My family was little help, either, as they were too busy with their significant others to notice my unrest. Watching my brothers doing just normal couple stuff was heartrending for me. I wanted what they had so much. I made rounds three times on Thanksgiving Day. I took extra calls just in the hopes I would be too busy to think. I trusted my mother's words when she told me to let Bella come to terms with what she was feeling. Meanwhile, I remained her friend.

When I knew she had returned home from Forks, I made it a point to drive by her house after work just to check on her. I would park across the street and just watch her house. I had to make certain she was safe.

Alice had gone to a lot of trouble to plan the Christmas party for the office staff. Jasper had begged Emmett and myself to just "go with the flow" on some of her ideas. Jasper had told us she had planned to have a talent show. Emmett wanted to be a comedian; however, Emmett could screw up even the most simple knock-knock joke. In high school, a few of our friends had lip-synced to a song that was popular at the time. We got the idea to do one of our own; we worked on that routine for a few weeks. We, however, were able to find just the music tracks and we all learned the song and actually sang it. I was never so grateful that we had been forced to take dance lessons as children.

I had expected the girls to show up in rather risque pajamas, I mean they were beautiful women. However, nothing could have been more beautiful than the simple cotton pajamas that Bella arrived in. They were so simple, the button-up top and matching pants were nothing less than sensational on her. I could picture her coming downstairs to breakfast, with her socked feet and messy ponytail.
For most of the night, I could only watch her. The way she laughed, the way her expression changed when she would listen to people talk to her. The look of anger when Nicki pissed her off was actually kind of erotic. I was surprised when she admitted something so personal to everyone as her lack of experience with intimacy; I would be changing that for certain. I had plans to kiss her until we both passed out, and to love her until she took her last breath. I was very determined to spend the rest of our lives together.

I sang that crazy schoolboy love song to her. I made it a point to lock eyes with her when I sang the last verse. She would have no doubt that I wanted more than to be just her friend. The look on her face told me she had gotten my message loud and clear. The look of a deer in headlights was all the confirmation I needed. I sat back and watched as she began this internal battle with herself...come on, baby...just let it go.

I hadn't noticed Jasper leave the room until I heard him playing. My attention was quickly shifted to him sitting on the couch. I knew he was just playing around, he didn't really know the song well he was trying to play. I listened as he kept repeating the same few notes. I watched as the look of recognition flashed across Bella's face, not surprising as the song was a popular one. Nothing could have prepared me for hearing the soulful vocals that came from my Bella's mouth. Her voice was sultry and seductive, bluesy and classic.

I acted without thought as I quickly grabbed my guitar. My motivation was purely selfish as I joined in and took over for Jasper. I watched as Bella closed her eyes and let the music take over for her. I allowed myself to imagine for just a moment that she was singing and thinking of me. When we were close to the second verse, I wanted to see her eyes as she sang, so I used all of my emotions I had bottled up inside and began singing the next verse. Bella slowly opened her beautiful brown eyes and I was hopelessly lost. This was where I wanted to be. I wanted to stay right here and sing with her, saying the words that I wanted her to hear. Letting her know in the most personal way how I desperately wanted her. When we came to the bridge, I just knew it was time to let Bella take the lead. I saw the passion and pleasure as she perfectly hit each high note. Just when I didn't think there was anything I didn't know about Bella Swan, she showed me this was only the tip of the iceberg. Not only was she breathtakingly beautiful with a heart of true gold, she had a deep love for music. With the last six words, I was brought to an all new level of love for her.

Yes, Bella, I am...the greatest fan of your life

Since that night, I had tried to continue to be patient. I had invited her to dinner, always assuring her it wasn't going to be with me alone. She continued to refuse. I began to worry that I had misread
her expressions. For the past several months, she wasn't at home in the evenings when I drove by her house. I began to worry that she had met someone else and had begun dating. I even went as far as to ask my brothers if the girls had mentioned anything. I considered briefly following her home after work, but decided that was just too stalkerish. I would listen to my mom and just wait until she was ready. I did notice that she was looking a lot more tired than usual. I worried then that maybe she was moonlighting; surely my dad paid her well enough to not need to do that.

Today, however, was the worst I had ever seen her. The dark circles under her eyes now had me very worried. I planned to take her aside this afternoon and talk with her. I had to know everything was okay.

Jasper and Emmett were sitting in my office waiting for me this morning. This was most definitely odd as they were usually lip-locked with Rose and Alice. I made my way to my chair as Emmett began to speak.

"Edward, I need your advice."

I chuckled to myself, this was typical for Emmett. He would always get Jasper and I together when he needed a second opinion.

"Alright, I'm listening."

Emmett took a deep breath and then let his shoulder slump. The look of worry was written all over his face.

"I think Rose is going to dump me," his was voice shaky.

"Why do you say that, Em?"

Emmett had his forearms on his knees and his face towards the floor.

"Because she's been acting very weird lately. She hasn't wanted to have sex with me in weeks. I mean we used to do it several times a day, but now nothing."

"Have you tried talking with her?"

"Duh. Yeah, but she tells me she's just..."

Before Emmett could complete his thought, Bella came stomping through the door. The look on her face was one of anger and confusion. I watched as she pointed her finger at me and told me, not asked me, to see Riley. Deep down, very deep down, I was very turned on by pissed off Bella. Watching her talk to Emmett like he was a six year old was so erotic. When she ordered Jasper to get into her office, I nearly came in my pants. I noticed that my dad made no argument as he quickly
left his office and went to hers as well when commanded. Damn, she was hot as hell when she ordered us around like that.

I should have known something was up when Jasper came back from his weekend away with Alice and she stayed with him. My brother was a married man...lucky fucker. Listening to Emmett shout to the world that he was going to be a father nearly did me in. I had wanted to be a husband and a father for as long as I could remember. I wanted it all, the morning sickness, the sleepless nights, and the spit-up on my clean shirt. The catch was... I wanted it with Bella.

When I took a look at Riley, I knew we had a situation on our hands. I was surprised his appendix hadn't ruptured before I got it out. When Bella had informed me that Lauren would be my assistant, I was less than thrilled. I was downright pissed when I found Dr. James flirting with my girl. The thing about Dr. James was he was all about the challenge. Once he had the girl, he was done. I think the only exception to that rule had been Lauren. I had walked in on them far too many times. I was ready to rip his throat out when he reached out to touch Bella...MINE. Somehow, though, I had a feeling if he could get his hands on my girl, he would never let her go by the way he looked at her.

I couldn't take it anymore. After all these months of being the good guy, I was sick and tired of being her fucking friend. I wanted to throw her over my shoulder and take her away to a private island and keep her naked for weeks on end. I wanted her screaming my name over and over like the way she did in my dreams. I wanted to see her smile when I came home to her. I wanted to wrap myself around her every night and wake to her every morning. I wanted to do the most mundane tasks like grocery shopping with her. I wanted to fight with her over silly things and have fuck-hot makeup sex.

Without thought of any possible consequences, I began to tuck the loose strands of hair behind her ear. Her skin felt so soft and warm. When she didn't back away or flinch, I decide to go for broke. I had waited for nearly a year to kiss those lips of hers. She was everything I had ever wanted in a woman. She had owned me from the first night I sat across the table from her. I was hopelessly hooked from the first time I touched her as I threw her into the pool. She had become my entire world.

I could have sworn I heard angels singing as I felt my lips barely grazing hers...

It was as if a bucket of ice cold water had been dropped over my head as the phone began to ring. It was as if fate had stopped me. I couldn't look at her; I couldn't bear to see the look of regret on her face. I pick up the dictation phone and began to dictate. How stupid could I have been?
Several minutes had passed before I chanced a look in Bella's direction. Was she pissed at me? Did she regret what had nearly happened? She motioned to my phone and I noticed a yellow sticky note attached. With my luck, it would be her letter of resignation. Dad would certainly have my ass for that one. Not like I didn't deserve it.

I quickly finished my dictation and wrote my orders for Riley in the computer. I checked to make sure he had pain meds and several antibiotics. I took in a deep breath as I turned my attention to my waiting cell phone. The yellow note taunted me as I slowly grasped the phone. My knees nearly buckled as I read her words.

Angela called to say your girlfriend is waiting in your office.

Kate...oh, god.

This was not how I had wanted Bella to learn about Kate. I had some major damage control to do. By the time I made it back to my office, Bella's car was gone. This was actually a good thing as I needed to get my thoughts together. I found Angela sitting at her desk. I told her to go home and that I would lock up.

I had spoken with Kate earlier in the day and she had told me she had a surprise for me. Well, I was definitely surprised. I knew she was coming into town, I just hadn't expected it to be today. I rounded the corner of my office to find Kate talking on her cell phone. I waited patiently as she ended her call.

"Well, hello, sunshine," she greeted me as she snapped her phone shut.

"Hey," I responded as I leaned over and hugged her.

"Your receptionist said you had an emergency surgery. Did everything go alright?"

"Yes, he'll be fine."

"I met Bella."

"And?"

"She's beautiful, Edward."

"That she is."

"You need to fix this."

"That's easier said than done. She doesn't know...about us."
"She knows what she's been told, that I'm your girlfriend. It's time she learned about us, don't you think?"

I tried to get my thoughts together as I drove to Bella's house. I prayed over and over that she would be home tonight. As I rounded the corner, I was both relieved and terrified when I saw her car in the driveway. What if she refused to hear me out? What if she had found someone else?

Kate placed her hand on mine and I gripped the steering wheel. Kate had insisted on coming with me so we could tell Bella the truth about us. I hoped Bella would understand. I had called my parents and told my mother the entire truth. She agreed with Kate that it was time to come clean and tell Bella everything. She reminded me that she loved me and said she expected us at breakfast tomorrow morning.

I felt like a dead man walking as I walked across her front porch. I took in a deep breath as I lifted my fist and began to knock. So many thoughts were flooding my mind. I only hoped she would listen to what we had to say.

The sight of her as she opened the front door nearly crushed me. Her eyes were clearly red from crying. She had looked tired this morning, but now it was pure sadness. This was my fault.

"Bella, we need to talk."

Bella simply nodded as she opened the door wider. She said nothing as she turned and walked back to her couch. She slumped heavily as she reached for her wine glass and refilled it.

"Can I get you anything to drink?" her voice was raspy.

"No thank you, Bella," Kate replied from beside me.

Kate walked around the coffee table and took the wine glass out of Bella's hand. Setting the glass and wine bottle down, Kate began.

"Bella, you need to hear what I have to say to you. I need you to listen to everything I have to say before you say anything. Can you do that?"

Bella simply nodded her head resignedly and then tucked her feet under herself. I quietly made my way over to a single chair across from Bella.

"I met Edward in medical school. He and I had several classes together and we just seemed to hit it off. The next semester was when we met Alex Tristan. We had such a great time together. For years, we were
always together and they watched over me, like I was their little sister. Our classmates always assumed we had a threesome going...and well...we found it funny and just went with it. During our residency, Alex got an offer from a different hospital and that left Edward and me behind. Not surprisingly, everyone assumed we were a couple and again, we didn't deny it."

I remembered how nice it was during my residency. The nurses left me alone because they thought I was with Kate, and the other male residents didn't hound Kate. When I did go out, if Kate didn't approve of the girl, which had been all of them, she was soon history. We liked our arrangement and kept it going for years.

"When Edward met Tanya, I told him that she was bad news. He tried to tell me that he was just trying to help her. I suspected she wanted more from him, but I gave her the benefit of the doubt. In the end, I was right."

Kate had been right about Tanya. I had wished a hundred times that I had listened.

"It was shortly after the Tanya thing that I met someone. Abraham is a wonderful man who was just starting his own practice as a neurologist. It was love at first sight for me; and for him as well. He asked me to coffee and we talked for hours. I was nervous when I introduced him to Edward for the first time. I wanted so badly for Edward to approve of him, so you can imagine my joy when Edward gave me the thumbs up."

