



By CaraNo

Written and dedicated to HollettLA

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BPOV

1.

Growing up, Jasper and I quickly learned only to count on each other. It's actually pretty amazing that we turned out the way we did. With an alcoholic mother and a gambling father, we didn't exactly have stability. But we had each other, and we still do. Even with the bad stuff that's happened in our life, nothing holds us back. We fight, work, and achieve.

In fact, Jasper's biggest dream came true a few months ago. He was drafted to play for Chelsea FC in London, one of the best soccer clubs in Europe.

London, baby!

Now, it's not often you hear about Americans going to Europe to play.

It's usually the other way around. And by that I mean, when you're not good enough to play in Europe anymore, LA Galaxy takes you.

Just look at Beckham.

I kid, I kid.

Anyway...since Jazz knew that one of my dreams was to travel with my Nikon in hand, he asked me if I wanted to leave Florida and the States behind, too. No one knows my big brother the way I do, so he says, and now I'm his PA. I don't think he actually needs one, but he has my back and I have his.

Jazz left for London last week when pre-season training began, and I arrived here just a few hours ago.

I'm a proud sister when I flash some big security dude my ID at Stamford Bridge. And now it's time to see my brother in action.

Okay, the real action doesn't begin until August when the season starts, but whatever. At the age of twenty-one, my brother is one of the best midfielders out there, and even a training session is a riot to watch when Jasper gets going.

There are butterflies in my belly as soon as I—after getting lost a few times—reach the field.

Hell, my eyes even well up when I spot him. He's out there, wearing a yellow vest over his Chelsea blue outfit. As he moves, the vest shifts, and I see "Whitlock" in white letters on his back. Yep. Proud sister, right here.

It doesn't hurt to have all this eye candy around me, either.

The players out on the field all look fine, and...some of the guys on the sidelines are hot as fuck, too. Especially that man over there. Yeah, over there. Tall, broad-shouldered, messy hair in some reddish brown shade, muscular arms folded over his chest... Damn. I only see his profile so far, but it gives me a delicious view of his defined jaw.

Totally lickable.

I'm already loving London.

And for some reason, the theme song to *Jaws* begins to play in my head.

2.

When practice is over, Jazz spots me and gives me a cheesy grin before he runs toward me at full speed.

He's sweating like a pig; his curly is hair pretty much plastered to his skin, but I don't care. He picks me up and spins me around in the air, making me squeal like a little girl.

"Fuck, it's good to see you, sis," he says, hugging me tightly.

"You, too," I giggle as he releases me. "By the way, your apartment is awesome."

"It is, isn't it? And it's *our* apartment." He grins. "I take it that means you've already dropped off your luggage?"

I nod. "Took a shower too, so if you wanna go out for dinner or something, I'm game."

"You're not tired after your flight?"

Jet lag is a bitch, but... "I'll sleep when I'm dead."

He laughs and throws an arm around my shoulders. Then he starts walking me toward his teammates. "Actually, we're a few guys going out. But you're definitely joining us."

Hmm. "Is that man over there coming, too?" I ask, subtly motioning at Mr. Lick My Jaw. The man in question is currently speaking to one of the players, and, um, it appears they're talking about the player's calf.

Odd.

"Oh, for fuck's sake, Bella," Jazz groans. "I know you were a little flirt back in high school, but this shit is different, all right? Besides, Doc is way too old for you."

I tilt my head up at him. "How old is *too old*?" I mean...I know I'm only nineteen—twenty in a couple of months—but that man—Doc?—doesn't look a day over twenty-eight, *maybe* twenty-nine...thirty at best. Eh. Whatever. And hey, age is just a number.

"He's thirty-five."

Oh...

3.

"Come on, I'll introduce you," he mutters. "But you play nice. Don't shit where I eat, or...eat where I shit. Whatever the saying is."

I scoff. He makes it sound like I'm a tease or a heartbreaker, and that's hardly the case. Just because I'm not a virgin doesn't mean I get around a lot. I've had three or four boyfriends. So what? That's nothing. And honestly? I'm sick of boys my age. They don't want what I want. I swear I was born in the wrong decade, 'cause I long for kids already. Jazz says I was dropped on my head when I was a baby.

With Renee as our mother, I wouldn't be so surprised if that really happened.

Oh, and one more thing? Jasper fucked my best friend in high school, only to never call her again. So, talk about taking a huge shit where I eat. Or ate. Past present.

"Guys, this is my sister," Jazz says to a group of players. They all smile and shake my hand. Most of them have thick accents and they call my brother "Yankee".

He introduces me to his coach, too.

And then we finally reach Mr. Lick My Jaw.

"Doc, this is my baby sister—Bella Whitlock," Jazz says, his protectiveness shining through when he slips his arm around my waist. "Bella, this is Edward Cullen—one of the physiotherapists. Everyone calls him Doc."

Well, fuck me silly. Can I have your babies, Doc?

"Glad to meet ya, Bella," Doc responds, smiling warmly. First, I notice how his eyes crinkle at the corners when he smiles. Second, his accent... Good God, he's Australian. Homina, homina. "Yankee's been talking about his sister for days now."

"He's biased," I tell him, shaking his hand—a hand with long fingers. *Ungh*. Plus, he's not wearing a ring. Score. "He thinks I'm awesome because we're related."

Doc chuckles; I still want to lick his jaw and have his babies.

I smile up at him from under my lashes.

How about an Australian kiss?

"All right, I'm gonna hit the showers," Jazz decides. "Bella, meet you outside in a bit?"

Those were the words, but what he really meant to say was, "Stop shitting where I eat."

4.

An hour or so later, about fifteen of us are gathered in a pub near Westfield Park. I may or may not have made sure to end up in the same booth as one Edward Cullen—sitting right next to him, too.

He smells so good.

Just saying.

"First round's on me, guys," Jazz announces, standing up. "The limit is eighteen here, not twenty-one, so feel free, sis." He winks.

He just wanted to get my age out in the open, not that I understand why. Everyone already knows Jasper's age, and they also know I'm his *little* sister. Asshole.

I shoot him a playful scowl and say, "I'll have a Newcastle."

"A Stella," Doc says. "Cheers, mate."

As soon as Jasper's gone, the three guys sitting across from me are quick to start up conversation. I learn that Michael Newton is from Manchester, Paul Lahote is from Lyon, and Caius Schmidt is from Hamburg. They're all defenders for Chelsea. I also learn that they're good at mistaking tits for eyes...seeing as they stare at my chest when they speak to me. But it's a common thing. I was blessed with a good rack.

In attempt to include Doc in the conversation, I ask, "So, where are you from? What's your story?"

"Melbourne," he replies, which comes out "Mellben". I stifle my smile. "After I got my undergrad there, I moved to London to study sports medicine at the uni, and I never looked back."

Impressive.

"My dad's American, though," he adds. "I spent quite a few summers in Chicago when I was a little shit."

Unfortunately, my brother comes back with our drinks, but there's a silver lining with him showing up. 'Cause when he slides into the booth, Doc scoots closer to me to make room for Jazz. That's all very fine by me.

5.

At around eight o'clock, half the people have cleared out to go home to their families, but a few remain. Namely, Edward—who told me to call him Edward or Eddie, as opposed to Doc. *I picked Edward*. Jasper, Paul, Michael, Felix—the first goalie—Eric, another midfielder, and Jacob—who is one of Chelsea's personal trainers—stayed behind as well. We're all sitting in the same one booth now, as crammed as it is.

Since there's no practice over the weekend, Jazz and the others let the drinks flow.

Despite the fact that we're all sitting so close together, we're still divided in two groups, and I think age is the reason. The younger guys: Jasper, Paul, Michael, and Eric talk about the clubs here in London, and they brag about conquests. Meanwhile, Edward, Felix, and Jacob—all of whom are over thirty—sit a bit quieter and talk about other stuff. Felix mentions that this will most likely be his last season, and Edward grins and says something about Felix wanting to spend more time with his "ankle biters". Kids, I presume.

"Yeah, and when are you gonna settle down, Doc?" Felix retorts.

Edward shrugs and rests his arm on the back of the booth, conveniently right behind *me*. I doubt it has anything to do with me, though, 'cause he hasn't paid me much attention at all. "When the right woman comes along."

"She's taking forever," Jacob quips.

"Too right!" Edward agrees, chuckling, and clinks his beer glass with Jacob's. "But unlike *you*, I won't settle for a fuckin' gold digga'."

"Ouch." Jacob pretends to be hurt, although you can see the humor in his eyes.

Both Felix and Edward laugh. I don't understand, but Edward notices my confused expression and leans close to explain. "Jakey here collects wives." With a grin in Jacob's direction, he asks, "What number are ya on now, mate?"

"Two," he huffs, but Felix smirks and holds up four fingers behind Jacob's back.

I giggle like the tipsy teenage girl I am.

And the arm Edward had on the backrest ends up around my shoulders.

Well, well.

6.

Jasper throws an oblivious Edward a quick glare when he notices the arm around me, but I silence my brother with a glare of my own. Jazz knows very well that he has no right to dictate over me and, truth be told, I don't believe Edward's really that interested. It's more that he's a happy drunk than a horny bastard. He's simply jovial and friendly.

A part of me even thinks that Edward's not aware of the arm he has around me. He's still chatting it up with Jacob and Felix; his touch is casual and, like I said, friendly.

"Another round?" Jacob asks the group.

Jazz, Eric, Michael, and Paul nod and rattle off their orders, but Felix shakes his head. "I'm off, fellas. Time to go home." And I ask for another Newcastle before Edward goes for a Carlton Draught. After we've said our goodbyes to Felix, Edward proudly tells me that Hank—the owner of the pub—makes sure to always keep a few Australian beers on hand...just for Edward.

"That's...awesome," I reply, not really knowing what else to say. But it's clear that the man loves his beer. I decide to tease him. "Does he keep Vegemite for you, too?"

He narrows his eyes at me. "Are you taking the piss, love?"

Yeah, my eyes bug out. "Taking the wh-what?" I splutter.

Apparently, that earns me a chuckle and an eye roll. "You havin' a laugh at my expense?" he clarifies.

Oh. Taking the...um, right. Someone hand over a dictionary, please.

And, love?

Man, if only they didn't use "love" here for pretty much anything between a pile of dog shit and a million bucks...

"Wouldn't dream of it, *mate*," I shoot back with a flirty smile.

He grins. "Feisty. I like it."

7.

"So, tell me about yourself, Bella," Edward murmurs, and I suddenly feel his fingers begin to draw circles on my skin. "From what Jasper's said, I know that you're his cheeky little sister, and that you're always attached to your camera."

I laugh quietly and sip my beer. "Well, that's obviously wrong since I don't have it right now. Wouldn't you agree?" I don't feel the need to mention that my Nikon is safely tucked into my bag. "All kidding aside, I love photography."

He hums. "Anything in particular you like to photograph?"

You? Preferably naked?

I clear my throat. "Not really. If something catches my eye, I'll take a shot." I shrug a little. "Back in high school, I did an exhibit where soccer was my theme."

He smirks. "You know, here in Europe we just call it football. What you yankees call football..." He shakes his head, laughing through his nose. "I mean, you use your hands the majority of the time!"

"Hey! I didn't name the game," I say defensively and smack his chest playfully. "But enough of that." 'Cause I want to know stuff about him, too. "It's your turn—tell me about yourself." I grin. "All I know is that you're a physiotherapist."

He nods. "I've got a Master's in sports physiology. I'm also a massage therapist, and I've worked for Chelsea for about eight years now."

Oh, sweet Jesus. A massage therapist? I bet those hands of his can cure cancer.

"And you like walks on the beach and stargazing?" I wink and turn my body a bit more in his direction.

He chuckles. "You want my sign, too?"

"No, but your phone number wouldn't hurt," I say with a cheeky smile.

It makes him laugh and lean closer to me, so I hope my attempts at flirting haven't been a total bust.

With his lips almost brushing against my skin, he whispers in my ear. "Shouldn't you focus your attention on someone your own age, love?"

8.

Gazing back at him pensively, I ask, "I don't know—should I?"

Our age difference certainly doesn't bother me, but I probably should've thought about that it might bother Edward. All I see is that older men are more likely to want the same things as I do, which makes Edward even more attractive to me.

"I think that's best," he says quietly, and he kisses my cheek before straightening in his seat. I can feel my face fall a little, but I do my best to recover quickly. I guess not quickly enough, though, because Edward leans in again and murmurs, "I'm flattered, Bella, and you're so fucking gorgeous, but I don't think we're after the same things."

I give him a small nod and a brief smile, struggling to keep the disappointment from showing. I breathe a sigh of relief when Jasper leans over the table and asks if I'm ready to go home, because I definitely am. However...that's when Edward speaks up again and wonders if we're sharing a taxi. Apparently, Jazz and I are now neighbors with Dr. Edward Cullen. Then I find out that not only are we neighbors, but Edward owns the fucking building. He was the one who offered my brother the apartment in the first place.

Yay me.

"Doc's an investor," Jasper chuckles as we head outside. I pretend to be interested in what he's saying, but Edward clearly sees through me. I've never been a good actress, and the only reason Jasper's oblivious right now would be the copious amount of alcohol he's consumed tonight. "He is part owner of three restaurants, too," he babbles on, "and a hotel complex in Brighton."

