



Stephenie Meyer owns Twilight

Written by CaraNo

## **EPOV**

"Edward, you still looking for a new assistant?"

I nod absentmindedly, eyes still glued on the plans before me. Mind spinning. Last minute changes before the presentation of the new buildings in New York and London. Hopefully, James Hunter of the Hunter Group will be satisfied.

"Well, my Bella's looking for a job," Charlie says pointedly. "She's finally coming home."

He has my attention.

"Ah yes, she's graduated now, hasn't she?"

The smile of a proud father. And he has every right to be proud. Bella graduated High School at seventeen, and college at twenty-one. She's worked hard in Los Angeles, rarely coming home for visits.

Come to think of it, I don't think I've seen her since she left Seattle four years ago.

## **EPOV**

"Yep. And she's sick of LA," Charlie chuckles. "I have a feeling she'll be much happier back here in Seattle."

I tilt my head, thinking. "But if she's my assistant she won't spend that much time here."

There will be traveling, and I need an assistant with me. To me it's heaven, especially since my divorce. Spending my weekdays in New York and London for the next foreseeable future is something I'm looking forward to.

"And that will work out very well," he tells me with a satisfied grin. "You see, she always had a thing for the East Coast. And she wouldn't mind travelling for a while."

I see.

"I'm sure we can work something out then," I say simply.

We were neighbors growing up, and Charlie and I made things work early on. He was there for me when I was fourteen and my parents died, and I was there for him when he found out that Renee was pregnant. Bella was very much wanted, but it still came as a shock. Charlie was only twenty-one, and Renee and I were seventeen, going on eighteen.

## **BPOV**

"Voluptuous Vicki!" The crowd goes insane. "Teasing Tanya!"

I take a deep breath. I grin widely to myself. My heels are mile high. My corset hugs me in all the right places. My tits look amazing.

"And..."

Say it. Give it to me.

"Give it up for Irresistible Izzy!" Demitri shouts. "It's her last night in town, gentlemen, so let's make it a good one!"

Yes. Last night in LA. Finally.

After slipping on my black mask in satin and lace, I make my way down the stage, not stopping until I reach the pole in the middle. Victoria and Tanya flank me. The three of us are the most desirable girls here. We make the big bucks.

The DJ plays Rockstar by Rihanna. That song makes the club vibrate.

We drop low, smiling seductively.

I can't wait to spend my weekends at Demitri's club in Seattle.

There's no way I can leave this part of my life.

Fuck wholesome.

At the end of the night, I say goodbye to my girls.

Time to go home.

## **BPOV**

"Good to have you home, kiddo."

I hug my dad hard. I've missed him. "Good to *be* home. Mom says hi, by the way." I release him. "She took me to brunch after she picked me up at the airport-"

I stop before I start rambling. Dad already knows all this. He also knows I'm nervous about meeting Edward, so he smiles reassuringly and tells me everything will be fine. I have no doubt about *that*, but... fuck, this is *Edward*. The man I crushed wildly on when I was a teenager. Hell, my first orgasm belonged to him. I was fourteen, I remember.

Hey, if other girls could fantasize about older rockstars, I sure as fuck could fantasize about older architects.

"Is Edward in his office?"

Dad nods. "Yep. Come home for dinner tonight, yeah?"

Feels *so* good to be home.

"Absolutely, Dad."

## **EPOV**

"Ship these to London, too," I tell Maggie. "Oh, and did you fax all the paperwork?"

"Yes, sir. Everything is expected to be finalized within the next ten days." She takes the plans and the files before leaving.

I find myself grinning in my office. I'm ready to move on with my life. New York and London, what a way to start. And hopefully I will have a new assistant by the end of the day. I actually have no doubt that I will. Charlie's singing the praises, not that he needs to. I know how qualified his daughter is. She was always a good girl. Working hard, eager to learn. Above her peers. A little shy. Very pretty and very smart. No, I have no doubts.

When Maggie alerts me of Bella's arrival, I take my place behind my desk.

"Send her in, Maggie."

The door opens and...

*Fuck me.*

### **BPOV**

I'm nervous, but I'm not the stuttering fool I once was.

"Hey, Maggie. I have an appointment." Edward's assistant hasn't changed a bit. She asks for my name, and I chuckle. "Isabella Swan."

"Oh, Bella! You've all grown up!" Ah yes. People tend to do that as the years pass. "You were always a very pretty girl but look at you now!"

Naw, shucks.

"Thanks, Maggie." I smile. "So, is Edward ready to see me?"

She does her thing, all while smiling that motherly smile of hers, and soon I hear, "*Send her in, Maggie.*"

*Ungh.*

Here we go.

I know I can do this. My makeup is light, my hair in a ponytail, my dark grey pencil skirt does its job, same goes for my black pumps, and my white button shirt is perfectly tight.

Seconds later, I open the door to his office, and I enjoy seeing his eyes widen.

*God, Edward, you look good.*

### **EPOV**

I'm momentarily stunned.

The woman standing in the doorway is just that; a woman. A *stunning* one. What happened to the pretty girl?

"Edward, it's been so long." Soft voice but rich.

*Snap out of it.*

I do and I clear my throat.

"It certainly has, Bella."

I stand up and walk around the desk, and I hug her because she's... Bella. I was there from the day she was born.

*Christ, she smells good.*

I clear my throat once again and release her. "Please... have a seat."

Back in my own seat, I see the document I have up on my computer, and I see my distraction, because clearly I need it.

I go through the 'interview' on autopilot while I remind myself of a few important things... by typing them down.

*...You're 38 years old, Edward... She's your business partner's daughter... Your ex wife babysat her... 38 years old... she's 21... Charlie's little girl...*

At the end of the 'interview' I force myself to smile for her.

Playfully I tell her, "Well, *Ms. Swan*. Welcome to Cullen/Swan Architecture."

## **BPOV**

Nothing can ruin my day. Edward's reaction to me was a pleasant one. But what did he expect? That I still looked seventeen? Hmph.

Anyway, the interview went off without a hitch, and Edward is now Mr. Cullen. I can't wait to serve him coffee.

What if I spill?

I shake my head. Sometimes I'm such a hussy.

It's much more than serving coffee. It's actually a job I think I will love, and I will get to use my education. I enjoy architecture, and it's not exactly up my alley but it's not far away. I studied Graphic Design and Production Management, after all.

So, that's the first job done.

Now it's time to get the other, and that's why I'm standing outside Demitri's second club – *Girlesque Night*.

Looking down at the piece of paper, I still try to remember where I've heard the name Emmett McCarty from. I swear it's familiar, but I shrug it off. I must've heard Demitri say his name before or something.

## **EPOV**

"Morning, ladies," I say, smiling at Maggie and Bella.

They're sitting behind Maggie's desk, and Bella has spent the past couple of days following her around. She's a fast learner, there's no denying that.

"Good morning, Mr. Cullen," they both chuckle, and Bella holds up my coffee before saying, "I've put your messages on your desk."

"Thank you." I sip my coffee and it's as perfect today as it was yesterday and the day before. "I'll be in my office, and I'll see you for lunch, yes?"

"Absolutely." I don't like that her smile is so incredibly beautiful. "I made reservations at Alice's Bistro."

“Excellent.”

Soon I’m behind closed doors and I exhale. Again.

I keep it polite and brief. Our lunches together are about one thing and one thing only; our upcoming trips. I simply fill her in.

Then, everyday as I return to my office, I exhale loudly in... I don’t know, relief?

I just need some time to get over this... whatever it is.

### **BPOV**

“Ready for your first night, Dee?” Emmett waggles his eyebrows.

Dee McKenna. Fake name. I’m in Seattle. There’s no way I’m using my real name here. Thankfully Demitri helped me out and took care of all the paperwork. So... I’m Dee to Emmett, who is the host here.

“I’m ready.” It’s just too bad I only have a couple of nights a month here. “Let’s do it.”

Emmett grins. “Fuckin A. And let me know if you wanna dance in the VIP area sometime.”

Yeah, I don’t think so. I dance, but I don’t touch and I don’t get too close. Going anywhere near the customers is a no-no for me.

Minutes later, I hear Emmett introduce me. My mask is in place.

“It’s her first night here at *Girlesque*.” He pauses for dramatic effect, I guess. “Here’s Delicious Dee!”

### **EPOV**

"That's still a no," I sigh heavily, I want to hang up. Ever since I got divorced, my cousin's been on my ass about 'getting pussy.' "I have no desire to hook up with the women you flaunt around, and I have no desire to visit your strip joint."

I *know* sex, and I honestly don't see what the big deal is. It's in and out and then you fall asleep. I prefer my hand, and I use it to get a release every now and then.

There's a knock on the door then, and soon Bella pokes her head in.

She's still grown up, I see.

"*It's not a regular strip club, Edward,*" Emmett huffs. "*This is some tasteful shit, ya know. I'd even put you in the VIP area!*"

"Don't care," I tell him, gesturing for Bella to come in. "Still not interested. Now... I'm going to London in a few days. I'll call you when I get back."

I hang up the phone and instinctively smile at Bella.

"Are those the visas?"

She grins widely and nods. "Yep, we're good to go."

## **BPOV**

I'm a bit disappointed. It was never a plan to get Edward to notice me and it's not like I've spent the past years pining away. But *now*... I'm *interested*. I can't help it. However, he keeps things very brief. We only talk about work. Granted, at our first lunch together, he asked me if I had enjoyed college and my summer and blah, blah, blah. Just to be polite, I'm sure. But that's it, and now I'm aching for more.

I want to know about Karen. Why did they get divorced?

I never noticed problems between the two, but then again... I never saw them as affectionate either.

Sighing to myself, I vow to myself to get that man to open up.

Tomorrow we're going to London together. All this time alone oughta give me *something*, right?

## **EPOV**

SeaTac is alive, even at this ungodly hour.

I'm tired and grumpy, though elated. Bella's... radiant. Dressed in black pants and a fitted cardigan in purple – with matching heels – she looks both casual and professional. Add a Blackberry to that equation and you have my gorgeous assistant, who evidently is already at the top of her game.

Maggie left yesterday. It's just Bella now, and already she just... *knows*.

I'm very impressed, and... well, at five in the morning I'm also in awe, because... *it's five in the morning*.

You're not supposed to be all-knowing. You're supposed to be all-sleeping.

"Oh, I forgot your coffee!" she says, rummaging through her carry-on bag. "I think I saw a Starbucks over there. I'll be right back." And that *smile*. "Can I get you anything else?"

Loaded question.

But I suppose the normal black coffee will have to do.

## **BPOV**

With a heavy sigh, he shakes his head, asking for nothing more than the coffee. But I've found out that Edward has a sweet tooth.

When it's finally my turn, I order Edward's favorite. According to Maggie, it's something he indulges himself in every once in a while.

"One Peppermint White Chocolate Mocha." I smile, satisfied with my decision. "An extra shot of espresso too, please," I add. I know he's very tired. Then for the sweet tooth. "And two Double Fudge Mini Donuts."

The donuts are for later, so I hide them in my bag.

Soon I'm back with Edward, and I hold up the beverage for him.

When he sees the whipped cream on his coffee, I get the Edward Cullen smile.

It should be patented.

## **EPOV**

The coffee made my morning, all because Bella brought it for me. For some reason I see it as her taking care of me. Not her... just... doing her job. But it's a good feeling, and I want to hold onto it. I've never had that before.

Karen was... well... just no.

With Bella, though, it feels like... Fuck, I don't know, but it feels like she's working hard to get everything right. For *me*.

So, I need to take a step back. She's been here for less than two weeks for Christ's sake.

There's something inside of me waking up. Something I haven't felt in years, but I recognize it.

Desire. *Lust*.

Yes, a few steps back are in order.

Then, three hours into our flight, there's a box. From Starbucks. With two donuts. All for me. And that smile is still there.

*Still fucked.*

## **BPOV**

I loved travelling. Notice the past tense? As in; I used to.

Flying from Seattle to New York, New York to London... yeah, that shit takes time.

I don't know how we're gonna keep this up, because according to Edward's schedule, we'll make this trip at least twice a month. That's going back and forth between Seattle and London four times each month. Four times!

"See you in the morning, Bella," he sighs, giving me a tired smile before he opened the door to his hotel room. "Or," he checks his watch and groans, "in five hours."

I chuckle. "Can you spell jet lag?" I joke, opening the door to my own room.

We have adjoined rooms.

"J t e - l g a," he jokes back. Then he winks and he's gone.

And I'm glad I brought my trusted rabbit because that wink... *damn.*

## **BPOV**

I knock on the door that separates our rooms. "Are you awake, sir?" I check my watch. We need to hurry. "You have a breakfast meeting with Black Construction in half an hour."

I pace by the door. I ordered wakeup call for us both, he should be up.

I'm dressed in my work attire. Apart from colors changing from day to day, it will always be the same. Dress pants, snug fitting, clinging to my hips. Not my waist – I'm not an old woman. And a button shirt. Hair in a ponytail. Heels. Light makeup.

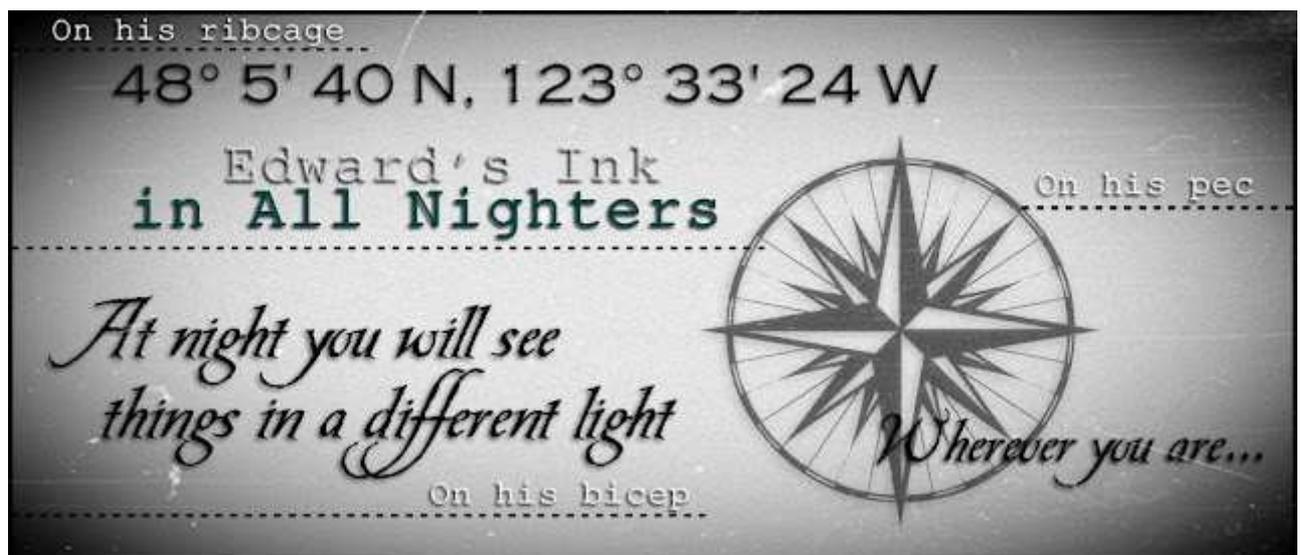
Finally the door opens and I think I'm dying. *Dying.*

"Sorry. I overslept. Come in."

*Yes. Please. Come in. Me.*

Ink. Oh *God*, I see tattoos. One on his left pec, one below his ribcage, and one on his bicep. And how do I know? Because he's only wearing a towel.

He doesn't look thirty-eight. *Anywhere.*



## **EPOV**

Once I'm dressed in a grey suit, Bella and I make our way to the meeting.

For some reason I don't like the silence in the cab.

"Have you ever been to London before?" I ask, and it's a stupid question because I know she hasn't.

"No." She flashes me a quick smile before looking out the window again. "But I have a few hours off tonight, so I was thinking I'd take advantage of that and go out."

I frown. "I can't say I like the idea of you wandering off alone at night, Bella." Just the thought of it annoys me. "London's not that safe."

And she grins at me. "I can take care of myself, *Mr. Cullen*. I'm an adult."

Believe me, I'm aware.

"Still not safe," I point out.

"Then I suppose you just have to come with me."

Hhhumenumph.

## **BPOV**

After hours and hours of meetings and checking out the construction site, we're tired. Again. Or still. Depends how you see it. But I'm adamant about my free time. I do want to see London, if only a little each time we're here.

Edward's very tired, and I told him earlier that he was welcome to stay behind. He didn't like that at all.

Win for me. Because I have a plan.

"So... where to?" he asks, smiling tiredly.

He's so very, very tired.

"Piccadilly Circus."

*I want you to be curious, Edward. Go ahead, ask me anything.*

*That's not work related!*

I need him to let me in.

## **EPOV**

Once we've arrived at Piccadilly Circus, I'm no longer as tired. I still am, but there are more important things I focus on. Such as Bella's expressions. Standing in the middle of the square, by the big statue, I want to know what she's thinking about.

My hands are in my pockets. The summer still lingers in the early fall night. I'm intrigued as I stand next to her.

Times Square in New York is far more impressive if you're looking for billboards, and I know Bella has been there a few times. So, what does *she* find so captivating here?

Her eyes take it all in, and I take it in through her. Billboards, the Virgin Store, Boots, the statue, even Burger King across the street.

In the end I can't stay quiet. "What's going on inside that head of yours?" Please tell me. *Anything*. I just need to know.

Her smile is blinding.

## **BPOV**

*Thank you, Edward, for leaving work behind.*

"It's beautiful, isn't it?" I say softly, smiling in the direction of the billboards, and my answer is vague enough for him to continue.

"What is it that you find beautiful?" He's curious.

"Everything," I tell him, smiling. "I like the contrast between the old buildings and the neon lights. It would never work in New York. Everything is new there. But here it works."

I have his attention, I see the smile.

"Behind us we have an old statue for instance," I say. "And in front of us we have commercials for Coca Cola and fast foods." I shrug. "For some reason, it works here."

And now we're talking architecture.

*Yes, I'm my own person, Edward. Don't see me as Charlie's daughter. Please don't label.*

I want him to get to know *me*.

## **EPOV**

I'm beginning to see that she has changed. Or maybe I'm beginning to simply see her. Because I knew the girl Bella used to be, but I don't know the woman she has become. That's very clear to me now, and the little insight makes me hungry for more. What are her likes and dislikes?

I decide then and there that architecture is a safe topic.

"There are many old buildings in New York, too," I point out, eager to hear her response. In fact, my favorite building in New York is from 1902. The Flatiron Build-

"Oh, I know," Bella says, interrupting my thought. "And many beautiful ones. But I can't see flashy billboards on them like I can here." She waves a hand towards the billboards, and then chuckles, looking up at me. "I mean, can you imagine seeing billboards on the Flatiron Building? That wouldn't work."

She mentions *that* building, and I suddenly wonder if architecture really *is* a safe topic.

## **BPOV**

"That's..." He clears his throat, averting his eyes for a second.

"Interesting. I guess you have a point."

I tilt my head. "I'd say it's a matter of opinion." *I gave you mine, now give me yours.*

He huffs a chuckle. "Touché."

And he gives me nothing more.

*Alright. Enough for one day, I suppose.*

"Time to head back?" I wonder.

He agrees with a nod that comes way to fast for my liking.

Hmph.

On the way back to the hotel, I think about the fact that I have finally seen Piccadilly Circus... and then I'm done thinking about that. Because let's face it; thinking about a bare chested Edward is much more enjoyable. And... hmm... give and take, right?

*You showed me your tats, Edward. And you know the saying, I hope. Tit for tat?*

## **EPOV**

Karen and I were sixteen. We became friends right away, and because we were close, it was easy to just... slip. I was young, I was horny, I saw my friend. She had a crush on me and that was that. And it was... *good*. It was sweet and comfortable. Why leave that, right? So, when she told me

she loved me, I didn't hesitate because I loved her, too. Very much. It was just a different love. *That* I know *now*. Not that I know what true love is now, because I really don't. I doubt I'll ever know. But what I do know is that we never had passion.

I never felt the urge to ravish her, or had the wish to worship the ground she walked on, or the need to bend her over the kitchen table and fuck the living daylights out of her.

That wasn't us. I never even thought about it or even wished for it, because I simply didn't know. My hunger just... died.

You don't miss what you've never had.

So, when I wake up panting the next morning and my mind is filled with images of me pounding into Bella like there's no tomorrow, I'm a bit thrown off.

I take the first cold shower in almost ten years.

## **BPOV**

As I go around the table, serving coffee to Edward's team of architects, I entertain the thought of dressing up like one of *those* assistants. *Oops, the buttons on my shirt just accidentally popped. Yes, that* kind of assistant. I won't do it, mind you, but it's an entertaining thought, because Edward is incredibly sexy as he stands at the head of the table talking to his team.

"Hmm, Bella, have you seen the Cheney file?"

"Yes." But I'm confused because Cheney is for New York. "I packed it already since we're leaving so early tomorrow." Then I remember.

"Actually it's right next to my suitcase. I'm just gonna finish this," I hold up the coffees, "and then I'll get it."

I hurry because I'm a good assistant, but Edward waves me off.

"Don't worry, I can get it."

Without another word, he heads for my room, and I wonder if I should stop him, because my suitcase is open on the bed.

*I hope you like black lace, Edward.*

It's not a tit for his tat, but it's a start.

## **EPOV**

I head to Bella's room right away. The poor girl has done nothing but working hard the past few days, so I don't see why I can't get it myself, especially when my hands are empty and hers aren't. And just like she said, I see the files on her bed, right next to her suitcase.

I smile at her organizing skills. Every file is sorted in alphabetical order.

With Cheney's file in my hand, I see *it*. *That*, right there. *Something*.

Though I can't see exactly what it is, I sure as hell recognize the fabric, and my mind heads straight for the gutter.

Black lace.

I clench my teeth when I feel the now familiar stirring in my pants, and before I can stop myself, I touch the fabric. *Fuck me*. It's lingerie.

Curious, Karen's never looked like that.

I swallow hard, knowing that another cold shower is in order tonight.

## **BPOV**

As soon as Edward's team has left, I yawn. I'm fucking exhausted. It's only been three days in London, but I've already realized that all nighters are a part of the job.

There's been no more sightseeing, but it doesn't matter much. We'll be back soon enough, and I believe Hyde Park is next on my list. After dark, of course.

"Are you packed and ready for tomorrow?" I ask, clearing the dining room table of empty coffee mugs.

I know he's seen my lingerie. That was clear when he returned with his file. The man refused to look at me for a solid hour.

"Yes, almost." He rubs his face, I know he's exhausted, too. "When do we leave tomorrow?"

I bite my lip, watching him as he loosens his tie. It forces me to rub my thighs together.

"We leave for Heathrow at six AM," I tell him, averting my eyes. It's just too much. "Then we have five hours in New York before our flight to Seattle."

"Okay. I'm... just gonna take a shower before I go to bed."

*Ungh.* Want some help?

"Yeah, I'm gonna take a shower too," I decide, because I've seen the showerheads here. "Goodnight, sir."

## **EPOV**

If Bella knew there was a thirty-eight year old man lusting after her, she'd be disgusted. But as I step under the hot spray in my shower, and my cock is hard, I don't find it in me to care. If only for a few minutes, one

time only, I allow myself to fantasize about her. And I do. In the shower I do. I see the black lace on her. I see her begging for me.

"Fuck," I breathe, stroking myself harder.

I swipe my thumb over the slit, imagining her mouth on me, her pouty lips and eager tongue.

Bella is what I never had. Black lace and pure sex behind that innocent façade. She's sensual and graceful. Forbidden and... oh *God*, I want her. I want her wrapped around me. Tight, slick, hot pussy.

"*Jesus.*"

My orgasm takes over, leaving me gasping for air, and every muscle in me clench and unclench as I watch my release disappear down the drain.

The next morning I text Emmett in nothing but desperation – I need visuals, obviously. Hopefully he can help me get over the image of Bella.

## **BPOV**

In New York we share a quick lunch before we have to head back to the airport, and since I don't have the weekend off, I sleep. Edward works. Works or sleeps. Since London, it's all he's done. No talking, nothing casual. It's like I'm not there.