Kate was correct, I did like Abe. He treated her with respect and I never doubted his love for her.

"Unfortunately, my family didn't share my joy. See, my family comes from old money and Abe comes from a very humble, middle-class family. My father felt he was just using me to get to my family's money."

I watched as the look on Bella's face began to change. She was really listening to what Kate had to say. She was beginning to understand. For the first time in the past three hours, I had hope.

"So for the past...oh, god, I don't know how long...my family has believed that Edward and I are together, even though we've never been a couple in reality, we're more like siblings. I've never even kissed him," she said poking my arm. "Finally, though, I realized one night that what I was doing, not only to my family but to Abe, too, was wrong. I was in a way denying my love for Abe by keeping him a secret. So the next day, I had Abe come over to my parent's house and I admitted to them that Abe and I were together. My father, of course, threatened to cut off all ties to me. However, my mother stepped in and told my dad to think before he spoke. My mother actually hugged Abe and welcomed him to the family."
I noticed a single tear running down Bella's cheek as she listened intently to what Kate was telling her. I so wanted to wipe away that tear.

"Abe has proposed to me after asking my father's permission. My father has been slowly warming up to Abe and now I think he likes him better than he does me. That, Bella, is the reason for my surprise visit. I wanted to share my happy news with my best friend."

Bella began to chuckle as she wiped away her tears. Kate then surprised the fuck out of me as she leaned across the couch and hugged Bella.

"So, Bella, now that you know the whole truth, I must apologize to you, for letting you believe that Edward had a girlfriend earlier. We've had this fake relationship thing for so long now that it still just comes naturally to say that. Please believe me when I say there's never been anything but friendship between Edward and myself. He's never had a real girlfriend as long as I've known him. We've always been each other's wing man.

"Well, I've told you my story. I want you to know that I'm so glad I finally got to meet you. Edward talks about you constantly. Oh, and you do know that you should've been a whole lot less forgiving about that swimming pool thing last year. I would've slugged him in the balls."

We all began to laugh at that one. Kate was right; Bella had forgiven me too easily. I just hoped she was in a forgiving mood tonight. I could tell she believed Kate. Now it was my turn to tell the truth.

A knock at the door brought an end to our laughter. Kate excused herself and insisted on getting the door. Not surprising, Abe was standing on the porch. I watched as he wrapped his big arms around my best friend. Abe was quite a big guy, actually bigger than Emmett. He was very handsome, too, if I did say so myself. More importantly, he loved Kate the way she deserved. I was happy for her.

Abe made his way into the room with Kate securely tucked under his arm. Introductions were made and congratulations stated. Bella and Kate hugged again and I felt as if the two of them would become good friends in the future. Once Kate and Abe said their goodbyes, I turned to Bella.

"Can we talk now?"

"Yes, Edward. I think we have a lot to discuss."

We sat down on her couch. I took the spot that Kate had occupied just
moment before. I was about to tell her everything. If she didn't feel the same, then at least I would know.

"Bella, I need you to please let me get this all out. I need you to listen to me as you listened to Kate."

Bella simply nodded her head and assumed the same position as she had with Kate.

"From the first moment I saw you, you captivated me. The things you said that first night took me by surprise. I've never had anyone know so much about me without meeting me first. I was blown away by the amount of respect that my parents have for you. I've regretted not being honest with you about how I feel, but I just wanted to give you time. When I first found out about Jacob, I was... pissed. My mom quickly told me that your heart wasn't in it. I tried to tell myself that anyone who was in a relationship for as long as you were with him had to have developed deep-rooted feelings. When I found out that was not the case, I allowed myself to hope."

I took a chance and moved slightly closer to her. I wanted to touch her. I wanted her to see and feel how much I deeply cared for her.

"That night in the bar... that song... it was for you, Bella. I sang that song from my heart to yours. I watched disappointed as you left that night, only to have you show up at my front door later. I wanted to tuck you away that night, I wanted to keep you safe and never let you be hurt by anyone again. You have to know that when I laid you in the bed that night... I... I kissed you. I'm so sorry, Bella, I just..."

I closed my eyes and waited for the screaming to begin. I had taken her pain and turned it into my pleasure. How could she ever love such a monster?

The feel of her warm fingers reaching across my knuckles brought me out of my mantra. She slowly weaved her tiny fingers into mine. I stared down at our hands meshed together. I began to rub my thumb on the knuckle of her thumb.

"You need to know that I fully expect you to ask me to leave when I finish telling you everything. I just need you to know that my feelings for you have only gotten stronger as I've gotten to know you more. You're constantly in my dreams and in my every thought. I want so badly to be everything you deserve. I want to be your every thought and every dream. I want to be the first person you share your joys and sorrows with. I want to own you like you own me."

This time Bella was the one to move closer to me. The hand that had been resting on the back of the couch was now gently caressing my face, her thumb moving back and forth across my cheek bone.
"Bella...I'll understand if you don't share my feelings. But you have to know..."

"Shhh," she whispered, her thumb now covering my lips. Her eyes locked with mine. I couldn't hold back any longer. With all the desire and passion I had suppressed for so long, I cleared the distance between us and kissed her.

I had kissed several girls in my past. None of them, not a single one, ever felt like this. I could feel this kiss all the way to my toes. I could feel her hair between my fingers as I held her face to mine. The feel of her gently pulling on the hair on the back of my head only encouraged me more. I wanted her to understand how much I deeply loved her. I backed away slightly as I had to get air into my lungs. With a quick intake of breath, I dove back in this time, parting my lips and brushing my tongue across her bottom lip. Bella parted her lips, granting me permission to explore her sweet mouth. She was the one to pull away this time. We were both gasping for air. Moments passed as I kept my eyes closed and just enjoyed this moment.

"I love you, Bella, so much."

"I love you, too, Edward."

I couldn't contain my joy. She loved me back. You could have given me the worst news in the world right now and I wouldn't have cared...she loved me back.

I began to kiss her again, simple quick pecks all over her face. She began to giggle and I quickly joined her.

"You know, Dr. Cullen, that was my first official make-out session."

"That's right; I'd forgotten you'd admitted that. Well, Ms. Swan, I think you need a little more practice..."

Well...Well...Well...

Now we can get the party started! Next chapter will be breakfast at the Cullen house.

15. Chapter 15

Welcome back!
Thank you to everyone who has left reviews!

Ms. Meyer owns Twilight, I own a beta named Dollybigmomma. Give her some love!

Now on with the show!

Chapter 14 - Bringin' Down the House

BELLA

The first rays of morning light had begun to creep along the horizon. According to the clock on the DVD player, it was almost six o'clock. My lips felt bruised and swollen, and I couldn't keep from smiling. The declarations that had been made last night were still prevalent in my mind. The feel of Edward's gentle fingers running up and down my spine made me smile. I was afraid to move, afraid that if I even blinked, this would all have been a dream. I wanted to lay here forever, wrapped safely in his warm embrace.

"Babe, I would love nothing more than to lay here all day with you, but..." Edward's husky voice rumbled in his chest.

"Don't say it," I moaned as I buried my face further into his chest.

"Sorry, sweetheart. Esme expects us at breakfast this morning."

"Huh?"

"I last night called her on my way over here. She said for you and me to be at their house for breakfast."

I began to giggle as I raised my body up from his chest.

"You know, sometimes your mother freaks me out."

"Tell me something I don't know."

I began to attempt to try to crawl over Edward to go to the bathroom. However, he had other plans. Quicker than I could comprehend, my back was now on the couch. Edward's lips were attacking my neck and shoulder. Between each kiss, he would mumble that he loved me and my skin.

"Edward," I moaned.

"Yes?"

I couldn't even respond. His kisses were driving me insane. With a chuckle, Edward finally stopped kissing my neck and moved away from me.
slightly.
"Yes?"

"Oh...um..."

He immediately removed himself from the couch, allowing me to get up to go to the bathroom. As I finally got my bearings and made my way toward my bedroom, Edward smacked my behind. I quickly spun around and playfully glared at him.

"You're just lucky I love you so much," I grinned as I continued to walk backwards.

"Luck's got nothing to do with it. That ass belongs to me."

Well, all right then...

I quickly showered and threw on jeans and a sweater. Since today was Saint Patrick's Day, I made sure my sweater was green. Edward collected his coat and keys and we were quickly off to the Cullen's house. Pulling into their massive drive felt so different this time. In the past, I always felt like a guest, like I had to ring the doorbell and be on my best behavior. It felt strange to just walk in behind Edward, hands laced together. After closing the door behind me, Edward quickly cupped my face and kissed my lips. The smile on his face was contagious and I couldn't help but to return it.

"I'm going to grab a quick shower. I'll meet you in the kitchen."

He kissed my lips again, but as I was headed for the kitchen, he quickly grabbed my wrist and brought me back to him. He kissed me again and told me he loved me, this time slapping my ass before he took the stairs two at a time.

I entered the kitchen, not sure I would even find anyone awake at this hour. Once I rounded the corner, though, I found that the kitchen was full of people. Alice and Rosalie were sitting at the bar while Esme was making a pot of coffee. Jasper and Carlisle were actually the ones cooking breakfast. Emmett looked to be making orange juice.

"Bella!" Alice shouted excitedly.

"Good morning, everyone," I said, the smile still present on my face.

Esme was quick to stop what she was doing and crossed the room and hugged me.

"Tell me you made him beg," she whispered in my ear.
"Nope, it's been long enough."

We continued hugging and chatting until I heard his velvet voice behind me.

"Ready for some coffee, babe?"

I turned to see Edward dressed in a V-neck sweater and dark jeans. His hair was still damp from his shower.

"Yes, please."

"You got it. Go sit at the bar and I'll bring it to you."

"But..."

"Not up for discussion. Better get used to it, babe." He pointed to the bar where Alice and Rose were currently sitting.

He turned with a wink as he joined Emmett at the counter. I made my way over to the bar and joined Alice and Rose. I had barely gotten in my seat when Alice let out a squeal that would break glass.

"EEEEE!"

"Jesus Christ, Alice," I cringed as she threw her arms around me.

"Oh, Bella, lighten up. I'm just so happy to see that you guys finally got your heads out of your asses."

"What the hell?"

"Oh, please, Bella. There was so much sexual tension between you two we had to step over it."

Before I had a chance to respond to her comment, there was a loud crash from across the room. Everything seemed to stop as Edward began to yell at Emmett.

"Emmett! Dude, I just took a fucking shower!"

Apparently, Emmett had managed to spill an entire glass of orange juice down the front of Edward's sweater. I looked up just in time to watch Edward tug the now-drenched sweater over his head. The sight of a half-naked Edward was just...wow!

I couldn't remove my eyes form his chest. Edward had definitely been spending some time in the gym, that was for certain. His pecks were well-defined, his well-toned chest continued to his abs that were definitely a full six pack. I allowed my eyes to wander to the patch
of hair that seemed to disappear into his jeans. The well-defined 'V' pointed like a neon sign to the promised-land.

"Oh..."

"...My..."

"...God."

There was a collective gasp from Rose, Alice, and myself. Rose leaned over and whispered in my ear, "Aren't you glad you tapped that?"

I couldn't even respond. I could only stand slack-jawed and staring at his chest. I hadn't tapped that...yet.

Thank god for Alice breaking my infatuation with Edward's naked chest as she shouted from her chair, "Hey, I have a great idea. Let's all go to that new club downtown tonight."

"Yeah, that's a great idea. We should so do that. It's St. Patty's day and it'll be sick!" Rose agreed.

Everyone was agreeing and then looking at me. I knew that I couldn't go. I also knew that they would hound me for the truth.

"Sorry, guys, I have to decline."

"Wait. Bella, you have to come..." Alice began to whine.