I just want my bed.

Approximately thirty minutes later, I get my wish when we arrive in Knightsbridge.

"See ya Monday, mate," Edward says when we reach our floor. "And it was nice meeting you, Bella."

"Monday," Jasper confirms and I say nothing. Edward heads left while Jazz and I go right. Not that we go far; our apartments are literally next to each other.

Once inside, I walk straight to bed, calling a "Good night" over my shoulder.

He slurs a response, and that's that.

9.

Over the next several weeks, I find a routine that I love. Mac—Jasper's coach—calls for closed practice most of the time, meaning no media access, but when he heard that I'm a photographer, he gave me access to be there. I told him I'm just an amateur, but Jasper—being the good brother he is—has apparently showed him the pictures from the exhibit I had in high school. Anyway, Mac asked me if I could take photos at the training sessions, photos that he will keep for his professional collection later.

I was more than willing to comply, so I'm at practice most days.

I've also met Mac's wife, Didi, who is a funny woman. I guess I always thought British people were stuffier and...I don't know, but Mac and Didi are so nice and welcoming.

In the past few weeks, I've learned a lot about Edward, too. He's foulmouthed—he loves the words "piss", "fuck", "wanker", "bloody", and "shit" in all their forms. He has nicknames for everyone, he's a jokester, and his smile can kill—okay, I already knew that. He's like an older brother to many of the younger players.

He also watches me a lot.

It's confusing to say the least.

I pretend not to notice, but I definitely do.

Like right now, for instance, when I'm taking pictures of Felix and his personal coach, I can practically feel Edward's eyes on me.

I've developed quite the crush on him, so I can't say that I appreciate the mixed signals.

"Eric!" Liam, Felix's coach, calls. Liam is, uh...very Irish. "Get yer arse over here!" Eric, one of the midfielders, runs over. "Doc! Can ye look at this?"

Oh, great. That's just what I need—more of Edward.

I can't get that sexy man out of my head. Or my fantasies.

It doesn't help that we seem to share a wall at home. This morning when I woke up, I could've sworn I heard him getting off in his shower, which must be wall-to-wall with my bedroom. Or maybe that's just wishful thinking on my part. Ugh. It's all just blah.

Keeping close to the goal line, I watch through my camera as Edward, Eric, Liam, and Felix huddle close and talk about...something. Eric and Felix are dressed in training gear, of course, and Liam and Edward are wearing Chelsea blue t-shirts and black tracksuit pants.

For the record, Edward calls tracksuits "trackies". It's like every word gets shortened with the addition of "ie" or "y" at the end. Coldie = a cold beer. Minnie = minute. Brekkie = breakfast. Tanty = tantrum. Yesterday, for instance, he said, "Mikey, that fucking wanka', threw a tanty 'cause he missed the bloody ball."

I could go on and on and list the weird things coming outta his mouth.

Weird but hot.

I shake my head and refocus.

When Edward squats down and does...something...to Felix's ankle, I may or may not take a shot of Edward's ass.

What?

That's not weird.

Totally normal behavior.

For me, anyway.

"We'll tape it before the game," Edward says, standing up again. "Yorkie, work Felix's left when you shoot." Taking a few steps back, he tells Felix, "Let me know how ya feel before the press conference on Monday."

Felix wriggles his foot. "It's nothing. I'll rest this weekend—it'll be good."

"We'll see, mate," Edward chuckles. "I know you don't wanna sit out the first game, but..."

"We'll see," Liam agrees firmly.

When Eric starts shooting the ball from the penalty spot, I walk closer to Edward and Liam in order to get a better angle.

"How are ya, love?" the man of my fantasies asks.

"Good." I smile when I get a perfect shot of Felix making a save. "And you?" I'm one polite chick.

He grins at me, and for some reason, he drapes an arm around my shoulders. "Great. Getting any good shots?" He leans down to look at my camera.

Always so fucking close.

10.

I sigh internally, wondering why the hell he feels the need to be so close to me. This isn't the first time, either. Whenever we've been out or...after practice...or the one time I ran into him at Tesco when I was grocery shopping...he's always touching me. A hand on my cheek, an arm around me...

Sometimes he brushes a piece of hair away from my face. And why? Fuck if I know. 'Cause he made it clear that he wasn't interested.

"Any plans this weekend?" he asks, eyes on the little screen on my camera. He nods and grins in approval of the shot I took of Jasper doing a perfect overhead kick. Or what the guys around me call *bicicleta*.

"I'm being lazy this weekend," I answer him, sort of in afterthought. "With the season starting soon, I wanna rest and veg out."

"Alone?"

I frown up at him and switch off my Nikon. "What?"

"You're being lazy alone?" he inquires, his face blank. "Or is Yorkie joining ya?"

Um... "Why would Eric join me?"

He shrugs and looks out at the field. "I heard he asked you out."

11.

I don't hold back the sly smile on my lips.

Oh, Eddie boy.

Fisting his t-shirt, I make him lean down to be level with me.

"What if he did?" I whisper in his ear. I feel his shiver rather than see it. I also see his Adam's apple bobbing once as he...I don't know, thinks about a response? I release a breath, so close to his ear. "Let me guess, *mate*. You're just curious." With that, I take a step back and smooth out his shirt. God, his chest sure is muscular...*hard*...fuck.

I leave him there and walk over to Mac, making sure my hips sway a little more than necessary.

Truth is, Eric did ask me out last week, but I said no. While I'm crushing on Edward, I have no intention of dating others. That's not who I am.

Since Mac is busy, I just stand next to him and do my thing with the Nikon. However, once he has a spare minute, he asks me if I can be there on the sidelines on Monday—for the press conference. I assure him that I can—internally, I'm very happy, because Jazz is gonna be there, and I always want to support my brother—and then we wish each other a good weekend before I leave.

Later, I spend hours in Hyde Park with my camera. It's pretty much an addiction, and I don't get back to our apartment 'til I'm all but dead on my feet. My guess, as I take the elevator up to our floor, is that Jasper is at some club by now.

When I reach our door, I realize that I'm definitely wrong. 'Cause I hear a woman in there, and I don't think they're having tea and biscuits.

"Yes! Right there, Jasper! Fuck me harder! Oh, Gaaaawd!"

12.

I stare at the door as if the *godawful* noises in there are gonna cease just like that. The keys in my hand are beginning to hurt, which makes me realize that I'm holding them too tightly. I'm not really angry—more annoyed and fucking disgusted. I already know that my brother is a manwhore, but I'm his *sister*. I don't wanna *hear* that shit. I go with "ignorance is bliss". So, right now, I wouldn't mind giving him a swift kick in the nuts for erasing my...*ignorance*. So to speak.

"The key goes into the hole, love."

"HOLY FUCKING SHIT!" I scream, clutching my chest as I spin around. Ugh. Edward just came out of the elevator. Fucking great. "You *scared* me!"

He just looks amused, walking toward me instead of his own apartment. Sorry, *flat*. "I apologize," he says, full of shit. "But like I said, the key goes into the hole. Then you just twist and open the door—"

I smack him in the chest.

Not funny, mister.

I'm too tired for jokes.

"Ouch! Such a violent girl," he chides playfully, all while rubbing that spot I smacked. Which is damp, I note, when I clench my hand into a fist. 'Cause he's been working out and is only wearing basketball shorts and a t-shirt. Damn. But seriously, who works out on a Friday night?

"Yees! Oh yes, Jasper! Aaaaaahhh!"

I give Edward a look and jerk my thumb over my shoulder. "And *that's* why I won't open the fucking door."

He smirks. "I see."

I want to either lick his jaw or stomp my foot.

I'm odd, I know this.

"Well..." He clears his throat, amusement suddenly gone. Instead he looks a little apprehensive, if not nervous. Maybe uncomfortable? "You could always wait in my flat."

I could, huh? Interesting.

He's only being polite, Bella.

Then what's with all the touching?

"Thank you," I say, smiling. "Hopefully, my brother won't be too long."

Whatta lie. Hopefully, Jasper will take *all* night.

13.

Edward is a bachelor, but he doesn't live like a true one. The walls in the hallway are a warm brown color, and there are pictures on the walls. Granted, they are strictly soccer photographs, but still. They're in black

and white, all with matching frames. There's even a plant on the hallway table. It's a cactus, but a plant nonetheless. I'm impressed.

"Thirsty, hungry?" he asks, kicking off his Nikes. He doesn't seem nervous at all anymore, but I am, on the other hand. Damn. I didn't expect that. "I just need to take a shower real quick."

"Um..."

He flashes me a grin. "Kitchen's through there." He points to his left direction. "And the living room's through there." Right direction. "Make yourself at home; I'll be right back, yeah?"

I nod dumbly and watch him take a right to go down another hallway. It's the same direction of Jasper's and my place, so I assume he's heading for the bathroom. The one that is perfectly located wall-to-wall with my bedroom...

I shudder and sigh, steeling myself for...I don't know what. But the worst of the nervousness seems to dissipate a little, for which I'm thankful, and the apartment's scent helps. Seriously, it smells so good in here. Like Edward's cologne or something. Fresh, musky, all man.

Ignoring the kitchen, I take a right and end up in the living room. While his apartment is pretty bare when it comes to furniture, it's still more of a home than a "place to crash". Hardwood floors, same as the hallway, walls painted in a light olive green color. Big, big, humongous, huge flat screen, of course. Gaming consoles and games littered on the floor by the mentioned TV, and the entertainment center is packed with the same: games. There are also movies and CDs, a big stereo, and a DVD player.

Again, pictures on the walls, but this time I see family and friends, as opposed to soccer. I don't try to guess who's in the pictures, but I do see an older couple who I assume are Edward's parents. He has his mom's

coloring and his dad's height and body. A smile plays on my lips as I continue looking at the pictures. Vacations, birthday parties, barbecues. There is one shot of Edward and two little girls—they all share the same hair color—and it's clear that the girls are twins and celebrating their birthday. Edward looks really happy, wearing a silly smile and a cone-shaped birthday hat.

Sighing contentedly, I sit down on the black massive corner couch. *So fucking fluffy.*

Man, fuck beds. I'll take this couch instead.

My eyes are closed, and I'm maybe three or four minutes away from falling asleep when I hear the padding of feet coming closer. Opening my eyes, I spot Edward just as he enters the room, wearing a pair of sweatpants and a t-shirt. A towel is thrown around his neck, and his hair is still damp.

Lucky towel. Lucky t-shirt. Lucky sweats. Is he wearing boxers? If that's the case, then lucky fucking boxers.

14.

"You look tired," he says, plopping down next to me.

I hum and loll my head to the side, facing him. "I blame your couch."

"Ah, yeah." He nods and pats a cushion. "I just bought this bad boy. The old one had beer stains all over it." His grin is so boyish, it makes me giggle drowsily. "So, I reckoned it was time for a new one. Good, isn't it?"

"Very." I stifle a yawn. "I might marry it."

He chuckles, and I can fucking smell him. He's being so unfair, smelling so good. "So, how has your Friday been? I thought you were just bummin' around."

I nod sleepily and close my eyes again. "I was, but then I got bored, so I went to Hyde Park."

"Get any good shots?"

I cock a brow but keep my eyes shut. "How'd you know I took my camera with me?"

"You left it in my hallway." He taps my nose.

"Oh."

He chuckles again. "You gonna fall asleep on me?"

If only he meant that literally—fall asleep *on* him. That'd be awesome.

"Would you be offended?" I mumble, snuggling closer to the warmth. Deeper into the couch and, uh, yeah—that's Edward's shoulder. Nice. I let out a soft hum when I feel his knuckles brushing over my cheek, something he does often.

"Not at all, but I do have spare bedrooms," he murmurs. His voice sounds like it's farther away than it is. "Wouldn't that be more comfy?"

I think I shake my head. I think I feel his lips on my forehead.

"Sleep, my Bella."

15.

Lying on a massage table, my face in that hole, I hear Edward standing by my feet. There's some soft music in the background, but I can't really find focus. It's like the edges of everything are fuzzy.

Then... "You want my hands on you, Bella?" I hear him whisper in my ear.

I shiver, feeling goose bumps appear on my naked body. The only thing covered is my ass, and it's with a *tiny* towel.

"Yes."

He hums, and I hear him pouring oil into his hand. "Where?"

I clench my thighs together at the husky tone of his voice.

"Everywhere."

I remember when I asked him about being a massage therapist. We were at Hank's pub, and I recall the rather short denim skirt I was wearing. Edward never looked away from my thighs as he spoke. He said that aside from massaging the Chelsea players' calves on occasion when they're cramping, it wasn't really his job. The team has its own crew of massage therapists, and Edward's main job is being the physiotherapist. But...when he spoke about it, I could almost *feel* his hands on me, pressing, kneading, relieving tension.

"Oh," I breathe out, feeling his strong hands on the back of my thigh. Slick, warm, firm. "Edward..."

The towel shifts with each pass of his hands, exposing more and more of me.

"Perfect fuckin' legs," he mutters. Higher up. Higher up. I withhold a whimper when the tips of his fingers graze the lips of my pussy. "You need to relax, my Bella." His breath is suddenly hot against my neck and,

once again, I feel him brushing over my pussy. "You're wet, aren't you?" he whispers in my ear. I shudder. "I bet you've dreamt about this. I bet you've dreamt about me slamming my cock deep inside of you, fucking you so bloody hard that you won't be able to walk for a week."