But I won't give up. I'll just work harder.

When we're back in Seattle, I'm dead on my feet, but I only have three or four shifts a month at *Girlesque Night*, and I don't want to miss out. This weekend I'm lucky enough to have both Friday and Saturday. Not that I need the money, because I don't. It's just a passion. I find it fulfilling and flattering.

Behind that mask, I can let go completely and allow my inner tigress some playtime.

"Any plans for the weekend?" Edward asks conversationally as we wait at baggage claim. So, *now* he wants to converse.

"Going out with some friends," I say, shrugging. It's not a complete lie.

I'd ask what Edward's plans are but I know he has meetings at the main office with dad and a few others. I asked if he needed my help but he declined.

"Well..." He sighs. "I guess I'll see you back here on Monday, Bella."

## **EPOV**

*"Going out with some friends."*

*"Going out with some friends."*

Her words frustrate me to no end.

Of course she's going out with friends. She's young, she's beautiful. Of course she's going out. And me? I'm working all weekend. Well, not tomorrow night. But the rest of the weekend will be spent at the office with the much older and much less attractive Swan, not to mention much more male.

Yes, I've chosen this. Ever since the divorce, I've worked six to seven days a week. Now, though, the last thing I want to do is work. Luckily I have tomorrow. Although I'm still a bit apprehensive about the whole thing. Regardless of how tasteful the club is – according to Emmett – it is what it is, right? It's still a strip club.

But, hopefully it will give me something new to *think* about.

## **BPOV**

"We have to talk about your schedule tomorrow, Dee," Emmett tells me after the show. I nod for him to continue as I take my seat by the mirror. Time to get the ridiculously long lashes off. "Kate just called and she can't make it tomorrow."

"Okay?" And what's the problem? I mean, she's not in the show tomorrow. She's a solo in the VIP area.

"It means we need a dancer in VIP." I'm already shaking my head. "But it's Saturday! We need two girls up there then!"

"Forget it, Emmett." No way. Never. It's too close for me.

"You won't touch anyone, and just like on the main stage, you only get down to your bra and thong. You know that, right?"

"Doesn't matter. The stage up there is much smaller and the audience is right there. In my face. No way. It's too intimate."

Then he pleads with me. He's actually on his knees. And his dimples... Good *God*, save me. "Please, Dee. My cousin's coming tomorrow, and I want the sexiest dancers up there."

"Stop it, Emmett." *Please*, stop it.

"Purdy, purdy please, Dee!" The puppy eyes. Fuck. "Edward really needs to see a *real* woman. *Seriously*, you should see his ex!"

My eyebrows shoot up. Right up there.

Edward?

*Edward.*

Click, click, click.

The connection. I *knew* I had heard McCarty before!

"What's his last name?" I need confirmation.

"Cullen. Why?"

*Decisions, decisions...*

## **EPOV**

"I fucking *knew* you'd come around, man," Emmett bellows, grinning like a fool as we take our seats in the VIP area. "So, whaddya think?"

Weeeell... I have to admit it looks better than I thought. There's nothing seedy about it. It's actually quite... classy. Black walls with black chandeliers hanging from the high ceiling, and there's a large balcony, on which we are seated as VIPs. There's a small stage up here, too. Below us, there are tables scattered around, chairs all facing the stage where there are five poles. I guess the last piece is less classy, but... whatever.

"It looks good," I decide, nodding in thanks as a waitress comes with my beer. "So, what am I in for tonight?" I smirk.

He grins even wider. "Dude, it's Pussycat Doll Night."

I shake my head in amusement. "Dude? You're thirty-three. Aren't you too old to say dude?"

"And aren't you a bit too young to be a boring prude?" he fires back.

I'm *not* a fucking prude.

"Anyway, before I head back down," he says, changing the topic. "Let me fill you in about the VIP privileges." And there's the grin again.

## **BPOV**

“Can’t wait to get out of the corset,” Jessica complains, cupping her twins. It makes the rest of us chuckle. “Don’t fucking laugh at me! My piercings are craving freedom!”

This makes us laugh harder, of course. She’s always talking about her piercings. I don’t talk about mine, but then again, my piercing isn’t bothering me.

*Deep breaths.*

I’m nervous but... elated. *Ready.* After the show tonight, I’m heading upstairs. To the VIP area. And he’s here, you’re here, Edward.

I know I look good, really good, in my baby pink corset that pushes my tits up, matching boy shorts that makes my ass look delectable, and white velvety heels that do wonders for my legs. We’re the innocent Pussycat Dolls. Yes, pigtails. Of course.

The five of us are ready, waiting for Emmett to introduce us.

Then he does. “Give it up for Jeweled Jessica, Luscious Lauren, Cockteasing Claire, Bondage Bree, and Delicious Dee!”

“Why aren’t you wearing your mask, Dee?” Jessica asks as we move toward the stage, and I shake my head.

*Because I don’t want to wear the mask tonight.*

Here we go.

## **BPOV**

Regardless of how nervous I am, I’m not Bella on stage. I’m Dee. I’m confident, sexy and very *able*.

The DJ plays *Buttons* by Pussycat Dolls, and the five of us move toward our poles as the two hundred people in the audience watch us hungrily.

*I'm telling you to loosen up my buttons, baby*

I reach the pole and lean back against it as I drop to a low crouch. I part my legs, and close them again. Bree joins me and the music is pulsing as the two of us move closer to the edge of the stage.

*Who knows just how to get what I wanna*

*What I want to do is spring this on you*

I bend over and Bree takes her stand behind me, spanking my ass twice. I smile seductively at the crowd and hiss before I caress the spot she spanked. The pout, I give her the pout, the men love that. Bree just smiles and trails a finger along my cleavage.

*Take a chance to recognize that this could be yours...*

I walk backwards, not stopping until I reach my pole again, and I look up. The balcony, and there he is. Too dark to see expressions but I see his muscular form as he rests his elbows on the railing.

*I'm about to blow*

*I don't think you know*

I feel hot with his eyes on me and I wish I could use him instead of the pole.

I slide down, my eyes close, mmm, Edward...

Bree is back and the two of us grind and move together, hands roam, eyes are hungry, it's time.

*Come on, baby, loosen up my buttons, babe*

*Loosen up my buttons, babe*

With skilled fingers we work our way out of the corsets.

Left are boy shorts and barely-there bras. Baby pink satin and a lot of exposed skin. My nipples are hard.

Again I look up, this is for him.

*Baby, won't you loosen up my buttons, babe?*

*Loosen up my buttons, babe*

The secret is out, your move, Edward.

## **EPOV**

Yes. No. Fuck. *Me*. I can't. It's too much. *Not enough*. Disbelief, shock. Eyes wide and wanting and no. *No*. It's Bella. Sweet, innocent little Bella. Only, it's *not*. It's *Bella*. Sexy and confident and very much grown up. Her *body*, oh God...

Scrambled, jumbled thoughts, inside my head, all over.

My insides are screaming. A millions voices, yet I can't obey a single one of them. Instead I stand rigidly and watch... *Bella*. Because it's her. It's her. She's here, it's her. Right there. Dancing. Seductively. So sexily. *Sinfully*. Her eyes are *burning*.

*Have mercy on me, beautiful.*

I force myself to repeat a few words that Emmett shared with me earlier about the girls here. "*They're not strippers like that. Yeah, they dance and lose clothes, but they don't give lap dances or accept singles, if ya know what I mean. They don't get close enough to the crowd for that. The girls*

*up here in the VIP area, however... they give lap dances if they want to. But not those girls."*

Over and over I repeat those words in my head because I need it. The thought of Bella taking her clothes off for money sickens me, but for some reason I don't think that's her game, and then there's the fact that it sickens me because... I don't want *others* to see her like that. Which is selfish, but true nonetheless. *I* want to be the one seeing her like that, and... now I am.

God, I'm *watching* her.

*Hungrily.*

And the problem is that I don't know if she's seen me. It feels like she has, but... surely the spotlights are in the way? Right?

## **EPOV**

"The show's almost over!" Emmett shouts over the music. "The two girls in the middle will come up here soon!"

*Two girls in the... two girls in the middle... Fuck. No, Bella, no!*

"Bella's a VIP dancer?" I choke out, insides churning with reluctance, lust, and I don't know if I want the answer.

"Who?" he bellows, frowning in confusion. "No, Dee and Lauren! There's no Bella!"

Wrong. There *is* a Bella here, though she must've picked another name.

"You want a lap dance, dude?" He grins and waggles his eyebrows, apparently oblivious to the storm raging inside me. "I can hook you up with Lauren, cause it's Dee's first night in the VIP and she's the look-but-don't-touch kind of girl." And he points at... Bella.

I breathe out in relief and words fail me because I can't even begin to describe how happy I am to hear that about Bella.

I know I have no right to judge her, and that's the thing, because I'm not judging her. I just... fuck... *I just want her for myself.*

But then I focus on what else Emmett told me; she's coming up here tonight. Maybe she won't give lap dances but she will be up here. Up here, where I am.

Shit!

I panic. "I have to go, Em!"

Hopefully she hasn't seen me.

## **BPOV**

I had already anticipated his move.

"I gotta go, Em," I say in a rush, not bothering to change clothes. Instead I just throw my black trench coat on. "Ask Claire to fill in for me."

"Whoa, whoa, wait, Dee." He grabs my shoulders, stilling my movements. "What's wrong?"

"I... I have to go," I grit out, eyes on the door next to him. "I have to follow him."

Confusion, oh the confusion. Then he understands. "Wait. *Edward?* Do you *know* him?"

I chew on my lip. I nod. I plead with him. "I will tell you everything later, but I *need* to go."

He surprises me by smiling, and then he steps aside.

"Thank you," I breathe out in relief.

I know Edward isn't home.

So, I take a cab to his office. I see his car outside the tall building.

Once I reach his office, I don't knock.

He's sitting on his leather couch, elbows on his knees, hands in his hair.

Only the lamp on his desk is lit.

"Edward."

## **EPOV**

"Hello, Edward."

My eyes snap up and widen.

For a split second I wonder how the hell she knew where to find me, and of course *why* she was looking for me, but it dawns on me before I can think further. It's crystal clear. She saw me at the club.

I say nothing because I *can't*. Everything inside me is still raging and I'm incredibly confused by... *everything*. I'm not used to *confused*. I'm used to *predictable*.

"You ran," she says quietly, softly, and she's approaching slowly, which makes me nervous. But then I notice that she's nervous, too. "So, Emmett's your cousin, huh?"

Yes.

My mouth is dry, she stands right in front of me.

The tension crackles. I feel it everywhere. I exhale shakily. My fingers ache to touch her.

"Are you disappointed?" she whispers, waving a tired hand at her face, her body, obviously referring to her job.

I wonder why my opinion matter.

I find my voice, though it hardly carries. "It's... hard to explain, but..." I shake my head, unable to find words. I don't want her to be ashamed, because she has nothing to be ashamed of. I just can't explain what I'm feeling.

There's yes and no, there's the why and how. It would take forever to explain, and it would give me away, though I'm pretty sure Bella already knows about my attraction to her.

Then, my body goes rigid as she gently places a hand on my shoulder, and for some reason, I let her push me back against the back of the couch.

"Bella," I breathe out shallowly.

She shakes her head, silencing me.

And then she unties her trench coat.

## **EPOV**

Voice and reason leave me. I can do nothing but watch her and allow everything to happen.

Parts of me yearn for it. Many parts. Maybe all of them. *Most likely.*

My eyes devour her almost naked body – a naked body she only shows me. I'm the only one right now.

"Do you want me?" she breathes.

*Yes. More than words can say. Do you want me?*

But I still can't find my voice. I'm too aroused to form a single word. Apparently I can move, though, because I feel my hand reach out, softly grazing her thigh with the pads of my fingers. Shivers run through us both. I feel it, and I see it on her. Shivers and gooseflesh. Am I the cause?

That's an answer I need, so I look up, hoping I will see the answer in her eyes, and I'm floored by the intensity in them.

I exhale audibly. I'm caught.

"I want you, Edward," she whispers, and I can hardly believe it. There's no reason for her to want me. And maybe she sees my doubt because she repeats herself, but I can't focus on the words because she straddles me at the same time.

I can't breathe, her forehead against mine, her hands on my chest, I can't fucking breathe.

Her coffee brown eyes draw me in again, and I'm lost when a quiet whimper escapes her perfect lips.

In an instant I'm there, capturing her mouth with mine.

My body is suddenly alive. Every nerve ending, every atom, every cell, every fiber in me is buzzing with need and want and lust and desire for the beautiful woman in my lap. And right now she wants me, too. It's mindblowing to feel desired, and her lips are eager against mine.

She moves closer, she wants me, her hips roll over my throbbing cock.

"Please want me, Edward," she breathes against my lips.

Her quiet plea ignites me.

"I want you," I admit easily. I groan. "I *want* you, Bella."

Frenzy.

My hands slide up her soft thighs, her hands get tangled in my hair, we deepen the kiss, our tongues meet, I know I won't stop this, and it's...

*Passion.*



## **BPOV**

My fingers get tangled in his silky hair. I pull and twist as we kiss deeply.

He moans and it makes me shiver.

"*Jesus*, Bella."

I feel him everywhere, his hot breath, his muscles flexing... his rock hard cock.

My body tells him how I needy I am for him. I arch and ache.

Push me, take me, fuck me.

"Edward," I whimper. With the use of his name, I plead and beg for more.

"I know." And he does, because then he's there. His fingers, two of them, underneath my soaked panties. It's a breath, "So wet."

I am. It's all for him, it's all for you.

Abruptly I push myself off him, but I don't allow for him to get confused. I work quickly, removing my bra and panties, all while watching his erection with hunger. I lick my lips.

And he understands.

With those long fingers he unbuckles his belt before unbuttoning his pants, yes, we're doing this, finally, I can't wait. Eager. I want him so badly. Now. Right now.

"Oh God," I breathe out as he pushes his pants down his hips. Boxers, too. Have mercy on me, he's blessed. Long, thick, fucking perfect. Yes, I've seen many. But that's not to say I'm one to sleep around, because I'm not. I'm more of the relationship kind of girl. It's called the Internet. I love sex and erotica. I research for pleasure and pleasure and oh the pleasure.

*Pleasure.* I feel his hands on my hips, eyes on me in silent question.

I nod and step closer.

And he's there. My hands in his hair again, wet kisses on my hipbone, hot breath, wet tongue, he finds my piercing, he stills. Just for a second or four, and then he drops a kiss over it. Over the diamond, over the skindiver that's embedded in my flesh on my hip.

"There's a story behind that one," he whispers, kissing my piercing once more before he goes south. "I want to hear it one day."

I'm unable to speak but I will give him everything he wants.

Fingers caressing my skin, closer and closer, please, more.

Closer. He's there.

"Fuck," he breathes with a shudder, I feel his breath over my bare, wet flesh.

For seconds he just stares at my pussy.

He licks his lips.

Closer.

Closer.

Yes.

I whimper as he parts my slick folds with his tongue.

He groans.

"Edward," I moan.

I think I set him off because goes deeper and harder, fingers gripping my hips tightly, mouth eager on my pussy. Again he moans, I do too, but I need, I need, I *need*. All of him.

"I need you," I whimper as his tongue delves deeper inside of me. My hips buck. "Edward!" I gasp. The sensations surging through me are like... I don't know, but... *God*, I've never felt this before. This need, this raw hunger.

With a determined push, I make him lean back against the couch again, and his eyes are wild, dark, and predatory.

I don't hesitate.

I straddle him again.

"Protection?" he grunts as my wetness coats him. "Christ." His eyes are on his cock and how dangerously close my pussy is. "I... I don't...have..."

"I'm covered," I whisper, nipping at his jaw. He shudders. "Do you trust me?"

"Yes," he breathes and that's all I need.

Slowly but surely, I guide his smooth and thick cock to my entrance, smiling internally as I feel it twitch in my hand. He's really fucking blessed.

"Fuck." The head of him, inside me, holy... stretching me *fiercely*. "God, Edward."

We don't breathe.

I feel his eyes on me, I look up, there he is.

Restrained, eyes so expressive, muscles tensing.

I sink further, slowly, but not stopping until I have swallowed him whole.

The feeling of completion runs through my head, and I lean forward to kiss him, he eagerly responds with depth and passion, I can hardly breathe. His tongue, his heated lips, five o'clock shadow, I'm everywhere, he's everywhere. He cups my tits, gently and tentatively at first, but I arch into him, showing him that I want more, that I *need* more, and he gives it to me.

"Fuck, baby," he moans in my mouth. *Baby* sends shockwaves of desire through me, I need to move. "You feel so fucking good." I move slowly, lifting myself off him before I sink down again. I roll my hips, and I arch more. More, yes, more. "Incredible."

Deeper.

I push, I push, I want more. I twist his hair between my fingers, I push my tongue into his mouth, he thrusts, I sink, I moan, he groans. Hands, they cup my ass roughly. *Yesss*. My head falls back and I fuck him harder, clenching my muscles around him. His mouth is everywhere, hot and wet, capturing my nipple, teeth grazing. God, oh God... Yes, deeply. My hands on his thighs, I use for leverage. I slam down on him.

"Fuck!" he groans, then he helps me, frenzy, he pushes me down, yes. Yes, yes, yes, Edward, fuck me.

I pant out his name as his skilled fingers rub my clit, drawing out sounds I didn't know I was capable of making.

"Please, Edward." My forehead falls on his shoulder, I'm closer. The buildup. The buildup. Tightening, rushing. I taste the skin on his neck. "I'm close," I whimper.

Before I know it, I'm on my back, not breathing. Down. On the couch.

He slams into me, I scream.

"Baby," he grunts. "That's it... God, you're... *ungh*... I can't stop..."

*Don't ever stop.*

I cling to him as he pounds his thick cock into me, over and over, reaching my deepest spot.

I explode with out warning, a silent scream, rigid body.

The waves of pleasure consume me.

“I’m gonna come, beautiful,” I hear him moan.

I’m long gone.

He shudders and shiver, his cock throbs, I feel filled and sated, he’s on top of me and I adore it.

I adore *him*.

Minutes pass in silence. No words, only breathing, I feel his lips on my shoulder, and every breath. But instead of calming down, I hear his breaths come faster and faster, heart thumping wildly against me.

His mind is spinning. I don’t need to be a mind reader to know that he’s conflicted.

Now that I know that he wants me, I also know his concerns. He’s my boss, he’s seventeen years older, I’m one of his closest friends’ daughter. He sees obstacles, I don’t. I don’t think the way he does. I never could. But I’m prepared for anything. I won’t take it personal. I will just let him process this in his pace.

So, to make things easier on him, I quietly tell him that I’m there for him. I tell him that when he’s ready, I will already be next to him.

Then I leave.

## **BPOV**

I don’t hear from Edward on Sunday, but that doesn’t surprise me. I spend the day preparing for New York instead. I also meet Emmett for lunch at Pike Place. I tell him everything about myself and the work relationship I have with Edward. Whatever Edward and I did yesterday is ours, I don’t share that because it’s not Emmett’s business. I do however

confess to him that I have genuine feelings for Edward. I want more, I want all of him.

Emmett supports me, he's a nice guy, and he wants happiness for his cousin.

It makes me curious to hear more about Edward and Karen's marriage, but I don't know how to find out. I suppose I could talk to mom and dad. Maybe. But I would rather hear it from Edward.

When I wake up on Monday, I get dressed in my work clothes, and I'm nervous as I wait for Edward at SeaTac.

How will he act?

All too soon I find out.

Tired eyes anywhere but on me, and he's bought himself coffee already. "Good morning, Isabella," he greets me curtly, eyes focused on his watch. He hasn't slept well. "I suppose we can check in now, yes?"

I see. We're pretending like nothing's happened?

*Nice try, Edward. But this isn't processing. This is ignoring, and I won't allow that.*

I decide to confront him this week.

## **EPOV**

I spent my Sunday trying to convince myself that I have not seen Bella in sexy lingerie. I have not seen her slide down that pole as if it's the easiest thing for her to do. I have not watched her move her hips seductively to the music, and I have not seen her in nothing but panties and a bra.

And I have not slept with her. I have not tasted her, I have not kissed her incredibly soft lips, I have not felt her eager tongue against mine, and I have not ravished her on the couch in my office.

Only problem is that I failed to convince myself.

I *have* seen her.

I *have* slept with her.

And I can't get her out of my head.

I couldn't sleep. I kept thinking about the amazing things she made me feel. I felt... *alive*.

The problem is that I know I can never pull off "casual," and Bella is an extraordinary woman. I know already that it would be so easy to fall for her. I know because my feelings linger. I want more, but not just from her body. I want to explore everything. I want to know her, and this hunger inside of me is something I've never felt before.

This is where the problems come in.

It can't happen.

So, when I greet Bella at SeaTac on Monday morning, I do the inexcusable. I act like nothing has changed or happened between us. I'm desperate for her to take the hint, because the last thing she needs is me and my baggage.

What surprises me is Bella's reaction. A part of me wished to see disappointment wash over her, which just proves how far gone I already am. Because *I'm* disappointed. Incredibly so. But the fact that she isn't can only mean that she isn't in the same place I am.

Her heart isn't in it.

Which is good. For her.

## **BPOV**

“What would you like for dinner?” I ask him, standing ready by the phone in Edward’s hotel suite.

He doesn’t even look up from the plans that are spread out on the dining room table. “Doesn’t matter. Pizza, maybe? I’m not picky.”

I bristle. I’m sick of being ignored. I don’t deserve it.

After I’ve ordered pizza for the pigheaded man, he tells me I’m free to leave because he’s just going to prepare for the meetings tomorrow, and apparently he can do that by himself.

Before scream, before I demand for him to just *talk* to me already, I come up with a plan. Yes, *another* one, but this one *will* send him over. It *has* to.

I need to blur the lines he’s trying the draw for us.

Besides, I want to shake him up a little.

So, I walk back to my room, purposely leaving the door between our adjoining rooms open, and five minutes later, I call out for him.

Because woops, I just slipped in the shower. Silly, clumsy me.

## **EPOV**

I don’t think as I make my way to Bella’s room. She yelled out to me for help, and that’s that. Once I reach her room, I look around for her.

“Bella?” I call, walking through the small living room area to reach her bedroom. It’s the only other room, so I assume she’s in there. “Where are you?” She’s not there. Hmph.

*"Bathroom!"* I heard her reply. *"I slipped, and... I need your help."*

"Fuck," I whisper under my breath, eyes now glued to the bathroom door in her bedroom.

With my hand on the doorknob, I feel compelled to ask, "What's wrong?" I'm not going in there if I can't help it. Only God knows what I'll do if I see her... *undressed*. Actually, that's a lie, because I'm pretty sure I will do something incredibly stupid.

*"I slipped in the shower. I think I sprained my ankle, I can't stand up."*

And I'm torn. Partly concerned, partly... well, there's no reason to skirt around the correct word; horny. But I know what I have to do. I mean, I can't exactly leave her, so I suck it up and open the door, making sure I don't look in the direction of her shower.

"There are towels to your left. Thanks for helping me."

*Sure.*

Towel, got it. Keeping my eyes downcast, I walk over to the shower with the towel, and I feel the hot steam pour out as she opens the shower door.

I swallow hard.

Everything inside me is raging again.

## **BPOV**

"Are uh... Are you okay?" he asks, blindly thrusting the towel towards me.

"Do you need, um," he clears his throat, "my help to get up?"

"I... I think so," I say quietly as I wrap the towel around my wet body *loosey*. "You can look now."

Then he does.

He sees me sitting on the floor, he sees my legs, my thighs, my arms, my soaked hair, my face, and he settles his eyes there. His darkened eyes. Jaw tense. I see lust, I *feel* lust.

The tension is palpable. Thick like a fog.

My nipples harden under the soft fabric that barely covers me.

"Come here," he all but whispers as he crouches. I take his offered hand before placing my arm around his neck, and he snakes his arm around my waist. I shiver at the feeling of his muscular body. "Ready?" I nod and he slides his other arm underneath me in order to pick me up bridal-style, and once he does, I've never felt more cradled and safe.

And turned on.

His large hand is on my naked thigh.

When he realizes just where his hand is, his eyes meet mine.