"Babe?" Edward asked confused.

"It's not that I don't want to go. I'd love to. It's just that I already have an obligation for tonight. But Edward, please go and have fun."

"Not a chance. What obligation?" Edward's eyes were now questioning.

I took a deep breath and decided to let them in. They would find out eventually, might as well tell them before they found out by accident.

"Well, I have this friend...he and his girlfriend just had their second baby. She was put on bed rest due to complications. Anyway, I've been filling in for him and tonight's the last night..."

"Filling in how?" Edward questioned.

"He plays lead guitar in a band."

"Wait....you play guitar?" Emmett exclaimed.
"Yes," I answered timidly.

"Like really play. Not like Guitar Hero, but actually play?"

"Yes, Emmett, I play for real. I actually suck at Guitar Hero. Like I said, go ahead and go to the club and I'll hang with you guys another night."

"Oh, hell to the no," Rosalie interrupted.

"This I've got to see. We are so coming to watch," Emmett shouted.

"Guys, please, don't feel like you have to change your plans for me."

"Babe, you're my only plan. I want to come and listen to you play," Edward's face was now inches from mine.

"Bella, you have to let me dress you up!" Alice announced while trying to push Edward's face away.

"Sorry, Alice, I'm there to play, not draw attention to myself."

"But..."

"Sorry, Alice, but you'll see why; I get enough attention just by being a girl who can play guitar."

"And that's precisely why I'll be there. The bars will be packed with drunk, horny guys tonight that'll want a piece of my girl," Edward frowned.

Part of me was a little offended at Edward's words. The other part was thrilled beyond belief. I chose to go with thrilled, for now.

"Okay, well, I have to be there by 8:15 PM to get set up and do a quick sound check. You guys can come at any point. I'll have the owner reserve you guys a table up front."

"Not happening, little sis. I gotta side with my brother here. We'll be helping you set up and fending off the guys," Emmett puffed up his chest and gestured between himself and Jasper.

I wasn't going to argue with him. I only hoped that at the end of the night, Edward would still be talking to me.

"Fine, but no caveman impressions; they do have bouncers there, guys."

I was never worried about Jacob's reaction when it came to me playing. He was always smiling when men would catcall or slip me their number. He would always just tell them to just write their number on the back
of a twenty. I knew Edward wasn't like that, but I also wasn't certain how he would react to me being up there.

I could still remember the first time I ever auditioned for Sam, the lead singer and self-imposed leader of the band. He, like most guys, didn't give much validity to my playing abilities. That was until he actually heard me play some pretty impressive shit.

When I was first learning to play, it was only to have something to do with Jacob. That quickly changed as my passion grew. I hadn't been playing for very long when my dad took me to Seattle and bought me my first Les Paul guitar. He told me he had no doubt I would be able to kick ass with it. During my high school years, while most of my friends were singing along with the latest boy band, I was building more calluses as I played till my fingers bled.

I read an article once that stated that Eddie Van Halen played by ear. I ran out and bought a VHS taping of him playing Eruption, where he had perfected what was called "tapping." I must have watched that performance at least a thousand times. I found a gently-used Ibanez guitar and began to try and duplicate his performance. Many years later, I still couldn't do it quite as well as him, but I was pretty damn close.

One afternoon, I was watching a special on MTV where Dweezil Zappa was being interviewed about playing guitar. When asked what, in his opinion, was the most difficult riff to play, he responded, "Back in Black, by AC/DC." I knew my dad had a cassette of theirs lying around and when I questioned him, he only smiled as he handed it over. The look in my dad's eyes as I played it for him four months later would be forever burned in my mind. My dad was always my biggest fan.

"Bells, are you sure you want to give Quil back his spot," Sam nudged me while we were setting up.

"You know this isn't for me, Sam. I love music so much, but I like it private."

"Yeah, I know. Still, the fucking tips are better when you play."

We both laughed at his admission. It was true, though. We never had to pay for a single drink when I was playing. The tip jar always had a few phone numbers in it, too. Still, I was a nurse and this was just for fun.

"So, which hunky guy are you taking home later?"

"Are you referring to my personal roadies?" I questioned with a chuckle, nodding my head in the direction of the bar where Edward, Emmett, and Jasper were standing.
"Well, well, Bella. I never took you for a freak in the bedroom."

"Shut it, Sam. I'm not sleeping with any of them. However, the guy in the black shirt is special."

"Tell me he's good to you."

"He's better than good."

I was right in my assumption that tonight's crowd would be huge. I was barely able to get enough chairs saved for everyone. As I made my way across the wooden stage, I tried not to look in Edwards's direction. I knew I needed to concentrate on playing. Sam thought it was fun to always change things up a little. Not that it was a bad idea; he just failed to tell the rest of us. I quickly found my place to the left of where Sam stood. I couldn't help myself as I began to scan the crowded room. The catcalls began as Embry plucked a few notes as a little tease. I was nearly finished with my scan of the crowd when my eyes landed on my favorite set of green orbs. God, how I loved those eyes. Edward broke my trance as he mouthed I love you.

"Well, alright now...how is everybody doing tonight?" Sam's loud excited voice rang from the speakers. The sound of the crowd was nearly deafening as they returned his greeting. "Are you ready to have a good time?"

The crowd again went wild.

"I said...Are you ready to have a good time?" Again the crowd cheered. "Well, now, that's a little better."

Sam began to make his way to the very front of the stage as he spoke.

"Tonight, I want to do a little something different."

Shit, here we go...

I looked directly into Edward's face and mouthed I'm so sorry. He tipped his head and raised his eyebrow in question. God, I hoped this ended well.

"You guys are some lucky motherfuckers tonight. See, tonight's our fair Bella's last night playing with us." Several people booed and a few clapped. "So tonight, I thought we'd go back to the beginning. Back to the first time I ever heard this fine-assed woman play," Sam made a gesture in my direction. I rolled my eyes at him.

"So I know what you're thinking out there. You're thinking, 'Dude, she's a fuck-hot looking girl and you must just have her up there as a
prop...am I right?" The crowd cheered loudly in agreement. "Trust me...I once thought that, too."

What the fuck was he trying to pull?

"The first time I laid eyes on Bella, she was about fourteen I think. She was best friends with a kid from my neighborhood. Anyway, he brought her around to play with us and I quite honestly wanted to laugh the first time I saw this little bitty girl standing there with a guitar in her hands."

I, too, remembered this particular event. I remembered it slightly differently, though, but what the hell; if he wanted to play, I'd fucking play.

"So she sits down and has this pissed-off look on her face. Do you remember this, Bella?"

I got closer to the mic as I faced him. "I do, actually. But you do recall that you ended up looking stupid, right?"

The crowd began to laugh.

"She's correct. I did look like an ass. But I think they need to see your mad skills to prove it."

The crowd again went wild. I glanced over at the guys' table to see all of them standing and clapping.

"Fine. Tell the story, asshat."

"So, this little girl sits herself down in my garage and proceeds to tell me that she can play guitar. I look at her and laugh of course. I mean, really, she's a tiny fucking girl."

That statement actually got a few girls in the crowd to throw ice at him. Couldn't say I didn't laugh...because I did.

"So I say to Pollyanna here, 'Play me the most difficult piece you know.' And I shit you not, she responded, 'No, fucker, how about I play you the hardest piece you know.'"

The crowd again went wild.

"I kid you not when I say she floored me. Bella, tell them what I told you to play."

I thought for just a second that I could just say the name of the song and we could be done with this stupid story. However, that wasn't what I did.
Taking a deep breath, I dove straight into Master of Puppets by Metallica, and Sam could only smile as I played. Not surprisingly, the crowd again went bat-shit crazy. When I finished, I glanced over to the table of my guys. Alice and Rosalie were dancing in their chairs while the guys sat there slack-jawed.

I had only played a few bars of the song as it wasn't one I played often. I had my favorites, and this wasn't one of them.

"Now, I know what you're thinking, her friend had to have tipped her off, right? I mean girls can't play metal, right? Well, then I told her to play me something a little harder."

This time, I played one of my favorites; Van Halen's Eruption. I watched as my fingertips played each note and I found myself lost in the rhythm. Sam had to actually stop me this time.

"But wait. No, this isn't even the best fucking part." He was so excited, even though he was admitting to looking stupid for questioning me because I was a girl. I quickly changed to the final thing I had played for him that August afternoon. This was one of my favorites, AC/DC's Back in Black.

Finally, the rest of the band joined in and we played as Sam just jumped around the stage.

"So, I admit that I judged Bella that day because she has a vagina. But let's be honest, she can play some kick-ass guitar!"

The crowd again went wild and I would fully admit it was fun to show off just a little bit.

"Since this is Bella's last performance with us, I wanted to give her the option of choosing the first song we play."

I knew ahead of time he would do this. He always did this when they had a substitute player. I smiled and turned to the guys at the table once again. I looked directly into Edwards eyes as I began to put down my Ibanez and picked up my Les Paul, the very one my dad had bought me all those years ago.

What I said next wasn't original; they were the words from the prom scene in one of my favorite movies, Back to the Future, but I loved to play this song and I knew that anyone who had watched the movie would enjoy it.

"This is a blues riff in B, watch me for the changes, and try and keep up, okay?"
I let my fingers take over as I closed my eyes. Johnny B. Goode rang from my guitar. I had loved this song ever since I had first watched the movie. I would admit I had a huge crush on Michael J Fox, but who didn't? I opened my eyes and was surprised that the dance floor was packed with people dancing to the song. Emmett was swinging Rosalie around like she weighed nothing. I tried to find Edward as the crowd seemed to get thicker. Suddenly, a woman was being slung around in the air. Imagine my surprise when the woman turned out to be Esme, and Edward was dancing with her. They had actually caused the crowd to stop and watch them. They were amazing. When the song finally ended and the crowd again cheered, I was pleasantly surprised to see Edward standing at the side of the stage with a bottle of water in his hand. I made my way over to him with the biggest shit-eating grin on my face.

"Well, what did you think?" I questioned him.

"What? That little 'Guitar Hero' shit you just did?" the grin on his face was slowly growing. "You're amazing, but I already knew that. Now get back up there and have fun."

I kissed him quickly as I returned to my place on the stage.

"Alright. That was fun. Now, just when you didn't think I could surprise you any more..."

I knew what this meant. This was the song that I had honestly wanted Edward to miss. The main reason I had hoped they would have gone to another bar. I really liked the song, but Sam liked to mess with me while I played. In the past few months, it hadn't been a big deal, but now that Edward and I were together, I was so worried. I wondered if maybe I should tell Sam not to do anything; I knew that if I did, though, he would just do something worse.

With a deep breath and a heavy sigh, I pick up my Ibanez and got ready to play the next song.

"Now, before any of you lovely ladies get pissed at this next song and decide to throw more ice at me, listen. Bella is actually the one who picked this one out."

Here goes nothing...

Looking down at my fingers, I noticed they were shaking. I was honestly scared of Edward's reaction. I gripped the guitar and closed my eyes, saying a silent prayer that he would understand this was all an act.

I concentrated on counting the notes I was playing, something I had never had to do. I always just listened to the song play in my head.
and matched it.

D eight times, C C D...

The crowd obviously recognized the song, Bad Girlfriend by Theory of a Deadman. My entire body began to shake with nerves.

My Girlfriend's a dick magnet
My Girlfriend's gotta have it
She's hot, can't stop,
Up on stage, doing shots,
Tip the man he'll ring the bell,
Get her drunk she'll scream like hell
Dirty girl, gettin' down,
Dance with guys from outta town
Grab her ass, actin' tough
Mess with her, she'll fuck you up

No one really knows if she's drunk or if she's stoned,
But she's comin' back to my place tonight

At this point in the song, Sam was supposed to make it appear as if he was talking about him and me. He would be singing to me and not the crowd.