I moan.

His hands are all over me. As is his mouth.

"I want you, baby," he groans as he kisses my shoulder. "Please let me fuck you."

Yeah, that's when I wake up.

"Nooo!" I whine, kicking off the blanket. Now I'm all horny for nothing!

Reality sucks...until I notice that I'm in Edward's apartment. On his couch.

I'd like to say that the man himself is wrapped around me, but he's not. Sadly.

He's definitely awake, 'cause I can smell food.

16.

When I enter the kitchen, the first thing I see is a half-naked Edward standing by the stove; he has his back to me. His hair is deliciously messy from sleep, and he's only wearing a pair of sweats that are drawn to his calves. Fuck, even his damn feet are sexy.

I'm gonna combust one of these days.

"Good morning," I say sleepily, announcing myself.

He looks at me from over his shoulder, smiling. "Yeah, I thought I heard something. Morning, love. Just in time for brekkie."

I smile.

"It smells amazing," I comment and walk over to him. I jump up to sit on the counter next to him. A shower and new clothes wouldn't kill me, but I'm good with stalling for now. I want more time with Edward.

My nose tickles, and then I sneeze for no reason. 'Cause sometimes that happens.

"Not catching a cold, I hope," he says, leaning over to give me a soft kiss on my cheek. I shake my head, both answering his question and getting rid of the haze he wraps me in. "Good. And now that you're up, you can push play on the iPod behind you."

"You could've played music before, too," I tell him, a little embarrassed. I don't wanna be in the way or keep him from doing what he wants. "Can I check your lists?"

He nods, and I remove the iPod from the dock station. "You were so out of it last night. You needed your sleep—didn't wanna wake ya. By the way, how do you want your eggs?"

Looking down at the pan, I see that he's making scrambled for himself. "Scrambled, thank you." With a small smile, I return to the playlist I just opened, which is named "Random". Hmm. The man has good taste. The Smiths, Radiohead, Smashing Pumpkins, The Killers, Ramones... "Excellent taste in music, Dr. Cullen." I smile cheekily and return the iPod to put it on. I pick "Bullet with Butterfly Wings" by Smashing Pumpkins.

"I know," he deadpans then winks at me. Oh, just slay me, you sexy son of a bitch. "So, what are your plans for the day?"

I shrug. "More taking it easy. Maybe some sightseeing."

With a slow nod, he focuses on the eggs for a while. It looks like he's thinking hard.

"You, uh..." He rubs the back of his neck. "You want some company?"

I wanna squeal like a girl, I wanna smack him for running so hot and cold all the time, I wanna kiss him, I still wanna have his babies and lick his jaw.

I do none of that.

Instead I blush like a little girl and nod. "Yes. I'd love some."

He smiles pretty damn wide, but there's also something else in his expression, too. Wistfulness? I don't know.

17.

"Never again!" he exclaims as we leave Harrods. I laugh hysterically, not even stopping as he pulls me close and drapes his arm around me. I'm definitely fazed, but I crave it by now. "Ah, you think this is fucking hilarious, don't'cha?"

"I do, yeah," I chuckle. Truth be told, Edward was more entertaining than Harrods. Every time we entered a new section of the massive department store, he made faces and cursed like a sailor. Still, he held me close and refused to leave. "And we're not done." I poke his stomach. "Next is Harvey Nichols."

"Bloody hell," he whines. "You're fucking killin' me. Haven't you bought enough shit to last for a lifetime?"

I giggle and shake my head. And, for the record, I left Harrods with just one bag. A big bag, but just one. A new strap for my Nikon, a shirt, some candy, and two skirts.

"I'm gonna need a ciggie to survive this," he grumbles and presses a kiss to my temple. "And maybe a pint or two."

"You smoke?" I grimace. "Not cool."

Kinda ironic, too. Doctors who smoke, chefs who don't cook at home, teachers who hate children...

"I *know*," he chuckles. "I quit seven years ago, but you just might make me start up again."

"Oh, dude." I snicker and shake my head at him. "Don't put that shit on me." We stop at a red light—we and the rest of London, it seems. Let's just say that Harrods is a popular tourist trap. "Suck it up or go home." *Please don't go home*. "But I need to find some souvenirs to send back to the States."

I don't miss Florida, but I do have a few close friends I hope I won't lose. Heidi, a friend from high school, just had a daughter, and I want to find something cute for the little one.

"Nah, you're stuck with me," he says as the light turns green. We cross the street, his arm still around me, and I figure I might as well ask him where I can find the Chelsea store. "I hope you don't mind."

I hope you don't mind that I'm falling in love with you.

Christ. I'm so fucked.

"I'm glad," I sigh. "And now I need your help." He gives me a nod for "go ahead" just as we reach the sidewalk. "Jasper told me there's a store full of Chelsea merchandise. I'm guessing you know where it is?"

"Sure." He nods. "There's the one at Stamford, of course. And then there's one in Kingston, but Stamford is definitely closer. Why?"

I hum, thinking. "Well, I wanna find some cute baby clothes, and I thought it'd be cool to find something with Chelsea on them."

"Baby clothes, huh?" He grins and puts his hand on my stomach then whispers in my ear. "Something you wanna tell me, love?"

Very funny. "I wish," I sigh, a rueful smile on my face. "No, it's for a friend of mine from home. She just had a daughter."

That's when we reach Harvey Nichols, but instead of opening the door, Edward just holds it while giving me some odd look.

"You wish?" he asks with a tilt of his head.

18.

"What?" I'm confused.

"You said you wish," he clarifies, finally opening the door to Harvey Nichols. "As in...you wish you had a child?"

I nod in thanks and enter. "Yeah, of course. Who wouldn't want a baby?" I've always loved children, and I hope to have a couple myself. Preferably young. "Anyway, as I was saying, a friend of mine recently had a little baby girl, and I wanna find something for her. Hopefully something Chelsea related." I grin up at him as we walk farther into the store. "Can't you imagine a little pacifier or something—or maybe a uniform!" God, now my ovaries are exploding at the mere thought. "Ooh, I wonder if I can find a shirt or whatever with Whitlock on it. That'd be awesome."

"Um, right. Uh...well, you can find official Chelsea merch in plenty of stores." He's frowning, seemingly deep in thought. "In fact, I'm sure you can find some right here. If there's a sport section, that is."

"Hey." I put my hand on his forearm, halting our steps. "Are you okay?"

He opens his mouth, but then he closes it again. He has a little crease between his brows that will contradict anything in the lines of "Everything is fine", so if he does say something like that, it'll be a lie.

"Yeah, yeah, it's all good—no dramas." He bobs his head up and down. "Just a few things on my mind."

And it's clear that he doesn't want to elaborate, so I don't ask.

The rest of our outing is still good, but a little bit less cheery from Edward's side. When I find the cutest pair of soccer shoes for babies, I show them to Edward and he offers a strained smile. That's pretty much when I decide enough is enough. After that, we take a cab back to our building and call it a day.

19.

The next few weeks of practice are crazy busy. There are press conferences, some traveling, interviews, PR gigs, and I find myself thrust together with other PAs and family members. I quickly make a few new friends, and the rest can choke on their husbands' credit cards for all I care. Snooty bitches, is all I'm saying. But Angela, one of the forwards' girlfriends, is really nice. So is Alice—Mac and Didi's daughter who just came home from Paris last week, where she's lived for the past year and a half. So, since I'm all done with taking photos at training sessions, I often meet up with Angela and Alice during practice. It's easier. 'Cause it's hard being around Edward all day.

The man in question has been especially busy the past few weeks. With both Premier League and Champions League starting up soon, he has his hands full. There are always injuries involved, of course, and the media wants to know. For instance, when it's an open practice and reporters see a player cringing or expressing discomfort, they immediately start speculating. So, Edward is up to his elbows in rumors about who's injured

or not. To add to that, he's busy taking care of those who actually *are* injured. Felix's foot is acting up, and Edward has diagnosed him with something-something-tendonitis. Jasper's kneecap is badly bruised after a fall a few days ago, Mike pulled a hamstring last week, and Eric strained some muscle in his thigh a couple of weeks ago, so he's cramping a lot.

The pressure is high, and you can practically feel how close the new season is just by looking at the players.

On top of all this, I've fallen completely in love with Edward.

I've also decided that one of these days—when he's kissing me on the forehead, hugging me close, or placing his arm around my shoulders—I'm going to kick him in the shin and tell him to back the fuck off. 'Cause he's playing with my feelings, and it officially hurts. I mean, he's not being all touchy feely with others. It's just with me, and he told me from the beginning that he wasn't interested. Then he acts the way he does, always touching, always saying sweet things... No, that shit can't go on any longer. Just last week, some guy came on to me, and Edward had to be there and scare the guy off. I'm not saying I would've done something with that guy—I wouldn't—but Edward had no right to butt in. He has no right to act territorial.

Before I know it, it's August and Premier League is about to kick off. I've only been in London for little over two months, but this is home now. I love the energy, the game, the people, and...ugh, that fuckwit Edward Cullen.

It doesn't help that my neck is sore this morning from waking up in an odd position.

I push that aside right now, though, 'cause it's time to wake up my brother.

20.

"Jasper!" I pound on his bedroom door. It's only six in the morning, and neither Whitlock spawn is happy at this time. But Jasper's gotta join the living now. "Wake up! You have that meeting with Adidas in an hour!"

As it turns out, my brother really does need me as a PA, 'cause he's fucking clueless on his own.

"I don't wanna!" he whines. *"M'sleeping! Go away!"*

"Ugh!" I kick the door as I rub my neck. It really hurts. "Get up! Stop acting like you're twelve, you jerk! It's not my fault you were up all night!"

Big day tomorrow. Chelsea's playing Liverpool at Stamford.

Everyone seems to be buzzing, Jazz being the only exception, 'cause the only thing buzzing around him is his alarm clock. Which he consistently ignores.

"Jasper Charles Whitlock!" I scream. "Don't make me call Alice!"

Yeah, my brother has developed a crush on Mac's daughter. She's so off-limits, so Jasper's pretty much just ogling, day dreaming, and, and, and, um, to be honest, I think he stalked her once. It was harmless—just making sure she got home safe after a night out—but still.

"Or maybe I should call Mac and tell him about your little crush—"

"I'm up!" he shouts back before throwing the door open.

He glares at me; I give him a saccharine smile.

"You're evil, sis," he bites out as he passes me.

I ignore that. "Do you need me to go with you—maybe hold your hand?"

He flips me off over his shoulder, and I take that as a no. That's just awesome, 'cause my bed is calling me.

Some time later, there's a knock on the door. I want to ignore it, but the knocker just keeps knockin', making ignoring it damn difficult.

Walking toward the hallway, I pull my hair up in a high, messy bun, and then I rub my eyes, thankful I showered last night before bed. Otherwise, there'd probably be makeup all over my face because I tend to forget to wash it off.

Knock, knock!

"I'm coming!" I shout. "*Jesus.*"

Dressed in nothing but sleep shorts and a wife-beater, I rip the door open.

Oh, horseshit.

21.

"Did..." Edward swallows and speaks to my tits. They're pretty visible in this top. "Did you say horseshit?"

Oh. Well, maybe. I thought I'd said it in my head. Guess not.

I snap my fingers in front of his face, which finally brings him back from the staring contest he was having with my breasts.

"Could be," I answer. "Now, what do you want?"

I want to go back to sleep. I also want to kill my sore neck—if such a thing was possible without killing myself in the process—and I want Edward to stop looking at me like I'm something to eat.

Like I'm someone he wants.

"I'm bored!" he blurts out, sticking his hands down the pockets of his grey sweatpants. My eyebrows rise. "I'm bored shitless, Bella. It's pissin' down outside—I don't fucking run in the rain—and, and," he sighs and runs a hand through his hair, "and there's nothing on the telly." His shoulders slump.

I stare at him, almost amused. "You have a gazillion friends," I state flatly and fold my arms over my chest. Bad move. That just pushed my tits together. Aussie boy is now eyeing my cleavage again. So...I snap my fingers again, and he gives me a sheepish smile. Jesus Christ. "Go bother them instead."

He shrugs. "Many of them are with the Adidas reps, and the rest..." He swallows and looks away for a second. "They're with their families." My brows knit together as I see a flash of something in his eyes. Pain? "Besides," he gives me a crooked grin, "it's not like you're a last resort. I wanted to...I don't know, do something? With you."

Huh. "Fine." I stifle a yawn. "Get in here. We can watch a movie and stuff our faces with unhealthy stuff." He smiles widely, and I wag a finger at him. "But just so you know, this is my last day off. We're not going out or anything. Consider the couch a part of me."

He nods. "Gotcha. Bummin' around sounds perfect."

I withhold my giggle at the sound of "puhfect." He's just too cute.

And hot. And sexy...oh, fuck. This has got to stop.

22.

"Aye, matey!"

He snorts. "What are you, a pirate?"

I shake my head and grab a handful of chips. "*Austraayen*, mate."

"You suck. We don't speak like that."

"I do not suck!" I reach over and slap his arm. "Meanie."

He snickers.