His heated gaze makes me shiver and breathe shakily.

*Lust. Desire. Yearning. Fire.*

I whimper. His eyes are glued to my mouth.

I'm ready to combust... just as there's a banging on a door far away.

Instantly I know it's Edward's motherfucking cockblocking pizza.

Edward sees his escape but I will go after him. *Again.*

**EPOV**

I don't speak as I carry Bella out of the bathroom, I don't speak as I lower her onto her bed, and I don't speak as I leave. My fists are clenched, I grit my teeth, I'm back in my own suite, I want to kill somebody.

As soon as I've accepted the pizza I'll never eat, I lock all doors around me.

I do the one thing I shouldn't do, especially on an empty stomach. I head for the bottle of Tullamore Dew I bought earlier that I was supposed to enjoy from time to time once I got back to Seattle, but that won't happen.

With every burn in my throat, I think about Bella's eyes. Her body, the way it felt against mine. It makes me realize that I don't actually know. Not really. She exposed herself fully to me, but I never did. Christ, I just pushed my pants down my hips before she...

Fuck.

## **EPOV**

My hand trembles slightly. The liquid goes down easily.

The desire in her eyes, just now in the shower, didn't escape me.

She wanted me. Wants me? Wanted? I don't know where she stands after I left her without a word, but she wanted me earlier. It was so clear on her face. Fuck, her eyes.

But I see issues, consequences, things to take into consideration; age difference, future plans, and unknowing fathers. We can't just... jump into bed together like that. I'm *not* that man. I never was, and I never will be.

But the thought of already believing that Bella is worth it all is what keeps me drinking and ignoring the knocking on my door.

## **BPOV**

An hour later, I try again.

“Edward!” I call. And knock. *Again.*

No response.

*Fuck it.*

I don't hesitate to bring out the extra key-card that Edward gave me earlier. Then I leave my room and head straight for his door, sliding the card in and wait for the green light. Then I'm in. The first thing I see is the damn pizza.

I find Edward in the living room area.

I see it all.

*Safe to say, I don't have to fake a limp or anything.*

“Have you been drinking?” I ask, making my way towards the couch where he's sitting. Elbows on his knees, tie loosened, sleeves rolled up, shirt un-tucked. “Edward,” I sigh. In front of him I crouch to see him better. My hands are on his calves.

He sees me and his smile is... wistful?

I smell the amber liquid. A glass in his hand.

He takes a swig, swallowing hard, then puts it down on the side table.

*I'm worried, Edward. You look broken.*

“Bella,” he sighs tiredly, tucking a piece of hair behind my ear. “Do you know how fucking beautiful you are?”

**EPOV**

I wake up with little midgets running around inside my head.

Unfortunately I remember how I ended up in bed, still fully dressed except for shoes.

Bella. She led me here.

I groan as I remember what I admitted to her. Not that her beauty is a secret, but the way I told her made things very clear. She has to know about me. She has to know that I want her more than words can say. Right? Yeah. I'm sure she's currently looking for another job, and at that thought I nearly snort. She can always pick up a few extra shifts at Emmett's club.

Where others will see her body.

Great, now I'm bitter, too.

"You're awake."

## **EPOV**

"Shit," I breathe out, rubbing my face before I look up.

Bella's sitting in a chair. Right there. In the corner.

"Uh..." What do I say?

"I rescheduled your meetings," she tells me simply. "You have the day off, and don't argue with me."

I'm pretty fucking blank.

"Go take a shower, *Edward*. I'll order you some breakfast, and then we need to talk."

I cringe internally at the infamous words.

They fill me with dread.

I've heard them before.

One time, I've heard them. They ended my marriage. The marriage I lived in for ten years; with the woman I supposedly loved... and gave twenty years of my life to.

Funny, when Karen said "we have to talk," I didn't feel what I'm feeling now.

### **EPOV**

I take my time in the shower, obviously stalling, but in the end I decide it's better to just get it over with, so I step out, get dressed in pajama bottoms and a simple black t-shirt, before I face Bella in the living room.

I guess I will be looking for a new assistant as soon as I get back to Seattle, because there's no way Bella's staying, is there? I mean, she's only twenty-one. Twenty-one year olds want to have fun. Without strings or obligations.

"Have a seat," she says, gesturing for the available spot next to her on the couch. There's breakfast on the coffee table, but the sight of it makes my stomach churn. "Did you see the painkillers I left on the nightstand?"

I nod and thank her quietly, taking a seat next to her.

Wordlessly she hands me a bottle of water before she turns her body to face me, and before I can ask her how her ankle is this morning, she speaks.

"Let's cut the bullshit, shall we?" She cocks an eyebrow at me. "You want me and I want you."

### **BPOV**

His eyes widen for a second before he sighs, averting his eyes from me. I can only imagine what he's going through inside that head of his, but I'm done with this. I want to know if I stand a chance with him, and I want to know exactly what Karen did to him. Because he doesn't see himself clearly. That much is obvious from yesterday. The pain in his eyes, the wistfulness, the yearning. He wanted me, he *wants* me, but something's stopping him, and I'm beginning to think he doesn't see himself as enough.

"Yes," he finally replies. His eyes meet mine again, I see confliction and just... everything. His green eyes are incredibly expressive, and I see now that Edward is a man who wears his heart on his sleeve.

It makes me fall. Hard.

## **BPOV**

"But you're fighting it," I murmur, tilting my head.

He nods once. Just a dip of his chin.

"I *know* there are things to worry about," I tell him quietly. "I guess what I'm wondering is if there's any possibility we can work on them together."

And now he's confused.

A part of me is fucking livid. What the fuck did Karen do to him? I've always been passionate and when I feel something, I feel strongly. Right now, I pretty much wanna smack the ever loving shit out of her. And then there's the part, the bigger part, that wants to show him right here, right now, that I'm not going anywhere.

"What do... What do you mean... *together*?" he asks apprehensively.

*This is it, Bella.*

## **EPOV**

Before I even know it's happening, Bella straddles me, but I notice right away that it's not sexual, and that's good, because I'm definitely not turned on. Instead I'm confused, annoyed, and... vulnerable. They're not feelings I'm particularly fond of, nor am I used to any of them.

"Edward," she says softly. It makes my forehead crease, I don't know why. "I'm not going anywhere."

I can't *read* her and I *need* that.

I should breathe, by the way.

"Don't you see?" she chuckles. A little humorlessly, though. That can't be good. "I've put myself out there quite a lot for you." Soft but pointed look. "You should know by now that I want you."

Not good enough. My insides are screaming again, I need her to elaborate. Maybe that's selfish, especially when I give nothing in return. No, not maybe. I definitely am selfish, but I can't take this. I can't put myself in this situation because right now it feels like I have much more to lose.

"I want *you*, Edward," she repeats quietly, forehead against forehead. "All of you. I want to get to *know* you."

I close my eyes tightly, I can't breathe, I have to ask her one question.

A very important question.

## **EPOV**

"What do I get in return, Bella?"

My eyes are pleading. I need her to understand. I don't want her to think I'm being an ass or that I'm rude. I just really need to know.

And for the first time since Bella walked into my life as an adult, her smile is shy.

I find it both comforting and endearing.

"Me," she whispers. "You get *me*. All of me."

I swallow hard, audibly, overcome with the sense of relief and *something* else I can't identify. It makes my chest tighten but not in an uncomfortable way. It's warm and encasing and suddenly my entire being is *in*. I'm powerless against this woman. Not even the disbelief washing over me has the hold she does. Whatever she wants, I will give. I'm terrified, which I absolutely loathe, but I'm unable to do anything about it.

Because I want her so badly.

*She wants me. All of me, giving me all of her in return.*

I realize that it's about time I find my voice.

I take a breath and give her the words that are unbelievably truthful.

"That's all I want, beautiful."

## **BPOV**

I exhale, I smile, relieved and unbelievably happy.

"I know we have a lot to discuss," I breathe, leaning just a little bit closer to him. "And until we know more, we keep this private." It was important to get that out. For the both of us but maybe mostly for him, and I smile when I see relief in his eyes; he's thankful for my understanding. "I won't push as long as we're honest with each other." He nods once, smiling.

Like, really smiling. Noses touching. "But we'll take it... um, slow?" Yes, that's a question, because I can feel him hardening and I don't want to take *everything* slow.

"Slow," he whispers, brushing his lips against mine. He's still smiling. As am I. "Hmm... how slow?"

Oh, the shivers.

## **BPOV**

Accidentally or not so accidentally, I roll my hips over his growing erection.

*Ungh.* Not helping.

"Edward." It's a plea. He needs to stop unless...

He sighs but it's in content, and he doesn't stop kissing me. Soft ones, my jaw, my neck, fuck, tongue darting out, he tastes me.

"How about..." His fingers slide up my thighs, just ghosting over. "How about we save that conversation for later?"

*Sounds genius.*

"Later," I breathe, dropping a kiss on his neck.

"Later," he affirms huskily. "An hour... or two."

I see need in his eyes, they mirror my own need.

But what really matters is that I see resolve. He's not backing away now. He won't.

We will talk but... I think we need *this* first...

## **EPOV**

I need to show her, and tell her for that matter, how incredibly thankful I am. But as words fail me, I start with showing. So, without apprehension or hesitation, I pick her up and carry her to my bedroom.

There are many insecurities swimming around in my head, and I don't believe for a second that I'm worth all the trouble, but if she wants to try, I will go in wholeheartedly. Because she's worth it. I know that already. I won't ever regret her.

After lowering her onto my bed, I crawl over her, dropping kisses as I go.

"Thank you," I mumble against her stomach. It's not enough, so I push the fabric up, needing to feel her skin. "For understanding me." It's evident that she does.

She sees me.

"Edward," she whimpers.

I shiver, I hover, I kiss.

Then her top is gone... followed by her black bra. God, she's sexy.

My hands move slowly and softly over her skin; her stomach, soft and toned, her breasts; soft and full. Everything about her is soft and all woman. She's petite and supple but I see strength and fierceness.

My own needs are secondary.

"You're exquisite," I murmur, unable to mask the desire in my voice. But if I could hide it, I wouldn't. No more hiding from this woman.

Meeting her heated gaze, I ask her silently as I dip my fingers underneath the fabric of her bottoms. She nods only once but quickly. She wants this. It's going to take time for me to understand that.

And her satin shorts are gone, leaving me with a stunned expression for a second or seven.

"No panties?" I ask hoarsely.

My cock throbs.

Her smile is coy. "Oops, I forgot."

Bella Swan will be the death of me.

She's wet, so fucking wet, and my finger is there, tracing the length of her bare pussy. I swallow hard. She moans, I'm going insane. So, I grip my cock outside my pajama bottoms. I stroke it hard but slowly, in the same pace that I finger her wet slit.

"More," she moans, arching her back. "Please... I need more."

*Fuck me.*

Every sound she makes, they all make me want to ravish her.

Still kneeling in between her parted legs, I lower myself over her flawless body. Close, close, I whisper in her ear, "Tell me what you want, baby." I'll give it to her in a heartbeat. I'm under her spell.

I slide two fingers inside her, my thumb is on her clit, my mouth is on her neck.

She doesn't answer but I feel her need for more, harder, and raw.

I kiss, all over. Can't stop.

Her hands are on me, pushing down my bottoms. I take the hint and pull my shirt over my head. I'm not sure, I think she likes what she's... *staring...* at. Hot damn, I'm on display. But for some reason it makes me feel even more desired. It's new for me.

I start again. With kissing.

She deserves to be worshipped, and worship I do.

I sit back on my heels, I lift her leg. Fuck, so smooth.

Her feet are small and I kiss. "How is your ankle?" I murmur. I don't even know which foot she injured.

When she doesn't answer, I look at her, her smile is full of mischief.

"Nothing wrong with it," she whispers. Eyes twinkling. "A girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do."

*She didn't fall in the shower.*

I'm in disbelief.

Her bluntness... I'm in awe of it. She wanted something and went after it. What she went after was... me.

Me.

*Fuck the feet.*

I cover her body with mine in an instant, it's time to ravish.

My mouth is hard and demanding, my tongue is massaging hers, my hands dig into the flesh on her hips. I'm hardness, she's softness. Yet, she's the fierce one.

Her arousal coats my erection.

"Edward!" she gasps in my mouth.

The way she arches, the way her body moves against mine, the way she shows what she wants... Fuck. Yes. I need, too. You, Bella. I'm done, I'm yours.

And it hits me. She doesn't want slow or sweet. She's not just for comfort. She's wild and passionate. So fucking wild.

"Now," I need you *now*. "...*Bella*."

"Yesss," she hisses as I bite down on her lip. Again she arches against me, needing closer and more.

Her pussy is wet and hot, my cock is there, I press and push, my eyes close.

*Fuck.*

In one thrust I fill her.

I groan loudly, it's sensational. My mind isn't full of jumbled thoughts... like last time. This time I know it's more. Much more. And I give it to her. She gives back. Legs tangled, hands roaming and holding. I fuck her. But I feel everything. It's not mindless or empty. We're everywhere.

"Bella," I moan, her pussy is tight and slick around me. I move faster and faster. "Fuck, baby." *Jesus*. My eyes roll back. I'm consumed by her.

My left hand holds both of hers above her head in a tight grip.

My right hand pleasures her. Slow circles, rubbing and stroking, pressing down, fingers soaked. I can't take my eyes off of her. And I can finally read her. Or maybe I could before too, but... I was in denial. Perhaps I refused to believe. But I see it now.

I push harder and deeper. Not too fast but desperate.

"Oh fuck, Edward!" she cries out.

Her face makes me feel euphoric.

Forehead against forehead.

Hot breaths, we're panting together.

I fuck her harder, letting go of all restraints.

I touch where I want because she wants it, too. Her body shows it. I give and take, she gives and takes. This is what it's supposed to be like. *Christ*. Clenching, she's getting closer.

My body's warning me, I'm close too.

Fuck, the pleasure is mindblowing.

And she flutters.

"Let go, beautiful," I whisper breathlessly. Verbal filter is gone. "Come on me, baby. Come on my cock."

Her eyes flash open, lust, desire, her mouth pops open, she tenses, *everywhere*.

Silent scream.

I feel her clamping down around me.

I can't hold off. I hold my breath, my eyes roll back.

Without warning my orgasm takes over, and I slam my cock deep inside of her as I spill into her tight pussy.

Everything inside of me releases.

I'm drained as I return to reality. Panting and ready to drop.

The fact that Bella's equally spent is satisfying alone, and the lazy smile she throws me calms me down. I satisfied her.

*Hell, I really have insecurities I need to work on.*

For some reason I think Bella's willing to help.

## **EPOV**

I expected it to be... different. Afterwards. I didn't expect soft kisses under the covers. I didn't expect smiles and comfortable silence. I definitely didn't expect the way her eyes took me in. Not studying... more like... memorizing.

And I do the same as we're in our bubble under the covers.

This is a whole other use of the word *comfortable* than I'm used to.

I kiss her, nibbling a little on her bottom lip. My tongue tastes.

Slowly and without direction, we just... *I don't know what this is...* but I love it. One minute I'm hovering over her, breathing her in. Then, she laughs softly, and straddles my waist. I don't fight her. She doesn't fight me. We just... *I still don't know what it is.* What do you call this? I know what cuddling is but this isn't it. Or is it? I mean, I'm not completely clueless, but I am clueless to the feelings stirring inside of me.

"Beautiful," I whisper, reaching up to kiss her nose.

Her hands in my hair, they make me shiver.

"Handsome," she whispers back. I chuckle when she drops a kiss on my nose. "What, you are." That smile of hers...

It draws out my own smile.

I want to know everything about this woman.

I feel the urge to throw a million questions at her, but at the same time I'm incredibly content in whatever we have going on right this second. Unfortunately, my mind starts spinning.

And my verbal filter is still gone.

The words leave my mouth before I can stop them.

"You're a stripper."

### **BPOV**

"You're a stripper," he blurts out.

I blink.

Then I blink again.

I... um... *wow*.

"Ah, *shit*," he mutters, looking away from me. I think he's even chewing on his lip. *Cute*. "That didn't..." He shakes his head, and the cover we've spent the past hour under, it slips off, pooling around us.

Give me a minute to recover, will ya?

He chose *this* moment to blurt that out?

"I'm..." He sighs heavily, still not looking at me. "Fuck, it wasn't supposed to come out like that."

*No, really?*

I'm not upset. I'm really not. More amused if anything, but I'm still speechless. Kinda curious about how his mind works, actually. I mean, we're in the middle of the most passionate post coital bliss *ever*, and... yeah. Okay, so... again; *wow*.

I clear my throat and replies slowly. "Yes. Uh..." *Would you like a demonstration?*

I can see that he's frustrated and I don't want him to feel bad, which he clearly does, but I don't think a joke or a witty comeback would lighten him up. Even if I have a bunch of them. Seriously.

*I'm good with poles, want me to suck yours?*

*Wanna give me a strip search?*

*Gimme a pole and I'll slide down faster than a firefighter.*

And one that would go well with Edward right now...

*While you put your foot in your mouth, mind if I put your pole in mine?*

I *could* go that route, really, but I wouldn't want Edward to choke on his own saliva.

No, I think it's best if we had this conversation now.

## **EPOV**

She moves off my lap, and I know I've fucked up.

Fucked up badly.

I'm a grown man for Christ's sake. I have degrees and diplomas, awards and recommendations. In my office. In my house. Telling what a great architect I am.

And yeah, that's not the same as being a man.

I know.

So... I'm an architect. But not a man.

No, wait. I am a man. But one that fucked up. Yep.

“Jesus Christ,” I sigh to myself, even though she’s sitting right next to me.

“Let me tell you a little something about myself, Edward.” I’m surprised she isn’t screaming or yelling at me. She should. I clearly insulted her.

“Dad wanted to give me money, so that I wouldn’t have to find a job while I went to college.”

I’m listening.

Her tone is light.

Yet, I cannot look at her. Not yet. I’m embarrassed.

“But I wanted to make it on my own, you know?”

No. I don’t. Because I’ve never been alone.

But a nagging voice in the back of my head says I’ve felt lonely.

And I have. For so many years.

“So... I got a job at Starbuck. Loved the menu, hated the job. I quit after a year, because... the coffee was free and I love their goodies.”

Goodies. God, she’s adorable. She said *goodies*.

“Then I met Demitri.”

Now I look at her.

I hate Demitri.

Who’s Demitri?

**EPOV**

And when she answers, I realize that my thought wasn't just a thought.

I actually asked her who Demitri is.

Problem is... well, one of them... is that I heard jealousy in my voice.

That's new for me, but easily recognized.

I won't deny it, though. Jealousy rushed through me when she mentioned his name, and I feel it now, too. Lingering.

"He was my boss," she replies with a smirk. A smirk that tells me she heard the jealousy. Lovely. "He's actually still my boss. He owns Girlesque Night. One club in LA and one in Seattle."

"But that's not what's important here," she says dismissively, and I disagree. I think it's very important. Is Demitri only her boss? Is or was. Shit. "What is important... is that I you realize that I'm not really a stripper."

But I already know that. I know she doesn't touch anyone. I know she's never naked on stage.

Emmett told me.

This is why I feel so incredibly stupid.

"Emmett told me," I say quietly. "And I'm truly sorry, Bella. I don't know what I was thinking." I roll my eyes at myself. "Clearly I wasn't thinking at all."

She doesn't miss a beat.

"Okay, so you know. But does my extra job bother you?"

Shit.

## **EPOV**

Yes. No. A little. It bothers me immensely. I don't know why. And I have to be honest, yes? Of course I do. I have to be honest. Jesus, all this is so new to me. Feelings and... shit... stirring inside of me. But I do recognize it all. I think instincts are always easy to pinpoint.

My truth.

"I want you," I tell her. "All of you. Only for me."

I know I sound like a caveman but I can't help it. It makes me feel like shit, but I refuse to take it back. I will be truthful. No matter what. And now I feel awkward and uncomfortable. This is so out of my comfort zone.

"I *am* yours, Edward," she says softly. Closer now, she's close. Not really touching but almost. Her face is close to mine. "And I was thinking..."

She looks down.

When she looks up again, her smile is... wicked.

Then she goes and straddles me. Again.

I try not to react but it's hard. We're both naked with only the cover between us.

Fucking cover.

"Edward," she whispered. Her eyes are burning. Noses touching. Her hands are lazy on my shoulder blades, drawing shivers from me. And I don't know how my hands ended up on her hips. "Would you like it if I danced for *you*?"

*Holy...*

## **EPOV**

"Whaa...?" is my reply.

I know. I *know*.

Educated man.

"Hmmm," she hums and kisses me softly. Grinding, grinding slowly. Sweet Jesus. "You see... I was thinking that..."

Oh, someone's thinking?

*I wish I could do the same but you make that impossible, beautiful.*

"Next time I work, Edward," she whispers in my ear. She sucks on my earlobe. I palm her ass and she moans. "Come watch me," she whimpers. "And after the show..." I thrust my cock against her. "I'll show everyone that I belong to you."

My mouth is on her neck.

I cup her breasts.

"You will be the only one I touch," she moans. "The only one allowed to touch *me*."

Yes. Only me.

The caveman is back. Others will watch her, but at the end of the night, she will put her body on mine.

In front of others.

*Oh, the urges...*

## **BPOV**

He catches me by surprise and flips me over.

The cover's gone.

I feel him in all the right places.

"How often do you work, beautiful?" he murmurs huskily in my ear.

My breathing hitches as he pushes the head of his thick cock inside of me. But no further. I want, I want, I need. Please. He does nothing. I arch for him. Still, he doesn't give in.

I need to answer.

"Three..." I breathe heavily. "...to four nights a month."

He hums against my collarbone.

I twist his hair between my fingers.

*Closer. Please. Fuck me.*

"I will be there, baby." It's a heated promise.

And then he slams into me.

All air leaves me in a whoosh.

"Fuck," he grits out.

No more restraints. He's awake. His body covers mine, his body is magical. Instinctual.

Raw pleasure.

"I will wait for you," he moans. Thrust. *Thrust*. "And you'll find me in the VIP, beautiful."

Yes.

"I'll show you," I whimper. "Only you, Edward."

Moans and groans fill the air.

Skin slapping.

He fucks me.

I ride him.

We show each other.

"Oh, fuck," I moan, sinking down on him.

He sits. That mouth of his... *talented* fucking mouth... and he sucks on my nipples.

His long fingers rub my clit.

He thrusts, I sink.

I'm close.

"*Jesus...* You feel so good, Bella," he grunts.

I reach behind me, down... I cup his balls...

He sucks in a sharp breath, I can see the pleasure on him.

We smell like sex.

We're all over the place.

Bodies working.

And then...

We come...

And come...

So hard.

He turns me into a screamer.

### **EPOV**

Her forehead drops to my shoulder.

We're panting together.

Chests heaving.

Bodies glistening.

Slowly, with trembling hands, I move my fingers up and down her spine.

The pads of my fingers. She shivers. I kiss her neck. I taste the sweat.

The new, fresh... that I worked up. I want to consume her. All of her.

"That was..." she trails off.

I hum. I agree. It was... "Incredible."

Her turn to hum.

I kiss her. Her neck, her jaw, her cheek, her nose, her mouth.

"Let me take you out, beautiful," I whisper against her lips. "Tonight."

She smiles, I smile.

### **BPOV**

It's impossible to take my eyes off him.

Many women in the establishment agree with me.

But Edward only has eyes for me.

At dinner, a fancy restaurant with Italian food, he's... something else. I have no words for him. He's a gentleman. Opening doors, hand on my lower back, complimenting, ladies first, he makes me feel like a princess. But the thing is, he isn't making an effort to do this for me. This comes naturally. He's simply a perfect gentleman. He's fucking amazing.

It's a *date*.

I feel the need to tell him. "This is my first date."

He stops. Fork in mid-air. He's confused.

And fuck me if I don't blush. I haven't blushed since I was in High School. Actually... I'm pretty sure Edward is the only one capable of making me blush. He sure did it often when I was younger. Of course, he had no idea the effect he had on me back then.

"First date?" he asks slowly. Like he's doing math in his head. "Ever?"

I nod.

"How..." He frowns and lowers his fork. "How is that *possible*?"

Weeell...