She likes to shake her ass, she grinds it to the beat
She likes to pull my hair when I make her grind her teeth
I like to strip her down, she's naughty till the end
You know what she is, no doubt about it
She's a bad, bad girlfriend

Again, I counted as I played the opening riff. The rest of the band was with me this time.

Red thong, party's on,
Love this song, sing along
Come together, leave alone,
See you later back at home
No one really knows if she's drunk or if she's stoned
But she's coming back to my place tonight.
I say no one really knows just how far she's gonna go,
But I'm gonna find out later tonight.
She likes to shake her ass, she grinds it to the beat
She likes to pull my hair when I make her grind her teeth
I like to strip her down she's naughty till the end
You know what she is, no doubt about it
She's a bad, bad girlfriend
 Doesn't take her long to make things right
But does it make her wrong to have the time of her life?
The time of her life
Now came the part that I was dreading. The plan was for me to take
over vocals as Sam would come up behind me and play my guitar. He
wanted people to think he was playing me and I was to throw my head
back against him at the end of the lyrics.

As rehearsed, I felt Sam's hands on my hips as he began to grind into
mine. I felt his hands cover mine as he took over playing. I ran my
hands up my sides and around his neck, burying them in his hair. I was
supposed to act turned on as a result of his "strumming." I closed my
eyes as I sang the next verse.

She's now a gold digger
You figure out it's over, pull the trigger
Futures finished, there it went,
Savings gone, the money spent
I look around and all I see
Is no good, bad and ugly

Man she's hot and fixed to be,

The future Ex-Miss Connolly!

I continued to play through the end of the song. I could not look at Edward. I was terrified of what I would find. I felt the sweat running down my back as I made my eyes look in his direction.

What I found nearly took my breath away.

Alright, stop right there. 

Put the pitchforks down...

I had to stop there so that I can switch POV's. I promise not to make you wait too long.

16. Chapter 16

This chapter is basically last chapter from Edward's point of view.

Chapter 15

EDWARD

There were moments in all of our lives that we would never forget; like the first time I caught a fly ball when I was in second grade. The first time I caught a perfect spiral being tossed by Emmett in my parent's back yard. The feeling I got the first time my father called me Dr. Cullen. However, none of them compared to the feeling I had at this very moment. I wanted to stay right where I was forever.

My back was stiff from lying on her sofa and her hair was tickling my face, but I never wanted to move. I knew she was awake, I could just feel it.

I realized we had to get moving soon. For fifteen seconds, I contemplated just lying here and ignoring my mother's orders that we attend breakfast. Then the reality hit that even though Esme hadn't brought me into this world, she could nonetheless take me right back out if she so chose.

Being with Bella was as easy as breathing. I didn't even have to think
about it, it was natural. I had come to realize Bella was everything I had ever dreamed of in a woman and so much more I didn't know I wanted. The simple act of holding her hand awakened parts of me that I never knew existed. Even though nothing sexual had happened last night, I could see this amazing glow surrounding her. I gently squeezed her hand as we drove to my parent's house. I knew I was going to have to field a million questions from my brothers and my mother. However, I would gladly repeat it over and over again if it meant I got to keep Bella.

As we made our way through the front door, I could hear my family in the kitchen. I decided to grab a quick shower before facing the firing squad. I knew I sounded like a total douche right now, but I loved my girl's ass. Don't get me wrong, I loved all of her, but her ass was just perfect. I tested the waters earlier this morning when I smacked her ass and she didn't hit me with a right hook, so she must have been okay with it. I was not a big enough douche that I would do it in front of our friends; it would be something I did when we were alone.

Standing inside my room, I reminded myself that I had to get serious about getting my own house. I could never expect Bella to be comfortable with sleeping in my childhood bed, let alone us living together with my parents. That thought alone was enough to give me the heebie-jeebies. With that last thought, I peeled my clothes off and jumped into the shower. I was in such a hurry I dropped the soap twice and dang near busted my ass on the slippery bathroom floor trying to get redressed so quickly.

Breakfast in our house had always been a family event. My brothers and I learned at an early age how to cook and clean. My mother wanted to send us into the world as self-sufficient men. When I was younger, I found it to be more of a punishment than a privilege; however, all that changed the first time I tried to impress a girl I was interested in.

Upon entering the kitchen, I noticed the girls were perched together at the kitchen island and my brothers were busy carrying out various tasks. As I headed to the coffeepot to get Bella a cup of java, I glanced around the kitchen and noticed my parents were once again lost in each other's eyes. Growing up, I used to think it was gross and embarrassing to see my parents touching or looking at each other like they were. Now I could only smile to myself, as I knew now what that look really felt like. That feeling of being complete and warm and totally content...loved.

Leave it to my asshat brother to fail to pay attention this morning as he proceeded to spill an entire glass of orange juice down the front of my shirt. I was so pissed that I angrily tore off my shirt and began to wipe the cold sticky juice off my chest. Emmett began to apologize and chuckle at the same time which only caused me to become
angrier. I was about to hand him his ass when I heard the girls gasp behind me. I turned my attention to the kitchen island and found all three girls staring at my chest. Bella had her eyes glued to my abs and her mouth slightly open. I had to chuckle to myself at the realization that my girl was checking me out.

My brothers and I had started to work out with my dad when we were still in middle school. It was a great time for us to just be guys in our basement and it really paid off when we played football in high school. Working out stayed with me even during medical school and by the look on Bella's face, it was certainly worth it. Mental note...increase abs workouts by an hour a week.

As we all talked and caught up on each family member's goings on, it came as no surprise to me that Alice wanted to go to the new club in town. My brother then proceeded to give too much information and told us she was like the Energizer bunny in and out of the bedroom. Today was Saint Patrick's Day and I knew the local bars would be packed. However, if Bella wanted to go, I was game. I noticed that the smile that had been plastered on Bella's face since last night began to fade as her eyes found the hem of her sweater very interesting. When she advised us that she had something else to do, my heart began to speed up. When she shared with us the story of helping out her friend for the past few months, it was as if a light bulb went off in my head. Bella had been acting strange the past few months. Although she was still her wonderful self, it was evident she was preoccupied. Honestly, I wasn't surprised in the least that she was burning the candle at both ends to help out a friend. That was just my girl.

When I insisted that I was going to the bar with her tonight, I didn't want to come off sounding like a jealous prick, but I was a guy after all and I knew what most guys would be thinking while they were watching her play. I knew that Bella could sing and I could not wait to hear her play.

The rest of the day was uneventful. My brothers and I tossed a ball around in the yard and walked down to the corner store for a soda and candy bar, reliving our youth. Eventually, evening came and we made our way to the bar where my brothers and I insisted on helping her set up her equipment. She kept insisting she could handle it, but chivalry and a big smile won out. I had to remind her that she had me now and I proved this point with my lips on hers...several times.

Remember how I said there were times in your life that you would never forget? This moment right here, when Bella first played her guitar, was one more. I watched as Bella rolled her eyes at the lead singer of the group as he told the story of the first time he met her. I had to agree with him on one thing, she really was fuck hot.

I watched as her fingers played effortlessly the cords to Master of
Puppets. How she closed her eyes and let herself go.

Emmett let out a roar of appreciative expletives as he watched alongside me, nudging me in my ribs with his elbow.

The lead singer continued to tell the story of how she basically schooled him in the fine art of guitar. I had to laugh, she was truly amazing and she was all mine.

What happened next would forever be the moment when time stood still for all the guys at our table. When Bella began to tap out Van Halen's Eruption, I nearly lost my mind. When we were younger, dad took us to a Van Halen concert. Dad was a huge fan and told us that this might be the last time to see Eddie play, as he had been diagnosed with cancer. I had always been fascinated with his skill level, as he played by ear, or at least that was what was rumored. After seeing him play that particular song, my brothers and I tried to duplicate him. Sadly, we all gave up before we even came close. I couldn't help myself as I closed my eyes and listened to her play. I would swear to god it sounded the same.

Jasper stood in awe from my left, looking at me wide-eyed. I gave him a look that said, 'Yeah, I know, dude, I know.'

The crowd went absolutely wild when the opening riff to AC/DC's Back in Black sounded from the speakers. I was surprised she could play this one, as the quick changes required tough finger placement and Bella had very small hands. She rocked it, though.

I noticed out of the corner of my eye that my parents had arrived. Alice motioned them over to join us and I watched as my father's eyes never left Bella. Dad was responsible for getting us started in music. He didn't get to play as much as he liked and I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt he was impressed.

I watched as Bella made her way over to change guitars again. This time, she returned with a very worn but very cared for Les Paul. This guitar was obviously special, not only because of the name, but there was something else.

I had to laugh when I heard her quote from the movie Back to the Future. I would admit that I watched that movie a few times and even tried to play that song just like Michael J Fox. I wondered if Bella had a crush on him as a teen.

Growing up, my mom made certain we all took dance lessons. She said she wanted more than just the prom sway at our weddings. I watched as Emmett began to swing Rosalie around the floor. He was as big as a brick wall, but the man could dance. I expected my parents to be on the floor as well, but my mother advised me that dad had injured his
knee earlier in the day and it was very painful for him. I knew how much my mother loved to dance, so I extended my hand to her.

I couldn't remember a time when I'd had had this much fun dancing with my mom. The smile on her face as I swung her in the air and twirled her around would forever be in my memory.

My father had fresh drinks waiting for us when we returned; I noticed a bottle of water beside my new beer. I quickly snatched it up and made my way through the crowd. When I reached Bella and her eyes met mine, well, what could I say? Her smile lit up the room and my entire world. Those big brown eyes sparkled with life.

I had to tease her a little when she asked me what I thought. I wanted to tell her how amazing she was, but there were no words for how she made me feel. I gave her the water and told her to have fun then quickly joined my family.

I watched Bella as she readied herself for the next song. Something was suddenly off, she looked anxious. Did she forget the chords? The confident girl had definitely left the stage. The song she began to play was a current popular song called Bad Girlfriend. The song was simple enough, not really difficult to play. Still, the look on her face was mostly fear.

What's the matter, baby?

I continued to watch her become more and more tense. She had avoided looking at me since the song began. Damn it, babe, look at me.

I watched as several things seemed to happen at once. First, the lead singer began to move behind her while she stepped closer to her mic. He took over playing her guitar as she took over vocals. I had to admit it was sexual. The way her guitar hung low to her hips, it looked like he was playing with her.

I finally realized what she was afraid of. She was worried I would think this was real. She was worried I would be pissed.

Emmett and Jasper had to assume the same thing that I did because the next thing you know, we were all three standing on the table. Emmett and Jasper were doing the 'we're not worthy' wave while I had one arm pointing at her while the other was covering my heart. As the last cord was played and the crowd was applauding, she finally opened her eyes and looked at me. The sadness was quickly replaced with laughter when she saw the three of us on the table.

"I love you, baby," I shouted at her. I watched as the light came back into her eyes and the smile I had put on that face last night returned.
Still with me? I know it's been forever since I gave you guys anything and I hope you're still there. I have to thank my very own Prince Charming for helping with this chapter.

I also have to say thank you to whomever has been recommending me as the amount of people placing me in favorites has skyrocketed. I'm truly shocked that anyone is reading the random thoughts that float around in my head.

Thanks again for reading and reviewing!

17. Chapter 17

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Hello again!

This chapter is dedicated to Sandy167...thank you for your continued kind words.

Dollybigmomma keeps my stuff tidy, and SM owns it, lucky bitch.

Chapter 16 – Say it in a Song

BELLA

The rush of emotions I felt as I saw the guys standing on the table dancing was enough to bring tears to my eyes. I couldn't even be certain where the fear came from. All I knew was that now that I had Edward, I wanted to keep him.

The band had a scheduled break after the last song we had played and I was honestly looking forward to getting a drink and time with my boyfriend.