After we had loaded the coffee table in my living room with chips, dip, candy, beers for Edward, and a couple of Bacardi Breezers for me, we didn't put on a movie. We had just sat down together on the couch when we realized that the DVD player was way outta reach. And we were—still are—too lazy to get up. But since the remote control to the flat screen was closer, we ended up watching regular television. Or more precisely: *The Biggest Loser—Australia*.

I'm trying to mimic Edward's accent.

According to him, I'm not doing a good job at it.

Huff.

"What do you call that?" I point at the bowl of candy.

He rolls his eyes but keeps the smile on his face. "Lollies."

I giggle. "Lollies. What do you call that?" I point to his bottle of beer. It's a Carlsberg.

He gives me a look. "It's beer, Bella," he says slowly, as if I'm mentally challenged.

"Oh." I pout. "Don't you have a funny word for it?"

"*Funny?* You sayin' the way I speak is *funny?*" He almost manages to hide the teasing smile on his lips.

My turn for the epic eye roll. "You know what I mean, Aussie boy."

He sighs and chuckles a little.

"I reckon most call it a coldie," he tells me with a shrug.

I hum and nod, snuggling farther into the couch. With my head resting on the back of the sofa, I watch the show for a little while as I rub my neck.

"What team are you rooting for?" I ask.

His eyes are on the screen, too. "Chelsea. Obviously. Jesus."

"Ugh. I mean there!" I wave a hand at the TV. "*The Biggest Loser*. What team? Blue or red?"

"Yeah, I really don't give a shit, love."

"Well, you're no fun at all," I joke.

He snickers again. I kinda like his snickers. "You still suck. Go put on a movie, will ya?"

"I can't. I'm dead. You do it."

In my periphery, I see him shaking his head and then taking a sip of his beer. "While you were in the bathroom earlier, a leprechaun came in and crushed my kneecaps. I can't walk. You should take pity on me."

I can only grin. I don't know, but when you meet Edward, you don't see a thirty-five-year old doctor. Or physiotherapist. He's a kid at heart. Playful and funny as hell. Witty.

"Hey, what's with your neck?" he asks.

I yawn. "A leprechaun sat on it while I was asleep. Can you believe that shit?"

"Leprechauns are evil, aren't they?" he laughs quietly. "Kidding aside. It really hurts?" I nod. Which hurts. "You want a massage?" Rolling my head to the side, I face him and try to read his expression. I hate how casual he can be around me, 'cause I'm finding it so difficult.

Being in love is a full-time job.

"Don't worry. I can show you a certificate." He winks at me.

And now I'm getting wet. How's that fair?

23.

After quietly and nervously accepting his offer, Edward tells me to sit in front of him on the couch, *between his goddamn legs*, which is why I'm looking at him like he's lost it.

"You need to keep your neck and back straight," he explains, setting his beer bottle on the table. "That's where most people screw up when they give each other back rubs—they lie down and end up all crooked."

I scrunch my nose.

I don't wanna be crooked.

"For instance," he goes on, "if you were to lie on your stomach—right here on the couch—your neck would be twisted. Unless you press your face against the cushion, of course, but breathing is pretty important." He grins. "Anyway, I'd probably do more bad than good if I massage your neck while it's tilted to the side."

Right.

So...yeah, I'm just gonna go over and sit between his muscular legs now.

Thank God our sofa is deep, 'cause I'd die if I came in contact with Edward's cock or something.

Once I'm seated...*there*...I go stiff as a board.

We're not touching, but I can still feel his body heat. Remember that I'm only wearing a tank and cotton sleep shorts? Yeah, it doesn't really conceal a lot. Or protect. And Edward's only wearing sweats and a t-shirt.

Just a little cotton separating...

And there go my nipples, tightening and shit.

You slutty little traitors.

"Relax," he murmurs behind me, placing his hands along my sides.

I breathe out shakily.

24.

While I try to take his advice and relax, he traces the length of my spine with two fingers. It causes a shiver to run through me, and my body reacts in two completely different ways. I feel my cheeks heat up and my pulse quicken but, at the same time, I also feel myself calming down. My heart thumps wildly, yet my breathing becomes steady.

"Lean forward a bit," he instructs quietly.

I do as I'm told and rest my elbows on my knees. My head lolls forward when he starts to press his skilled hands along my shoulders. It's a slow start that relaxes me. His hands and fingers slide over my skin, down my upper arms then back toward my neck. Fuck, those fingers. They brush over the fine hairs on the back of my neck, eliciting a small moan in pleasure from me. It just feels so good.

Once I'm thoroughly at ease, he adds pressure.

It's not just my neck he's massaging, though. His warm and smooth hands always start at my neck, but then he rubs them down my back. Down my shoulder blades, along my sides, and up again. More pressure. Tension rolls off of me in waves, and shivers upon shivers rock through me. Whenever he touches a part of me that isn't covered in fabric—namely my neck, arms, and the sliver of skin between my tank and shorts—goose bumps appear.

My eyes have long since closed, and several moans have slipped through my lips.

I'm practically lulled into a state where I'm half-asleep.

I hum when the tips of his fingers rub my lower back. "You can go under the shirt," I say lazily, sleepily, not really aware of what I just said. "God, that feels so good, Edward."

I'm too far gone to hear his exhale, but not too far gone to feel it on the back of my neck.

That wakes me up.

25.

At a torturously slow pace, his hands slide up my back—under my wife-beater, this time. More gooseflesh, more shivers. I'm still relaxed, but I'm more aware now than I was a moment ago. I can feel the atmosphere changing, the tension thickening. He's closer, I notice. We're still not touching, but when his hands move up to my neck again, I can feel that his chest is only a couple of inches away from my now-exposed back.

I'm pretty sure that he can see the sides of my breasts if he just tilts his head to either left or right.

Fuck, how he turns me on.

"Lean back again," he says, and I don't miss the husky note his voice has taken on. Leaning back slowly, I wait for him to stop me. "Right there." I stop. I'm sitting up straight, but I'm still relaxed; it's comfortable. And Edward is even closer now. As he keeps massaging me, the fabric of his t-shirt ghosts over my skin every now and then.

For a while, he focuses on my lower back. He kneads and presses, rubs and strokes. Sometimes, his hands go higher up, only to roam my sides on the way back down. And with each pass, I feel how he moves closer and closer to my breasts. Never close enough to actually touch, but... closer.

At the same time, my breathing picks up.

Edward's does, too.

"Oh," I exhale.

I clench my thighs together, relaxation and sore neck forgotten.

He leans toward me slightly, and it's enough for his chest to finally come in contact with my back, if only a little.

It sets me on fire.

He rubs down my arms firmly. Then up again. With his face close, he massages my neck. I feel his breaths on my skin. Instinctively, I scoot back a little. More contact. Closer. His inner thighs have me caged. I bite down on my lip to stop the next moan from escaping. Because it would be a different kind of moan. I want him. I want him so fucking much. My chest heaves. He makes another pass down my sides, my ribs, my waist, up again, dangerously close to my breasts, down, up, down...

"Edward," I whimper. *Please, please, please.*

The desperation seeping through in my voice triggers him.

"*Fuck,*" he curses, and then he finally closes the distance and cups my tits. At the same time, his mouth latches onto my neck. His kisses are rough and passionate, open-mouthed and so hot. I tilt my head, giving him access, and I reach behind me to tangle my fingers in his hair.

It's frantic and chaotic, like we can't get enough fast enough.

I move closer and arch into him, moaning when I feel his rock-hard cock straining against my ass. When I rub myself over his erection, he lets out a lustful groan and squeezes my breasts harder. Long and talented fingers play with my nipples, sending me into a frenzy of need. His mouth reaches my jaw, my cheek and then, at last, my lips. He kisses me hungrily, pushing his tongue into my mouth, and I return the kiss with just as much fervor.

It's a relief. After months of wanting, pining, falling in love... I don't know why he's been reluctant in the past, but I hope this is the end of all that. Because it's so clear that our attraction is mutual.

It's exhilarating.

"Jesus Christ, baby," he groans into the kiss. "So fuckin' flawless..."

"More," I pant, not above begging.

He curses again, and one of his hands slides down, down, down...

26.

I'm a squirming and panting mess by the time his hand slips under my shorts.

We're still kissing wildly, and I don't even care that the position isn't the most comfortable one for my neck. Breaking the kiss, this fucking kiss, is a no-no. So, my back to his chest it is. For now, at least.

"Bloody hell, you're not wearin' any..." He trails off with a moan, evidently having expected me to wear panties. "Fuck." He shudders as he starts fingering me slowly.

I whimper and tug on his hair, which ends the kiss. But it was a must. I need to get rid of my damn top, and I do so quickly, not caring where it lands. Edward moans again and returns to kissing me. At the same time, he moves his fingers around my clit. Then down, down, and inside of me. *God, it feels so amazing.* Still slowly, but firmly. He's not teasing. And as he works me up, as he turns me into a begging freak, I reach between us and pull on the drawstrings on his sweats.

"Off," I whine.

He exhales harshly and looks me in the eye. I think our faces have plenty in common right now. Swollen lips from kissing so roughly, flushed cheeks, excitement, lustful and dark eyes.

Maybe he's searching for something. I don't know. All I know is that I want him right now—all of him—and preferably without over-thinking and analyzing.

Whatever it was, he must've found it, 'cause he removes his fingers from me and tells me to stand up. I do, and I watch as he pulls his t-shirt over his head. His pants are pushed down next.

Holy cock!

My eyes widen for a second, trained on Edward's big...*holy cock.* Hard. Long. Thick. Most definitely ready for me.

"Get back here," he says, extending his hand to me. I take it and let him draw me closer to him, so close that I'm standing between his legs.

"Damn, Bella." He sighs quietly and slides his hands up my legs, not stopping until he's reached the hem of my shorts. "Do you have any idea much I..." He doesn't finish the sentence. He just shakes his head a little and tugs on my shorts. They're pulled down an inch or two. Then another few. "You're too good to be true," he whispers, dropping a soft kiss on my stomach. "You have to be."

"Edward..." I don't know what to say, but I'm afraid we're moving into the zone where we think too much. Okay, I'm not, but he seems to be.

With another tug on my shorts, they end up pooled around my feet.

"So fuckin' sexy," he murmurs, seemingly to himself, and pulls me down. I straddle him, and we're finally all fire and passion again. Cupping my neck, he crashes his mouth to mine, his other hand going to my hip. It doesn't stay there very long, 'cause as soon as I grind my pussy against his cock, he palms my ass. Just as our kisses are rough, he kneads my ass roughly.

I love how greedy he is in his touches.

"I want you," I admit breathlessly, though it's been obvious for a long time now. "Please, Edward."

He groans when I dip my hand between us and stroke his hard dick. "I—I, oh fuck. Anything you want, baby. Jesus—anything."

I slide the head of his cock down my pussy, toward my entrance; he stares at me intently. His mouth opens—as if he's about to speak—and the look in his eyes tells me that there's something he *wants* to say... something that's troubling him, maybe?...but he doesn't say a word.

Instead, he breathes out shakily and leans forward to capture my mouth with his again.

27.

My breathing hitches as I sink down on his cock. Edward groans; he's all hands and mouth. While I'm trying to take a simple breath, he begins to drop kisses along my jaw and neck, and his hands are either on my ass or on my tits.

"Oh, God," I whimper when our hips meet. I feel so damn stretched and filled, it's impossible to not move. "Feels so perfect." I swivel my hips, causing him to moan against my throat. He also bucks his hips and slides even deeper into me.

"Fuck, yeah—perfect," he agrees, breathing heavily. "Bloody amazing. Even better than I imagined."

For a few moments, we move together slowly and focus on each other's bodies. I finally get to lick the man's jaw, which elicits a breathy laugh from Edward. Not that I care. I've been fantasizing about that defined jaw for months now.

Then, slow isn't good enough anymore. Hoisting me up, Edward gently positions me back on the couch. I stretch out and spread my legs for him. He hovers over me, his penetrating gaze never leaving me, and then he drives deep. My eyes close. He pushes. I pull. He reaches down and starts circling my clit. I can hear how wet I am. Edward can, too, and he seems to like that. Slipping his fingers farther down, he touches us where we're connected.

He speeds up and fucks me hard.

"Ever since I fucking met you, baby," he grunts, dropping his forehead to my shoulder. "Christ, you—"

I cry out his name, feeling a rush of heat spreading through me like a wildfire.

My cheeks flush, I cling to him, I meet every thrust, I claw at his back, my insides coil. We kiss again, only it's out of control and sloppy. But I still love it. I still want more.

Oh, my God. I can feel the beginning of my orgasm taking over.

"Are you—shit, shit, shit," he grits out. "I'm close, love—*fuck*. I need you to come."

"Almost," I pant, our lips still touching. I taste him, us, just as I can smell us. And his touch, his cock...those hands, those fucking fingers, that mouth... I love that he's a kisser. I can't get enough.

He slams into me and adds pressure to my clit.

I'm so gone.

Holding my breath, I let the orgasm wash over me, through me, under me, whatever.

It's everywhere.

28.

Afterward, we're not in a rush to get comfortable. Actually, I am comfortable, and Edward seems to be, too. But whatever, we remain on the couch, me on my back, him on top, still inside of me.

I chuckle and cringe at the same time when I spot something on his shoulder. "I'm sorry." I fucking bit him. I must've done that while I came. It's his fault. 'Cause that orgasm...*damn*. Out of this world. Still, I hope I didn't hurt him. I definitely didn't break skin, but it could've still hurt.