How do I tell him this?

## **BPOV**

I think, I think, I phrase my words, I sip my wine.

I go with honesty.

"You were my first crush," I tell him. His eyes bug out momentarily.  
"And..." I shrug. "You set the bar pretty high. In college, I couldn't find anyone that could compare."

He finds this hard to believe. He shouldn't. He's... out of this world.

"I've always been drawn to maturity," I explain softly.

"But..." he trails off, shaking his head slowly, still not understanding how completely amazing he is. "I mean... before me, you...?"

"Older men," I say. *Older men without the possibility of dating them.*  
Fuck, how will he take it?

I expect him to cringe or grimace but instead he shows understanding. Not necessarily acceptance, but... it's like a puzzle piece. He understands now that I'm simply drawn to older men.

"Um..." He clears his throat. Then... apprehension, and... reluctance. "Many of them?"

"No!" I choke out. God, I don't want him to think I slept around with older men everyday. Oh, Jesus. Is this really what you talk about on dates? I take a deep breath. I sip my wine. *Stalling.*

"I'm sorry, Bella," he says. "I don't want you to be uncomfortable. I'm..."  
He sighs. "I want to know, but I don't want to hear about it. Does that make sense?"

Yes.

Of course it does.

I don't want to hear about Karen but God knows I have questions that I fully intend to ask.

"It makes sense," I answer with a small nod. "Um... do you want to get this out of the way so we can move on?"

He nods stiffly... quickly. "Yes. I need to know."

## **EPOV**

I'm a masochist.

The thought of other men touching my Bella is repulsive. Younger or older, doesn't matter. Also, I admit I'm conflicted when it comes to her comment about older men. A part of me understands why she's with me, and instead of feeling that she's only with me for my age, I know that we're simply more compatible when I am who I am. I trust her, I know she wants me for me. But then I wonder... about those other older men. Are we talking older men like me? Or... disgusting sixty year olds pawing all over her.

I want to roll my eyes.

If there's anyone pawing, it's me. Jesus, I can hardly take my hands off her.

So... am I one of *those* older men?

I'm not comfortable with that thought at all.

Bella's voice brings me back. "Not many. Four, including you. All in their thirties."

That's okay. That's *not* okay.

I'm an idiot, I know.

I'm also torn. The fact that I'm Bella's first crush, as she put it, is both ego boosting, and... odd. It feels odd. Flattering for sure, but... how old

could she have been? Fifteen? Sixteen? Or hell... *Fourteen*? I was in my early *thirties* then.

That's... not okay.

I loosen my tie.

All right. So, three older men... before me. Three men, touching my Bella.

## **EPOV**

I clear my throat, hoping to God my jealousy doesn't come through.

"All right," I say slowly. "But... didn't they... take you out to dinner?"

That still bothers me immensely. Bella is a stunning woman. She's amazing beyond words. She should be treated like one.

Now that she's with me, I intend to take care of her. It's what I want and need. I may not be able to take her out in Seattle, but I will one day. This is just temporary. This is just to make sure. But I know I want her permanently.

"Um... that wasn't an option," she sighs, averting her eyes.

Pardon me?

Why wouldn't that be an option?

## **EPOV**

"Why wouldn't they take you out?" I ask, frowning. I'm annoyed, I can't help it. But I find it horrible. She's twenty-one years old, and this is her *first* date.

Again with the confliction.

I'm suddenly pleased, because that means I'm the only one to ever date her.

I never knew I could be this... territorial.

"Because they were professors."

"Www-"what the *fuck*?

"They weren't *my* professors," she explains in a hurry. "But yeah... they were professors."

My mind spins. Sipping my wine gives me time to calm down.

This should also mean that I will be the first one she enters a *real* relationship with. I like that idea too much. But I'm also thoroughly pissed. Bella's never had anyone to appreciate her for what she is.

"They hid you," I state flatly, unable to hide my disdain.

And her hand covers mine on the table.

To soothe, to comfort, to calm.

"It was mutual," she says softly. "With *them* I didn't want more. *You* are another matter."

I think I'm falling for her.

## **BPOV**

We both agree that our date hasn't been the best, but it has still brought us closer. We've started talking about things we need to get out. That's what's important, and in the cab I tell him to quit frowning. I know him.

"Your first date should've been better," he sighs.

And I tell him, "Doesn't matter. It's not the date. It's the company."

His eyes soften. His kisses are affectionate and I know we have a future together.

It's him.

"There will be many dates," he murmurs with another kiss. "I promise you, beautiful."

"Many dates," I hum against his lips. My hand grazes his muscular thigh. "I can live with that."

A quiet moan escapes him, and his hand... *God...* up my ribcage.

He deepens the kiss, he groans, "And many all nighters."

## **EPOV**

Silent agreements. There are a few things we don't have to talk about.

No questions asked.

She sleeps in my bed. No more separation.

We're a couple when we don't work – another silent agreement.

The next three days prove how well we can do this.

We work. There are many meetings. We visit the construction site. We meet with the Hunter Group. We arrange and rearrange, and Bella's by my side, working hard like always. No slipping. Only secret smiles and a few touches during work hours.

Sue me.

I can't help it.

Then we have our nights. Hours of loving sensually and passionately, and fucking hard and desperately.

It's a newness I'm already craving.

Unfortunately our work hours haven't given us time to talk more, but I know it's coming. I also know what's next.

She wants to know about my marriage.

But not now, because now it's time to go home for the weekend. I have meetings, and then... yes, I'm going to *Girlesque* tomorrow night.

Emmett is giddy.

Bella's secretive with her mischievous smile.

I'm... pretty happy about the fact that I'm in good shape, because I don't want "Skimpy outfits on a sexy woman caused this man's heart attack" on my headstone.

It could happen.

Time to leave New York.

## **EPOV**

"Edward?"

"Bella?" I smile, looking up from my laptop.

Her expression in thoughtful as she looks out the window.

That little crease between her eyebrows is... cute. It's there whenever something is on her mind. Something she wants to talk about, but... for some reason hesitates to bring up.

I admit, I watch her a lot.

But she's a vision.

Her voice is quiet, almost a whisper, "Can I ask you something?" Now she looks at me. I nod. I'm a bit amused but I don't really know why. She's just... Never mind, because I don't know. "When was the last time you received a blowjob?"

I choke on... nothing, really.

And I cough.

And cough.

Then I look around me, hoping to *God* no one on the plane heard her.

## **EPOV**

"Isabella, what the *hell*," I whisper harshly.

She only smiles. Innocently. And speaks like nothing is wrong in the world. "Yesterday, and then again this morning, I tried to go down-"

"I know what you tried," I cut her off in a hushed tone. "Can we save this for another time?"

This is not happening to me. This is *not* happening to me.

"No one can hear us," she says quietly.

Again I look around me, needing to make sure.

My palms get clammy.

I loosen my tie, because around *her*, I often need to. In order to *breathe* properly.

As for her question, I don't want to hear about it.

"So... it's okay for you to go down on me, but not the other--"

"For heaven's sake, Bella!" I hiss quietly.

*Christ, how mortifying this is!*

## **EPOV**

"Please, can we drop this?" I plead quietly with her.

She stares at me, calculating, lips pursed.

Until she finally sighs, and gives me a nod.

"Thank God," I whisper under my breath, visibly relaxing.

She looks out the window again, and I turn back to my work.

But I can't focus on the plans that the engineers have sent me.

Her question echoes in my head.

*"When was the last time you received a blowjob?"*

*"When was the last time you received a blowjob?"*

*"When was the last time you received a blowjob?"*

Truth is, I don't know the answer.

But it was before I got married.

Karen told me it made her feel inferior.

That was the *last* thing ever I wanted her to feel.

## **BPOV**

"You sure you don't want my help at the meeting?" I mumble in between kisses.

Sweet kisses, nibbling, smiling, tasting, sweet, softly, sweetly, I'm addicted.

We're back in Seattle. SeaTac. We stand at baggage claim. Luggage next to us, but we don't leave just yet. People hurry around us, we stand still... in the middle of it.

Softly, his hands are on me. Cupping my neck, cradling my face. Memorizing. Lips soft and wet, moving against mine.

He's a caresser. Showering me with affection.

He makes me feel so precious.

He handles me with care... but he still knows when to let loose.

Well, to an extent.

It's quite obvious that Karen wasn't wild in the sack.

She muted my Edward.

Don't even get me started on his issue with oral sex. Or *receiving* because he loves to give.

*And boy is he good at it...*

But when it comes to himself... He's pushing his urges down, and I don't know why. For instance, sex is only for the bedroom. And apart from the time in his office last time we were in Seattle, we've only had sex in his bed. A shame, I know. But don't worry, I plan on changing that.

It's not like he says anything. It's just... obvious to him. You have sex in the bedroom and that's that. He wants, he wants, he wants, and so badly.

But he pushes it all to the side. Almost all of it. I'm glad he's letting go in bed, but... oh, the possibilities. I want him everywhere.

I plan on having him everywhere.

"Edward?" I sigh softly, pecking, pecking, and mmm... he deepens the kiss again.

"Give me a minute," he mumbles, sucking gently on my bottom lip. "I'm not ready to stop yet."

And I know...

That I'm falling in love with him.

## **EPOV**

"You're incredible, you know that?" she whispers against my lips.

It makes me smile against hers.

"So are you, Ms. Swan."

I know it's time to go. I have two meetings at the main office before I can go home and rest for a few hours.

"Mmm, your meeting starts soon," she hums.

In reluctance we break the kiss.

"Again, are you sure you don't want me there?" she asks softly, quietly, as I kiss her on the forehead.

And yes, I'm sure.

"Charlie's there," I remind her with a half smirk. "You may be able to act, but I would never be able to pull that off."

It's true. I know how I look at her, and Charlie, well... anyone, really... even a blind man would see that I care deeply for her. Very deeply.

"Okay," she sighs, smiling a little. "So..." Ah, the glint in her eye. "I'll see you tonight?"

I swallow my desire. I need to keep myself together... at least until tonight.

"I wouldn't miss it," I say, and yes, I failed at hiding my desire.

The coy smile. "Hmm, until tonight then, Mr. Cullen." And she *curtsies*.

"Vixen," I whisper, and with a final kiss, we part ways.

Tonight can't come soon enough.

## **BPOV**

I hurry with the lock as I hear my phone ringing from inside, and once I'm in, I rush over to hallway table to pick up the phone.

"Bella speaking," I rush out, quite breathlessly.

"*Oh hi, sweetie!*" Mom. I drop the keys on the table and kick off my heels. "*Did I catch you in a bad time?*"

"No, no," I assure. "I just got back from New York."

It feels good to be back, but... I already miss it. New York. London. Travelling with Edward. I've grown attached to it.

Good thing I love my apartment, because it's pretty much the only thing that holds me in Seattle. Well, except for *Girlesque*, of course. But yes, I love my apartment. It's just a small one but it doesn't matter. A tiny bedroom, a tiny living room, a tiny kitchen, a tiny bathroom. IKEA all the

way. Wooden floors and grey-blue walls. Sparsely decorated since I'm rarely here.

"Ah yes," Mom says, bringing me out of my thoughts. *"How is the job, by the way? Do you like working for Edward, honey?"*

*If you only knew, Mom.*

"I love it," I tell her, grinning widely to myself. "He's great, and I love the traveling. I mean, it's taken a while to get used to all the time differences but I've quickly learned to sleep when I'm tired, regardless of the hour," I chuckle. Actually, it was Edward who told me to just ignore what time it was.

*"I can imagine, sweetie,"* she laughs softly. *"Anyway, I just wanted to say hi, and I was thinking of you because I just got home from a spa trip with Charlotte and Mary."* Of course, her best friends. Gossipy bunch. I can't help but to smile. *"I'm rambling,"* she chuckles, *"I was thinking of you since I just got back from the airport, and... you know... the traveling reminded me of your new life."* We both laugh at that. She's right. It's like a new lifestyle. I sure spend a lot of time in airports. *"And it's been a while, you know. Your Dad and I miss you."*

I smile sadly into the receiver, missing my chatty Mom. "Maybe I can come home for dinner on Sunday," I suggest. I wouldn't mind spending some time with them, either. I miss them too, and I know the next couple of weeks are going to be even busier.

Since Edward doesn't have meetings planned next weekend, there's no reason for us to return to Seattle, and I don't have work then. So, after New York next week, we're heading straight back to London.

*"Oh, that would be lovely!"* she exclaims. *"You cook, I bake?"*

Ah, old times. I smile, it's nostalgic. Mom is a terrible cook but for some reason she makes the most delicious desserts, and this was always our thing when I lived at home. I made dinner, and Mom made dessert.

"Sounds good, Mom." I grin. "Does that mean we take Pike Place before?" I ask, sounding hopeful. Another thing that's ours. We buy what we're going to make together, and we usually make a day out of it.

"*Yep! Just like the good old days,*" she laughs, and I fail at stifling a yawn. "*Oh, I'm sorry, baby. I'll let you get some sleep. I'll see you on Sunday, and we can gossip good and proper!*"

"Okay, love you," I chuckle tiredly, shaking my head at her in amusement. "Tell Dad I love him."

"*Will do, and love you too. Kiss, kiss!*"

## **BPOV**

*Ask me of my favorite color :) ~Bella*

*Okay? What is your favorite color? -Edward*

*Green. Ask me why ~Bella*

*You're too adorable. All right, Ms. Swan. Why green? -Edward*

*It's the color of your eyes. I know, cheesy me! :P ~Bella*

*I stand firm. You're too adorable. Is it my turn now? -Edward*

*Depends. I can't date you if you love the color of shit ;) ~Bella*

*Noted. First, your eyes are beautiful, and they certainly don't remind me of shit! Second, my favorite color is silver -Edward*

*Tsk, tsk, tsk. I don't need to have studied Graphic Design to tell you that silver isn't a color, Mr. Cullen ~Bella*

*I suppose I don't care, beautiful. I stand by my favorite –Edward.*

*And I hope that tonight will change your mind ;) ~Bella*

*How so? –Edward*

*Not telling. Btw, where are you? ~Bella*

*I see you didn't study English. I won't ever text-speak with you. And I'm almost at the club. Emmett is meeting me outside –Edward*

*K! C u soon, zxy! ;P LMAO ;) Time 2 get durrrrrty ~Bella*

“What the *hell* is with the cheesy grin, Dee?”

Said grin is still plastered on my face as I look up at Jessica.

“Oh, never mind that,” I say, waving it off. “Now. Wardrobe. I think I’m gonna go with the black corset in satin with matching heels. And black stockings, too.”

“Okay. As for bra and thong?”

I smirk. “Green.”

## **EPOV**

I shake my head in amusement. She’s just too cute for words. “LMAO?” I mutter to myself as I step out of the car.

What the hell does that *mean*?

I consider asking the valet as I hand over my keys, but... no.

"Edward!" I hear my cousin bellow. "Good to see ya this fuckawesome Friday night."

Yes. I ask that "dude."

Unfortunately Emmet doesn't know text-speak either, but after thinking about it, I'm relieved. He is over thirty, after all, and you won't ever find us surfing through Internet communities. That's where you learn the language that's trashing our English, no?

Once seated in the VIP area, the text is forgotten, though.

"So... you're dating Charlie Swan's daughter, eh?" His grin is wide and his eyebrows are wagging their way off his face. "I gotta tell ya, I was in disbelief when Dee told me her real name, and... the connection between the two of you."

"You're still calling her Dee?" I ask before taking a sip of my beer.

"It's her name at the club." He shrugs. Then grins again. "*Delicious Dee.*"

I'm not arguing about the delicious part.

"And for some reason, she's working in the VIP's tonight. I wonder why," he chuckles. "Could you be the reason, perhaps?"

And I grin in satisfaction, because... fuck yeah.

**A/N:** Chapter song – *Disturbia* by *Rihanna*: [youtube . com/ watch?v=E1mU6h4Xdxc&ob=av2e](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1mU6h4Xdxc&ob=av2e)

## **BPOV**

We're only three dancers on the main stage tonight.

We're more aggressive, no one's pretending to be innocent.

We're sex.

Rihanna's Disturbia comes on, and Emmett introduces us as we walk out.

Black mask in lace, covering my eyes and cheekbones.

*But you know who I am, Edward, and this... this is for you.*

"Bondage Bree!" And she walks out...

"Delicious Dee!" And I walk out...

"Cockteasing Claire!" And she walks out...

*I'm going crazy now*

The middle pole is mine.

I pass it and head for the edge of the stage, we all do, and we're there.  
Sexy smiles for the audience, I bite down on my lip... I blow them a kiss.  
Here we go, boys.

*It's a thief in the night to come and grab you*

*It can creep up inside you and consume you*

Mmm, but Edward consuming me is all I can think about as I grab the pole and slide down against it. More than once. Around and around, the beat is heavy. I grind and slide, I drop, my legs part. Hands, my own, they caress my thighs. The smile on my face promises fun. Let me be your bad girl for the night, Edward.

*Your mind's in disturbia, it's like the darkness is light*

*Disturbia, am I scaring you tonight?*

*Disturbia, aint used to what you like*

*Disturbia, disturbia*

Claire and I walk to the edge again, we have eyes for each other. Eyes that undress, eyes that devour. Hands that touch. Hands that work the corsets. Smiles that ask the crowd... *Do you want us to continue?*

And they do.

They do.

With a kiss on her naked collarbone, I reach behind her and unzip the corset.

She's left in dark red lace.

My turn.

Claire moves behind me, I face the audience.

My head falls back against her shoulder, my eyes are on you, Edward, you're up there there, you want your hands to be Claire's hands. And they will be baby, I promise.

*Release me from this curse I'm in*

*Trying to maintain but I'm struggling*

*If you can't go-o-o*

*I think I'm gonna ah ah ah ah*

My corset is gone.

The kiss I blow is for the VIP area up there, it's for you and you know.

Do you like green now, Edward?

**EPOV**

She's sin.

Delicious sin.

Pure sex.

And I want her. Right now. A bed would be nice to have around, so that I could just ravish her.

God knows my cock is awake for it.

"Three VIP dancers are on their way up, dude," Emmett tells me over the music, and I watch as Bella and her... friends... disappear behind stage.

"Let's have a seat, yeah?"

I don't speak but I follow him back to our chairs, and I chug my beer as my life depends on it. Fuck. Her body, the way she moved, will she move like that up here? Around me, there are approximately ten to fifteen men. And the stage, the tiny stage up here, will they all dance there for these men? Jesus.

"Will three dancers fit on that stage?" I ask, leaning closer to him.

"Nah, we usually only have two dancers up here," he tells me. "We have three tonight because one of them are going to be with a client."

And his grin tells me that I'm that client.

Which would make Bella the dancer.

She will be right here, only for me, while the other two entertain the rest of the hungry men.

"Yeah, do you have any idea how lucky you are?" he laughs when I swallow hard, visibly. "Dee's still new here, and she's already got a following."

Yet I'm the only one she will dance for. The first, the only, the last.

Yes. Yes, I'm a lucky bastard.

"Ah, and here they come, Cullen! Sit back and enjoy!"

### **BPOV**

As Claire and Bree get ready for another set on the main stage, Kate, Jessica, and I head upstairs for the VIP area. Masks are gone. We're down to lingerie.

When we arrive, Kate and Jessica move toward the stage, but I won't do that, and there he is. I walk with purpose, he drinks me in. In a leather chair, he sits. Emmett leaves with a hearty laugh, and the music starts.

He raises an eyebrow as I lean over him.

I breathe him in.

My tits are pretty much in his face as I whisper closely.

Seductively.

"Be gentle with me, it's my first time."

He groans.

I'm done for.

### **EPOV**

I'm done for.

A song that I actually recognize comes on and Bella moves...

So.

Fucking.

Sexily.

*This tainted love you've given*

*I give you all a boy could give you*

*Take my tears*

*And that's not nearly all*

*Tainted love*

My jeans are tight in the right area. She knows. Her ass was just there.

"What's your favorite color, Edward?" she whispers in my ear.

I moan as I feel her breasts press against my chest.

"Green, baby."

Then her hands, sliding up my forearms, pushing up the sleeves of my black pullover, and that's right, beautiful, I need to feel skin on skin.

*Jesus*. The tension is thick. Her mouth is close to my ear, my hands all balled into fists along my sides, fuck, I need to touch.

*Don't touch me, please*

*I cannot stand the way you tease*

"Someone's hard," she purrs, rubbing that delectable ass over my crotch. And before I can response, though I have no idea how *to* respond, she turns and straddles me in the leather chair.

"*Bella*," I growl, it's a warning, I don't have that much restraint.

She whimpers and fists my hair, shooting waves of pleasure to my erection. I palm her ass, unable to hold back. She arches and swivels her hips.

I thrust.

She moans.

I moan.

*Touch me, baby*

*Tainted love*

*Touch me, baby*

*Tainted love*

"I think..." She breathes heavily in my ear. *I think my cock is going to explode. "...it's time for your VIP privileges."*

Yes.

Emmett told me. Private rooms.

"And Edward?" She pauses, she nibbles and bites on my neck, before she licks to soothe, to drive me fucking insane. "I told Emmett to shut off the security cameras in our room."

But... but... but...

## **BPOV**

He's incredibly turned on as I lead him into one of the private rooms. Hell, so am I. My thong is soaked. Walking behind me, so closely, we're almost touching. But we're not exactly entering a bedroom, which is why I know I'm not imagining his nerves. Like I said, it's not a bedroom. It's a room

with a pole, dark red walls, black glossy floor, a black leather couch, a matching chair, and a stereo system.

Cameras in the corners, to make sure the dancer is safe. To make sure nothing illegal's going on. But Edward and I are different. Emmett didn't even hesitate when I asked if he could shut off the cameras. Instead he just said, "Just don't kill him. You're night to Karen's day."

*And oh, don't I know that already.*

"Have a seat, Mr. Cullen," I say coyly, gesturing for the couch.

I head for the stereo.

We're not going to have sex.

But it's about time the man received a proper blowjob.

**A/N:** Do yourself a favor and listen to this [www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3xesKwWsXo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3xesKwWsXo) while you read ;)

## **EPOV**

The music starts. It's slow and sexy and I watch. I watch as she saunters over to me. High heels, stockings. Bra and thong. And she's right. Silver is no color – it's a metal. But green is a color, and I love it, I adore it.

Deep breaths, I have faith in her.

She's relaxed and incredibly sexy, I'm rigid and annoyed with myself.

I'm nervous and it's new. All of this. But... fuck, I *want* it.

I want this without feeling guilty.

*I lose all control*

*When you grab a hold*

*And you do your trick*

*I love it when you lick*

I arch a brow at her. In question to the lyrics.

She only smiles. "Let's get a bit more comfortable, shall we?"

I don't know what she suggests, but I know I won't deny her.

"Anything, beautiful," I say huskily, leaning forward. Then she's right there, standing in between my legs, and I look up at her, the woman nods. A nod for yes... anything. So, I touch. My hands move up her calves, eyes still locked, higher and higher, I caress her thighs.

*You've got lock and key*

*Every part of me*

*Know what makes me tick*

*I love it when you lick*

I watch her to make sure, but even as I tug on her thong, her eyes tell me that I'm doing everything right.

With a shaky breath, I slide her thong down. And when I look up again, her bra is gone, too.

"Fuck," I whisper under my breath.

She stands in stockings and heels.

*Don't make my body wait no longer*

*Because this pussycat's ready to play play play play play*

"Jesus Christ, Bella," I mutter. I lick my lips, this is what she wants? Fuck yes. I don't hesitate, I want it too. So badly. Always. I love it. So, I grab her. Closer and closer until I'm right there, and I lick. God, I lick. The length of her wet pussy.

"Oh fuck, Edward," she whimpers.

My tongue delves deeper, she's... so... fucking... wet.

*I lose all control*

*When you grab a hold*

*And you do your trick*

*I love it when you lick*

I see the pleasure I give her, I fucking taste it.

"I want more," she moans. "I want your cock, baby."

Fuck.

With a push, she has me on the couch. Leaning back. I'm breathing heavily, licking my lips to savor her taste. Eyes hungry and devouring her as she unzip my jeans.

I lift up, so she can push them down. Boxers follow, and I groan as my erection springs free.