I chuckled at myself as I realized I sounded like a thirteen year old school girl for even thinking of Edward as my boyfriend. Was I too old to use that term? Did I care? One thing I was certain of was that he was mine and I couldn't quit smiling.

Just as I was about to put my guitar away and head over to their table, Nicki came rushing up toward the stage, heading straight for me. The smile on her face was nearly as big as the one currently residing on mine. I hadn't even realized she would be here, but I was glad she was nonetheless.
"Bella! Hey, girl, I had no idea you were so talented."

I smiled back at her then turned my eyes to the floor as I began to tug the guitar strap from around my neck.

"I'm not..."

"The fuck you're not. I've seen a ton of guitar players in my time and let me tell you, you fucking rocked that shit."

I began to laugh and decided not to fight this one with her.

"Thanks, Nicki, it means a lot that you're here."

She reached up and grabbed my hand, placing a stiff piece of paper in my palm. I glanced down at my hand to discover a one hundred dollar bill folded there.

"Nicki, you don't have to..."

"Relax, Swan, that's not a tip. I have a song request." Her Cheshire cat smile was bright enough to light up the stage behind me.

"Okay, let's have it."

Nicki quickly filled me in on her request that included her joining me on the chorus. I quickly grabbed my acoustic guitar and a barstool and made my way over to the mic. Since the band was technically on a break, Seth had switched the mic off and was backstage with the rest of the band. The bar was still really packed and loud as hell. I switched the mic back on and took a seat on the barstool.

"Alright, everyone, as Seth said a moment ago, the band is taking a break, but I have a special request from a close friend, and she's donating one hundred bucks to the diaper fund tonight so...here we go."

I grasped the neck of the guitar and then looked directly at Edward who was now standing right in front of the stage. His piercing green eyes were filled with as much love and adoration for me as I had in my own brown eyes for him.

"This song is dedicated to all the young ladies here tonight that are searching for their personal prince charming. But it's specifically to my friend who has definitely found hers."

As I began to strum the cords to the popular song by Colby Callilat, I remembered the first time I saw Edward. I wanted to hate him; I wanted to show him that I was immune to his charm. I didn't want to be just
another nurse that swooned at his feet. I wanted to be respected by him.

Now, I wanted to be treasured and loved and touched by him. God, how I wanted to be touched by him.

I don't know but
I think I maybe
Fallin' for you
Dropping so quickly
Maybe I should
Keep this to myself
Waiting 'til I
Know you better
I am trying
Not to tell you
But I want to
I'm scared of what you'll say
So I'm hiding what I'm feeling
But I'm tired of
Holding this inside my head
I've been spending all my time
Just thinking about ya
I don't know what to do

I turned to Nicki, giving her the cue to start singing the chorus with me. I turned my attention back to Edward, who was still standing in the same position and with the same intense stare.

I think I'm fallin' for you
I've been waiting all my life
And now I found ya
I don't know what to do
I think I'm fallin' for you
I'm fallin' for you

Our eyes never broke as I sang the chorus with Nicki. We both knew our feelings were of love and not at all what the words I currently sang were trying to convey. However, Edward didn't seem to care. He took in every note and every lyric as if I had written it for him myself.

I reluctantly tore my gaze from Edward's face and took a quick look around the room. I noticed a plethora of couples dancing close and several kissing as they swayed to the music. I noticed Dr. Tristan standing beside Edward, his eyes glued to Nicki as she returned his gaze.

As I'm standing here
And you hold my hand
Pull me towards you
And we start to dance
All around us
I see nobody
Here in silence
It's just you and me
I'm trying
Not to tell you
But I want to
I'm scared of what you'll say
So I'm hiding what I'm feeling
But I'm tired of
Holding this inside my head
I've been spending all my time
Just thinking about ya
I don't know what to do
I think I'm fallin' for you
I've been waiting all my life
And now I found ya
I don't know what to do
I think I'm fallin' for you
I'm fallin' for you
Oh I just can't take it
My heart is racing
The emotions keep spinning out
I've been spending all my time
Just thinking about ya
I don't know what to do
I think I'm fallin' for you
I've been waiting all my life
And now I found ya
I don't know what to do
I think I'm fallin' for you
I'm fallin' for you

The words were so true; I had been waiting all my life for him. It was as if my soul knew he was out there waiting for me as well. I was meant to be loved by Edward. He was my entire life now, the reason I was born and the reason I continued to live.

I can't stop thinking about it
I want you all around me
And now I just can't hide it
I think I'm fallin' for you
I'm fallin' for you
Ooohhh
Oh no no
Oooooohhh
Oh, I'm fallin' for you

As the last cord was played and the audience again applauded, Edward leaped up on the stage. He quickly removed my guitar from my shoulder and crashed his lips to mine. His kiss was longing and eager. He literally took my breath away. I didn't want the kiss to end, but I desperately needed air. I removed my mouth from his and quickly took a deep breath. I only got one gulp of air as Edward again attacked my lips. This time I didn't care, I welcomed it. I felt my body moving, but I was so lost in his kiss that I couldn't have cared. I could barely hear the catcalling and the whistling; all I could think of or feel was his kiss. I could feel his palm at the base of my neck, his fingers pressed firmly on my scalp. His other hand had magically made its way under my shirt and was pressed firmly in the middle of my back; his fingers were under my bra strap.

His lips were so soft and warm; the man could kiss like no one's business. He never asked for permission as he plunged his tongue into my mouth. He tasted of beer and pretzels and...oh, god, like a man. I moaned like a porn star as he continued to explore my mouth, my hands grasping the short hair at the back of his neck. I wanted to bury myself inside him. I never wanted to stop touching him, stop loving him. My hands moved from his neck to his broad shoulders and then down to his chest. I wanted to feel him, feel his skin as he was feeling mine. I lowered my fingers to his waistband and ultimately under his t-shirt. The feel of his skin was electric, as if I had touched a live wire. This electric sensation caused parts of my body to vibrate over and over. Suddenly, he broke the kiss. I wasn't having it as I pulled him back for more.

"Babe," his husky voice cautioned, "That's my phone."

Like a child that had just had her candy taken away, I began to pout. He quickly kissed my protruding lower lip as he made his way off the stage and out of the bar so he could hear.

Once I got my breathing under control and downed an entire bottle of water, Seth reminded us the break was over. I made my way back on
stage and grabbed my guitar neck again. I tried to find Edward in the crowd, but I came up empty. Seth liked to keep the energy high when the band played. I contributed that to their popularity. He liked to mix things up as well; he would play a few older songs and then some of the current music that was on the radio.

He also liked to keep things on the sexual side. Let's be honest, when you got some people drunk, their hormones came into play. Seth liked to cash into that, so we would play songs that either had the mention of sexual acts in them or a beat that allowed a little bumping and grinding to go on.

Bad Girlfriend had only been the beginning. The first song after the break was Addicted by Saving Able. Seth, however, wasn't satisfied with just simply playing the adult version of the song, no, he wanted to really get the crowds' juices flowing so to speak. He insisted I take lead vocals on the song.

Now that I knew Edward wouldn't get upset, I decided to have some fun with the song. After Seth made his announcement that we were back and that I would be singing lead vocals, I took in a deep breath and took the microphone in both hands and closed my eyes. The song opened with the vocals and the music starting at the same time. My cue to the lead guitar was to sway my hips twice, on the second sway we would start. With my eyes still closed, I began.

I'm so addicted to
All the things you do
When you're going down on me
In between the sheets
Or the sound you make
With every breath you take
It's unlike anything
When you're loving me

I wasn't about to sing the next lyric correctly, no matter how much Seth begged me. So instead of singing "Oh, girl, let's take it slow, I sang...

Oh, oh, let's take it slow
So as for you,
Well, you know where to go  
I want to take my love  
And hate you 'til the end  
It's not like you to turn away  
From all the bullshit I can't take  
It's not like me to walk away  
I'm so addicted to  
All the things you do  
When you're going down on me  
In between the sheets  
Or the sound you make  
With every breath you take  
It's unlike anything  
When you're loving me  
Yeah  
I know when it's getting rough  
All the times we spend  
Trying to make this love  
Something better than  
Just making love again  
It's not like you to turn away  
All the bullshit I can't take  
Just when I think I can walk away  

The crowd was really cheering at this point. I was swaying my hips and grinding into the mic stand. I had tried to find Edward twice since I began this song; he was still nowhere to be found. I closed my eyes as I began to belt out the chorus.
I'm so addicted to
All the things you do
When you're going down on me
In between the sheets
Or the sound you make
With every breath you take
It's unlike anything

When I opened my eyes, I found Edward standing directly in front of me. His eyes were fixed on mine. His primal gaze began to ignite a fire within me. My job was to arouse the drunken men in the crowd; however, the very sober and sexy doctor was arousing me. I stared directly into his eyes as I continued the remainder of the song. This was for him, for all the desire I held for him, for all the things I wanted to do to him and him to me.

I'm so addicted to
The things you do
When you're going down on me
Or the sound you make
With every breath you take
It's unlike anything
When you're loving me
When you're loving me
How can I make it through
All the things you do
There's just got to be more to you and me
I'm so addicted to
All the things you do
When you're going down on me
In between the sheets
Or the sound you make
With every breath you take
It's unlike anything
It's unlike anything
I'm so addicted to
All the things you do
When you roll around with me
Or the sound you make
With every breath you take
It's unlike anything
I'm so addicted to you
Addicted to you

I was nearly out of breath when I finished the song. Not from singing, but from the eye fucking I was getting and giving. His eyes were still locked with mine as he raised his right hand and motioned me over with his long index finger. My eyes never left his face as I took the three steps necessary to reach him.

His hands gripped my waist as he pulled me down to the floor. His arms engulfed me in a tight and protective embrace as he placed his lips to my ear.

"Isabella," his deep quivering voice sounded in my ear, "I have to get to the hospital. There was bus accident on the interstate. Several children have been injured and they need my help."

I reluctantly pulled away from his embrace. The look on his face was torn; he wanted to stay with me, but it was his duty to help others. I knew this sense of duty well.

"Do you want me to come with you? I can assist you in surgery if..."

"No, babe, they're going to the county hospital, it's closer and you don't have privileges there."
He was right; I had never stepped foot in the county hospital. I also wasn't aware that he had privileges there. Carlisle must have intervened.

Before I could argue with him or question him, he said, "What I do need from you is to ride home with my mother and..." he closed his eyes and swallowed hard, his forehead pressed to mine, "Babe, I need to find you in my bed when I'm finished. I need to know that you're safe and that when this is over, I can come home and...touch you."

I wasn't about to argue that I was a big girl who was perfectly capable of taking care of myself. He needed to believe that I was tucked safe and warm in his bed. He would need a safe harbor when he was done fixing those kids, or heaven forbid, letting their parents know they didn't make it. God only knew what he was going to find at that hospital. I could do this for him. I would do as he asked and when he was able to join me in his bed, I would not only allow him to touch me, I would touch him as well.

I raised my face to his and planted a firm yet loving kiss on his lips. "Whatever you need, now go save some lives. I love you, Edward."

A/N: Whoosh! (Fans herself)

I know some of you have been begging for lemons, and they're coming (pun intended :)

I just want to convey to you that my version of Bella isn't someone who's going to just go from one relationship that's loveless and sexless to nonstop debauchery.

I've been asked a few questions about this story that I've decided to answer publicly.

How old is Edward and Bella? Excellent question! Bella is 25. Edward is 31.

What was the song that Bella played that made her nervous? BadGirlfriend by Theory of a Deadman.

Now, some help from all of you. I need a fluffy story to read. I read Cotton Creek and loved it, now give me another one!

18. Chapter 18

Practice Makes Perfect
We have a lemon alert, people!

Please read the AN at the bottom...enjoy!

SM owns it all except for my plot.