"What?" he mutters lazily, tilting his head to see. "Oh." He lets out a chuckle, too. "Did you—did you *bite* me, Bella?"

I smile sheepishly and lick then kiss the spot I bit him. "I'm sorry," I repeat in a whisper.

I suck.

No. Correction: I bite.

"No dramas." He does his little snickering thing. "Fuck, you're cute." He kisses me on the nose. I pout. "Aw, don't feel bad, love. I didn't even know."

"Still," I mumble, looking away.

He hums. "That means I get to bite you now, right? I mean, that's only fair, I reckon."

Damn, he's too wonderful, trying to make me feel better.

He winks and then bares his teeth.

I giggle, too happy for words.

I finally have him.

Then I sigh; it's one of those dreamy ones.

But everything is far from settled. I want to know why he rejected me in the beginning, and why—since then—he's always made sure to be close to me. Never did he try to put distance between us. Maybe one time or two, I don't really recall, but nothing serious. He's just been there; always close, often touching...

"But while we're on the subject of apologizing..." He clears his throat, and the humor is suddenly gone. Now he looks rather troubled. "I—uh..." He sighs and rolls off me. Thankfully, he doesn't go too far. He ends up right next to me, and he also drapes a blanket over us.

"What?" I ask.

Admittedly, I'm a bit nervous now. He doesn't seem like a fuck-and-duck kind of guy, but perhaps I'm wrong?

I hope not.

"I'm sorry," he says quietly, knitting his brows together. His eyes are downcast, like, on my shoulder or something. I'm not sure. But it doesn't matter, because he looks me in the eye then. "I've acted like a complete prick."

I frown. "You have?"

"Of-fucking-course I have!" His eyes widen. "Come on, Bella; you can't tell me you haven't noticed. I was a wanka' for blowin' you off..." He winces.

I finally realize what he's talking about. I mean, acting like a prick in my book is when you're rude, mean, and insensitive. I dunno. Or maybe he *has* been a bit of a prick. "I've cursed you a time or ten in my head," I confess with a rueful smile. "You also confused the crap out of me, and..." I hesitate a second before I lay it all out there. "It hurt when you ran so hot and cold the whole time. You said you didn't want me, and then you were always there."

His face falls. "I know," he whispers. "And I'm so sorry—"

He's cut off when we hear someone banging something against something outside the apartment. I furrow my brows, confused, 'cause while our

walls aren't the thickest, I usually don't hear anything from anyone—not counting the few times I've heard Edward in his shower.

After the banging comes shouting and laughing. It's a kid. Or more than one. Yeah, and they are *loud*.

"Stop running, Elizabeth!" a woman screams. *"And, Mary, get back here! Jesus H!"*

"Wow," I mutter, a little amused.

"Oh no," Edward suddenly groans next to me.

29.

"This is the last thing I wanna deal with right now," Edward mutters and gets off the couch. I frown. "It appears my aunt's in town," he explains wryly as he pulls on his sweats. "She has a thing for surprise visits, and..." He blows out a breath, reaching for his t-shirt. "Of course she brought the girls." Insert Edward Cullen eye roll.

I'd be amused if I wasn't so confused.

The banging continues out in the hallway, and I'm guessing they're waiting for Edward to open his door.

But then, Edward doesn't seem to be in a rush anymore. He lowers himself on the couch, once again hovering over me. Which is all very fine by me. I like it when he hovers. At least I like it now when I know he wants me.

"Beautiful," he murmurs and kisses me softly. I smile. "That face—mouth—fuck, those eyes." He kisses my eyelids. "I want to stay; I want to talk to you." I nod, knowing that we need that. "But first I gotta tell my aunt

to find a hotel. Last time they were here..." He shakes his head. "Let's just say that my flat screen took the brunt of their visit. Wild family."

I laugh through my nose. "You're not a fan of kids, I take it?"

Pity. Seriously. 'Cause he'd make pretty ones.

Edward gives me an odd look. "I love children," he says quietly, frowning. "I've always wanted a family of my own—" He stops. "I've done some pretty stupid things." Now I'm the one who's frowning. He sighs. "I will explain it all lata', yeah? How about—how about we go to my place after the game tomorrow? We can talk."

"Okay," I agree softly.

After Edward has left, I remain on the couch for a while, thinking, pondering, worrying a little.

It's not until I get up to take a shower that I notice the evidence of being with Edward earlier.

Shit, shit, shit.

We didn't use protection.

30.

The next day, Alice and I get ready together at her place before the game. I tell her everything that happened yesterday with Edward, and we act like the young girls we are. There are squeals, sighs, giggles, and, uh, a little bouncing. I'm not very proud of it, but you know what? I'm a girl. I tend to act like one.

By the time we're ready to leave, we're both wearing black skinny jeans and brand new Chelsea game shirts. Mine has "Whitlock" on the back and

Alice's has "Brandon." Oh, hers is so specially ordered. Being the coach's daughter has its perks.

To add to our attire, we put on matching Converse—also brand new—and royal blue glitter eyeliner.

We know very well that when we enter the box, where all the wives and other family are gathered, Alice and I will stand out. Football wives, Alice says, are prissy and all about Gucci and rat-sized dogs. I know this to be true, 'cause I've seen most of them a few times.

When we finally arrive at Stamford, the place is buzzing.

Chelsea blue is mixed with Liverpool red.

"I'm so excited to have someone to share this with besides Angela," Alice says, linking arms with me as we walk toward our private entrance. "She's great, as you know, but the rest? They are so daft that I'd rather socialize with their bloody dogs." I laugh, and we flash our passes to the security. "What? It's true, Bella!"

I pat her arm. "I know, Alice. I know."

That's when we reach our box, and it's already full of uppity football wives, all of whom are sipping cocktails.

We greet them as politely as they greet us, which isn't very polite at all. Man, they really know how to turn up their noses, those snooty bitches. It's like all they know is to show disdain. Well, I'm sorry, Mrs. Posh, that I don't share your obsession for Dolce.

"I can't wait for the game to start," Alice says as we grab a couple of beers from the bar. "I need some time to ogle that fine brother of yours."

"You should just tell your dad that you want Jazz, you know," I tell her. I know that their crush is mutual, but Mac is more than a little protective of his daughter. Though, he can't say no to her.

"I need liquid courage for that," she replies, grinning, and clinks her bottle to mine. "Cheers, love."

"Cheers," I chuckle.

"I can't see Uncle Eddie!" I hear a little voice complain. Turning, I see a girl standing by the window, and I recognize her immediately. She's one of the girls I saw in that picture at Edward's place. And if I'm not mistaken, this girl has a twin sister.

Elizabeth and Mary? Were those the girls I heard screaming yesterday?

"Mary, get back here," a woman scolds. I guess that's Edward's aunt. I also guess that they're from Australia...what with the accent and all. But that woman looks a little old to have girls at the age of five or so.

She's very beautiful, and I remember seeing another woman in the photos at Edward's place who resembles this one. So, maybe she's Edward's mom's sister? But unless there's a massive age difference between Edward's mom and aunt, this woman has to be at least fifty or fifty-five.

31.

No, no, no!

The Liverpool forward runs fast as hell, dribbling the ball past both Paul and Michael. Along the sidelines, another two players in red run to assist. Thankfully, Jasper covers one and Eric the other, but the player with the ball is already through.

When he shoots the ball at Felix, I can barely watch.

Fuck!

Felix throws himself, but it's too late.

"BOLLOCKS!" Alice screams as Liverpool scores.

"NO!" I palm my forehead and cringe as I watch Felix curse up a storm and yell at the defenders. Not that we can hear what he's shouting, but it can't be pretty. Alice and I, as well as the others up here, are surrounded by flat screens, which are the ones we watch—as opposed to the big-ass window. 'Cause we're too far up to get a good view. Anyway, we see exactly what all the people who are watching the game from home see. It kind of makes me hate this supposed luxury to stand in a box. I'd rather have a ticket and sit with the crowd. Maybe next time.

"Uh-oh, look," Alice mumbles. I nod, agreeing. Felix's foot is acting up again, he's limping, and Edward and another physiotherapist run out to him.

The commentators talk about the goal; they also cover the basics about Felix's documented injuries and whether or not this will be his last season. Last but not least, they mention there's a rumor about Feyenoord's—a team in Holland—goalie playing for Chelsea. Some dude named Emmett McCarty.

"Five minutes 'til halftime," Alice sighs and sips her beer.

I sigh, too, but from watching my man in action.

Yum.

He works quickly, taping Felix's foot, and I can see that he's bitching with Felix, which is just plain hot to watch. I kinda wish I knew what was being said, though. Unfortunately, the cameramen find it more interesting to

show Liverpool players then, and Edward is outta view. Damn. Whatta shame.

"You're such a girl," Alice giggles, apparently reading my mind. "Can't keep your eyes off of your Aussie prince, huh?"

I scoff. "Says the broad who almost cried when Jazz fell two minutes ago." I arch a brow at her. "Good thing my man can fix your man's boo-boos."

"Bitch," she huffs, glaring playfully.

I laugh.

She nudges my elbow. "That's your own brother you're talking about."

"I'm aware," I respond dryly. "But I have another man who I find much more fun to think about now." I chuckle. "Jasper's a complainer. Good luck with that, by the way."

"Excuse me?" someone behind me says.

I look over my shoulder, seeing the woman I assume is Edward's aunt. "Yes?"

"I'm sorry," she smiles carefully, "but I couldn't help but overhear... You were talking about Edward?"

"Bella's Aussie prince," Alice supplies.

I send her a quick glare for *that*...and turn back to Maybe-Aussie-Auntie.

Edward and I haven't had our talk yet; I have no idea if we're "official", or if he even wants a real relationship with me. So, talking about my Aussie prince in front of a supposed family member to Edward isn't my idea of a great afternoon.

"I'm Bella Whitlock," I say, extending my hand. "That's Alice Brandon, and she's drunk. So, just ignore her, please."

The woman smiles, though it's still sorta careful and small. "Tanya Masen."

32.

After the game—which ended 1 to 1—I say goodbye to Alice and head for the parking lot. She's going out with several others; I know Jazz is included in that bunch, but I'm more anxious than ever to speak to Edward.

What Tanya told me...Christ, I hope it's not true. She wasn't rude or unkind, nor did she seem like a bad person; she was more cautious and confused than anything. She was polite enough, but what she said wasn't what I wanted to hear. Quite the opposite, actually.

Regardless, I'm not going to freak out until I've heard Edward's version.

There are usually two sides to every story.

About half an hour later, my phone dings with an incoming message.

Are you still at Stamford? I'll be outside in two if you want a ride home. –Edward

Since we hadn't talked about meeting here, I can't help but smile at his thoughtfulness. My plan was just to wait here 'til he got out. I mean, there's only one exit for him, so I can't really miss it.

Standing outside. A ride will be great. ;) And a ride home, too. –Bella.

His response is instant, and I laugh when I read it.

A stiffie in a locker room full of naked blokes? Not okay, Miss Whitlock. –Edward.

Those two minutes go by quickly, and along with Jake, Liam, and a few others, Edward eventually emerges and gives me a big smile as soon as he spots me.

Man, I hope we're official.

"Oi, darlin'!" With a quick tug on my hand, he has me pressed against him. He drops a soft kiss below my right ear. "Fuck, you look sexy in a game shirt."

I think it's safe to say we're official.

Behind us, we hear Jake and Liam whistling and catcalling.

"About time, Doc!" Jake yells.

Edward looks happy when he shouts back to them. "Ah, nick off, wankas'!"

"Kiss me," I whisper, tilting his chin back in my direction.

"Oh, I plan to do more than that," he chuckles huskily and dips down. Planting little kisses along my jaw, he whispers, "Something about giving you a ride, yeah?"

"You talk the talk," I admit with a grin. We kiss slowly, sweetly, fucking cutely. That's it. We're being so fucking cute. "Do you walk the walk, too?"

"Damn. Have you already forgotten yesterday?" he teases and pokes my stomach. I squirm. "I thought my swagger was unforgettable."

And I can only laugh. Sorry, but the thought of a man having a *swagger in bed...*

"You're so weird," I tell him, smiling.

"Eh." He shrugs and drapes an arm around me. "C'mon, baby. Let's go home."

On our way to his Jeep, the silence is comfortable, but I gotta break it.

"So, I met Tanya," I mention casually.

Edward, a thirty-five-year-old *man*...lets out a *whine*.

33.

"Ugh." He grunts and opens the door for me. "What did the old hag want?"

I can barely contain the incredulous laugh inside me, but I manage, and I keep quiet until he slides in behind the wheel.

"You didn't know she'd be here today?" I ask, turning to look at him.

He nods and turns the key in the ignition. "Of course. I fixed the passes for her and the girls." Placing a hand on the headrest of my seat, he looks behind us as he backs out the car. "I even suspected she'd approach you, though I sure as shit hoped she wouldn't."

"Well, she did," I say wryly. "And she told me about a woman named Emily."

He nods again, not surprised. Blowing out a breath, he spins the car around and pulls out of the parking lot. "All right, my guess is she told you that Emily is my long-lost love who is still waiting for me to come home to Melbourne."

Pretty spot on.