*It feels so good I'm going crazy*

*My eyes roll back inside my head*

"On your back," she instructs breathily.

I obey.

But when I'm on my back, she doesn't straddle me.

Well, she does... but she straddles my face.

Not complaining. At all, but...

"What are you doing, Bella?" I rasp.

She wraps her fingers around my aching, leaking cock.

"Would I ever do something I don't want to do?" she asks me, and I'm a bit thrown off by the seriousness of her question. Forgive me but it's hard to focus when her pussy is literally ten inches or so away from my face, my waiting mouth. Not to mention her hand working my cock. Slowly. Sweet torture.

But I manage to grunt out a "no" because I know she wouldn't.

"Listen to the lyrics," is all she tells me.

*And hold on tight*

*Hope you aint scared*

*I promise I'll return the favor*

I shiver, my cock throbs in her hand, I'm gone.

"Trust me. I *want* this, Edward. *So* badly."

I'm unable to speak.

Luckily, she doesn't expect me to answer.

Instead she lowers herself on me, and I moan as I taste her heat again. My hands, they're there in case she'd try to get away. I wouldn't allow it. I

love this, crave this, crave her taste, scent, her pleasure. I'd give it all to her. And I do. I lick, lap, and suck and moan and *fuck*, her... she... holy...

My moan against her pussy is loud as I feel her tongue on my cock. Swiping off the pre-cum. Then her lips... wrapped around... and she sucks me in.

She *wants* this, I remind myself.

I have to trust her.

I squeeze my eyes shut.

*I lose all control*

*When you grab a hold*

*And you do your trick*

*I love it when you lick*

My tongue enters her, I fuck her slowly, she squirms, my hands hold her fast. Moving, slowly and sensually together. She dips, I take. And I realize... that she's wetter now. Which means... she really wants it. She's even getting more turned on by it.

I moan.

And moan...

And moan...

At the realization.

She sucks me hard and deep.

Shivers rock through me.

Then she encourages me to thrust.

I think I'm gonna explode.

*You've got lock and key*

*Every part of me*

*Know what makes me tick*

*I love it when you lick*

"Fuck, Isabella," I groan.

She releases me for a second, only to whimper out, "I'm so close, Edward."

*Lick*

I add my fingers, two of them, rubbing her clit, as I continue fucking her with my tongue.

Closer, I'm close too.

She cups my balls, massages them, I'm dying. Tongue swirling around the head, teeth grazing, I tense.

*Your every touch excites me*

*And damnit, I aint too proud to beg*

"Bella," I pant, "I'm close."

She doesn't move, doesn't move, doesn't move, she moans around me. She moves faster, harder, I hit the back of her throat.

I squeeze my eyes shut again.

She climaxes.

Right then.

Right there.

It triggers me.

I take, I give. She takes, she gives.

With a muffled groan, I explode, instinctively thrusting deeper into her mouth.

Her moan calms me down.

Shivers and shudders. She licks me clean.

She's rendered me speechless.

On the couch, we're a panting mess.

Her smile is lazy, eyes happy, she's satisfied.

I'm still dead.

Though my heart is pounding.

Give me a minute or ten.

## **EPOV**

No questions asked, I bring her home with me after the club. She tells me she doesn't want to sleep in the bed I shared with Karen. I tell her that I have a new house, and that's that. Hell, that was the first thing I thought of when I was handed the divorce papers. There was no way I'd live in that house.

Hand in hand, we enter my house.

Bodies close together, we sleep peacefully. Naked.

I expect us to wake up together too, but that doesn't happen.

What does happen is that I wake up alone... but Bella returns before I can get up.

"How about a lazy morning in bed?" she asks with a smile, holding a bag up.

A bag from Starbucks.

My grin in return is wide as I lean back against the headboard.

She bought us breakfast.

"Sounds fucking perfect," I chuckle in my morning voice.

Then there's a Peppermint White Chocolate Mocha with my name on it, along with bagels and – as Bella would put it – goodies.

I know I've never been more at peace. It's everything she does.

And in bed... she's wearing my boxers and t-shirt.

I'm irrevocably in love with her.

I want mine to be ours.

## **BPOV**

I still don't know what Karen did to him, but whatever she did has turned Edward into an insecure man. He doubts himself when it comes to what he's good for. He knows he's an excellent architect and business man, but on a personal level he doesn't know just how incredible he is. So, I spend our lazy Saturday morning in bed giving him all of me. I fill him in about my life, I tell him why I dance, what I want to do in the future, and I

make it abundantly clear that I see myself with him permanently. In other words, I let him into my life. He knows now that dancing for me it's just for kicks. I like it and will keep doing it for another year or so. Because I have a plan, which I also tell him about.

I want to start my own company where I can work as the graphic designer I studied to become.

I also tell him that this is what my pay check from Girlesque is for. I'm saving up, so that I don't have to take a bigger loan than necessary. It's been a dream for a long time, and I've been saving for three years.

I tell him everything.

Then, later that night after his meetings, I again show him how my body belongs to him. To others at the club, I'm Dee. But I'm his Bella, and I show him just that. I show him how much I desire him and how much pleasure he gives me by returning every favor, every touch, every kiss.

And why do I do all this and expect nothing in return?

Because I love him.

He will give me everything when he's ready.

He just needs time.

## **BPOV**

After spending Sunday with Mom and Dad, I'm... pretty fucking speechless.

Exhausted and speechless.

I didn't ask Mom a single question about anything that involved Edward, but that didn't mean Mom wouldn't talk about him anyway. And she sure

did. She's a gossip, there's no denying that, and there's also no denying that I wanted her to keep talking, but in the end I was fed up.

*And seriously considering hunting Karen down.*

See, I was under the impression that my parents were close to Karen, but I was wrong. So wrong. Apparently they were friends because of Edward. She was his wife, and therefore a friend of Mom's and Dad's, too.

God, I had no idea what a fucking shrew Karen was.

Dad was mostly quiet because he's not a gossip, but I could still see that he agreed with the stuff Mom said.

## **BPOV**

In bed, I stare at the ceiling. I want Edward here next to me, or... actually I want to be in Edward's bed. With him. But I can't. Not tonight with all this shit going on in my head. Plus, it's late and I'm pretty sure he's asleep. We're going back to New York very early tomorrow morning, after all.

So, I stay. And I stare up at the ceiling.

As Mom's words echo in my head.

*"She used him. Plain and simple. She knew what a giver Edward is and she took advantage of that."*

*"He never said no. She manipulated him."*

*"We were still in our twenties when she started, and I'm damn glad I managed to convince him into drawing up a pre-nup before he married her. Who knows what she'd be walking away with otherwise?"*

*"She often used the phrase 'Edward, darling, I'm a woman. I know what I'm talking about.' I swear I could wring her neck for how she slowly but surely broke him down. He went from strong and full of life to withdrawn and weak. She made him feel like a failure."*

*"And gosh, everytime I tried to talk to him, he would shut me out. Not because he didn't necessarily believe me but because he took his vows seriously. You marry for life, and he had every intention of keeping his promise. He was faithful, he never stopped giving, and he obeyed her like a fucking dog. Pardon my language, but... ugh!"*

*"The only thing she was good at... well, apart from destroying Edward... was taking care of children. Being a housewife gave her time, and she loved children. However, she used this against Edward. He didn't want children, and she did. So, she guilt tripped him, made him feel even worse. She thought she could convince him, but that was the only thing he refused her. Can't say I blame him – the last thing he needs is people to take care of. He lost his parents at the age of fourteen, and since then he's taken care of himself. His aunt and uncle sure didn't do much. They gave him food and shelter, and they paid for his first four years in college. Other than that, he's been on his own. What he needs is someone to take care of him for a change."*

This was just a few of the things Mom had told me.

## **EPOV**

When I see Bella arrive at SeaTac this early Monday morning, I mirror her smile as we both realize that we've bought coffee for each other.

"Hey, that's my job," she teases, reaching up to kiss me.

I pull her closer to me, thrilled to have her close again, and the kiss feels like sweet reunion. Now we have almost two weeks before coming back to Seattle.

"Good morning, beautiful," I murmur, softly nibbling on her bottom lip. "Let's see if great minds think alike, shall we?"

With a smile, she holds up the beverage meant for me, and when I smell the mint and see the whipped cream, the black coffee I bought for myself is long forgotten.

"What did you buy?" I ask, nodding at her own coffee.

"Tea," she says, smiling curiously at the one I bought.

I smirk. "Caramel Cappuccino with an extra shot of espresso."

She throws her tea away, eagerly accepting the cappuccino.

Hand in hand, fingers threaded together, we head for our terminal.

After boarding the plane, I ask her how her dinner yesterday with Charlie and Renee was.

She looks out the window with a scowl on her face.

## **BPOV**

I tell him that Mom spent quite a while talking about Karen, and Edward grimaces slightly before nodding once in understanding; he knows my Mom after all, and she's the gossip we hate to love so dearly. Then he sighs and tells me that we'll talk as soon as we reach New York.

To lighten the mood, I bring out my phone.

*My morning shower was lonely without you ;) ~Bella*

When he reads the text, he only coughs once.

Before he subtly adjusts himself.

And to my surprise, he texts back.

*When we get to NY, I think it's best you show me how you coped with that loneliness -Edward*

Well, fuck me running.

"That's a deal, Mr. Cullen." *After we've talked about Karen.*

## **EPOV**

I suggest that we rest for a while when we arrive at our hotel in New York, but Bella says no. I suggest that we shower, but she says no. I tell her I'm hungry, and she orders me a damn pizza. She knows I'm stalling. And now... now there's yet another pizza that I won't eat, and... we're sitting in the living room area. She's waiting. I'm dreading.

And truth be told, I don't really know what to say.

Because what it all comes down to is that I didn't realize how miserable I was until it was over. I thought my life was okay. Sure, I always wondered why Charlie couldn't wait to go home to Renee, and why I never felt that longing to go home to Karen, but I was always happy with what I had, because I didn't want to be greedy.

Some say that the grass is always greener on the other side, but I wouldn't know because I never looked. Why look if you can't have it, anyway? Why tempt yourself?

I married Karen, and I didn't take that lightly.

Was it wrong for me to marry her? Of course, because I married her for the wrong reasons, but I made my bed, and... I got used to it.

So, the first thing I say to Bella... "I thought I was happy... or at least, perfectly content."

## **BPOV**

"I thought I was happy," he sighs. "Or at least, perfectly content."

I say nothing. I just sit in the chair. Feet up, chin resting on my knees, I'm curled into a ball. And Edward, he sits on the couch with his elbows on his knees, eyes downcast, like he's talking to the floor.

"I can only imagine what Renee said," he mutters, huffing a chuckle. "She never really liked Karen."

Understatement.

"Okay," he sighs again, and rubs his face tiredly. "I... don't really know what to say, Bella. I mean... the only thing I know is that I've always wanted security."

I nod in understanding even though he can't see me. "That's understandable," I say softly. "You didn't have it, growing up."

"Right," he agrees with a quick nod. "And... well, she was a friend." He shrugs. "One thing led to another... and, it was... *comfortable*."

Comfortable doesn't taste good anymore. I can see that on him. Comfort isn't enough, as it shouldn't be.

"I know this, Edward," I tell him quietly. "What I don't know is how she altered you." He looks up at me then, with a frown. "You know she did," I say pointedly, hoping to God he doesn't believe otherwise. "I mean... when was the last time you did something for yourself?"

He opens his mouth to reply, but... nothing comes out.

Exactly.

Unfortunately, I'm afraid I'll get more facts from my Mom than Edward, because I doubt he knows just how much Karen fucked him over.

## **EPOV**

I don't know if I can say that Karen *altered* me. I mean, I'm responsible too. I told her I didn't want children but she still stayed, always believing she could change my mind, and I didn't argue with her. Well, I did. But after four years of begging, I just settled for a *no* before I left the room. And she continued. Maybe I should've pressed the issue. Maybe I should've divorced her because I knew she wanted children, and I didn't want them. But I did no such thing. I kept going through the motions of our life instead. We'd fight, and I'd end up spending a night in one of the guestrooms, then it was over. For that time. A few weeks later, we'd go through the same fight again.

I guess, in the end, she realized I wasn't changing my mind.

Which was when she handed me the divorce papers.

## **EPOV**

We weren't right for each other but we both stayed married for so many years, and we got stuck.

Are there things I've wanted in my life that hasn't been possible because of Karen? Absolutely, just like I'm the reason for her not having a white picket fence and 2.2 kids right now.

So, I tell Bella all of this. I explain that children was the biggest issue. She wanted them – I didn't. Never did, never will, but... I also know that I will

go to great lengths to satisfy. I know for instance that if Bella wants children, I won't hesitate, and I know that I will love our children. But I guess this is because I'm actually in love with Bella. I never felt this way about Karen.

Of course, I don't tell Bella that I will do everything for her... yet...

I will, but I'm not ready. Or *maybe* I am, but I don't really know where she stands in our relationship. It's only been a month and a half since Bella returned to Seattle, after all. Then again... Bella has only shown that she's committed to this relationship.

So, I guess the hesitation comes from me.

## **EPOV**

And about children... It's not that I don't like them. I do. I have nothing against children – I just never pictured myself as a parent. It's not a picture I'm entirely comfortable with, and I admit that a big part of me is relieved when Bella doesn't react badly to the issue I had with Karen. It makes me curious – does Bella want children one day? And I guess that's proof; I *am* ready to tell Bella that I'll give her everything, because I want to know what she wants in the future. In other words; I want to *be* her future, and I'd like to know what I can do to make sure I am.

In the end, I've told Bella about the issues I had with Karen, and I've told her about Karen finally giving up, which led to divorce.

Apparently, though, Bella doesn't think I'm done. She says nothing and the look on her face tells me... *Yes? Go on.*

But that's it.

Right?

I've nothing more to tell.

## **EPOV**

So... when Bella realizes that I am, in fact, done... she gives me a look of disbelief.

"That's it?" she asks, and I know it's a rhetorical question because to her the obvious answer is no. "Okay, so you don't want children, and she did... does... whatever, but there's so much more, Edward. Can't you see that? Don't you see how you push yourself aside all the time? It's always about others."

This is too much. I'm not a child. I know exactly who I am, and I fend very well.

"Decisions I make aren't based on others," I tell her defensively. "I'm perfectly fine here, Bella, and have no issues voicing my thoughts."

"Don't you?" she asks dryly, clearly not believing me. "For instance, if you want to watch the news and I want to watch a movie, what would we watch?"

I don't miss a beat. "Most likely a movie, but that's because I'm a gentleman."

"Yes, if it happens *sometimes*. But if it's you surrendering everytime, then nope." She doesn't miss a beat, either. "That, Edward, is being a doormat." *Ouch*. "Karen pushed you to the limits, and what you call gentlemanly behavior is something she exploited and took advantage of until you stopped taking yourself into consideration."

She's wrong.

She has to be wrong.

But I have a feeling she's not.

Shit.

### **BPOV**

He doesn't see. Seriously, he doesn't see that he's spent years acting like Karen's puppy.

So, I push.

After all the things Mom told me, I sure as hell have ammunition.

"I know you, Edward," I tell him. "And I know that you're a pleaser. Not because you have to be but because it's your nature. You don't like it when people feel bad, and you loathe being the cause of an argument." He looks up at me, opening his mouth; to argue, no doubt, but I halt him. I want him to speak up, but I need to get this out before he starts defending his actions. "I'm not saying that you would cave in an argument," I say pointedly. "I am however saying that you wouldn't let it go that far. You would make sure an argument never even started." I pause. "So, if Karen wanted to redecorate the living room, you just said yes and handed over your credit card." The look he gives me is one that I return with, "Yes, Mom did go into details." He sighs, and I continue. "The only thing you never gave her is children, so..." I blow out a breath. "...she used that and she made you feel guilty, right?"

He says nothing.

### **BPOV**

"Fine. If you won't talk, then I'll just continue," I huff. "I wonder, when was the last time Karen gave you something? And I'm not talking about a birthday gift, Edward. I'm talking about simple reciprocation or a goddamn thank you."

He clenches his teeth, and I can see the anger building up. I push on, knowing that the next topic will piss him off. Yes, he had told me after last Friday about Karen's thoughts regarding oral sex.

She found it demeaning.

*Bitch, please. I call bullshit.*

I wanted to know more but Edward had closed the subject, stating that he found it uncomfortable to speak about.

"And I'm curious, Edward... did Karen ever do anything to please you the way you pleased her?" His eyes flash with fury as he faces me. "Yes, I'm talking about both sexual and nonsexual pleasing. Because as far as I know, you did everything she wanted, but... what did she do for you? Did she ever ask you what you wanted? Did she even care? Did *you* care? Was it okay for her to turn you down because she's a woman? Would it make you a pig just because you wanted something from her? Did she often play her woman-card and how delicate she was? And let me guess, you rubbed her feet because you were a gentleman and an amazing husband, but did she ever do it for you?"

All. Buttons. Pushed.

*Here we go.*

## **EPOV**

I can see that she expects me to blow up. I can see that she's waiting for me to shout at her, or defend myself, or... hell, I don't know, but it's clear that she's waiting for a fight.

She won't get one.

I can't yell at Bella, because... she's just saying what her own mother has tried to tell me for years. Only, I didn't allow myself to listen to Renee. It's different with Bella, though, and I can't *not* listen.

No. I won't shout.

And if there's anyone I want to shout at, it's me.

I feel embarrassed, utterly humiliated, and angry. I know it's my pride, and I shouldn't care because it's Bella – the woman I'm ridiculously in love with, but I can't help it. I can't help but to feel wounded by the fact that a twenty-one year old woman can read me better than I can. I should know myself best. Bella shouldn't be the one telling me how I feel. Or rather, she shouldn't be correct. *I* should be correct, yet I'm not.

It hits me hard that I have no control over my own life.

## **EPOV**

I... "...need time." It's a weak whisper. But the statement rings true. I need time to think. "I need time," I repeat, a little louder this time and I look up at Bella.

I see fear in her eyes, and that wasn't my intention.

"Just a moment," I clarify quietly, slowly standing up as my jumbled thoughts finally give me direction. "Stay here," I tell her. "I just need to be alone for a moment, okay?"

Chewing on her lip, she nods hesitantly, and I escape to the bathroom, spending a good amount of time pulling at my hair while I wait for the water to heat up in the shower.

I need to get some fucking clarity.

## **EPOV**

Under the spray of hot water, I stand still – apart from rolling my shoulders every once in a while. The water feels good; it helps loosening a little of the tightness I feel, and *have* felt for so long. Tense, always waiting for something to happen.

I'm not depressed or anything, I'm not "broken."

I'm even happy. That's all Bella.

But the fact that my marriage was doomed from the beginning stings badly. I shouldn't have married her. I shouldn't have settled. I shouldn't have caved. I shouldn't have let guilt run me, but I did. Whenever Karen wanted something, I gave it to her because I felt guilty. Even though she knew I didn't want children, I felt guilty. And I let that run my life. I let *her* get away with everything.

She didn't even have to ask. My answer was yes, regardless to the question. Apart from that one thing I wouldn't give her. And... in the end she did stop asking. She took, I gave, and... when the hell did I ever get something in return?

I know there's only one thing that I have. One thing that's all mine, and that's because I never told Karen about it. It was the one thing that was all *me*.

Absentmindedly, I run my hand over the ink on my ribcage.

## **EPOV**

*Absentmindedly, I run my hand over the ink on my ribcage.*

It's nothing big, which makes it even sadder. Something so small, and kind of insignificant, means so much to me just because it's mine. Only mine.

I chuckle humorlessly at the lie that once rolled off my tongue so easily. One lie. It came naturally.

*"It's the location of where my parents died,"* I'd told her, as she had eyed the tattoo. It wasn't where my parents had died, and I already had a tattoo in their memory, but... Karen being Karen didn't exactly question it. She had no reason to. Because I never lied. But I did then, and before I knew it, my trips to that place came out as "golfing with Charlie and a few co-workers."

So... the little piece of myself that I still had, I kept hidden from the one person I was supposed to share all of myself with.

I guess it's about time to follow my own wants and needs, eh?

Old habits die hard, but...

I need to start somewhere, and...

I know exactly where.

## **BPOV**

By the time Edward emerges from the bathroom, I wouldn't be surprised if I looked down and saw that I had paged a hole in the floor. Luckily I haven't.

"Are you okay?" I ask quietly, trying not to stare.

It's hard, though. The man is standing in the middle of the living room with nothing but a towel wrapped around his hips.

"I'm getting there," he murmurs, as he slowly approaches me.

I chew on my lip, worried and confused.

His eyes are different. They're darker...

I see... determination?

"Come here," he says quietly, not waiting for an answer. Instead he pulls me closer, really close, and I look up at him, unable to form a single word. Shivers run through me as our bodies collide. "You're right, I haven't lived for myself," he whispers, dipping down. Eyes on my mouth. "And there is one thing..." He licks his lips, barely brushing them over mine. *Heat*. "...I need to do now."

"What?" I breathe out shakily, feeling his hands slid down my sides. Further down, until he reaches my ass, and instinctively I put my arms around his neck.

He doesn't answer. He just lifts me up, wrapping my legs around him before captures my mouth with his in a searing kiss.

I'm a goner.

## **BPOV**

He's in control as he lowers me on the bed.

I'm aware of everything he does, yet I can't find focus. Everything inside of me is jumbled, but I still feel incredibly peaceful. Because it's right there, in his eyes. I see it. So vividly. Granted, we aren't done talking, but I think Edward have made a few decisions about his life.

So, instead of pushing, I let him lead. It's clear that he's ready.

Soft kisses on my hipbone. He pushes my pants down, underwear included. His towel is gone. I shiver. His hands, they're everywhere. Firmly caressing my thighs. Good flesh. Tongue darting out on my stomach. I feel feverish.

"Edward," I exhale.

He presses his body against mine.

He's on a mission.

## **EPOV**

For once in my life, I feel confident enough. I know what I'm doing because I'm me, and that's what matters to the amazing woman I'm pinning to the bed. I see the need she has for me. It mirrors my own, and I'm no longer blind. I don't make excuses.

I study her, I read her, and with the knowledge she gives me, I bring her to orgasm with my tongue and fingers.

The moans I draw out from her...

The shivers that she passes on to me...

The whimpers that plead...

The arch of her back...

The flush on her chest...

*My name on her lips...*

I take my time as I kiss my way up her body.

I kiss every spot.

My mouth is on hers, she tastes herself, we moan, I cover her with me, I push into her.

"Edward," she pants. "Oh, God... you're... ungh..."

Closer, I press my body against hers.

I move with purpose.

I thrust hard but slowly.

Our breaths mingle with our foreheads touching.

Slow...

Deep...

Hard...

My hand slides down, under her, and I cup her ass, pulling her closer to me as I push hard.

"Fuck, baby," I moan through clenched teeth.

Breathing labored, legs tangled together, hands finding purchase, hungry mouths; I move faster, feeling her wet pussy squeeze me tighter and tighter. Muscles aching and working. Skin glistening. She gasps, she moans, she clings to me. Her head falls back, her chest rises, and I'm there, kissing her exposed neck. Tasting her efforts. Tasting what I draw from her. *Fuck*. Closer. I grunt, my eyes close tightly. I feel the pleasure surging inside of me, I don't ever want it to end.

"Oh fuck... *Edward*... I'm... I'm..."

"I know," I breathe.

*You're so close, baby...*

Her eyes are on me then, and... I see *everything* in your eyes.

I swallow hard. *You do the same*.

Her lips part, I'm mesmerized.

"I love you."

## **EPOV**

She gasps, I feel her starting to tremble beneath me.

"I love you, Bella," I repeat breathlessly. "I love you."

With one more thrust, she falls apart with a silent scream.

She pulls me with her, and just as my orgasm takes over, I hear it in a breathless whisper.

"I love you, Edward..."

*Jesus.*

Ripples of intense pleasure wash over me, all but consuming me, and there's nothing to do but to ride it out, and hope I'd heard her right, because it all feels too unreal. At thirty-eight, I hear three words that suddenly feel perfect. Three words I've heard before, but never did they feel this... this... mindblowing. And I realize that there's a difference between telling and showing. Bella's *shown* me... *and* told me.