Chapter 17 - A First Time for Everything

BELLA

You know that amazing feeling you get when you wake up and discover you still have several hours before your alarm is due to go off? That perfect feeling of soft clean sheets, the absolute perfect temperature in the room, the perfect amount of light and darkness present in the room? That was exactly how I found myself this morning.

I snuggled a little deeper into those very soft and clean sheets; the very sheets that smelled of Edward. I woke to the indescribable feeling of Edwards's body wrapped around mine. I could feel his warm breath gently brushing the skin of my shoulder. I wanted so badly for this very moment to last forever.

My wiggling caused Edward to draw his body closer to mine. "Mmm," Edward's husky voice broke the silence in the room.

I couldn't help myself as I slowly turned my body to face his. I just had to see him, to touch him. I had to know he was real and that he was finally safe at home.

Ever so gently, I traced my index finger over the top of his shoulder, slowly and gently cascading down to the middle of his defined chest; the very chest where I found such comfort. I could not stop myself as I watched my fingers exploring his warm skin. A quick glance to his face and I found his eyes were now open. He was watching me with amusement, admiration, and dare I say; lust. God, how I loved this man, this man that I had tried so hard to hate. This man that I wanted to share every day with till the end of time.

Before I could blink an eye, he had me flat on my back; a squeal left my chest followed by uncontrolled giggles. His lips found my neck of their own accord.

"Do my kisses amuse you?"

I giggled harder.

"Bella, you really know how to bruise a guy's ego."

The feel of his hand now traveling up my thigh brought my giggling to
an abrupt halt and in its place, I began to moan.

"There...that's what I wanted to hear."

Edward continued his assault of my neck and shoulders, while his hand continued to travel up and down my thigh. I began my own assault of running my hands from his neck to the top of the elastic of his sleep pants. Edward moved his hips to where his erection was in direct contact with my very wet core. This caused an entirely new sound to fall from my lips; something between a gasp and a moan. My reaction only caused Edward to push against me harder, pushing me further toward the edge. With one hand, he found the edge of my panties while with the other found my breast.

"Bella," his breathing increased and his voice was laced with want and need.

"Yes," the word came out as a throaty gasp as that was all I could manage.

"Babe...tell me to stop and I swear to god I will."

Parts of me, very aroused and wet parts of me, wanted him to never stop. The remainder wanted to wait for a time when I was certain my legs were shaved smooth and my breath didn't make a buzzard gag.

Edward's thoughts must have resembled my own as he began to slow down his kisses. Their intensity grew weaker until they were only pecks and soft brushes.

Slowly and quite deliberately, Edward removed his body from atop mine, never losing contact with each other's skin as he pulled me into his side.

I wanted to ask him about his night and how the kids from the bus accident were doing. I wanted to ask him when he had finally gotten home and then apologize for waking him.

I did none of them; I simply snuggled further into his side. After a while, I could tell that Edward had finally fallen asleep. His even breathing and slight body twitches gave it away. I closed my eyes and willed myself to fall back asleep, but it never came.

There in the darkness of Edward's room, I allowed my mind to drift to all of the things I wanted to do later this morning. I knew I needed to head home and get cleaned up. I also knew I needed to get myself ready for the week ahead. Once I had mapped out all of the mundane tasks I needed to complete before I allowed myself to crawl into bed, I had an idea. I wanted to share more of my world with Edward. I wanted to show him some of the silly things I liked to do, things that
I had never been able to share with Jacob. Jacob would have only complained and then made fun of me for even suggesting the things I had planned for Edward.

The sun was just starting to rise as I began to extract myself from the warm cocoon that was my Edward. I tried to be quiet and not wake him, but I failed miserably.

"Mind telling me where you think you're going?" his sleepy voice sounded behind me.

"Sorry, sunshine, but I've to get moving."

Before I could even toss the comforter back, Edward had me pinned to his chest, planting his face in my hair while kissing my neck.

"Well, I was hoping to take my wonderful and very handsome boyfriend out this afternoon."

Edward now hovered over me as he began to plant kisses on my shoulder and chest.

"Really? Do I know this lucky bastard," he said, peppering me with kisses between each word.

I couldn't help but giggle. He was amazing, even being woken up twice, he was just...sigh.

"Yes, as a matter of fact, you know him quite well."

If I lived to be one hundred and nine, I would never tire of looking at his face. His eyes alone captivated me and took my breath away. I wanted to share everything with him. To look at life through his eyes, to hold his hand as we made new memories.

"I want to show you something special today."

"Alright," he said smiling.

I asked Edward to be at my house at six o'clock that evening. I had a basket filled with fruit and cheese and a bottle of red wine. During the spring and summer, my neighborhood park would show old black and white movies at the band shelter. Couples would show up with blankets and baskets and make a spot for themselves on the lawn. I loved going to these showings, even thought I had always gone alone.

Tonight, I would share this with Edward. It was simple and maybe a little cheesy, but I loved it.

As I expected, Edward arrived precisely on time. Due to his need to
kiss me every five seconds, we nearly missed my favorite spot...not that I was complaining.

Edward helped me to spread out the blanket and then opened the bottle of wine. I watched in anticipation as he glanced around the park.

I had just settled between Edward's outstretched legs when the movie, Easter Parade, began.

"I can't believe they still do this," Edward's attention never wavered from the screen as he spoke, "I love old movies like this."

"They've done this every Sunday evening for as long as I've lived here." I snuggled deeper into Edward's embrace, "I'm sorry if you find this simple or too silly."

Edward quickly moved his attention to me. His hand gently cupped my face, turning me so that I was now looking up at him. "Bella, nothing we do together will ever be anything but wonderful."

And with that, he kissed the top of my head. During the entire movie, Edward would hum the songs that were played while he gently stroked my arms with his warm fingers. I lost track of the times he gently kissed my shoulder or my knuckles.

Before I was ready, the movie ended and we began to pack up our trash. Just as we began to walk back to my house, the heavens opened up and it began to rain hard, soaking us to the skin. Edward grabbed the basket and blanket from me and then took me by the hand as we ran through the torrential downpour. I couldn't quit laughing as we made our way to my front door. I never knew I could be this happy while running in the rain.

As we finally made it to my front steps, the storm increased in intensity. I tried and failed to unlock my front door as I couldn't stop laughing hysterically. Finally, I was able to slide the key in and unlock the door. I turned to look at Edward and found him staring at me with his deep green eyes. He, too, was laughing uncontrollably.

It was as if time suddenly stood still. Our laughter stopped abruptly and before I knew what was happening, Edward's lips were on mine. He wasn't gentle this time; he was acting like a thirsty man that was desperate for water. He pulled back slightly and then dove in again, this time even more intense than the last.

Something in me snapped and I found my hands buried in the hair at the back of his neck. I couldn't get enough of him. I couldn't get my skin close enough to his.

With what little rationale I had left, I fumbled for the doorknob and
swung open the door. Edward and I stumbled into my living room, with lips and tongues fighting for dominance. It was primal and raw, and I craved it.

Quick as the lightening that had begun to flash outside, Edward had me pressed up against my now-closed front door, his lips and teeth nipping and exploring my neck and shoulder.

I could hear myself taking in shallow, quick gasps of air. I could feel Edward begin to lift my soaking wet shirt off my body. I needed him to kiss me again; I needed to feel his lips on mine. With both hands on either side of his face, I directed him to where I wanted him.

I felt my wet shirt as it grazed my face, causing Edward to stop kissing me. I heard the wet sound it made as it hit my wood floor.

I began to unbutton his shirt, but quickly became impatient as the buttons wouldn't come apart fast enough, so I ripped it open and then tossed it to the floor to join my own.

I felt Edward's warm fingers and he began to unclasp my bra. However, he shared in my impatience as he ripped it from my body.

I had never been in this position before. Here I stood in my living room with this half-naked, wonderful man, our bare chests touching, our lips moving in sync, tongues still battling for dominance. There was nothing in the world that was going to stop this from happening.

I had to look at him. I had to see those eyes. With great reluctance, I broke the kiss to look into his face. What I found I was certain mirrored my own.

"I love you, Edward."

He didn't respond with words. He dipped down and placed his arm under my knees, carrying me bridal style to my bedroom. Once inside, he sat me gently down and began to unbutton my jeans. I fumbled with the buckle of his belt as he directed me backwards toward my bed.

With no clothing left to separate us, Edward slowly lowered me to the bed, his lips barely leaving my skin as he continued to explore my body.

With the tip of his tongue, he quickly flicked my nipple which caused me to gasp and arch my back. I closed my eyes as I relaxed back into the bed and he continued to suck and lick my now erect peak.

When he felt my nipples had been fully explored, he made his way to my stomach. I felt him as he began to kiss his way across each of my
hips, slowly making his way down.

My breathing increased as I felt him shift himself between my legs. I could feel his erection as he continue to slowly maneuver his knees between mine. I could feel his fingers slowly descend to the apex of my thighs.

With a start, I opened my eyes and tried to close my knees. Edward stopped his movements and directed his attention back to my face.

I was certain fear was written all over it. I had never been here before; I had no clue what I was doing. I mean I had a general idea, but I felt like I was trying to describe the ocean when I had never seen it.

"Babe," my eyes were now locked with Edward's, "If this is too much, please tell me."

Was this too much? Was I ready to be with him?

Hell and yes.

"Ed-Edward..." I swallowed the large lump that had found its way into my throat, "I want this like I've never wanted anything else, but I have no idea what I'm doing."

"You're letting me love you, that's what you're doing."

How was it he knew exactly what to say to make everything alright?

With a new resolve, I let my knees fall apart and allowed myself to relax, glad I had tended to that shaving earlier. I could feel Edward's fingers gently caress the inside of my thighs, followed by gentle kisses. When he reached my core, he shifted his body again. Now I could feel his arm under my right hip as his bicep circled around it.

I expected to be embarrassed by what I knew Edward was about to do. I expected Edward to be grossed out by it as well. What I didn't expect was the feeling I got as he slid his tongue flat against my lower lips. I didn't expect the sounds that came out of my mouth as he did it again. Most of all, I never even fathomed the overwhelming need to watch him.

With my upper body resting up on my elbows, that was exactly what I did. I watched as Edward's pointed tongue dove between my folds, and then circled my throbbing clit before darting lower and inside me. I watched as he then slowly slid in his middle finger. I gasped as he began to massage inside of me.
There were not enough words to describe the feeling I got from watching Edward continue to lick and suck at my clit. The feeling was like nothing I had ever felt.

I watched his hand as he continued to move his finger inside of me, mesmerized by the motion of his wrist as he increased his movements and the look in his eyes as he watched me watching him.

My orgasm hit me like a tidal wave, slowly building at first, and then crashing hard and fast, over and over. The scream that left my lips was positively primal.

I was out of breath and felt as if my entire body was now made of jelly. It surprised me when I opened my eyes and found my favorite green orbs gazing back at me.

I couldn't help but smile. Edward slowly began to run the backs of his fingers across my cheek. It was as if he was putting my face to memory.

"Do you know how beautiful you are right now."

It was a statement and not a question.

"Edward, I'm ready. Please make love to me."

With my words, I watched his face fall slightly. Had I said something wrong?

"Bella," his face fell to my chest, "Babe, I didn't plan this. I didn't bring anything with me."

"Edward," I all but whispered, "Please, look at me." He slowly raised his face to mine. "I know you didn't plan this. I still want to make love with you. I've been on the pill since I was sixteen. I have terrible cramps otherwise."

"I need you to know that I'm clean, Bella. I haven't been with anyone in a very long time. I swear to you I've always used a condom...well, until now. I've never done it without one."

"I trust you."

His eyes never left mine as he positioned himself at my entrance. I knew I had to relax or this was going to hurt. Edward resumed his assault on my neck, bringing on a brand new feeling of arousal.