I stare at Tanya curiously after she asks me if I'm really involved with Edward. Before I can even answer, she goes on to explain. "I apologize for asking such a personal question—it's just... It's just that Edward has someone at home waiting for him. Home—in Australia."

My eyebrows shoot up, and while worry spikes through me, not to mention hurt, there's also a big pile of doubt. Because Edward doesn't seem like a man who could harm a fly. Well, not intentionally. His actions have hurt me—I won't deny that—by claiming that he's not interested... while his hands have been all over me...but still.

I'm not one of those naïve girls who says—after just meeting a guy—"I trust you with my life." That comes with time—that kind of trust—but my gut instinct at least tells me that Edward is a good man.

"Hasn't Edward lived here in England for like fifteen years or something?" I ask, skeptical.

To that, Tanya had said it was a complicated relationship, but that Edward and Emily wanted to work things out.

Once I've told Edward all of this, he sighs heavily and shakes his head.

"Well..." He clears his throat and gives me a nervous smile. "I'm glad you didn't jump the gun and believe her...?" It was almost posed as a question, like he's not sure.

"I'm here, aren't I?" I counter softly.

34.

The relief is visible on him; his clenched jaw and stiff shoulders relax, and he reaches over and squeezes my hand. "Thank you. As for Tanya..." He chuckles bitterly. "She has her heart in the right place, but she's fuckin' bonkers. She's my mum's sister, yeah?" I nod along; like I said, I kind of

already guessed that. "We all grew up close together in Melbourne; Tanya lives right next door to my parents. My uncle, too—Phil. Uh, they had a daughter—Kate; my cousin—but it was a difficult birth or something. I don't know—I don't rememba'. Anyway, Tan and Phil wanted more children but couldn't have any, so they adopted."

The look Edward gives me says that it's pretty clear it's Emily.

"I see Emily as my goddamn cousin," he chuckles, shaking his head as we stop at a red light. "Evidently, she doesn't feel the same... Which I've known for years. She even asked me to our year-twelve formal. Christ."

"Did you take her?" I ask curiously. I mean, something must've happened for this woman to still hold out hope that Edward will fall for her, right?

"I did!" he laughs. "But it was all a huge misunderstanding! I didn't wanna go at all, but she did, and—fuck—I don't know, I thought I was just bein' nice." Again, he shakes his head. Then he sighs, all humor gone. "After graduating from uni—here in the UK—I went back home for a while. I'll admit, she'd grown up—she's pretty." He shrugs and makes a turn. "So, I told her, you know? But I did it just like I tell my mum she's beautiful every time I see her. Since then, each time I go home for a visit, she's flirting with me. I don't get it. It's not like I'm leading her on."

I purse my lips. "You mean like you didn't lead *me* on?"

He winces. "Ouch." Then he nods. "Touché—I deserved that. But there's a difference. I did lead you on; I was a fucking—"

"Wanka'," I say, mimicking what I've heard him say before. "Yeah, yeah. But you haven't done the same with her?"

"No way!" He seems upset just by the thought of it. "What can I say—I'm a nice bloke. I don't wanna be rude."

I roll my eyes. "So, you haven't specifically told her you don't see her that way?"

Some women just need to be told, is all I'm saying. Because women can be stupid.

"Should I have to?" He scrunches his nose. "We're cousins. That's just wrong."

Jesus Christ. Men can be dumb, too. "But you're not really related. She doesn't see you as a cousin," I point out.

He looks frustrated as we finally pull up at our building. "*Maybe* you're right," he concedes, sighing. "Just know that whatever Tanya told you is bullshit. There are no skeletons in my closet, I'm not secretly married, and I don't have kids."

I chuckle at that, but then I remember something. "You said your aunt and uncle only have Emily and...Kate?" He nods. "So, the twins..."

Driving down to the underground garage, Edward looks a little sad. "Kate died in a car accident four years ago. Her husband, too. The twins were only a year and a half at the time."

"Oh no," I gasp, thinking about those two adorable little girls. "That's horrible."

"Yeah..."

"So, Tanya and Phil take care of them?"

He nods, parking the car. "Yep." He pauses for a beat. "Like I said, Tanya's heart is in the right place. She's a good mum—a good aunt, too. But she's a little obsessed with having her family close. That's why she visits here so often; she thinks she can convince me to return to Australia.

Especially if she brings the twins." He flashes me a quick grin. "I love those girls—they're crazy. Last night I took them to Pizza Hut. Good times."

But he's not smiling.

It makes me realize that he really wants children of his own. It's the same look I've seen countless times by now: the wistfulness.

Pretty damn wryly, I think about the fact that we didn't use a condom yesterday. Granted, I had my period last week, so I sincerely doubt anything is gonna happen right now, but I still need to tell him. Plus, there are other reasons why you should use protection during sex. While I know I'm clean, I don't know Edward well enough to say the same for him.

"Hey, you ready to go upstairs?" I ask, and he nods as he unbuckles his seatbelt.

35.

We end up in Edward's kitchen since we both admit we're starving. With barely any effort at all, he lifts me up and sits me down on the counter next to the stove. Then he kisses me sweetly and tells me to stay put while he cooks for us.

"I'm no chef, but I do make a mean lasagna," he says with a grin.

"I'll be the judge of that, Dr. Cullen," I say haughtily, jutting my chin.

He chuckles and heads for the fridge. "Can I get ya anything to drink, love? Beer, Bacardi, soda...?"

"You have Bacardi Breezers?" I ask, surprised.

Facing the open fridge, he smiles softly and pulls out one bottle. "Your favorite is pineapple, yeah?"

He remembers.

It's something I've just mentioned in passing, and it was weeks ago.

"Thank you," I say as he hands it to me. To be honest, this is one of those moments I wanna squeal like a little girl. I won't, mind you, but I would if I was with Alice.

"No worries." He grabs a beer for himself and then proceeds to take out the ingredients for his lasagna. "So...let's talk?"

I release a breath, not wanting to beat around the bush, and blurt out my next words in a rush.

"We didn't use a condom!"

Shit. Not so smooth.

To my surprise, though, Edward doesn't look shocked or stunned. In fact, he looks wary and ashamed.

"I know," he says quietly, clearing his throat. His eyes are focused on the sauce he's preparing. "Remember when I told you that I've done a few stupid things?"

I nod slowly, frowning, and vaguely recall him saying something along those lines before he left yesterday.

36.

"I just want you to know my past, yeah?"

I nod for him to go on. "Shoot."

"One of the most stupid things I've done..." He sighs heavily. "That would probably be when I thought a kid could fix the relationship with my ex."

Common mistake, but he must've realized it was just that—a mistake—before there was actually a kid...since he doesn't have any.

"What happened?" I ask inquisitively.

He grimaces. "Uh, it was about three years ago? We were only together for a year. I wanted more; she didn't. She was content to spend my money and go clubbing every weekend." Wow. Sounds like a keeper. "Actually, I didn't specifically want more with *her*, just more—period. I figured the issues I had with her would fade or whatever if we had kids." He snorts to himself. "I was a bit blindsided and overlooked several things with her that I really couldn't stand."

He continues as he arranges the pasta. "Felix made me realize how fucked in the head I was—how desperate I was," he says quietly. "Anyway, I ended it with her and swore off women for a while."

I tilt my head. "How long did that last?"

Puffing out his cheeks, he looks up at the ceiling for a moment. Then he faces me again with a small, wry smile. "Until you barged into my life." I giggle at that, 'cause I don't recall any "barging". But maybe I had a bigger impact on his life than he's lead on? "Christ, Bella, when your brother first introduced us?" He shakes his head and returns to the pasta. "I knew you'd be trouble. First of all, you're the most gorgeous girl I've ever seen." I feel my cheeks heating up at the compliment. "Second of all, you have this flirty smile..." He groans. "I'm telling you, love...you could bring down an army with those fucking dimples of yours."

Taking a sip of my Bacardi, I try to calm down. While I've received compliments before, it matters more when it comes from the man you're in love with.

"Is it safe to assume that my age is the 'third of all'?" I wonder.

His smile is sheepish. "Um, not your age, per se. But I figured you were too young to want the same things I want."

I nod knowingly. "Kids, marriage."

He nods, too. "But then I heard you say that, uh—about your friend in the States? The one who'd just had a daughter? And by then, I was already aware of the fact that I was fighting a losing battle." He opens the fridge and brings out cheese, followed by a cheese grater from a drawer. "Each time I saw you, which was pretty much every day, I got closer and closer to just begging you to give me another shot—regardless of what you were ready for. Family or not..."

I release a breath. "You shouldn't have assumed in the beginning."

"I know." He swallows. "And that's another stupid thing I've done in my life—brushing you off that night at Hank's." A mirthless chuckle slips through his lips. "It's pretty damn ironic. I thought you were gonna be more immature. Turns out, I was the immature one."

"You're a man." I wink. "Many of you tend to think you know what's best."

"Wow—you sure don't sugarcoat it, do ya?" He throws me a playful glare, at which I smile innocently. "Whatever. I deserve it." He shrugs.

I admit, he does deserve it. But I'm not exactly going to punish him or anything. He didn't know better; he made an assumption. If I let him grovel, plead, beg...I'd be punishing myself, too. I don't want to keep him at arm's length. I want him close. As long as he's done being stupid. Next time, I might not be so nice. We all make mistakes, of course, but we gotta take the consequences sooner or later. I'm sure I will mess up, too, at some point.

"Any other stupid things?" I ask with a small smile.

He bobs his head and averts his eyes. "Afraid so."

Oy. Now what?

"I was aware that we didn't use protection," he mumbles. "Even before we had sex." My eyebrows knit together as he gives me a quick sideways glance. "I should've told you—obviously...but I didn't."

I frown deeply, remembering the look he gave me right before I, uh...sank down on him. It was as if he wanted to say something, but he never did. He kissed me instead.

Was that it? Did he plan to ask me or tell me about our lack of condom usage...but decided not to?

"Why?" I ask, and it comes out hoarsely. I take a long sip of my Bacardi and clear my throat. "Why would you...?"

He takes a breath and closes the distance between us. With a gentle nudge, he parts my legs and moves even closer. His hands end up on the counter, on either side of me, and his face is so close. He regards me intently.

"I wish I could give you an answer that excuses what I did," he murmurs, dropping his forehead to mine. His eyes close. His jaw tenses. "I was *that* desperate? I wanted you too fucking much? I—" He stops. Then his eyes open again, and I don't see the jovial Edward I'm so used to. I see vulnerability, shame, remorse, and longing. "I wanted to tie you to me."

I stare at him.

Tie me to him?

By having sex without protection...

Holy shit.

My eyes widen.

"Oh, my God," I breathe out.

37.

I'm stunned, in shock, angry, ready to laugh my ass off, and...I kinda wanna slap him or twist his nipples.

I don't know.

"I'm sorry," he says quietly, *immediately* backing away. "I knew you'd be mad-"

I cut him off by punching his shoulder.

"Ouch!" he hisses, rubbing the spot I punched.

Oh, I'm so glaring at him. "Don't you *dare* run away now, you big fucking *baby*," I grit out. "Do you *want* me?"

His eyes widen. "Of course I do! What kinda question is that?"

A valid one. I know I said I wouldn't let him grovel and beg, but fuck that. I'm over his damn assumptions, and if he wants me, then he better be prepared to show it. And not by knocking me up!

"What *exactly* do you want?" I ask pointedly.

He opens his mouth then closes it.

I cock the bitch-brow.

He exhales. "I want everything with you, Bella."

Nice to hear that.

"Prove it," I say stubbornly and jump down from the counter. "Prove that you want everything with me." His eyebrows knit together, but I can also see hope in his eyes, so while he may be confused, he seems willing to try whatever. "I'm not giving you a time limit, and I'm not putting anything on hold. Just prove to me that you want this—us. No running away, no making assumptions, and..." I huff. "No knocking me up just to make sure I stick around. Christ—you ass." I shake my head, still in disbelief that he would do such a thing. A doctor no less. Seriously, I thought that shit was for bimbos who wanted to secure rich men.

I'm an adult; I should've remembered protection, too, but what Edward did...

Come on.

"Got it." He nods, and I think there's actually a slight blush covering his cheeks. Cute bastard. "When can I start?"

I tilt my head. "Right now?"

Another nod from him. "Great. While the lasagna's in the oven, we can go find your brother."

"What for? And he's probably out, you know."

"They're at the new pub near Albert Hall—just ten minutes away. We'll be back before the food's done. And...what for?" He blows out a breath. "It's time for me to tell him that I'm snatchin' up his baby sista'."

38.

When we reach the pub—it's a sports pub; what a surprise—Edward threads our fingers together and ushers me inside. I should probably tell him that my brother tends to speak with his hands, but I decide to just watch this play out.

"Bloody hell! Look who's here, lads!" Jake yells. He's standing by the bar with Jazz, Eric, Alice, Liam, and a few others. Jazz is tipsy but not too far gone. Actually, it looks like he has reached that state where he gets really passionate about pretty much everything.

It won't work in Edward's favor.

"Well, well, if it ain't the rumored cradle robber," my brother drawls. Yeah, I figured Jake had filled him in. Edward and I weren't exactly subtle earlier outside the stadium, and Jake was there, so... "Is it really true, sis?" he asks me as he pushes up the sleeves on his black button-down.

"Down, boy," I reply dryly, walking over to him.