Shivers are still running through me, even minutes after I've returned to reality.

I kiss her shoulder softly, never really allowing my lips to leave her skin.

We don't move.

"I mean it, Edward," she breathes against my neck. "I love you."

I believe her... because I can feel it.

"I love you too," I murmur quietly, slowly kissing my way to her lips. Her neck, her jaw line, her cheek... "I love you, Bella."

She hums, we smile against each other's lips, she whispers, "I love you, Edward."

So, this is what home feels like.

## **BPOV**

"Know what I'd like to do tonight?" he sighs contently as I rest my chin on his chest. We're all cheesy smiles. 'Cause we're in love. "I want to watch the news."

Oh, look who decided to be funny.

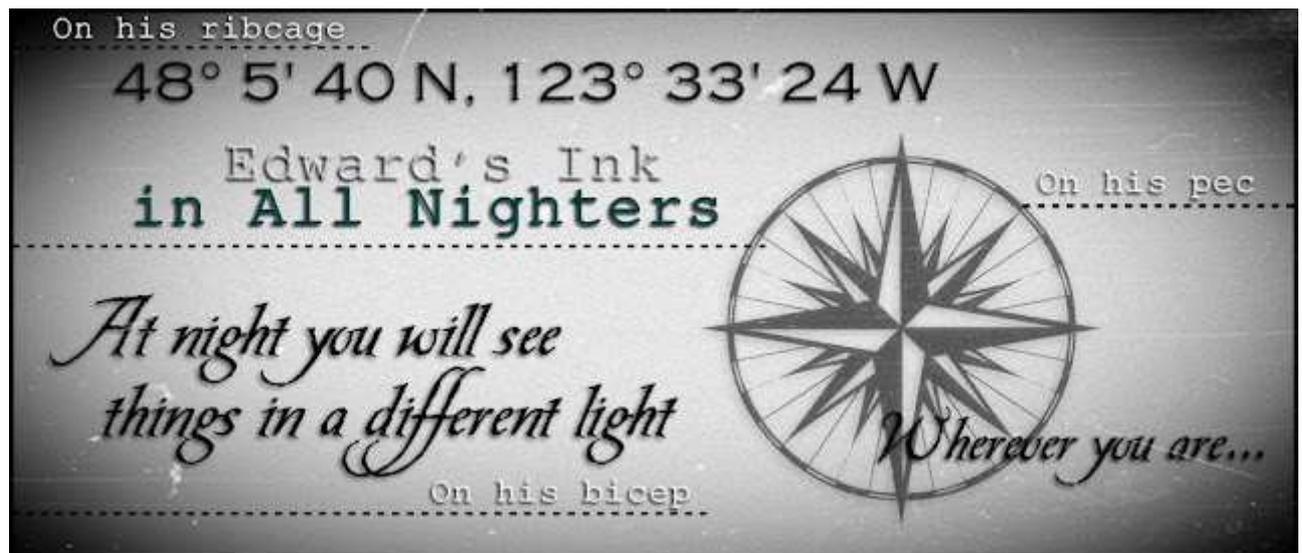
I grin and decide to play along. "But what if I wanna watch a movie?"

He shrugs. "Sucks to be you, I guess."

And the most girly giggle escapes my lips.

He *winks*.

God, I'm *giddy*.



## **BPOV**

*God, I'm giddy.*

But can you blame me? I mean... this is *everything* to me. And yes, we do have a lot to talk about still, but I know how effortless it will be now because I can see it all in him. He's decided now. I'm all in, he's all in. We will talk, but we won't rush it. We've aired most of it, anyway. He knows now, and I guess in the future it will be about him adjusting to a new way of thinking. It's about time he puts himself first. And I will be there every step of the way. Because the truth remains, you can't talk about a dead relationship that lasted for almost twenty years, and then be done with it. It'll take time, and we'll probably go with a little here and a little there. But we're past the breakthrough, and I feel like we have nothing holding us back anymore. Well... we still have my parents, but... yeah.

"Adorable," he whispers, tapping my nose.

I can only smile and kiss him, which I do. I kiss his abs, his ribcage, and... I pause there, still curious about that particular tattoo. We've already covered the other two – the one over his heart, in his parents' memory. It's a compass with the words "*Wherever you are...*" tattooed slightly below the center of the compass, and it's self explanatory. Wherever his parents are, he will keep them close.

Then the tattoo on his bicep – "*At night you will see things in a different light.*" He'd explained that he's a night person – which I know now – and apparently many of his best ideas have come from the all nighters he's pulled at the office over the years.

But then there's the last one...

I'm curious, but for some reason this tattoo feels more personal.

Hell, all his tattoos are, and I was almost embarrassed when he asked about the skindiver on my hip. My story about then is far from special. I'd

wanted a piercing for a long time, and a friend of mine said that if we passed the test we were studying for at the time, we'd get pierced. We passed, we got drunk, and I ended up with the skindiver. Like I said, nothing special.

"Ask me, beautiful," he murmurs, smiling softly but knowingly.

*Perceptive all of the sudden.*

## **BPOV**

All right, then.

"Can you tell me about it?" I ask, tracing the lines of the tattoo. They're numbers. A location. Longitude and latitude. "It's a place, right?" I kiss the tattoo again.

"It is, yes," he murmurs as he plays absentmindedly with my hair. "It's a piece of land that I own." He pauses like he doesn't know whether to tell me or not. Or rather, how to continue. "Do you remember... sometimes I took weekend trips?" I remember *vaguely*. I nod. "It was to that place – a cabin." Huh... and here I was, thinking... something about golf trips. Guess I remembered wrong. "It's up at Lake Aldwell in the Olympic Peninsula. I built a cabin there, at the mouth of Elwha River." And I notice that he says "built." Not designed.

I wonder if he'll take me there one day.

## **EPOV**

I want to take her there. I want her to be the first one to see it.

I remember finding the place. It was so random. My car broke down. Luckily there was an RV Park and I ended up staying the night in a guesthouse, and then the morning after, I walked the area while I waited

for my car to be fixed. Somehow I crossed the river and found *my* place. I bought it as soon as I came home. No hesitation.

It's something I've made for myself. Designed and built. All me. I put my heart and soul into that place.

"When we're done with the Hunter project..." I clear my throat, and there's a knot in my stomach. "Will uh... Will you go with me?"

Big question.

The Hunter project isn't scheduled to be finished until December next year. That's more than a year from now.

But her smile is beautiful radiant and the knot disappears.

She not only shows devotion, but also commitment.

## **EPOV**

The next month and a half go by fast, and much like the routine we created after first getting together hasn't changed much. The only difference is that we talk more, mostly about me, much to my chagrin. But I can't complain. We've gotten a lot closer, and I've noticed many changes when it comes to my own behavior. Instead of putting Bella's needs first, I put *us* first. We're both in this.

We work together, whether it's in New York or London, we're there together. Always in the same room at night. This goes for Seattle, too. I haven't spent a night without her since our first weekend together in Seattle. When we're there, she spends the nights at my house, which I fucking love. I love having her there. She makes it feel like a real home. Well, home is wherever she is, but... yeah.

I just... love her. Completely. Everything she does for me, us, doesn't matter. I adore it all. The dates I take her on, the sightseeing we do in London, the lazy mornings at my house, the quick lunches at Starbucks, the erotic nights at Girlesque...

Which brings me to our love life...

Holy *fuck*.

## **EPOV**

From the first time I was with Bella, I've known that she's... *skilled*. To be blunt, she knows what she's doing, and she loves sex. What I didn't know was that she had barely given me a glimpse, even after our three first weeks together.

Then she began.

*Jesus Christ*.

Locations and positions. That girl is... *bendy*. The bed wasn't good enough, and well, I agree *now*. I didn't know better before. But now... The shower, the kitchen – every fucking surface. The living room, bent over couches and chairs, up against walls, my office in London, yes, my damn *car*, the hood of it even(!), the private rooms at Girlesque... just... *everywhere*.

She's wild!

And... I mean, I'm thirty-eight years old. I need some recovery time! Luckily, going down on her is something I could spend a lifetime doing, so I often do that when she's ready for round three, and then... well, then my – until recently – neglected cock wakes up for round four. She also claims that I have magic fingers, and yes, I'm a bit smug about that. I'm serious, though, she's... out of this world. Little nymph. And she blames me for it,

too. She tells me it's *my* fault she's insatiable. In turn, I blame her for my chafed cock.

I'm kidding.

Sort of.

I did tell her one time that my cock was sore, and... she asked me if I wanted her to kiss it and make it better. Yeah. That's Bella. So... she did, because... I'd be stupid to turn *that* down. And I uh... might have pulled the chafe-card a few times after that. Because... her mouth is magic. Magic! Plus, she's told me that she uh – and I quote – loves sucking my cock.

Fuck.

Now I'm hard.

Again.

Okay, so maybe I'm a little insatiable, too.

Her fault.

*Maybe I should wake her up...*

## **EPOV**

So... after checking the time, I see that we have to get up in twenty minutes, anyway. We're currently in London, but we're going home today, and we have to be at Heathrow in two hours. That means... plenty of time for shower sex, something I've grown *very* fond of.

"Bella," I whisper, dropping wet kisses on her neck. "Beautiful... time to wake up."

She stirs.

I grip her hip to let her know what she's caused.

"Mmm," she hums sleepily. "You're..." I press my erection against her harder, she whimpers. "Oh, God..."

"Shower with me, baby," I grunt against her skin.

"Fuck yes," she breathes.

## **BPOV**

"Oh fuck!" I gasp.

He's there. That spot, deep inside of me, the head of his thick cock.

Oh, *God!*

The hot water pours down, soaking us, but... I definitely don't need the water to be soaked. *Holy shit.* I whimper. I dig my heels deeper into his ass, and he responds by slamming into me.

"That's it, baby," he groans, burying his face in the crook of my neck.

"You love it hard, don't you?"

Damn dirty talker he's turned into.

And my pussy gives him the answer by clenching down on him.

I'm addicted to him, and I fucking knew it. Behind his gentlemanly behavior sits a wicked devil with a throbbing cock, filthy mouth, magic fingers, and eager tongue.

"Give me your words, Isabella," he moans, thrusting harder and harder.

"*Fuck...* Tell me how you want my cock."

*Jesus.*

My eyes roll back inside my head.

My nails on his back makes him growl.

"Hard," I mumble incoherently. "Love it hard, Edward... *ungh*... Yesss..." I hiss as he reaches my g-spot again. "Oh God... Oh God..." Clenching, yes... and *there*... holy... I cling to him, he kneads my ass, he fucks me... hard... up against the shower wall.

"I'm close, love," he moans in a strained voice. "Touch yourself for me. Let me see you touch your sweet pussy."

Too late, I'm already... oh, *God*...

"Edward, I'm... oh! Edwaaard!"

I'm gone.

"Fuck!" he gasps. "I'm coming... *Bella*..."

My climax hits me hard, I constrict fiercely around him, I hold my breath, I'm rigid and pulsing. Oh fuck, oh fuck, oh fuck! Even *more*. I feel him and it continues... *Jesus*, have mercy on me...

Every shudder coming from his wet body shoots waves of pleasure through me.

"Edward," I croak hoarsely when I can finally breathe. "You... you..."

...killed me.

It happens often nowadays.

I've created a monster.

One that I can't get enough of.

“Umph,” I whimper as he pulls out of me. My poor pussy. No, scratch that. I’m fucking blessed to have this man in my life, but... *damn*.

“What’s that, beautiful?” he chuckles breathlessly, lowering me to the floor again. “I what?”

*I said you killed me!*

I can’t speak, though.

So, I give him the pout.

And he cradles my face and kisses it away.

“Fuck, you’re cute, love,” he laughs silently against my lips. “Let’s wash up before I get us some breakfast.”

My stomach growls in approval, quickly followed by his own growling stomach.

Yeah, we tend to work up an appetite.

“Sounds good,” I sigh softly, feeling his fingers in my hair. “Mmm...”

I shiver.

“I love you,” I hum.

He kisses my lips lightly, continuing his work – with the magic fingers – in my hair. “Love you too, beautiful.”

## **BPOV**

*Two weeks till Thanksgiving*, I sigh to myself as I bring out my Blackberry. I know it’s time to talk about this. Not that we’ve avoided it – not at all – but we’ve agreed to take things slowly when it comes to my parents. We don’t want to just announce it, because I’d rather keep my Dad alive, and

he's not as healthy as Edward. Heart attacks happen when daughters come home with big news. My Dad is in the risk zone. But with Thanksgiving coming up, we need to talk about it since we'll both spend it together. It's a Swan thing.

Since Dad and Edward only hire the best to work for them, many of the architects at Cullen/Swan aren't from the Seattle area, which means many don't have families nearby. So, for as long as I can remember, Mom and Dad have hosted a big Thanksgiving dinner, and this year will be no different. However, this year I'm not in college, meaning; I will be there, and also, Edward's not with Karen anymore.

So... we gotta talk.

Like always when we're in the air, Edward is working on his laptop, but this can't wait, so I look up at him, sitting in the window seat across from me. We got lucky this time; the two seats next to us were never filled.

"Edward, do you have a minute?" I ask.

## **BPOV**

*"Edward, do you have a minute?" I ask.*

"Hmm?" he responds, typing away on his laptop. "Sure, baby."

I swear he'd have a heart attack if he wasn't able to work on his laptop while we're flying.

"We need to make plans for the holidays," I tell him softly, checking his schedule on my Blackberry. "We fly from New York on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and then Thanksgiving's on the 24<sup>th</sup>." I hum in thought, scrolling down to see when we're to return. "Next is... You're meeting with Mr. Hunter himself on the 28<sup>th</sup>. That's a Monday, and the meeting is in London." I check once more to see if there's anything before that date, and yes... "You have a staff

meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> at the main office." I shake my head at that. "Only you and Dad would plan staff meetings on a Saturday." Anyway... "Then there's Christmas," I continue, eyes still glued to the busy Edward Cullen's schedule. "We're in New York again, so at least we don't have to fly from London," I murmur to myself. "And your final meeting is with Benjamin Cheney on December 22<sup>nd</sup>. Then we don't have anything until..." I scroll down. "The 27<sup>th</sup>." Oh, I gotta grin at this. Looks like Edward and I will spend New Years in London together. *Nice.*

"So..." I sigh. "Thanksgiving, let's start there." Now I look up at him, and he's...

Smiling softly at me.

"What?" I ask, smiling just because his smile makes me smile.

## **EPOV**

"Nothing," I chuckle quietly. Okay, that's a lie. It feels heavenly. The question she asked was innocent, but... not really. *We need to make plans for the holidays.* To me it's big, and it feels incredible. "I just like the idea of planning my holidays with you," I admit.

And Bella Swan is an enigma at times. She can dance provocatively in barely-there lingerie like it's the most natural thing in the world, but tell her that you enjoy the thought of spending holidays with her, and she blushes.

"I do too," she replies, quite shyly I might add, and ducks her head slightly.

"So... Thanksgiving?" I inquire softly.

She nods with a dip of her chin and faces the Blackberry again. "Right um... We're at Mom and Dad's."

*Ah. Yes. Quite different this year.*

I sigh, thinking about what to say, but I don't really know. The dinner is an annual thing, and there will be at least twenty people there.

"Are you worried?" I ask her quietly.

Am *I* worried?

It depends. If we aren't going to tell them about us, then... no. With the amount of people, I highly doubt it will be too hard. Besides, we're always divided that day. The women gossip and deal with the cooking, while Charlie takes the lead and orders the men into the living room for an afternoon of watching football on their 50 inch plasma. It's tradition.

"No, not really," she says. "As long as we don't blurt anything out at the dinner table, we'll be fine." She smirks.

I definitely agree, but I know I will include Bella in my thanks. Maybe not out loud, but she's the one I'm truly thankful for. I doubt she knows how much she's given me.

After talking a bit more about it, we decide Thanksgiving will be the perfect time to feel Charlie and Renee out, even if only a little. And when the day comes, I don't think it's Renee we have to worry about. No, it's definitely Charlie.

"Then there's Christmas," Bella continues quietly.

## **BPOV**

I want to spend Christmas with him.

While I was in college, my parents visited me in LA, but... now I'm back, and sure, Mom and Dad will most definitely invite me for Christmas, just

like they'll invite Edward. But I'm not sure I want that. I think I want to be alone with him. Or at least not have my parents around.

"Well," he sighs quietly. "I usually spend that holiday with Karen and her family, so I don't have any plans this year. Not set in stone, anyway..."

I like that he's more open about his past nowadays. He mentions Karen sometimes simply because she was a part of his life for so long. It would be weird if he didn't say anything, but he does, and quite casually, which can only mean that he's more comfortable, not to mention already putting his past behind him where it belongs.

"What about you?" he asks.

"No plans." I shrug. "Mom and Dad visited me in LA during Christmas, but Thanksgiving's always been bigger in our family. Christmas is quieter and smaller." He knows this already, though. "So... yeah... no plans."

He nods pensively, eyes on me.

*Ask me, ask me! Ask me to spend Christmas with you!*

He clears his throat. "Um... Emmett has a suggestion."

I shake my head, confused as hell.

*Say what? What about Emmett?*

Ugh.

## **EPOV**

"He doesn't have family in Seattle... apart from me, that is," I explain, very aware of her confusion to why I brought up my cousin in this. "He wondered if we could get together for Christmas. Otherwise he'd have to fly back to Chicago, which he has no desire to do."

Bella nods in understanding, chewing on her lips as if she's in thought.

"Wait!" she suddenly giggles. "Did he say anything else? Maybe something about... other people?"

I furrow my brow. "Yes, how did you know?"

Emmett's exact words had been, *I know you wanna be with Dee, and I sure as hell want an opportunity to get closer to Rose.*

Rosalie is a new dancer at Girlesque, and as Emmett immediately started thinking of ways that would get him closer to said girl, Bella also took a liking to her. I wouldn't know, having only seen her briefly, and truth be told, at Girlesque, my eyes are pretty damn glued to my Bella. Anyway, apparently Bella and this Rosalie get along very well and have spoken over the phone quite a lot during our trips to New York and London.

"Well," Bella chuckles, gathering my attention again. "Rose mentioned that her family was going to Mexico this Christmas, and if she didn't have any other plans, she'd obviously go with them."

I chuckle, too. "Emmett has a plan then, I guess."

Smart man.

"Yep, to make sure Rose has an option. And I just *know* she will be thrilled." Her eyes, they... *twinkle* in excitement, and it's quite... easy to get lost in her... *Jesus*... "Because I happen to know that Emmett isn't the only one going gaga."

I clear my throat.

I loosen my tie.

"Christmas, then?" I say, getting back on track. "The two of us with Emmett and Rosalie? We could be at my house," I suggest, and I want to say *our* house... but I don't. "Or what do you say?"

Again she blushes... Don't ask me why.

"Yes! I mean, I wasn't sure if you... you know... wanted... I mean, we haven't been... for very long, and... yeah, so... I thought you meant... just you and Emmett and..."

Oh, dear.

"Bella?" Thankfully, she stops. "There's nothing I want more than to be with you for Christmas."

I'm pretty sure the smile she gives me has nothing on the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center.

## **BPOV**

"Bella?"

"Edward?" I mimic, smiling as I look over my shoulder.

He smirks and walks over to me. "What are you doing?" he asks, placing his hands on my hips.

And I turn back to packing. "Well, we're going home for Thanksgiving tomorrow morning," I inform him as if he didn't know, so I'm not surprised to hear him chuckling. "So, I'm packing," I say simply, turning around in his arms. "What's up?"

I know there's something on his mind. I've known for a few days now. But I don't push anymore. I don't have to, because I know he'll come to me when he's ready, and I have a feeling that's now.

"Got a minute?" he murmurs against my forehead.

"For you I even have two!" I gush in mock-excitement.

"Funny, funny you," he snickers, kissing me on the forehead once more before he tells me to join him in the living room area of the suite.

Once we're there, he doesn't beat around the bush.

"I need to know your thoughts about children." He rushes the words out.

"You know what I think, since..." He sighs. "I mean, about Karen. But you haven't told me what your thoughts are. Just... before you tell me, I want you to know that I will do anything for you, and not because I have to, but because I *want* to."

Poor man, always the worrier.

## **EPOV**

I have to know, especially with the holidays coming closer and closer. Thanksgiving is already here, and Bella and I are as serious as we can be, which means we're solid and committed. But I want to know what her feelings are when it comes to children before we start planning to inform her parents about us. So, when we arrived here in New York a few days ago, I promised myself to bring it up before we left, and... we're leaving tomorrow morning.

"This is what has been on your mind for the past few days?" she asks softly, sitting beside me on the couch.

And yes, this woman can read me like no other.

I nod once, facing her more as I bring my leg up on the couch. "Pretty much."

I've thought about her Christmas gift, too.

"You have nothing to worry about, Edward." Always that soft voice.

"Firstly, I'm too young to think about children. Second, I have a hard time seeing myself as a mother, and..." She sighs quietly, averting her eyes for a moment before she faces me again. "Third, you may see me as a selfless person," she wrinkles her nose a little, "but I'm not, you know." I disagree. "I'd much rather... I don't know... be just the two of us. I only want to think about us, the two of us. Does that make sense?"

Considering how that's just how I feel... yes, it makes sense, and I think I can breathe again.

Really, I can breathe again.

I've thought about it before, and if Bella had wanted children, I know I would be incredibly lucky to father them, and I would love them unconditionally, but there's no denying that I share her feelings for just being the two of us. And I don't see it as being selfish. I can't. She's the only one I want and need.

"Makes perfect sense," I murmur.

"Good," she says simply, grinning at me. "Can you relax now?"

I chuckle at her, amazed at how easygoing she is. "Yeah," I say, pulling her to me. "I'm all about relaxing."

She laughs. "Yeah, sure you are, my worrier."

I swat her ass playfully.

And Bella? She moans.

*Fuck me.*

She does. Fucks me, that is... until I'm properly relaxed.

## **BPOV**

“Oh...”

I shift slightly, and... try to focus on the movie that's playing.

“Christ, Bella...”

*Please stop*, I think with an internal sigh.

When we're at home, err... well, at Edward's house, we're both lazy fuckers... and with right, because our schedule is crazy. But it's hard to relax with his noises.

“Mmm...”

I sigh. I narrow my eyes at the TV. I don't even know what the movie's about. What I do know is that Edward's only wearing a pair of black sweatpants, and I'm only wearing a pair of his boxers and a t-shirt. That's not a lot of clothes. Plus, his head is resting in my lap.

“Oh, yeah... right there...”

Doesn't help that he's facing my stomach. His fingers lazily moving on my lower back, under the shirt.

Doesn't help that his couch is the comfiest couch on earth, and very pleasurable to use when you... you know, fuck. God knows we've done it here a lot.

Also doesn't help that he's moaning.

“God, baby...”

For the love of...!

*Focus on the TV, focus on the TV, focus on the TV.*

"Mmmmmm... you're amazing..."

I wish we could take this further because as God is my witness, I'm good and ready to go... if you know what I mean, but... it's Thanksgiving and we only have an hour before we have to get ready for Mom and Dad. Oh, and I'm on the rag. Not that he cares but I sure do.

"Jesus, beautiful..."

"Okay, you *have* to stop, baby!" I exclaim.

Then I stop massaging his scalp – the reason for his moaning.

"I can't," he mumbles against my stomach. "It feels too good, now..." And he gestures for me to continue. "If you will, please." Another gesture.

"Work your magic."

Oh yes, my sigh is heavy.

Then I continue, 'cause I have a thing for his hair.

"Fuck yeah..."

Sigh.

"Mmm..."

He's too adorable sometimes.

## **EPOV**

An hour after Bella's left the house – looking incredibly beautiful in a black skirt and a dark blue sweater... a really tight one, I might add – I make my way out to my Mercedes, feeling a bit nervous about seeing Charlie and Renee. It's different now. When Charlie and I are at the office, we don't exactly gossip. We work. But now... now we're going to spend time as friends. As the friends that we are, and... Christ, don't get me started

on Renee. She's actually the one I'm most nervous about today because she's the one that will notice the changes in me. They're not subtle changes, after all.

So, the fifteen minute drive is over before I know it, and soon I'm sitting outside the Swan house.