He was so slow and gentle as inch by inch, he lowered himself inside me. I could feel my walls stretch to accommodate him. When he was certain he was touching my barrier, he stopped and looked deep into my
eyes.

"I love you, Bella. I promise to love you every single day of forever."

I felt a pinch as he thrust forward and broke through my hymen. It wasn't the worst pain I had ever felt. Edward waited to move until I got comfortable. Slowly and effortlessly, he developed a rhythm as he continued to kiss me. He continued to whisper his love for me.

I didn't expect to orgasm my first time. But this was Edward and it was obvious he expected me to. He slowly reached between us and pinched my clit over and over until I cried out his name. Four thrusts later, I felt Edward's release.

I had never been more tired than I was right now. Who knew such pleasure could cause such exhaustion. Edward was curled around me, kissing my fingers as he played with them.

I decided I wanted to stay like this forever, naked in my bed with the man I loved.

Fate had other plans, though, as Edward's cell began to ring. I curled into my pillow as Edward reached into his pants for his phone. Had I known who was going to be on the other end, I would have made him ignore it.

"Emmett...slow down, I can't understand you." Edward moved to lean his back on my headboard. "Wait...Charlotte did what?"

Finally!

Okay, a couple of things.

First, I'm in the process of writing the next chapters of my other story, Prince Charming Syndrome. What I need from you guys is your favorite movie lines. I won't guarantee that I will use them all, but I will give you credit for the line and I will reveal the movie in case you have never seen it.

Second, thank you for reading. I mean I honestly do this for me. I find it amazing that anyone out there is reading the random thoughts I have in my head.

Third, reviews are like writing Viagra to me. Make me hard with your reviews, you know you wanna see me cumming with more chapters!
Having the most amazing night of my life interrupted by my brother was not high up on my to-do list. However, knowing that if the roles were reversed that Emmett would drop everything for me helped me to leave her bed and make my way to my parent's house. Once Bella heard my side of the conversation, she all but threw me into my car. She was dressed before I was and waiting in my car. My father was so right about Bella, she was fiercely loyal.

Once we made our way into the family room, my heart was nearly in my throat. Rose was seated in the corner of the couch, a blank stare on her pretty face, her left hand protectively massaging her belly.

"Rose, honey?" Her eyes never left the floor as I cautiously approached her, "Rose, can you tell me what happened?"

Emmett had given me the broken version of what had occurred earlier in the evening. What was supposed to have been one of the happiest days in a girl's life had been suddenly shattered.

"Sh-she said he couldn't..."

Rose's words were barely above a whisper.

"Couldn't what, Rose?"

Her bottom lip was now trembling. My heart was being ripped as I continued to watch Rose slowly form walls around herself.

"He doesn't love me l-l-like her."

Emmett had filled me in on the situation. He had taken Rose to The Blue Room. It was a Cullen tradition that every Cullen man had taken the woman he intended to marry there to ask for her hand. My grandfather had done it, as well as all of my uncles and even my father. Jasper had reserved a private room when he had asked Alice. Emmett was no exception and had just asked Rose for her hand when Charlotte walked by. Apparently, she and the good Dr. Abernathy had split and she'd had to move in with her sister. Her sister was a single mother of three and so that meant Charlotte had to get a job. Unfortunately, it was at The Blue Moon.
Charlotte knew Emmett had made reservations for dinner and took the chance to back at him. Knowing Charlotte, she would have happily assumed that Emmett had been left pining away for her. If she only knew the truth...

So when Charlotte spotted Emmett proposing to Rose, she caused a scene, shouting at Rose that Emmett was still her husband and that Rose was a nasty whore. Rose left the restaurant with help from our mother after Charlotte dumped an entire pitcher of iced tea on her.

"He'll always love her best," Rose's tearful words interrupted my thoughts. "He'll never look at me or love me the way he does her," her words this time were crystal clear.

"She's right, Rose; he'll never look at you or love you the way he did her." My words hung in the air as I could hear the collective gasps around the room. "Rose, I need you to listen to me." I placed my hands on each side of her face, wiping away the stray tears that had made their way down her face. "When Emmett first met Charlotte, he was in a very strange place. You see, all of his friends had girlfriends or fiancées and Emmett felt left out. He'd been so busy with medical school that he just didn't have time for a relationship. Charlotte just happened to be at the right place at the right time.

"She found him trying to drink his sorrows away. She fed him a few more drinks and then took him home with her. He was vulnerable and she totally took advantage of that, convincing him to marry her, but her true colors eventually came out. After Emmett and Charlotte divorced, we learned that Charlotte had just wanted to live the life of a rich doctor's wife. She didn't care who the doctor was or what kind, as long as he took care of her."

I would never forget the day Charlotte's sister told us that. Emmett vowed never to fall for another girl again. That was until Rose came along.

"Rose, when Emmett found her in bed with another man, he was hurt. But right now, Emmett is dying inside. He's terrified he's lost you. When Emmett found out you were going to have his baby, he was beyond happy."

I began to chuckle as I started the next story.

"When we were growing up and we would be just hanging out doing guy things, Emmett would always say that he couldn't wait to have children so he could do cool things with them. He always said he wanted to have three boys so that they could be as close as we were. He's always wanted to be a dad. After he and Charlotte married, she did the unthinkable. They had been trying for about two years when he found out that she had gone behind his back and aborted their baby, and then
she'd had her tubes tied. She never wanted children, she was afraid they would ruin her perfect body."

I remembered that phone call. Emmett had both Jasper and me on the line as he cried that she had killed his son or daughter, and that he had lost his only chance to be someone's daddy.

"So you see, Rose, he can never love you the way he loved her, because he never truly loved her. She betrayed him and took away from him his deepest desire. You're giving him everything he ever wanted, a beautiful wife and hopefully the first of many beautiful children."

I hugged Rose and encouraged her to put my brother out of his misery. I knew they would be fine once they talked rationally. As I made my way into the kitchen, I took notice of my brother's sad face. I made my way to where he sat and encircled him with a brotherly hug.

"Dude, you owe me. If I ever fuck up with Bella, you better be the first one fighting for me."

Emmett was too emotional as he slapped my back, fighting his sobs. He didn't need to say anything, he was my brother and he always had my back.

Four months later...

BELLA

I hated wedding cake. No, I really did. Here I sat at my sixth wedding reception in three months, not a fucking one of them mine.

I hated being this way. I hated the sound of my internal whining. I kept it all to myself. I wanted to be married to Edward. I wanted my happily ever after, but it wasn't going to happen.

These damn receptions started with Jasper and Alice. Esme had a literal shit fit that her son had gotten married and she wasn't there, so she made them do the entire thing all over again.

Next came Emmett and Rose. After the Charlotte fiasco, Emmett practically dragged Rose to the altar, cue reception number two.

Third came the Monday after when Dr. Tristan announced he was not waiting a second longer to be with Nicki and so he asked for her hand. Apparently, he took her to this amazing restaurant called The Blue Room. Turned out it was also a Cullen family tradition to pop that very important question in that very restaurant. Had I been invited to that restaurant? That would be a no.

The fourth and by far the most surprising was Jacob and Leah. He had
gotten himself into counseling and ran into her at a gas station and the rest as they say was history. I was happy for him, I really was. But I had to think, really? After eight years?

The fifth was my friend that I had filled in for while his girlfriend was on bed rest. He decided that after two kids, he was ready.

Last but not least were Ben and Angela. It turned out that Ben was a doctor that worked at County hospital. They were now having a lovely, intimate wedding...with another damn beautiful white wedding cake.

So here I sat brooding, staring at yet another piece of goddamn cake in front of me, listening to the village people sing YMCA while watching my drunk, happy friends dancing like idiots.

Edward was going to be covering for Ben while they were away on their honeymoon. He'd already had four calls so far today. I was not mad that he was helping out a friend. I was not mad that I hadn't been able to drink in case I had to drive myself home.

I was hurt, there was a difference.

Two weeks ago, I had overheard Edward talking with Jasper and Emmett. Emmett was giving Edward a hard time about when he was going to take me to The Blue Room. That was when I found out what The Blue Room was and why I wanted him to take me there.

He had told Emmett, and I quote, "We aren't there yet."

Edward didn't want to marry me. Plain and simple. He loved me; I knew this without a doubt, just not enough to marry me.

"Babe, I'm so sorry, I have to go to the hospital," Edward's warm voice interrupted my inner bitch-fest.

"Oh, okay. Please be careful. Saves some lives." I always told him this when he was called away.

"Okay, grab your purse and I'll drop you off."

I raised my hand to his arm, "No, I'm going to stay here and enjoy my last evening with Ben and Angela."

"Okay, well, get a ride home with my parents or Emmett then. I love you."

I kissed his cheek, "Me, too."

It was shitty, I knew it was, but since hearing Edward's confession about marriage, I hadn't been able to say those words back to him. I
also hadn't been able to sleep with him. For the first week, I lied to him and told him I had my period. The second week, he was called away three nights in a row.

I couldn't stand the way I felt right now. I hated that I was trying to push him away. It was just, damn it, I wanted to be fucking married to him already. I want to sign my name Bella Cullen when I charted. I wanted to wait patiently as the pregnancy test developed. I wanted to introduce Edward as my husband and not as my boyfriend. I wanted to call Esme my mother and not my boss's beautiful wife. I wanted to wake up with him every day and fight with him about leaving the toilet seat up. I wanted to watch him sleep next to me and wash his laundry. I wanted it all, as his wife, but I wanted it now.

I needed a drink, now.

I watched as happy couple after happy couple danced and swayed, eyes gazing and hands roaming as the music continued.

I lost track of how many straight Jacks I had consumed. Enough that I didn't notice all of the Cullen's leave. I decided I would have one more drink then call a cab.

By the time I had finished that last drink, I was not able to stand. Luckily for me, Emily, the new wife of the friend that I had helped out, was working at the hotel. She managed to find me a room at the hotel. She helped me remove my dress and get into bed. I wanted to close my eyes and forget the pain I had felt when I had first heard his words.

"We're not there yet."

I awoke to a heavy pounding in my head, and my stomach felt like it was going to remove itself from my body. I rose out of bed, threw my clothes back on, and made my way to the lobby. The concierge was nice enough to hail me a cab and I made my way home.

Once safely inside my house, I allowed myself to cry.

Once I had not a single tear left, I made myself get into the shower. I would wash away all of the pain that his words had brought me. I would wait for him to be ready for me. I knew it was stupid to push a man into doing something he didn't want to do. I would continue to act as if I hadn't heard his words.

I sat down on my couch and grabbed my guitar. I had done this quite a lot in the past few weeks. I had no one to talk to about this. Esme was out of the question, he was her son after all. "Oh, hey, Esme, I want to marry your son, but he doesn't want to marry me. What do I do?" Yeah...no!
My dad was also out of the question. He wasn't a feelings type of guy. Alice and Rose were too close to the family and if I was being honest, I was too jealous of both of them. Jasper had taken all of thirty seconds to decide he wanted to marry Alice, and Emmett wasn't much better.

I was the only single female in the office now. There was no talk of getting drinks after work or shopping trips anymore. No, now it was 'I made Emmett this for dinner' or 'Jasper helped me clean that.' Jealousy was an ugly fucking bitch.

I had been so lost in my mental pity party that I didn't notice that Edward had made his way into my house.

"Bella?" I jumped and screamed as his arm touched my shoulder.

"Babe, I'm sorry to frighten you, I've been calling and calling. I've been so worried about you. What happened last night?"

"What do you mean?"

"Bella," my name left his mouth followed by a long heavy sigh, "Please tell me what's wrong."

Pretend you didn't hear his conversation...

"Nothing's wrong, Ed..."

"BULLSHIT, BELLA!" he shouted. "Something is definitely wrong here. You haven't told me you love me in weeks. You haven't let me touch you in as long!"