"Nah, it's okay, baby," Edward says, also walking toward Jazz. Our fingers are still linked, though I can feel him letting go a little. Not good. If we hold hands, he can't beat up my brother, and as strong as Jasper is, Edward is several inches taller, not to mention bulkier.

"*Baby?*" Jazz glares at Edward and rolls his shoulders. Then he cracks his knuckles. "Dude, *that* is only okay when I say *baby fucking sister.*"

I want to yawn.

Alice joins me when Jasper and Edward begin some weird staring contest.

"I'm not exactly asking for your blessing, mate," Edward says with a smirk. "I just came down here to tell ya that I'm with Bella now."

Tsk, tsk. I shake my head. It's obvious that Edward's actually riling Jasper up.

"They're gonna fight," Alice whines. "Before I moved to Paris, I sometimes saw Edward with a shiner."

I arch a brow at her. "Are you kidding?"

She shrugs. "He once told me that he never backs down from a fight. He said, '*I neva' hand out the first punch, but I make sure to deliver the last one*'." I'm kinda impressed, and a little amused, with her Aussie impression.

"My brother's the same," I sigh.

And then I watch as Jasper pulls back his fist, only to slam it against Edward's jaw.

"NOT THE JAW!" I shout and cover my eyes.

39.

The fight is over pretty quickly, thank God, but not before the damage is done. Jasper has a fat lip, a bruised eye, and Edward has a sore rib and a cracked eyebrow. I'm so glad that his jaw doesn't have a scratch from Jasper's first blow, although there may be a slight bruise by morning. And true to his word, Edward threw the last punch.

Afterward, they were both panting and leaning against the bar.

Which is where we all are now.

"I'm gettin' too bloody old for fights," Edward mutters as I gently pat a wet napkin over his eye. It's just a tiny little cut, so I'm not too worried. "Shit."

"Fuck yeah—you old man," Jasper coughs and then winces when Alice wipes away a little blood. "Ow, my lip!"

Alice and I roll our eyes.

Men.

"Says the bloke who whines like a little boy," Edward retorts. "But it fits, I reckon, 'cause you hit like a baby."

Jasper is down to weak glares.

"Are you done?" I ask Edward.

He nods and looks down.

Just as Alice and I finish doctoring our he-men, a large man comes out from behind the bar, with a seriously pissed look on his face...

None of us are welcome in this pub anymore.

"I'm taking Jasper back to my flat," Alice decides.

I grin. "You do that. He's all yours now."

She actually looks as if she's reconsidering, but Jasper pouts at her—which would've made me throw him out, but that's just my humble opinion—however; it works on Alice.

And when I catch the pitiful expression on Edward's face, I find out that shit like that works on me, too. Though, only when it's him.

"I thought you were done being stupid," I whisper to him.

His face falls. "I'm sorry."

I roll my eyes again. "Come on. I still want that lasagna."

On the way back to Edward's place, I curse myself for thinking he's hot when he's being a bad boy. It's such a girly thing, really. I am glad, though, that he's not a bad boy at heart. 'Cause I can't stand those idiots. Been there, done that.

Before we sit down to eat, he proves that he's a man I *want* to be in love with.

40.

If times were a little different, I would've thought Edward down on one knee had another meaning.

I sit at the kitchen table, slightly turned in my seat, and he grabs my hand. "In my attempts to prove that I want everything with you..." He blows out a breath and looks up at me. "I could buy you flowers and jewelry everyday, and only take you to fancy restaurants. I could try to buy your forgiveness and affection, but I won't. Firstly, because it's not the right way. And secondly, because it's not a behavior I can keep up with. There won't be flowers everyday in ordinary life, and I don't do poetry or shit like that. I can't promise fairytales, and I don't play any instruments, so don't expect songs written to ya, either." I purse my lips in order to keep my laughs at bay. "What I can promise you...is that I will share everything with you. I want us to go on holidays together, I want to introduce you to my parents, I want us to argue over the remote—No, wait. I don't want that." He quickly shakes his head. I giggle. "We'll buy a second flat screen in that case. Anyway...I want you to show me the photos you take, and I want you to be there at the games. And, um, back to what I'm promising...fuck—I'm not good at this." He runs a hand through his hair.

"You're doing great so far," I say quietly, touching his cheek. "And I don't like poetry. It makes me laugh."

He lets out a breathy chuckle and nods. "Good. Noted. All right...uh, I promise to do my best at deserving you. And..." He exhales shakily, looking more nervous than he did before. "I promise to show you everyday, as well as tell you, that I love you."

I blink.

That I love you...

That I love you...

That I love you...

"Damn," I breathe out. My eyes well up, 'cause I'm such a girl. "I was sorta planning on letting you grovel for a while, but—how the fuck can I do that when you say sweet stuff like that?"

He smiles uncertainly. "Uh, I don't have a response for that, love."

Love.

"You love me?" I squeak out.

He nods and swallows. "I told you I knew you'd be trouble. It hit me like a bloody lightning bolt the night you fell asleep on my couch. Almost gave me a heart attack." I chuckle and snuffle at the same time, and he reaches up and brushes away a tear from my cheek. "Getting to know you over these past couple of months has been like sweet torture, and... Like I said, I knew I was fighting a losing battle."

"It was also unnecessary," I add softly. "You knew I wanted you."

"I know." He smiles sadly. "I know. Better late than never?" God, he looks so hopeful and vulnerable all of a sudden.

Leaning down, I press my forehead against his. "Better late than never," I confirm quietly. "And I love you, too."

That seems to shock him. "Fuck me! You *do*?"

I laugh and kiss him.

41.

EPOV

"Shit, Bella," I grunt as she drags her fingernails along my back. I kiss my way from her neck to her lips and slip my tongue in her mouth. The woman always tastes so fucking good, it's unbelievable. Right now she tastes like pineapple from her Bacardi drink. She also tastes like mint, which means she probably brushed her teeth before she came back here. Otherwise, I'd reckon she'd taste like lasagna.

After our dinner, I asked if she could spend the night here with me. She said yes but added that she needed to go over to her flat first to change into something comfortable. Comfortable and sexy, I'd say. Those tiny shorts of hers are now on the floor next to the couch, and I hope her black g-string is the next to go. And her top. And her bra. Jesus. We should be watching the movie we put on...about ten minutes ago. Yeah, that's how long we lasted. Now I'm on top of her, panting like I've run a marathon.

It's surprisingly easy to ignore the ache in my rib from my blue with a certain Jasper.

I win, though, 'cause his sexy sister is so mine.

"Oh fuck," she whimpers when I grind my cock against her pussy. I can't bloody help it. This gorgeous little brown-eyed woman has fucked up my life in the best ways. When I first saw her, I noticed her body and face. When I first spoke to her, I noticed her voice, her wit, and her flirty nature. And then it just continued. The more I learned, the less I could stay away. Hell, I could never stay away. Don't even know why I wasted so much time trying.

Within three days of meeting this girl, she had me jacking it in the shower twice as often as I normally do.

I fell hard and fast.

"This needs to come off," she moans, tugging on the hem of my t-shirt.

I curse and sit back on my heels, still between her parted legs. I'm quick to pull off my shirt. "Same goes for yours." Grabbing her hand, I pull her up in a sitting position. While she slides off her top, I get started on her bra. Gotta love the ones that have the clasp in the front. Last but not least, her undies are gone. I groan when she's fully exposed to me.

"Christ, your fucking tits, baby." She lies back on the couch, her breasts jiggling a little. That causes another groan to leave me, but I can't help that, either. My hands are all over those bad boys. My mouth, too.

"You're a boob man, aren't you?" she giggles, though it morphs into a moan when I suck a nipple into my mouth.

"Fuck, yeah." I blow out a breath over it, watching as it pebbles.

Damn.

"Honey, don't tease me," she whines.

I grin at that and reach up to kiss her soft lips. "Honey." I nibble a little on her upper lip. "I like that."

She hums and scratches my scalp, which makes me moan. "That I called you honey?"

I nod and then deepen the kiss.

It doesn't take many seconds for us to lose it. We're all over each other, hands roaming and bodies sliding together. The friction is out of this world but not enough. Only one thing is, and after having sex with her that single time yesterday, I've already become addicted. Of course, it doesn't

help that I had sworn off women for three years before Bella. I need to work up my goddamn stamina.

"Now," she pants, fisting my hair. "Right now."

Slipping my hand between our bodies, I push two fingers inside of her.

"Fuck," I spit out and breathe heavily. "So hot, baby." Fucking *soaked*.

"*Uungh*, it'd be even hotter if you slammed your cock in me," she states, gasping. Hot fuck. My girl is a dirty talker. "Divine fing—oh, *God*," she gasps as I curl my fingers upward, "*fingers...*" I chuckle huskily. "So good, so good, so good." I drop my forehead to hers. "But...*aahhh!*" I reckon I just found her g-spot.

I hope I can find it with my dick, too.

"But you want something much bigger in you now?" I finish for her, emphasizing *bigger* with a thrust.

She nods furiously. "Yes!"

I slip my fingers out of her and bring them to Bella's mouth where I spread the wetness over her lips. She moans. *Jesus Christ*. "I really fucking love you," I groan and dip down to lick off the arousal. Our tongues meet sensually and hungrily; she's driving me insane.

When she tries to push me inside of her, I manage to choke out the word I should've uttered the first time we were together.

"Protection!"

42.

EPOV

"Fuck that!" she cries out, and I freeze. With the tip of my dick inside her, mind you. I deserve a medal for that shit. "You want a baby, I want a baby—let's make that fucking baby!"

I stare at her, shocked and rendered stupid.

Has she completely lost it?

Who cares, mate! She gave you the green light! Put a fucking baby in her!

She cups my cheeks. "Edward, I love you. And you love me, right?" I nod dumbly. She's already taken over my world. "Exactly. And we're not strangers. We know each other, and we know what we want now." True. After I had declared myself earlier, she followed with her own declaration. She told me that she wanted the exact same things I want and promised what I promised her. "Plus, we have time." I still hesitate. Probably more for her sake than my own, but still. "I'm clean if that's what you're worried about."

That's not what I'm worried about.

I'm worried that she's going to change her mind.

She's so young.

Maybe that issue stems from my own insecurities, but I'm not certain.

"I had my period a week ago," she admits in a rush, wincing a little. That almost makes me chuckle. I would've...if an inch of me wasn't buried in her. "There's still a risk, but I doubt anything will happen right away."

I release a breath and relax a little. As much as I long for kids, I want to talk about it first. And preferably not when I'm already inside her.

Yeah, that wasn't a problem yesterday. Yesterday you didn't give a fuck about talking.

I know. But I wasn't exactly thinking rationally then. I was desperate.

"Damn," I breathe out, thinking, thinking, thinking.

I'm a doctor, for fuck's sake; I know the risks—sports medicine or not. I also know that Bella Whitlock has to be the sweetest and most dangerous woman I've ever met. She's genuine and mature. She has me by the fucking balls. We both want a family...we love each other... Fuck.

I'm a lucky bastard...and I don't want to ruin it.

Trust her.

"I love you," I say quietly, and then I slide deeper into her pussy.

Whatever happens...

Her mouth curves into a tender smile. "Love you, too."

Kissing her slowly, I begin to move in her. She meets every thrust, and she makes these cute little noises that spur me on. It was the same yesterday; one moment it was all calm and slow, only to morph into something frantic. She pulls when I push, she begs for more when I grind deeper, I moan when she claws at my back... And then she's on top, riding me.

Sitting up, I start lavishing her tits with open-mouthed kisses while I knead her perfect ass. Bella's not shy, which thrills me to no end, and I love that she is comfortable in her own body.

"That—that feels so good," she moans, and her head tilts back. The sight of her is almost killing me. While I move my attention to her clit, Bella starts cupping and fondling her breasts. My breaths come out in quick pants, sweat starts to bead on my forehead, and my insides coil.

"Jesus *Christ*," I grit out, slamming her down on me.

We go back to kissing each other devouringly, as our movements become jerky and even more instinctual. Moans and other noises are swallowed, and all I can hear is our harsh breathing, how wet she is, and the sounds of our mouths moving together.

"I'm almost there," I pant into the kiss. She swivels her hips over my stiff cock, and I press down my thumb on her clit in firm circles. "Oh, fuck." I break the kiss, completely fucking breathless.

"Yes...yes...yes..." She cries out and holds onto my shoulders, her head once again lolling back. She's so gorgeous and sensual to look at that I can't control my body's reaction anymore. When she sinks down on me again, I thrust upward, burying myself to the hilt, and Bella finally comes apart. As do I.

A tingling sensation spreads through my body quickly, starting at the back of my neck. Then it shoots down my spine and takes over everything. Warmth washes over me, but I shiver as if I was cold. With lazy thrusts, I release deep inside of her hot pussy in two, three spurts.

I still have one hand gripping her ass firmly, with the other hand between us.

"Oh God," she gasps and collapses against me.

Yeah, I'd second that, but I've lost the ability to form words.

Epilogue 1

EPOV

Bella never really leaves my flat after that first night, and Jasper pretends to be okay with it. I'm more than okay with it; so is Bella. But it doesn't matter what Jasper thinks. Besides, he's too busy brownnosing Mac and Didi to be an issue for us.

Even now, a few months later, Mac hasn't completely warmed up to the idea of Alice and Jasper together.