*Just act normal.*

I nearly snort.

Normal for me now is the way I'm with Bella.

"Oh, for fuck's sake," I sigh to myself. Time to pull myself together, which I do, maybe, then I leave my car. I'm relieved to see the driveway full of cars. At least I will have people nearby for the distraction I know I will need.

Unsurprisingly, Renee is the one who opens the door to their three story house. "Edward! Come on in, honey! Oh, it's been too long!" She stands on her toes, and throws her arms around me; always the affectionate woman. "I just told Bella, you know..." She releases me, only to smack me on the arm. "You work too hard." Light scolding; also tradition.

And I finally get a word in. "Good to see you too, Rae," I chuckle, dipping down to kiss her cheek. "Happy Thanksgiving, and no, I do not work to hard." I give her a wink, and then I enter the house I've spent much time in over the years. "I guess Charlie's in the living room?"

I look over my shoulder when she doesn't reply.

Her eyes are narrowed. Hands on hips. Flour on her forehead, I notice. Apron with stains.

"You look happy," she says.

*Wow, I really lasted long.*

## **BPOV**

Yes, I'm paying attention, and as soon as Mom had uttered those words, I leave the kitchen. Edward's different, and obviously, Mom – one of his closest friends – would notice right away.

"Mom," I call, walking out to the foyer. "We need your help in the kitchen." Then I smile at Edward who looks like he needs an escape. "Hi, Edward. Happy Thanksgiving. Dad and the others are watching some college game in the living room."

"Thanks, Bella," he says with a nod, removing his jacket. "Happy Thanksgiving to you, too." He smiles briefly, before he leaves us there.

"Mom?" I arch a brow. "Kitchen, remember?"

Suddenly she flinches back to reality. "Of course! Lead the way, sweetie." She smiles sweetly.

As I listen to the other women's gossiping in the kitchen, I think about the man in the living room, looking awfully delicious in a pair of dark washed jeans, and a fitted pullover in black.

*Focus on the gravy, Bella. Focus on the fucking gravy.*

I could pour it all over Edward and...

Damn.

## **BPOV**

When it's just the turkey we're waiting for, Mom insists that we join the men in the living room for some "chit-chatting." It's a tradition loathed by the men, since they're into the game.

"You need any help, honey?" Dad asks Mom, though his eyes are glued to the TV.

All men are watching the game intently, ignoring the women that somehow locate places to sit. Men. Elbows resting on knees, because that brings them closer to the damn TV. And beers, because that's vital. Right.

"No, that's okay, darling," Mom says lightly, sitting down on the armrest to Dad's chair. It makes me smile. They always orbit around each other. "Just thought we could chit chat for a bit."

"Hmm?" Dad responds. Before shouting at the TV, "What the fuck! What's with all the fucking fumbling, guys!"

Most of the men are shouting similar shit.

My Dad has quite the foul mouth when sports are involved.

I'm used to it. It amuses me.

"Having fun?" I ask quietly, crouching next to the couch where Edward sits. He sits much like Dad, and I wish I could mirror Mom. I just know that Edward would wrap his arm around me, like Dad does with her.

"Very much," he replies, grinning at me. He's more relaxed now. Beers, you know. "What about you? Is the kitchen full of gossip?"

"You know it," I huff playfully, rolling my eyes. "Let's just say that I understand why you guys avoid the kitchen."

"Oh, I'm sure you know my reason for staying away," he leans in slightly to whisper. "And it has nothing to do with gossip, baby."

I shiver.

"Oh? Then why?" I ask coyly.

*God, that smirk of his...*

"Because..." He leans in closer. A hot whisper. "I wouldn't be able to take my hands off of you, beautiful."

Someone *please* give me a fire extinguisher.

"Is that so?" I breathe.

He nods, and gives me one of his motherfucking winks, before straightening up a little. Luckily for me, the doorbell rings then. Because I'm not so sure the others would appreciate it if I jumped Edward in the middle on the living room.

I clear my throat.

"I'll get the door," I say loud enough for Mom to hear, and I find her already watching me.

"Okay, honey," she replies. Then her small smile grows. "Ooh, I think it's Jasper! He said he'd be a little late."

## **BPOV**

I make my way to the foyer, internally scolding myself from mine and Edward's not very subtle exchange. Clearly Mom is curious.

Out of reflex, I straighten my skirt, then I open the door with a Thanksgiving-smile on my face.

"Oh, hi, Jasper!" I say, stepping to aside to let him in from the cold.

"Happy Thanksgiving."

"You too, darlin'," he drawls, giving my cheek a kiss. Southern gentleman. It's hard to think I've only met him four or five times. "Good to see you again. You're not at the office very often."

"True," I smile, taking his coat from him, "it's usually just to say hi to Dad or to pick up Edward's work."

I chuckle as he shudders violently; the poor man isn't used to our weather. He's the newbie, having only worked at Cullen/Swan for a month. Dad and Edward had both watched him for a while, and decided to make their move when Jasper's last project was done for the firm he used to work for in Houston. And since Cullen/Swan has quite the reputation, Jasper obviously didn't say no.

"You'll get used to the cold," I laugh quietly, to which he gives me a doubtful look before he grins again. "Everything good with you?" I ask conversationally as we walk toward the living room. "I spoke to Charlotte, by the way. She says you're *quite* fond of the food at Alice's Bistro," I tease. "Or maybe it's not just the food, hmm?"

He huffs. "Ah yes, my assistant is a chatty one, aint she now?"

"Doesn't really answer my question, now does it, Mr. Whitlock?"

I swear the man blushes. Kinda hard to think a man in his thirties can blush.

So cute.

Actually no. Jasper is far from cute. He's quite handsome, and I can definitely picture him wearing a cowboy hat.

"That blush is an answer, however," I chuckle as we round the corner to the living room. "Don't worry," I whisper behind my hand, "your secret's safe with me."

"You mean, between you and Charlotte?" he laughs.

I shrug and grin.

"Jasper!" Dad yells, and yes, eyes still on the TV. "Glad you could make it!"

"Glad to be here, sir," Jasper replies politely as Mom rushes over to hug him. "Thank you for invitin' me, Mrs. Swan."

"Oh, none of that here!" Mom scolds. "Just Renee and Charlie. So good to see you again, Jasper." And hugs and kisses and gushing, and... yeah, you know. I'm already over it, finding it *much* more interesting to watch Edward as he swallows his beer. *Ungh*. "Isn't it just *lovely* that Jasper's here, Bella?"

Uh. What?

Edward coughs.

## **EPOV**

You have *got* to be kidding me, Renee.

I grit my teeth, forcing myself to stay quiet.

"Uh. What?" Bella asks confusingly.

Usually she's never confused. Bella, that is. Confusion's my game, but this, this is pretty fucking clear, and I *cannot* believe it. Seriously? Renee is trying to set up Bella with *Jasper*?

*Jasper*?

Fuck that. She's with *me*.

"I said, isn't it just lovely that Jasper's here," Renee repeats.

She has her back to me, unfortunately, but I know her enough. I can picture those blue eyes imploring my Bella to answer her. Thankfully, Jasper has the decency to look uncomfortable by rubbing the back of his

neck, and shuffling with his feet. And again, *Jasper*? Jasper of all people? What's so special with *him*?

I know. I *know*. I hired him. He's a great architect with even greater potential. But so what? I'm better. Sure, I have four or five years on him, but *come on*.

"Renee," Charlie says warningly.

Renee just looks over her shoulder, smiling innocently, first at Charlie, then at me.

"That's enough, Rae," Charlie adds.

*Thank you. Stop your crazy wife, will ya?*

"It's okay, Dad," Bella says, folding her arms over her chest. Then a brow is cocked and loaded. "Yes, Mom, it's very nice to have Jasper here. Now, are we done? Because I'm pretty sure the turkey's done."

Then she leaves the living room, and I feel compelled to follow her.

Especially when I hear clattering plates in the kitchen.

I want to. I *need* to.

So, I do.

With the excuse to bring more beer, I head to the kitchen.

## **EPOV**

I find her standing alone in the kitchen. Her back to me. Hands flat on the counter in front of her.

"Are you okay, baby?" I ask her quietly, placing my hands on her hips.

With a sigh, she turns in my arms and nods once before sliding her hands up my arms.

"I am now," she whispers, resting her forehead against my chest. "It's just... ugh, I wish I... I mean..." Another sigh. I kiss the top of her head. "I hate hiding," she mumbles.

*Me too.*

"Look at me, beautiful," I murmur.

She does, and I dip down and kiss her.

"I love you," I whisper against her lips. I squeeze her hips, she laces her hands around my neck. "We can tell them whenever. I'm ready too." I really am. "And Jasper certainly can't have you." Just the thought makes me angry. My kiss turns possessive, I can't help it. "You're with *me*, Bella. *Only me.*" She nods and parts her lips, I push my tongue into her mouth.

"I love you," she pants, hitching her leg over my hip. "Only you."

Then the other leg, and I hold her up, wrapping her legs around me.

"Ahem."

## **BPOV**

"Shit," I exhale in a rush.

Surprisingly, instead of moving as far away from me as possible, Edward stands still, practically shielding me with his body as he looks over his shoulder. I don't need to look. I know my Mom's voice.

Edward clears his throat as I tilt my head to look at... yes, Mom standing in the doorway to the kitchen.

"Renee," Edward says. I feel his fingers flexing on my hips.

Mom slowly arches a brow. "Mmhmm, just what I thought."

`Scuse me?

Apparently I had spoken out loud because Mom answers.

"Oh please, Bella," she huffs, as if I have insulted her. "What do you take me for?" Edward moves his hands to my waist as he stands next to me instead of in front of me. "I'm your Mom! Don't you think I know when my daughter's in love?"

"And *you*, Edward!" she says, pointing a finger at Edward. Slowly approaching. "Don't you think I'd notice it if you started *smiling* all of the sudden? You're one of my closest friends for fuck's sake." Another huff, she's closer. "Last but not least, I *totally* saw you at the airport a couple of months ago."

Well, *shit*... I think. I'm not sure.

Her eyes are accusing.

"Um... well, all right," Edward says slowly, and I guess he can't get a read on her either. "So... what was that about Jasper then?" I hear annoyance in his voice.

I stifle a teeny smile.

Mom doesn't stifle hers and hers is *far* from teeny.

It's *blinding*.

"Because you're a man in love, Edward!" Mom exclaims, grinning like a fool. "I knew that would set you off!"

Mom is giggling like a school girl.

I find myself relaxing.

Edward huffs. "Well, fuck."

Fuck indeed.

Ladies and gentlemen, Renee Swan. My sneaky Mom.

"And you're so clueless," she laughs. "I was the one who set Jasper up with Alice!"

Ah. I see. And I grin. Widely. Mom's sorta cool.

"Alice?" Edward asks flatly.

"Alice's Bistro. Where you dine frequently," Mom tells him with the duh-look. "Anyway, this was fun. Are you two done hiding now?"

Edward and I exchange glances.

*Exactly. Yep. And you know... uh-huh... True.*

That was mindreading.

Kidding. But I do know that we're thinking the same thing.

"I guess Dad doesn't know," I say, looking at Mom.

"Nope," she replies gleefully. "He's gonna blow up. So, let's do this!"

Mom's also fucking insane.

"The woman's certifiable," I hear Edward mumble under his breath.

Good, we're in agreement then.

"Now, Bella, why don't you tell the others that dinner's ready. I need to have a chat with Edward."

**EPOV**

Bella leaves the kitchen very reluctantly, and I let go of her... very reluctantly.

But I'm warm inside because she didn't leave before reaching up for a kiss.

In front of Renee.

But then it's just me and Renee.

I fold my arms over my chest, arching a brow. Might as well get it over with.

"Oh, don't look so hostile," she chastises. "I'm quite partial to your smile, you know." And I relax. "Listen, Edward," she says softly. "Is this weird for me? Without a doubt. The age difference is... big. For a lack of better word. And... you've watched Bella grow up, much like Charlie and I have--"

"Oh, not that much like you and Charlie," I insist. Hell, *that* would be wrong. "Call me a family friend, Rae, but please do *not* call me family." Yes, I'm begging.

She only laughs. "Gee, relax, Cullen. I only meant that we've all been close." Okay. Good. *Christ*. "With that said, I only want you to be happy. You know this." I do and I nod, knowing how many times she's tried to warn me about Karen. "Exactly. I can also see that you two love each other. Very much. And... well, I know my daughter. I know she can make you happy." She winks. "She's *my* daughter after all."

I exhale, quite audibly. Relieved, yes. And grateful.

"Thank you," I say sincerely. "And you're right. I do love her."

"I know," she replies simply, walking towards the oven. "Which is why I'm not freaking the fuck out right now. Come here, help me with the turkey, will ya? We have two of them."

## **EPOV**

While Renee announces that it's dinner, I manage to shoot Bella a reassuring smile, silently telling her that everything went well in the kitchen, and soon we're all heading for the dining room.

"What's the plan, Edward?" Bella asks me quietly on the way.

I shrug a little. "Up to you, baby," I whisper. "I'm ready, but... there's an awful lot of people here."

She snickers as we round the corner. "Yeah, but maybe that's a good thing."

I honestly don't care anymore, which is why I skip the charade. Well, not completely, but I hold Bella's chair out before I take my seat next to her. Not that this is big enough to gather looks from the others that are currently taking their seats, but... yes, I'm done hiding.

"Good thing Charlie's not a police officer or something," I joke quietly.

"Aw, he wouldn't shoot you," she laughs silently. "You're too pretty for bullet wounds."

"And you think Charlie thinks so, too?" I deadpan. And as an afterthought, "Not pretty, Bella. Men are handsome, women are pretty."

"Pretty boy," she whispers, right before Charlie gathers our attention.

I glare at her playfully.

"Thank you all for coming here today to celebrate Thanksgiving with us," Charlie says, and we all raise our glasses. "A toast before Renee takes over. And I'm still not one for speeches, so... Cheers!"

"Cheers!" we all echo through chuckles and snickers.

"Okay, okay, that was all lovely." Oh, fuck. Renee's practically bouncing in her seat. "Now it's time for thanks! I'll go first."

Charlie just smiles at her.

Bella squeezes my thigh under the table.

I wonder... how this is going to turn out.

Does she expect us to announce this while giving thanks?

Surely she's not. Right?

*Hmm, clockwise... that means I'll go before Bella...*

"Weeeell," Renee says, drawing out the word. "I'm thankful for you all, of course, and I'm so happy you could all make it. But most of all, I'm thankful for my beloved husband and my beautiful daughter. Oh, and the fact that Edward and Bella are in love with each other!"

A collective gasp. That's roughly sixteen people. Employees at Cullen/Swan.

My eyes widen.

Bella whimpers.

Charlie's head whips around, his eyes find Bella. Then me.

His face goes red.

*So much for taking things slow...*

“WHAT!” he bellows.

### **BPOV**

My grip on Edward’s thigh has got to be painful for him, but it doesn’t show. The only thing he’s doing right now is handing our pointed looks to the guests. Guests that he’s now dismissing like the employees they are... when it’s not Thanksgiving. But I understand him. I also agree with him. This wasn’t something Mom should’ve outed like that.

“Mom, for fuck’s sake!” I hiss as soon as it’s just the four of us left in the massive dining room. “Wasn’t this Edward’s and my news to share?”

“No, no, no, no, no...” Dad starts groaning, all while banging his head against the table. Not kidding. “This can’t be true... God, all the rumors...”

Wait, what?

“What rumors?” Edward’s asked, frowning deeply.

“I’m not talking to you, you cradle robber!” Dad snaps.

“DAD!” I shout. How dare he!

“CHARLES!” Mom growls.

“Oh, *goodie*,” Edward sighs, looking up at the ceiling for a moment. “Here we go.”

“Don’t call him that!” I sneer at Dad. “You have no right!”

“What she said!” Mom says, nodding at me. “They are very much in love, Charlie! It’s not some fling!”

"Shutthefuckup!" Dad snarls, banging his fist on the table. "I, as the father, has a right to act irrationally for a while, especially when my baby girl comes home with Hugh fucking Hefner! So, women, *please* give me a moment!"

I gape at him.

Mom, too.

Edward... well, he's carving the turkey.

"What are you *doing*?" I hiss quietly at him.

He looks over at me, wearing an everyday-expression. Like nothing's wrong in the world. "Just give him time, baby. He's gonna start yelling any moment now."

And I remind myself that Edward and Dad are friends. He knows how Dad functions.

## **BPOV**

And Edward was right.

Dad soon starts to pace around the dining room. Shouting and pulling at his hair, arms flailing around, and fingers pointing like swords. "...I heard the rumors around the office! Can't believe they're true!" Mom sips her wine. "...A few assistants... talking... about how close Edward and Bella seemed to be... GAH!" Outburst after outburst. Edward gives me a slice of turkey... and a kiss. A sweet one on my temple, then he digs in on the food. Dad continues. "I laughed it off! There was no way!" Mom starts filling plate after plate with food, and then she leaves, only to return to take more plates with food. To the guests, no doubt. Always the gracious hostess, that one. "...Then I started to notice things... Yes, I noticed!" Arms flailing again. "I saw the goofy fucking grins on Cradle Robber here."

He glares at Edward. Edward sips his beer. "Oh, and you, missy!" Glare pointed my way. "You sure as hell didn't come around often, but when you did, I saw the blush whenever Cullen here was mentioned!" Now he's growling. I'm quite thirsty, so I chug my wine. Then my water, too. "But NAH! I still waved it off!" Dad scoffs. "YOU!" he bellows, pointing at Edward. "Cradle robber! Woody Allen! Hugh Hefner! Baby snatcher! I could go on! She's my baby girl!" Mom enters again, then leaves with the last plates. "And YOU!" he shouts, pointing at me. "You just had to grow up, didn't you?" He sneers. "You couldn't stay five! NO! You had to grow up, you had to become this... this... this... ADULT. Ugh." Disgust clear on his face. "Last but not least, you just had to sink your claws into Edward, huh?"

He slumps down in his seat again.

Bangs his head against the table a few more times.

Groaning.

A little more banging.

Defeat.

Poor Dad.

"Well," Mom sighs, entering the dining room again. "I think he's finally done, no?"

"Looks like it," Edward replies with a nod. "This was delicious, by the way," he adds, forking a piece of turkey. "Heavenly."

Mom grins widely. "You can thank Bella for that. It's her recipe."

Oh, my smile is so wide.

"Really, beautiful?" Edward asks, smiling at me. And I nod. "Wow."

"I'll make you a special turkey sandwich tomorrow," I promise. "I have a secret recipe for seasoning."

He beams at me.

Dad bangs his head against the table one last time.

## **BPOV**

Surprisingly, the rest of the dinner is very pleasant. Once Mom's confirmed that Dad's done shouting, she calls the guests in again, and we enjoy the massive feast. We're all talkative and cheery. Only Dad is the quiet one, but Mom assures everyone that he will be fine.

Before I know it, it's past midnight and we're saying goodbye to the last of the guests, and I'm happy to see that Jasper's relaxed and understanding when it comes to Mom's game. Jasper had just laughed it off and wished Edward and I good luck before heading home.

So... in the end it's just the four of us. Mom and Dad, me and Edward, sitting in the kitchen with some leftover pumpkin pie and more wine.

"I think Charlie's ready to talk soon," Mom says knowingly, rummaging the cupboards for her beloved collection of Tupperware. "In the meantime, why don't you tell me about your plans for Christmas?"

So, we do.

Edward and I sit next to each other by the kitchen island as we tell Mom about having Christmas dinner with Emmett and Rose on the 25<sup>th</sup>, and soon Mom and I are in the middle of discussing Christmas decorations and recipes. While we do this, Edward's just smiling like he's won the lottery. And I know how much he loves the little things. Little things like when I ask him where in his house we can put up a Christmas tree. Little things

like the smiles we share. And I know... I know that the little things aren't really that little.

But when Dad groans loudly, we stop all conversation.

I think he's ready now.

## **BPOV**

"What are you thinking, honey?" Mom asks Dad gently.

He huffs. There's an epic eye roll going on, too.

Then he speaks... for the first time in hours...

"I'm thinking that I'm damn happy we didn't ask Edward to be Bella's godfather."

Yeah, I really wish he'd just kept his mouth shut.

Mom starts laughing.

Edward coughs and splutters.

"What?" Dad huffs again. "That'd be... just *wrong*."

Well, that's one way to put it.

Then, Dad turns to whining. "I mean, what can I say? I can't tell Bella that Edward's a horrible man who will just play her or whatever, and I can't tell Edward that Bella's too immature for him, 'cause... I fucking know the idiots!" He groans and whines to Mom as if Edward and I aren't there. Lovely. "Idiots, both of them," he mutters. "They're gonna give me greys, Rae, I swear to it. One of my closest friends, and my fucking daughter."

.

.

“Are you done?” Mom asks him, cocking the Mom-brow.

Dad slumps in his seat. “Yeah, I really fucking am.”

An hour later, Dad is on speaking terms with Edward again, and he reluctantly admits that he can see the changes in his friend. So, as long as Edward and I keep the PDA in front of him down to a minimum, he’s somewhat okay with it all.

Talk about eventful Thanksgiving.

But as I go to bed that night with Edward, I know I couldn’t have been happier.

Edward feels the same.

And... no more hiding for us.

## **EPOV**

Truth be told, I wasn’t nervous about telling Renee and Charlie about mine and Bella’s relationship. I was more nervous about the aftermath. I knew Charlie was going to freak out. That’s just how he deals. But it was the possible changes afterwards that stopped me for a while. Because the fact remains, Charlie and Renee are good friends of mine, very good friends. They matter immensely, and even though nothing can ever keep me from Bella, her parents’ support was and is important. To the both of us.

So... I don’t have to go on and on about how relieved I was to find out that they were okay with me and Bella. Obviously things are a little weird – that goes without saying – but there’s also acceptance.

Like I said, it matters, but we didn't know just how much it mattered until a few days after.

We felt the change, even between the two of us. There's no more hiding, no more wondering, and no more nervousness. Of course this effects our relationship, and definitely for the better.

For instance, when we got back to Seattle on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, we headed straight over to the Swan house for dinner before we went back to my house. It was simple and felt normal... as soon as Charlie had grumbled and bitched for a while, of course. But he wouldn't be Charlie if he didn't mope a little. Luckily, Charlie's favorite time of the year is Christmas, so his foul mood soon changed. And I think he's on to something. I've never really thought Christmas was all that, but I'm reconsidering. Maybe because I woke up this morning to a fully decorated house. No, Bella hasn't slept. At all.

Well, she's sleeping right now. In my bed. Wearing her usual attire – a pair of my boxers, and a t-shirt.

While she's asleep, I'm taking care of her Christmas gift.

I'd do it tonight if I could, because I wouldn't mind spending the day in bed with her, but we're busy tonight.

Yeah.

"Naughty Christmas Girls" at *Girlesque*.

I'm not missing that for the *world*.



### **BPOV**

"Edward just texted me," I chuckle, putting my phone down before I adjust my tits. My corset is tighter than tight. "He asked what the plans are after the show."

Rose laughs and we exchange knowing looks in the mirror. "I guess he's as eager as Em, then."

Pretty much.

I accidentally – or not so accidentally – told Edward that I have a surprise for him in one of the private rooms later. And now he's eager to find out just what this surprise is. Not that he can't put two and two together; he knows it's sexual. But he doesn't know the details. Same goes for Emmett. He's taken the night off because Rose has the same surprise for him.

"Five minutes, ladies!" Jessica hollers.

### **EPOV**

Emmett and I stand by the railing, looking down as the DJ introduces the four... holy shit... women walking on to the stage. *God*. Bella. Fuck. Yes, I do believe Christmas is my favorite holiday.

And it's all foreplay.

All of it.

They pair off – Bella and Rose, and... the two other girls, and...

They move. Together. To the music.

Wearing outfits that are... skimpy... sinful... sexy...

Bella's wearing a red corset with white lace. Red panties. It's Christmas, after all. And... *fuck me*... stockings in white. Making her look all innocent, and I have this urge to *claim* her... *hard*... over and over... and it doesn't help that we haven't had sex in four days. With the last New York trip, jet lag, dinner at Charlie and Renee, Christmas decorating and shopping... we've been pretty fucking spent, but now... Oh, *God*...