"Edward, I had my fucking period."

"Bullshit, Bella, I fucking know when you're having your fucking period and that wasn't it."

"How...why...?"

"Bella, I know you better than you know yourself. Something's wrong. It's something I did and it's really big. I've hurt you haven't I?"

"No, Edward. Everything is fine."

His face was pained. I wasn't fooling him.

"Really, then kiss me."
With a deep sigh and a trembling lip, I kissed him. I tried to swallow the pain that was trapped in my chest. I had to set aside my feelings and give him what he needed. I loved him and I would wait for him to be ready.

The kiss was lame and I knew it.

Our foreheads were now pressed together. "I...um..." his voice was quivering as he pulled his body back from mine, "I actually wanted to talk to you about something important." He crossed my living room and sat in one of the armchairs. "As you know, my house will be finished in a few days."

Edward had tried to find a house to move into. He had hired a Realtor and looked at hundreds of houses. He found fault with each and every one of them. So when one had more money than god...one builds. That was what Edward had done. He hired an architect and had a house built. And in true Cullen fashion, when one son did something, they all did it. Well, not every fucking thing, it would appear marriage...fuck, I was bitching again.

Anyway, they all had homes built, all within the same block as Carlisle and Esme. So soon, all of the Cullen's would be living on the same street behind big iron gates, having cookouts every Sunday while I sat alone in my little house that my ex-boyfriend had attacked me in. Wasn't life grand...

"Well, I was wondering...actually, I was hoping that you would consider moving in with me."

I couldn't believe this. He wasn't ready to fucking marry me, but he was ready for me to move into his house with him. He was ready for me to cook and clean for him and warm his fucking bed, but heaven fucking forbid if he was ready to place a ring on my finger and make a commitment to me.

Did he not fucking know me? I had bought this house nearly three years ago and never once considered moving my fucking boyfriend of eight fucking years in with me.

"I'm sorry, Edward. I can't do that."

"Bella?"

"Yes?"

"What...did I...are you...?" He stopped for a moment and gathered his thoughts. "Let me get this straight. You haven't told me you love me in two weeks. Up until five minutes ago, you haven't kissed me on the
lips. Then you get shit-faced drunk and spend the night in a hotel after you told me you would get a ride with my family, and now you won't move in with me. What gives, Bella? What happened to us? Did we fall out of love and no one told me?"

"How did you know...?"

"Emily called my mother and told her she put you to bed. She said she found you crying at the bar."

"I was just sad...because I...everyone had someone and I..."

"You've been alone before, Isabella. Lie better."

I was pissed. He had called me out and now I was fucking pissed.

"Get out! GET OUT OF MY FUCKING HOUSE!"

That was three days ago. He had left and I sat in the middle of my living room and cried.

Edward had been out of the office all this week. He did his final walkthrough and took possession of his house. He had taken the week off to finish moving in.

I regretted telling him everything was okay. I regretted not talking to him and telling him what I knew. But most of all, I regretted that I had pushed him away.

A knock on my office door brought me out of my list of regrets. It was Emmett. "Hey, Bella."

"Hey," I replied half-heartedly.

"So, can we talk?"

"Sure, come on in and close the door."

Emmett made his way into my office, closing and locking the door.

"Sorry, but I need to have this conversation with you without interruptions."

I would admit that I was nervous now. I began to run all sorts of scenarios through my mind as to what he was about to tell me.

"So, word on the street is that my brother asked you to move in with him and you turned him down."

"I take it you've spoken to Edward."
"More than that, I made him a promise. I promised him that if he was ever to fuck up and lose you, I would have his back. Do everything in my power to convince you to forgive him."

"Is that why you're here, you think he's lost me?"

"Nope, little sis, he did nothing wrong now did he?"

I couldn't answer, he was right.

"I know you heard our conversation, Bella, well, some of it."

"What are you talking about?"

"Bella, you can't bullshit a bullshitter. Listen, I know my brother and I know you. Quit trying to pretend that what you heard isn't tearing you up inside. Call your boy and tell him you love him and make this right."

I wanted to do just that as Emmett left my office. I was afraid that he would tell me to fuck off and get the hell out of his life.

And I would deserve it.

I pulled out my phone and started typing.

I love you and I'm sorry. You did nothing wrong, I'm just being a bitch. Please forgive me. I'll understand if you don't. Won't change how much I'll always love you...Bella

Sending a text message was the chicken-shit way to apologize, but it was all I could manage. I would crumble if he didn't answer my call. I just needed him to know I was sorry.

The four minutes I waited seemed like an eternity.

I love you, too, always. If you truly want forgiveness, be at the bar where I first sang to you tonight at six. Edward.

I told no one that I was going to meet Edward at the bar. I couldn't handle having everyone watch as I lost the love of my life. I made my way past the bouncer like I had all those months ago. I even sat at the same table. The bartender must have remembered me as he sat an unopened bottle on the table.

I scanned the bar. It was crowded for this early on a Friday night. I noticed that tonight there was only a single barstool on the band stage. Maybe this was a sign. Would I, too, be alone after tonight?
The lights began to dim in the room as the spotlight came on again above the lone barstool and a man made his way across the stage and sat down. I was in no mood to listen to some sap sing his heart out to the woman he loved. I kept an eye on the door anxiously as I waited for Edward to come in.

"Good evening," his voice sounded into the microphone. The already noisy crowd began to cheer and applaud. "Tonight, I need your help as I do something I've wanted to do for a long time. Bella, this is for you, babe."

I had been so focused on watching the door that I had tuned the man on stage out. It was Edward.

I watched as his fingers began to caress the strings on his guitar. I watched as his eyes closed and he began to sing...

Forever can never be long enough for me
To feel like I've had long enough with you
Forget the world now we won't let them see
But there's one thing left to do
Now that the weight has lifted
Love has surely shifted my way
Marry Me
Today and every day
Marry Me
If I ever get the nerve to say
Hello in this cafe
Say you will
Mm-hmm
Say you will
Mm-hmm
Together can never be close enough for me
To feel like I'm close enough to you
You wear white and I'll wear out the words I love you
And you're beautiful
Now that the wait is over
And love and has finally shown her my way
Marry me
Today and every day
Marry me
If I ever get the nerve to say hello in this cafe
Say you will
Mm-hmm
Say you will
Mm-hmm
Promise me
You'll always be
Happy by my side
I promise to
Sing to you
When all the music dies
And marry me
Today and everyday
Marry me
If I ever get the nerve to say hello in this cafe
Say you will
Mm-hmm
Say you will
I know what you're thinking, I was an ass. But just sit back and listen to what I have to say before you come at me with pitchforks.

From day one, Bella and I had had a very passionate relationship. Wait, I know you're going to say she hated me, and you would be right, but hate was a very passionate emotion, too.

From the way I had tossed her into the pool to how I had led her to believe I was involved with someone else, to pretty much everything else about us, nothing about our relationship had been your standard garden variety.

So, when it came time for me to ask her the single most important question of my life, I had to be true to who Bella and I were.

I knew Bella had been listening that day when I told my brothers we were not ready to get married. I also knew how she would react. She would keep it all in until she had a meltdown. Unfortunately, it was a temporary necessary evil to get where we needed to be.

As far as the Blue Room went, that wasn't us, either. Every major turning point with Bella and I had involved music and I refused to change now so I had some arrangements to make.

I would admit that it was a pretty awful thing to let Bella drink herself miserable at the last reception we had attended, but honestly, it was going to make a great story to tell the grandkids, not to mention it would make for amazing makeup sex.

Asking Bella to move in with me could have gone either way, but I didn't expect her to toss me out of the house and I nearly ran back in
and dropped to one knee right then.

I just knew things would work out with my plans of asking her to marry me. I just knew that everything would fall into place...eventually. So with the help of my brothers and their wives, I set off to get my girl.

The song I chose to sing to her I'd heard one of the nurses humming in the O-R one day. I pulled it up on YouTube and I knew it would be perfect.

I chose the place as you can guess because that was where she had first heard me sing, the night she stormed home and found Jake in her bed with Jessica and what's-his-name.

If I lived to be one hundred, I would never forget the look on my Bella's face when she realized it was me singing to her. More importantly, when she realized what I was asking her. I had always known Bella to be such a strong person, but I watched as she cried so hard that she couldn't even answer me. She could only nod her head yes.

Once I had finished my song to her and placed the ring on her finger, our family came from the wings to congratulate us. It took several minutes for Bella to compose herself enough so that she could even speak. I held her tightly to my chest and let her have her cry. I knew she was full of emotions and they needed to be released.

Of all the things she could have said once she finally calmed down, she said, "Esme, you'd better get your camera because we're going to the courthouse on Monday and do this."

BELLA

Edward Anthony Cullen was an ass. But he was my ass and I loved him. Once I was able to calm down and Edward filled me in on his plans of how to torture his future wife, it was as if a weight had been lifted off my shoulders.

I was one hundred percent serious when I told Esme to bring her camera to the courthouse because we were doing this wedding in seventy-two hours. Just because I was serious didn't mean it happened that way, though.

Edward convinced me that having pictures and letting our loved ones watch as we promised forever to each other was important. So I agreed to go to Las Vegas and have a little ceremony. I let Esme have her say in where and what we did; I didn't care as long as I got the other half of this wedding ring set on my left finger. We boarded the plane six days later and in a very quiet and very perfect ceremony, I
promised my heart to Edward Cullen forever.

Five years later...

"Daddy, will I be as pretty as Mommy?"

"Oh, yes, my sweet girl, you most certainly will."

Edward helped me to conveniently forget my birth control while we were in Las Vegas and so Samantha Marie Cullen was born nine months later. When we found out we were expecting a girl, I asked Edward if we could honor his favorite patient by naming our child after her. I think he smiled almost as big that day as he did the day I told him we were expecting.

"Mommy, can you show me the fingers again?"

Samantha wanted so badly to play guitar like her dad and I. Esme had had a guitar custom-made for her tiny hands. Our house was music central for all of the Cullens, as Rose and Em would bring Emma and Scott, their twins, over to play as well. Jasper and Alice were still trying to have a baby, but Jasper said he was really enjoying practicing.

Edward winked at me and smiled contentedly at my swollen stomach where it felt like our son was currently doing block and tackle maneuvers. We had done a lot of practicing of our own while trying for our second child. Edward kissed Samantha's head then came to stand behind me and wrapped his arms around me, resting his hands on our son. "I think we have an all-star football player in there. It feels like he's practicing punting as we speak," he laughed as my stomach jumped with a sharp kick.

"He's a Cullen; he'll have it perfected by the time he makes it out next month."

"Mommy, I can't do it!" our daughter growled bringing our attention back to her. Even with the custom-made guitar neck, Samantha would still get frustrated easily when she couldn't play as fast as she wanted.

"Samantha, honey, don't get upset, what did Daddy tell you that you needed to do in order to play like him?"

With a huff that was truly passed down from me, she rolled her eyes, something she definitely got from Edward, and responded, "Practice, cause practice makes perfect."

Edward smiled down at our perfect little girl. "That it does, sweetheart, that it does."
The End

I cannot say thank you enough to my beta who stepped up and told me what I needed to hear and not what I wanted to hear. She is exactly what I needed in order to get all of these ideas from my head and onto paper. I wish I could just let you guy in and watch all the scenes as they play out, but I can't. So again....thank you Dollybigmomma you are the best!

Now if you enjoyed this then I hop you will take a look at my other fiction that is in progress Prince charming syndrome. It is full of fluff and I am having a blast writing it.

21. Chapter 21

The most amazing thing has happened, my story, Hands of fate is currently one of the recomended stories of the week over at "the lemonade stand". If you would, head over there and vote for In the Hands of fate. This is a huge honor for me, kind of like the oscars. I am still pinching myself that this is all real. I thank you in advance for your vote.