I think it's fucking hilarious, but then again, I'm pretty weird.

Bella says I'm so connected to my inner child that it's scary, though she says it with a teasing smile. She also says it means there's never a dull moment with me around.

There's never a dull moment with Bella around, either.

That woman...

She's fucking glorious, that one. We don't have *everything* in common, which makes for interesting arguments. But I kinda like it that way. The chick has *awful* taste in books and movies—okay, when she reads romance novels, I reap the benefits, but other than that... I shake my head just thinking about *The Notebook*. She forced me to watch that shit with her, and then I forced her to watch *Paranormal Activity*. All three of them.

Scared the fucking *shit* outta my girl.

But I reaped the benefits from that, too, because Bella clung to me like a leech as soon as I turned off the lights.

It's all good.

We share a lot, too, which we already knew. We like the same music and have the same twisted sense of humor. She's also really into football, and the girl can hold her own when we go to the pub. Sometimes we cook together...we clean the flat together...we take turns with the dishes. Let's just say that ordinary life with her is amazing. We're both easygoing.

I've learned that there's no bullshit about her. If she has something on her mind, she says it. She's open and honest, and it has made it easy for me to be the same with her. I trust her unconditionally.

And I love that she travels with Chelsea when we're on the road, because it means I don't have to be away from her. Being Jasper's PA ensures that, and even if it didn't, I'd make sure she's with us...me.

We're on the road right now, actually. Chelsea ended up in the same group as Bayern, Lyon, and Feyenoord in Champions League, so we're in Holland at the moment, ready to take on Rotterdam's Feyenoord.

Well, we will be ready in a few hours, 'cause we're eating brekkie right now at the hotel.

"Oh, my God, you're such a fucking child!" Bella shouts, sitting next to me. "Quit it!"

That comment wasn't for me this time. It's for her brother who sits across from us and thinks it's funny to throw pieces of bread at his sister.

"Honey?" She wraps her hands around my bicep and snuggles it as she bats her lashes at me. She's a little killer, I swear. Since my mouth is full, I just hum in question. "Can you hit Jasper for me?"

I nod and swallow, then get up from my chair. "Sure, baby."

She tells me to jump; I ask how high.

"No!" Jasper yells. I cock a brow at him. "Jesus. I'll fucking stop. I have a photo shoot next week—I gotta look pretty."

I snicker and plop down in my seat again.

"You need a new face if you wanna be pretty," Bella states flatly. Then she grins as the blokes around us chuckle. "Edward could always rearrange a few things for you."

I smirk and shake my head in amusement.

She's funny.

"Whatta brat you are, sis," Jasper mutters.

"Oi!" I point my fork at him. "Watch it, mate."

"My hero!" Bella sings and hugs my bicep again. "You get a kiss for that."

I grin and dip down to kiss her.

Suddenly, her phone rings and I'm momentarily forgotten.

"Alice!" she greets happily. "It did? That's awesome!" A pause. She nods as she listens to whatever Alice says. "Thank you so much. You'll find out what it is as soon as I've told Edward, so...no peeking!" Wow, she looks like she just won Premier League or something. "Uh-huh. Yeah. I'll see you in a few hours, then." She looks to Jasper and scrunches her nose. "Really?" she grumbles. "You know, you could just tell him yourself-" Another pause. "Yeah, yeah, I'll tell him for ya...if you really feel that's necessary- Jeesh! I'll tell him! Calm down, woman." After saying goodbye, she gives Jasper a bored stare. "Alice says hi...and that she loves you."

Jasper's face lights up. Sort of like my face does whenever Bella tells me those three words. "And she's gonna be here for the game?"

Bella shrugs and picks at her toast. "I dunno..."

"Bella!" Her brother again.

"Yes," she rolls her eyes, "she managed to get off work. Christ, take a chill pill. She's on the next flight."

Jake, who's sitting next to Jasper, gives me a look. "I'm glad I'm an only child. Because these two..." He shakes his head at them.

"Too right," I chuckle, definitely in agreement with him.

Bella and Jasper always bicker, but it's been worse the past week or so. My girl is pretty set on riling up her brother for her own amusement. But that's the sense of humor we share. When people fall on TV, or when someone in general makes a fool outta himself, we crack up. Sometimes we watch reality shows just to get a good laugh.

"I have a surprise for you right after the game," Bella whispers in my ear. "I ordered it in Alice's name, so it just arrived to her apartment." She giggles. "She's so curious."

My eyebrows rise as I study her for signs. I can usually see if the surprise is a pleasant one for my dick.

But her face is surprisingly void of clues. Aside from a secret smile, there's not much.

Epilogue 2

EPOV

After the game, which Chelsea won...*two-nil, thank you very much*...Felix and I walk out after I've checked his ankle again. The bloke is serious about this being his last season, and though I think he'd be able to do well for yet another season or two, he says no. And I know Mac is interested in Emmett McCarty, who plays right here in Rotterdam. McCarty did a solid job today, but he still has work to do. Though, at the age of twenty-seven, he has time. Goalies can generally play longer than other players can.

McCarty and Whitlock are two of only four American players in the top leagues in Europe.

"I think Bella's waiting for you," Felix says, jerking his chin.

I follow his line of sight and grin when I see my girl standing by the bus. She always wears a Chelsea shirt for games, and she's so fucking hot in 'em. Those skinny jeans work wonders, too, 'cause her legs...bloody hell.

Alice is standing there, too, but she's easy to ignore. All she's babbling about is Bella's brother, and...yeah, I don't give a shit.

"I'll see ya on the bus," Felix chuckles before walking away.

I nod to him. "Lata', mate." Closing the distance between Bella and me, our smiles widen. "Hi, baby." I hug her to me and kiss the top of her head.

"Consider me forgotten," Alice huffs.

I wink at Brandon. "Planned to."

"Be nice," Bella chides playfully. "Now, are you ready for your surprise?"

I nod, 'cause...obviously. Gifts are fun.

"At first, I thought I should wait 'til we got back to our hotel room—"

"But fuck that," I finish and grin.

She laughs through her nose and brings out a box from a bag.

"It's soft." I take the box—which is *soft, soft, soft*—and squeeze it some more. Soft packages are usually boring, 'cause it's always clothes. "Bella, it's soft." I remember when I was little and received soft Christmas presents. They always ended up at the bottom of the pile.

"Just open it, you dork." She snickers.

So, I open it.

Well, I was right. It's a shirt.

But...

"Uh..." I hold it up. At the same time, I realize that I'm also holding my breath. 'Cause this shirt, this Chelsea game shirt, is not only specially ordered with the name "Cullen" on the back...

It's also freaking tiny.

I hear Alice yelling out a loud, "FUCK, YEAH!" in the background.

"What's goin' on?" And that'd be Jasper.

I stare at Bella, willing her to confirm that we're having a baby.

"We're gonna be an aunt and uncle, sweetheart!" Alice shouts...to Jasper, I presume.

Because *I'm* not gonna be an uncle, that's for sure.

"Congratulations, Daddy," Bella whispers.

"You're pregnant?" I blow out a breath and pull her closer. She nods, looking up at me. "Holy fuck!"

"A good holy fuck or a bad holy fuck?"

My eyes sting and I kiss her hard. "A fucking amazing holy fuck." I kiss her some more and pick her up. This shit needs to be celebrated! "God." I squeeze her to me. "I love you." I pepper kisses all over her face, which makes her giggle. "Thank you, baby." Kiss. "Thank you." Kiss, kiss.

"You're awesome."

"I'd like to think we did this together," she chuckles and hugs me so tight.

More kisses. "You're gonna turn into a hormonal freak now, aren't ya?" I grin at her and give her ass a good squeeze. "Damn, I can't wait."

She smacks the back of my head. "Jerk."

Oh yeah, I'm a lucky son of a bitch. "Still so violent, love." I nuzzle her nose. "My mum is gonna piss herself with joy." Very true. I'm taking Bella to Melbourne for Christmas. It will also be my opportunity to get my grandmother's ring. "Okay, we need to celebrate now."

I love how happy she looks.

"I love you, my crazy man," she sighs contentedly.

Growling playfully against her cheek, I pretend to eat it. "I love you, too, my baby mama."

Epilogue 3

EPOV

I chuckle as a frustrated Mac walks off the field after trying to speak to the new player from Spain. See, Mac hates it when international players never bother to learn English—even a little—hence making it difficult to communicate.

"You laugh now," he mutters, coming to a stand next to me. "But I'm willing to bet you won't be laughing when you have to treat him."

I tilt my head in his direction, but I keep my attention on Jayden who stands ready to serve the players near the case with water bottles. Yeah, my four-year-old son is Chelsea's water boy when Bella picks up Penny from practice. On Mondays, Penny has football, and on Thursdays and

Sundays, she has swimming lessons. It's the busy life of our seven-year-old daughter.

"Why would I need to treat him?" I ask Mac.

He grins. "Because it will be hard for him to get my foot out of his arse."

"Arse, arse, arse," sings a little voice.

I close my eyes and count to ten. Bella and I are foul-mouthed, but we refuse to let our children take after us. Or Mac. Or my dad. My parents moved here a couple of years ago, and when we men get together for a game or something...curse words tend to fly. And even more so when Tan and Phil visit, because Phil is the worst. Then again, I'd rather deal with bad language than having to listen to Tanya asking me to move back to Melbourne. Thankfully, she stopped that once she realized how serious I was with Bella. Plus, with my mum and dad living here now, Tanya knows very well that England is home. For good.

"Bad word, buddy," I tell Jayden. "Remember what I told you?"

He nods solemnly, though his lopsided grin is still very much there. "No lollies on Saturday if I say bad words."

Christ, he looks just like his mother. Aside from the mouth, he's all Bella. Penny is a mix, actually. She has Bella's hair—though it's curly after Jasper—my eyes, and then she has my mum's nose.

"That's right." I pick him up and position him on my hip as I hear laughter coming from behind me. "You know what?" I kiss his nose. "I think I can hear your sister."

"Penny!" he shouts as I walk away from the field. Practice is almost over, and it's Thursday, which means we're heading to Earls Court after this. It's

the day we go grocery shopping, and since both Penny and Jayden insist on tagging along, only one parent isn't enough.

Because our two kids are fucking nuts. All wild and shit. Don't worry; Bella and I take blame for that. We are their parents, after all.

Anyway, there's a big Tesco in Earls Court, so...yeah.

"Daddy!" Penny runs toward me, brown curls bouncing. It's still a little wet from swimming. "I swam a hundred meters freestyle without stopping!"

I smile, proud as hell. "You did, huh?" I squat down, Jayden still on my hip. "That's great, sweetheart. You have the swim meet this weekend, yeah?" She nods excitedly just as Bella reaches us. Jayden is quick to run over to her. "Well, you have heaps of people coming to watch." I give her a kiss and then stand up.

Four years ago, my position as head physiotherapist with Chelsea went to Peter. It means I can take more time off; I don't have to travel with the team during weekdays. When I do travel, I can usually take my family with me.

"Hey, gorgeous," I murmur, tilting up her chin to kiss her. "Everything good?"

"Yeah," she sighs, relaxing in my arms. "But Jazz has called me fourteen times today. I'm ready to kill him. I don't care how nervous he is; he should bother someone else."

I snicker and kiss her on the forehead. "It would leave his kid without a dad if you killed him."

"See if I care," she grumbles, burying her face against my chest.

Alice and Jasper are expecting their first any day now. They still live in my building, right next to us, but I'm glad Bella at least doesn't work for her brother anymore. Hell, she'd kill him. And that's Alice's job. Nah, I'm glad Bella does her own thing now. She volunteers at a community center with my mum a few days a week, and then she's with the kids the rest of the time. She loves it that way—I do, too—and it doesn't leave her exhausted at the end of the day. 'Cause there was a time when Jayden was a newborn and we barely had the strength to get out of bed in the mornings. While taking care of both children, Bella was also taking online classes in art history. And I was working fulltime, traveling and going back and forth. There was just too much to do, so I handed over my position to Peter, and Bella dropped her classes. She was a little conflicted about that for a while, but when she was offered the job at the community center in Bermondsey, she was thrilled.

We have the perfect balance now for our family.

"You ready to go?" Bella asks, her voice muffled by my shirt. "Mmm, you smell so good."

"So do you," I return softly and press my lips to her hair. "And yeah, I'm ready to go."

It's just a regular Thursday for us, but I wouldn't trade our "regular" for any royalty's "special".

"Let's go, kids!" Bella hollers.

Looking back at Mac, I ask if there's anything else I need to do, but he shakes his head with a smile. Then we're out. Jayden clings to Bella as Penny grabs my hand and talks my ear off about swimming.

"Oooh, can we go to McDonalds, Daddy?" she asks suddenly as we get in the car.

Bella and I chuckle and exchange similar grins. "Only on Saturdays," we say.

The kids whine.

What they don't know is that Bella and I will probably bring out snacks and other goodies when the kids have gone to bed tonight.

What? We're parents. We make the fucking rules.

We'll bundle down on the couch, put on a movie, and stuff our faces. I'll most likely eat some chocolate off of Bella's tits, too. See, that's why we run together in the park three times a week. 'Cause food sex is *golden*. She lets me eat stuff off of her, and I give her massages in return. Win-win.

The End