"Fuck," I hear Emmett respond.

To what?

To Bella and Rosalie using that pole... together...

"Christ." That's me, and I think my pants are getting tighter, but... *damn*, she's just... "*Holy*..."

I have no words.

The crowd downstairs is wild.

I can't blame the horny fuckers.

And then the corsets come off...

Revealing strapless bras in red lace.

I catch Bella blowing me a kiss. I stifle a moan.

I check my watch. *Only twenty minutes left until I have her all over me.*

Then, as my eyes find her again, I see... *something...*

On her hip.

*What the hell?*

But I'm too far away to see what it is.

## **EPOV**

"Hello, boys," Bella says, smiling seductively as she walks toward me where I sit in a leather chair. "Anything I can do for my man this lovely evening?" She doesn't hesitate when she reaches me, straddling me right away.

*Those were the longest twenty minutes ever.*

I need her. Now.

"Fuck, you look delicious, baby," I groan, leaning in to breathe her in. My hands touch, because I'm the only one allowed to. Men notice, of course. I'm smug about it. Sue me. "Jesus, you were sexy downstairs... like always..." I kiss her neck, my hands inch higher. Naked thighs, so smooth. "And yes, there's something you can do for me." I push her down harder on me, and she notices. She always does, and she's the one causing it. Every fucking day. Feels like I've been perpetually hard now for months.

"Oh God, Edward," she moans in my ear. "Is that all for me, baby?"

"You know it is," I tell her huskily.

But then I remember what I saw... or what I didn't *quite* see.

On her hip.

My thumbs brush over the surface before I lower my eyes, and there's no mistaking it. The texture, I know it, and then I actually see it.

Bella stills in my lap when she knows what I'm doing.

It's dark in the club, but I still see, and everything else just disappears. The music, the people around us, everything.

All I see is the ink.

And what it says.

I swallow hard and look up. Her face, her eyes, her soft expression.

"You got a tattoo?" I rather ask than state. It's obvious she did, because I see it, I feel it, my thumb ghosts over it.

"In New York before we left," she murmurs closely. "Do you like it?"

No. I love it. It's beautiful and... for *me*. I'm humbled.

Suddenly it feels like we're in the wrong place.

There, on her hipbone, inked in black, right next to her piercing...

*All day...*

*All night...*

*...Only you*

"That's why you wouldn't shower with me yesterday," I blurt out dumbly.

"You were hiding it."

At least it takes away some of the tension, and she smiles radiantly.

“And I’m so sorry about that, Mr. Cullen,” she purrs.

Just like that, the tension shifts, and I’m no longer thinking with the head between my shoulders. And suddenly it feels like we’re in the perfect place.

She whispers hotly in my ear, “My very own Santa, you have something I want.”

Lightly, she presses a hand down on my cock...

Before she sucks my index finger into her mouth...

Releases it with a pop...

And thrusts her tongue into my mouth...

“I don’t know, baby,” I moan. “Have you been a good girl this year?”

She gasps. Pupils dilating. “Okay, we need a private room now, Edward.”

*Lead the way, baby.*



**EPOV**

"Fuck," I breathe out.

My cock is aching.

I sit on the leather couch in one of the private rooms.

She strips in front of me after pushing play on the stereo. Bending over, giving me a perfect view of her ass, as she slides down her knee-socks.

*Santa baby*

*So hurry down the chimney tonight*

My left hand is there, caressing her ass cheeks.

My right hand goes to my clothed erection.

And once she's completely naked for me, she straddles me again.

My hands slide up her thighs.

Not stopping until I reach her wet pussy.

She moans.

"Oh fuck," she moans, tilting her head back.

I finger her slowly.

*A 54 convertible too, light blue*

*I'll wait up for you, dear*

*Santa baby*

"You're so wet, beautiful," I groan, pushing two fingers inside her.

"Jesus, Edward, that's enough," she breathes, and before I know it, she's standing up again. "This is supposed to be about you."

I eye her in question...

As I suck her wetness off my fingers.

*Santa Cutie*

*Fill my stockings with a duplex*

*And checks*

*Sign your X on the line*

"Right," she exhales shakily, nodding once, and then her control is back.

"Because you were right earlier, Edward." Wicked glint in her eye. "I haven't been a good girl this year."

*Fuck.*

"In fact... I've been rather naughty, and... we have all night for you to punish me."

Oh... *yeah...*

"So... I'm all yours, Edward. At your mercy."

At my mercy...

I think I can work with that.

Definitely.

*Jesus fucking Christ.*

**BPOV**

After a moment of silence, he told me to change the music, because...  
*Sweet Christmas music won't cut it, baby.*

That's what he'd said.

So, I change the music.

A classic. Nine Inch Nails – Closer. Can't go wrong with that song.

"Where do you want me?" I ask, slowly walking back to Edward again. I love the way his eyes drink me in. "On my knees? Against the wall? Bent over?" He smirks as he pushes himself off the couch, and I love how confident he is nowadays. It's... so... fucking... sexy. "Or maybe you want a lap dance?"

He shakes his head... before he starts unbuttoning his black shirt.

"You can start by getting these jeans off me," he murmurs.

*Sir, yes sir!*

I kneel before him.

*You let me violate you*

*You let me desecrate you*

*You let me penetrate you*

*You let me complicate you*

"A bad girl, indeed," he chuckles huskily.

I push his jeans down, letting them pool around his ankles.

He is... so hard.

Boxers, off.

Holy mother of... cocks.

I lick my lips.

"No teasing from you, beautiful," he whispers, stroking his cock right in front of my face. "It's my turn tonight."

He says nothing more. Instead, he threads his fingers through my hair, guiding me to his leaking erection.

I swipe my tongue over the head, suckling slightly.

*I wanna fuck you like an animal*

*I wanna feel you from the inside*

I suck him in, hard and deep, hollowing my cheeks.

"Fuck," he moans loudly. "That's it... Suck me, beautiful."

My panties are ruined.

I swirl my tongue, I use my teeth, my hands tug on his balls, his hands... in my hair... He's setting the pace... thrusting...

I take him down my throat.

Oh, God...

"Enough, baby," he groans. "Get up."

I pout, I really pout, he knows I love to please him orally.

"Don't look so sad." He smirks. "Now... walk over to that wall over there."

*Help me tear down my reason*

*Help me, it's your sex I can smell*

*Help me, you make me perfect*

When I reach the padded wall, he spins me around, so that I face it.

"Put your hands on the wall," he says gruffly, standing behind me.

I shiver and shiver.

His hands are slow but firm on me. Up my calves...

"Spread."

*Jesus.*

I obey and spread my legs.

Higher, his hands... up my thighs... so close...

I whimper when his mouth is right there. I feel his hot breath.

He chuckles.

Then he stands.

His hands are on my hips.

His mouth is by my ear.

"Listen to the lyrics, baby." A hot whisper, he quotes me from our first time in here, so I listen.

*I wanna fuck you like an animal*

*I wanna feel you from the inside*

*I wanna fuck you like an animal*

He slams into me.

"Shit!" I choke out.

My eyes close as shockwaves of pleasure shoot through my body.

He stills, but only for a second.

And I'm really at his mercy.

"Fuck, Bella," he groans.

I'm unable to form a single word. Only moans, whimpers, fucking keening.

But he knows me. He can read my body. The way I arch, silently pleading for more. The way I moan wantonly, letting him know about the right spots he can reach with that throbbing cock of his. And he uses it all... his hands, his mouth, his cock...

He fucks me hard.

All over the room.

The song goes on repeat as he uses my body for our pleasure.

He gives and takes.

Thrusts so hard...

"Now, Bella," he growls in my ear. "Let me feel your wet pussy coming all over my cock."

...until he finally brings me to ecstasy.

This is the man I'm going to make sure that I spend the rest of my life with.

And before we leave the club, he whispers, "I'd rather have you naughty than nice."

Oh, how I agree.

### **BPOV**

We spend the 24<sup>th</sup> being lazy. Sure, we also prepare for tomorrow's dinner with Emmett and Rose, but other than that, we're being lazy and lovely. Showering, lounging, eating junk food, Edward hovering as I bake Christmas cookies, me batting his hands away, my girly giggles, his arm snaking around my waist, Christmas music in the background, making love on the couch, hard fucking in the kitchen, walking around in comfy clothes, more cuddling, watching Christmas movies, comfortable silence, and...

A little hiding as I wrap his gifts.

And I wonder... why am I not allowed to enter the guestroom next to Edward's home office?

"You'll see tomorrow morning," he says, then kisses my pout away.

Hopefully he'll like the two tickets to Paris I bought for him.

I've never been there, and... I wouldn't mind having Edward talking architecture in Paris, 'cause that's dirty talk in my book.

I also bought him a gift certificate from Starbucks.

That's how we roll.

Oh, and I bought handcuffs for him to use on me.

I think he'll appreciate them.

### **EPOV**

I'm still a bit stunned after opening Bella's gifts.

She'd woken me up at seven with breakfast served in the living room – by our tree. She's a Christmassy girl, and I adore it. The warmth she's radiating means so much to me. But she's also Bella, and Bella wouldn't be herself if she didn't mix sweet warmth with wicked heat.

My chest had tightened when I saw the tickets to Paris.

My smile was warm and wide when I saw the Starbucks card. It's so us.

And... my cock woke up when I saw the handcuffs.

Fucking *handcuffs*. There are possibilities everywhere.

Then I spent the next hour showing her how thankful I was and am.

But now it's my turn.

So, I lead her to the door next to my study.

And I open it.

"Merry Christmas, beautiful," I whisper in her ear.

## **BPOV**

I gasp. My hand covers my mouth, and I move without really knowing it. The room... the room that was once a guestroom is now...

"My God, Edward," I breathe thickly. Of course, tears follow, but my God, does he know how much this means to me?

The desk, the chair, the... holy shit... *two* very expensive stationary iMac's – he went for the 27 inch! And I walk over, I have to see them, and then I do, and... Christ... and one 17 inch Macbook Pro.

*Holy shit!*

I see the Software.

He's really gone all out. Fuck Photoshop, he's gone for the real stuff. The stuff we used in school. Illustrator, InDesign.

It's my very own office. A graphic designer's dream office.

And there's more.

Books, magazines, manuals...

Then, there on the wall above my desk...

### *Imagine Graphics*

He remembers what I want to name my business.

"Do you like it?" I hear him ask quietly, and I spin around to see him leaning against the doorframe.

Like it? *Like* it?

"No." I sniffle. "I love it. It's..." I look around me again, trying to find the right word. And it's not just the *stuff*, it's that *he's* the one giving it to me. He remembers it all. All my talking about starting my own business once we're done with the Hunter project in a year. He's encouraging me to go after my dreams. He's helping me, *supporting* me... He's... "Perfect."

*But, wait a minute...*

### **BPOV**

He's...

Huh.

He's giving me an office...

In his house.

*Oh my...*

"Bella?" It's a whisper, and he's now standing right behind me. My back against his chest. My tears are falling because I'm *such* a girl. His arms go around my waist, I feel his chin resting on the top of my head.

I'm frozen, wishing silently...

Does this mean...?

Because yes, *please*. I love it here.

"I know it's supposed to be your Christmas gift," he murmurs, dropping kisses in my hair. "But I will be the lucky one if..."

I swallow.

"If?" I breathe out.

Another kiss, this time against my temple. "If you move in with me."

*Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.*

And I realize that I'm chanting this out loud.

Because he spins me around and kisses me so hard, so passionately, that I'm left without air.

"Yes?" he mumbles against my lips. "You'll live here with me?"

"Yes!"

**EPOV**

***Fourteen months later...***

It's taken time. A long time.

But we're finally done with the Hunter project; we're finally done with the traveling. Now we're looking forward to work in Seattle. It started out as an escape for me – the travelling. But that quickly changed. Because of Bella, of course. With her in my life I have nothing to escape from.

So, now I'm back, working permanently from my office at the Cullen/Swan building. And Bella's finally starting her business. Actually, she'll work on the floor below Cullen/Swan Architecture. One floor for Imagine Graphics. Yes, Charlie and I went in as investors. Why wouldn't we? She's incredible and we have nothing but faith in her.

But... we're not there right now.

No.

Right now we're in the middle of nowhere.

I'm finally showing her my cabin.

And she's all smiles as I help her across the river.

Carefree laughs as I pull out the Starbucks lunch from my backpack.

She's adorable in her hiking gear.

And when we arrive, an hour later, at my cabin... her eyes are wide.

Trees surrounding us everywhere. Fresh air. One cabin.

"This is amazing, baby," she says with awe in her voice.

I dip down and kiss the top of her head.

It's modest but I love it. A one story cabin. Simple. Just a living room with a combined bedroom. An open fire, a small kitchen, and a small

bathroom. I don't even want to remember the time it took me to build everything that needed plumbing, and... fuck, drawing water and pipes and, all the permits and legal papers... No, I'm finally done. Thank God. It took me five years to finish, and I did it almost all by myself. I'm no electrician, or plumber for that matter. So, yeah, I had some help there.

But I built and designed.

"So... Mr. Cullen." Ah, the coy smile. I smile down at her. "You have your own tool belt then, yes?"

*Christ...*

I bark out an incredulous laugh, but I can't help it. She's too fucking cute.

"Yeah, I do," I chuckle, thoroughly amused. "Why?"

She goes for innocence but I don't exactly buy it. "Oh, no reason..." She shrugs, smiling angelically. "But, um, I think I want to see it on you."

"You do, do you?" I snicker, and pull her closer to me.

She grins up at me. "Oh, I definitely do."

*I suppose that can be arranged.*

## **EPOV**

"I already love it here," she whispers.

I agree and tighten my hold on her naked body. Legs still tangled after a few hours in bed. Under the covers. It's quiet up here. The fire is crackling in the corner.

"I love the smell," she sighs contently, and I hear her inhale. "The wood... the fire... the fresh air..."

"Us," I add in a quiet chuckle as I play with her hair.

But it can't be denied. I love the smell of us.

"Now look who's the crude one," she chides playfully.

I shrug. "I learned from the best."

Her eyes twinkle in the dim light.

And I know it's time.

So, I lean down and kiss her softly.

My hand goes under the pillow.

"I love you," I murmur against her lips. "You're my everything. You've given me life and love. And..." I tuck a piece of hair behind her ear, and I look down at her, at the woman I'm eager to share everything with.

"Hopefully I'll have you for the rest of my life."

Her expression changes slightly. Eyes widening. And glistening. Lips parted.

*She wonders.*

"Edward?" she breathes out shakily.

I smile softly against her jaw, and I nod because yes... *Yes, I'm proposing, baby.*

Meeting her gaze, I see the emotion she feels. I feel the same, and I'm sure she can tell.

"Will you be my wife, Isabella?"

I swallow at the same time as she does.

She exhale shakily, but I hold my breath and present her with the ring.

“Oh my...” Her eyes flicker between my eyes and the ring. “*Edward...*”

A platinum band with a princess cut diamond in the middle. Then small emeralds surrounding it, making it unique. Just like Bella.

“Yes,” she whispers thickly. “Yes, of course I’ll marry you. Yes.”

Completion.

### ***A look into the All Nighter future...***

#### **BPOV**

“Please,” I whimper.

He’s in control as I straddle him in the Jacuzzi. The Jacuzzi he’s installed outside the cabin. The cabin he built, that he now shares with me. Only me. It’s our place. Our weekend getaway. I love it up here. The quiet, the peace, the starry sky, the lit candles, the trees surrounding us, so far away from the city noises...

It’s a turn on for me, to see him work up here, and he knows it and loves it. The way he uses his hands... oh, and that fucking tool belt... *ungh...* He’s confident and... *God*, the way he can work my body. The buildup is fucking insane, and the ache in my pussy is downright uncomfortable.

I’ve watched him work on our new porch all day.

Now it’s time for an all nighter.

“You want my cock, Bella?” he whispers, making his sweet breath wash over the side of my face. “You want my cock to replace these fingers?”

“God, yes!” I moan wantonly, splashing water around me.

I try to ride him, but he stills me.

Luckily, I'm not the only one in need. I feel his own need throbbing against my thigh as his fingers fuck me slowly and deeply. He's ready, too. So ready.

Then he lifts me up, not saying a word.

Eyes dark and smoldering.

And slowly but very surely, he lowers me onto him.

His cock...

Fills me...

So good.

My head falls back.

I breathe in the chilled air. Mixed with the steam coming from the hot water.

I pulse and shake.

I roll my hips over him, making us both moan.

Then, faster.

He pushes and pulls.

Thrusts.

His mouth is wet, lips wrapped around my left nipple.

Goose bumps.

I both hear and feel his grunts.

*So deep...*

Scorching.

"You're... so fucking sexy, Bella... you have no idea..."

All the attention he lavishes me with.

Fingers, mouth, words, and the cock...

*Jesus, it deserves an award.*

I clench down on him fiercely when the head of his erection rubs against my g-spot. He feels it, I feel it, and then again, more and harder, he wants me to explode...

"You're so close, beautiful," he whispers breathlessly.

I am, and then I'm not, because I'm suddenly there, and I cum and I cum, and I cum so hard.

Silent screams. I can't breathe.

I feel everything. With every thrust he delivers, his breaths become more erratic, and before the most intense orgasm I've ever felt subsides, I lean forward and bite down gently on his earlobe while clenching my muscles down on his cock, and I whimper, "I need you to cum in me, Edward."

He chokes mid-moan, and now he's there, too.

He spills into me with a loud groan and I watch and watch and watch as the pleasure surges through him. The way his face scrunches together, his eyes shut tightly, almost like he's in pain. Lips pressed together, his jaw tight... and I'm the one making him feel this way.

It's powerful.

"I love you, Mrs. Cullen," he exhales. "So much."

I hum and press our wet bodies together. "I love you, too."

Warmth makes me shiver.

He holds me tightly in the Jacuzzi.

Lazy kisses.

We have everything we want. Right here.

**The End**

~oOo~

**Outtake/Futuretake**

**EPOV**

"Here you go, love," I say, handing Bella her chicken wrap.

After almost four years of marriage, we still keep up with our Starbucks addiction. It's where we share our lunches when Jasper doesn't insist that we go to Alice's Bistro.

We may work in the same building, but our hours keep us from seeing each other often. Well, often enough. We drive to work together in the morning, of course, and then we drive home together, as well. Around five PM, or something like that. It depends on meetings and so on. But during the day, we only have our lunches. And... the occasional *meeting* in her office... or mine. Can't be helped. As soon as I see her in her professional attires, making her look like the sexy CEO that she is, I'm a teenager.

It's only when she dresses up like Dee that I'm worse. Oh, don't worry. She may not work at *Girlesque* anymore, but she still performs. For me only.

"Thank you," she replies softly, leaning over to kiss my cheek.

She likes it when I don't shave everyday. Apparently, scruff is her thing.

Safe to say, I don't shave everyday.

"So, how did the meeting go?" she asks, smiling curiously.

Because she's genuinely interested in my work.

That still matters so much to me that I notice it each time she asks.

"Good," I respond with a nod. Before continuing, I wipe my mouth with the napkin. "We decided that it's best that I go to the exhibit in Rome since he's going to Vancouver next week for the benefit."

Charlie and I rarely work outside of Seattle nowadays. We have a whole team of eager architects for that. But for seminars, exhibits, and social functions, it's important that we attend.

"Is that all you're gonna say?" she asks incredulously.

I stifle my amusement.

I go for casual. "What do you mean?"

Unfortunately, my wife can read me too well, and when she narrows her eyes at me, I know I'm busted.

"Nothing. Never mind," she replies flippantly, returning to her lunch.

Hmph.

So much for letting her drag it out of me. Looks like I'll be the one spilling freely.

Not that I mind.

Especially since I know her work hours. Her business is successful to say the least, and with her own team of employees, there's nothing stopping her from taking a long weekend off.

"Bella?" I murmur, leaning over the table. She hides her smile... sort of. I can see the tugging. "I believe we have an anniversary coming up."

"Mmhmm."

Oh, I'm getting to her.

"Will you please consider spending that anniversary with me in Rome?"

And the Isabella Cullen smile is... my reason for living.

"Yeah?" she whispers, rather shyly, I must say. "You want me to go with you to Rome?"

"Fuck, yeah." I brush my lips over hers. "We haven't gone to Italy together yet. This must be remedied."

She kisses me back, always with the same eagerness.

"Can't wait," she murmurs, smiling tenderly.

"Me neither."

"E-Edward?"

Shit. That voice...

Bella's expression quickly morphs into one of hatred, and I know that she will cause a scene if I don't play my cards right. Hell, a part of me wants that scene, and I have no shame in admitting that Bella's reaction is humbling to me. It matters immensely to me that she feels so strongly, but... this is not the time, nor the place. So, I plaster a neutral expression on my face, and then I turn around in my seat to see my ex-wife. Or, rather, I'm looking over my shoulder to see her there. Yes, she's in shock.

"Hello, Karen," I say.

With narrowed eyes, she actually approaches, so I move over to sit next to Bella instead. I thread our fingers together, too, because I want it. I won't ever hide my wife, nor will I be embarrassed. On the contrary, I love having her on my side.

"You're dating *Edward*? Really?" She narrows her eyes. "I... I *babysat* you, Bella," she says accusingly.

I'm not surprised when Bella's glare vanishes. Because the angelic smile she trades it in for is nothing short of lethal. For many reasons, but in this case it's for pissing Karen off. It's going to work.

And dating? I think not. She's my stunning wife, Karen.

"Oh, I remember, Karen," she replies sweetly. "How are you, by the way? I heard you moved to Portland."

Is it acceptable for me to actually enjoy a little of this?

"Yes, I'm just here to visit a friend." Karen sneers, and that's the moment Bella displays her left hand on the table. Bad, girl... Oh, how I love you.

I arch a brow at Bella, but she just keeps smiling.

Ah, hell. Fuck it. I want it, too.

With my left hand, I grab my coffee.

Karen turns into an unflattering shade of red.

"You... You're *married*?" she grits out through clenched teeth.

"Yes, we are," I tell her before taking a sip of my coffee. "I'm a lucky, lucky bastard."

Bella winks at me, then turns back to Karen.

"I gotta say, Karen. I don't understand how you could ever let Edward go." No, Bella. Don't. Oh, God... I know my girl. She has no shame. Don't do it. Do it. Don't do it. Do it. Christ, I can't make up my mind. "I mean... apart from the amazing personality that I fell in love with like that," she snaps her fingers, "there's also the addictive cock."

She fucking did it.

Quickly, I glance around to make sure no one heard her. Truly, there's not a lot that embarrasses me anymore, and she's has really turned me into an insatiable man, but... *Christ*.

I'm so incredibly torn. She strokes my ego nearly as well as she can stroke my cock, but I'm still myself. Five years with Bella don't erase the twenty I had with Karen. Twenty years of boredom. Twenty years where I wasn't enough. Now all of a sudden, I have a wife that makes me believe I'm some god. It's quite different.

Facing Karen, I don't know whether to laugh or cry. She's impossibly red, and I can almost feel the anger rolling off her in waves.

"What, I'm just stating the truth." Bella shrugs. "I mean, the *orgasms* he gives me... Just... *wow*, you know? Don't even get me started on his fingers... or his tongue!"

My ears feel so very hot.

"Bella?" I whisper. "I think that's enough."

Plus, I think I'm getting a little turned on to hear my wife talk like that, so I'd rather take a detour to her office than staying here.

"Edward," Karen growls, effectively ruining my growing erection. "How *could* you? She's Renee and Charlie's *daughter!*"

"No, you're kidding," I deadpan. "Now, was there anything else?"

"Yes, was there anything else?" Bella asks. "Because our lunch is almost over, and I really need to ride my husband before I go back to work."

I swallow hard.

Blood rushes south, way down south...

How very inappropriate of me, but it's all Isabella's fault.

Karen lets out some odd shriek before storming out, and I cannot even bring myself to ask if Bella's done with lunch, because I need her. Now.

"Did you notice that she wasn't remarried?" Bella giggles as I usher her into the elevator in our building. "At least, there was no ring on her finger."

Don't know. Don't care.

Need. Wife. Naked. Now.