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Bloody Kisses

~EPOV~

When I see my sister's eyes glaze over, I know she's being sucked into another vision.

I see what she sees.

I see Emmett, fear evident in his eyes. I see his human wife, clutching her stomach.

My brows knit together as I continue watching the scene unfold. Alice and I stand in the middle of the forest but, with her gift, it feels like we're on Isle Esme, intruding on Emmett and Rosalie's honeymoon.

How he could fall for a human, I don't know.

I've never laughed so hard as I did the day Emmett came home after a rather startling discovery in his biology class. The idiot had found his mate. In a useless human. A blond and blue-eyed little brat.

Emmett calls her the love of his life.

I'd call her a mediocre snack.

Alice and I both let out quiet gasps when we realize...

"Rosalie's pregnant," she whispers.

XXX

That word... pregnant... it doesn't fit in our world.

"Can you see further into the future?" I ask, ignoring the scent of a deer close by.

Trust me, it's easy to ignore. But it's a charade my sister and I have to keep up.

At least for now.

"Emmett's bringing her home," she murmurs. "But I can't see much else."

I jump up on a boulder and sit down. "So, he finally gets laid, and now he'll be stuck with a child," I muse, shaking my head at the thought of my so-called brother. So foolish. Not that I claim to be so much more experienced, but I'm no virgin. It's been a couple of years now since I had some pussy, but I get bored easily. Mindless humans don't do shit for me, and I rarely encounter vampires that I consider to be good enough for a fuck.

"I think what we need to focus on here, dear brother," she arches a brow, "is how she ended up pregnant."

I shrug. "Either the bitch cheated, or... who knows? Perhaps male vampires are fertile."

XXX

My sister takes a seat next to me on the boulder, and not a second later, her phone chirps.

It's Jasper. Who else would it be?

Clueless fucker.

Alice rolls her eyes and turns off her phone. ~He's getting on my last nerve, brother.

I nod, knowing.

He's blinded by my little sister's charm. He thinks they're mates. Well, it's half-true. Jasper just happened to be one of the few vampires who ended up with a one-sided connection. Because Alice doesn't feel it.

She lets him believe it's all very lovey-dovey, though. Just like we pretend to be vegetarians while living with the Cullens.

Actually, we are vegetarians, I suppose. But it's very temporary.

Alice nudges me.

"What is it?" I ask.

She grimaces. "We have dogs coming to visit tonight."

There's no stopping my shudder. Fucking Quileutes. If only we could snap their necks and be done with it.

But no, fair Rosalie would have a conniption fit if we killed her precious puppies.

XXX

We run through the forest.

Our break is over, and it's time to return to our charade.

To the Cullens, I'm the quiet one; the musical prodigy. Never causing problems and always worshipping the ground my maker walks on. I pretend to be fascinated with all the medical bullshit Carlisle spews out.

Since I was changed at the age of thirty-three, I'm way too old to pose as a high school student. Therefore, I'm a music teacher at Forks High. My sister, however, was changed at nineteen, so she is a student.

Emmett and Jasper, too.

Carlisle Cullen and his wife have two children. Emmett and Alice. I play the part of Esme's brother, and Jasper is adopted. This is so that Jasper can show Alice affection in public. Yes, it was his demand when we moved to Forks a few years ago.

We're a fancy family.

Wealthy.

Much thanks to Alice and me, I might add.

With her visions of the future and my mind reading, we do very well when it comes to money.

XXX

"You're home!" Jasper sighs in relief upon our return. Or...Alice's return. He's always been a bit wary of me. It's not often you have blood related vampires, such as Alice and me, and he knows there's something different about me. Had he not been blinded by the love he has for Alice, he'd know

that she's different, too. He is the empath, after all. And as much as I'd like to, there's no hiding certain emotions.

"I had a vision," Alice announces, reluctantly settling on Jasper's lap.

And soon, Carlisle and Esme appear.

XXX

Carlisle is baffled.

Esme is worried.

Jasper is on edge. He always is when something new and unfamiliar is going on.

Alice is bored.

So am I, but on the outside we're concerned.

"She's pregnant?" Esme whispers softly. "And..." She turns to Alice again. "Emmett's bringing her home?"

"Yep," Alice replies with a nod. "They'll be here tomorrow."

The hours that follow are full of research. Being the good family member that I am, I help Carlisle searching for legends and shit like that. From his years in Volterra, he knows a lot. This is why Alice and I stay here. We need to know as much as possible about the Volturi, and Carlisle Cullen knows most. He and Eleazar, actually, but Alice and I can't stand the Denali coven.

We've met with the other five vampires living in Alaska, of course, but there is no way we'd consider living with them. A few years ago, they visited us in Tacoma. And I have to say that I am not eager for another one of their visits. Kate has got to be one of the dumbest vampires I've

ever encountered, Tanya is a stuck up succubus who I spent a lot of time shooting down, and Irina is just a vicious bitch. Eleazar is secretive, much to my dismay. Lastly, Carmen. Just a little annoying.

"The mutts are here!" I hear my sister sing.

Lovely.

XXX

"Where's Rosie?" Jacob grits out.

I'm tempted to yawn, but that's a human thing to do.

"Probably fucking her husband right about now," I lie dryly, holding my hand up to keep him from entering the house. It's bad enough to have their smell lingering outside the house, but I refuse to have it indoors.

"Perhaps you should let go of that puppy crush of yours," I advise.

"Rosalie is a married woman now, you know."

He glares at me.

I'm not affected. It'd be so easy to take him out.

"I'm aware," he growls lowly. "But she called me."

Oh, did she now? I feel the left corner of my mouth curl up.

"Really? And what did she have to say to you while she's on her honeymoon?"

I assume Emmett knows. He probably dialed the number for the bitch. He's so fucking whipped, it's not even funny.

Jacob doesn't answer, but I easily pluck the answers from his mind.

So simple, so amusing, and now I'm over it. Bored again.

Apparently, Rosalie called Jacob to say goodbye. A final goodbye. Please. How many goodbyes does one need?

She also wanted Jacob to leave Rose's cousin a message. Some chick that was supposed to be at the wedding but couldn't get away from work or whatever. A cousin I've never met. Don't know, don't care.

"Well, she'll be back tomorrow," I inform him lightly. "Feel free to not stop by."

With that said, I slam the door in his face.

XXX

When Emmett and Rosalie return from Brazil, our house turns into a motherfucking circus. Or a freak show.

She's growing some weird hybrid inside of her, and it's quickly destroying her body from inside out.

Then we have the dogs. Oh, yeah. They're all camped outside. Well, three of them. Jacob, Leah, and Seth.

Esme makes them cinnamon rolls.

I want to throw up.

Life at home almost makes me enjoy going to work every morning. Since Emmett and Rosalie were married over Christmas and are now unable to attend school, it's vital for the rest of us to keep up with the human charade. So, Carlisle works a few shifts at the hospital, Alice and Jasper go to school, and I teach music to useless humans.

We also have Chief Hale pounding on the door every once in a while, demanding to speak to Rosalie. And evidently, Rosalie's cousin never got

the message, because she's waiting patiently over at the Hale house. She wants to visit. How cute.

Not happening.

I'm a little amused, I admit, when I tell Chief Hale that Rosalie has caught some South American bug and is now unable to take visitors. Visitors = humans.

Because Daddy Dearest would have a fatal heart attack if he saw his daughter right now.

She looks like she's ready to blow up, for fuck's sake.

But she's a stubborn one, that little brat. She's dead set on having the monster spawn.

And then, a couple of weeks later as I get out of the shower, I hear the resounding crack of her spine being ripped.

I guess the baby's coming, eh?

XXX

And so the freak show continues.

Rosalie gives birth to a boy who they name Hale.

I know. I'm trying not to laugh. Hale Cullen.

Emmett also changes his wife, and we're currently waiting for her to wake up as one of us.

In the meantime, we have a puppy imprinting on little Hale.

I guess Leah's one kinky bitch. Imprinting on an infant? Really?

Ah, well.

I try not to get involved. I show concern, of course, but I stay in the background.

Like now, for instance, I'm hunting. I do that a lot these days. I also stay late at "work" often.

But I just have to get away from the dog stench.

Alice is with me, too.

"Shit," she breathes out, coming to a screeching halt.

Slowly, my head turns in her direction as we watch the vision play out.

Rosalie... Leah in her shape-shifter form...

Hale?

Hunting together.

Rosalie comes to a stop. Her head whips around. She's caught a scent.

A woman, standing on a cliff.

Irina.

Rosalie gives a tentative wave.

Irina's eyes narrow in on Leah and Hale.

Then she runs.

"What the hell?" I ask, facing my sister. "The kid looked like a four year old. Since when do you get visions that we'll have to wait so long for to come true?"

She shakes her head. "That's not four years from now." ~Hale is what, two days old? I nod. "But he doesn't look like a two-day-old baby." That's true. Carlisle and Emmett are worried about how fast the kid is growing. "This feels closer." She frowns. ~I'd say a few weeks from now.

Before we can ponder further, Alice has another vision.

We see the cloaks that we recognize so easily.

XXX

I laugh softly as Alice's vision ends.

"So, Irina turns to Aro, tells them about the half-vampire child. Just because she's pissed at the dogs that killed Laurent," I conclude, still very amused. "It's her revenge, I presume."

Alice grins maliciously. "Yes. And in the end, it will bring us the Volturi."

Perfect, indeed.

"It's what we want." I smile wistfully. Alice mirrors my expression. This is what we've waited for. Which means we have a lot to do. "It's not the right time, though," I say pointedly. As much as we wish for it, we cannot afford to make mistakes with our impatience. We've already waited for decades. We can wait a little longer. "And this is not the right place, either."

"True." She nods thoughtfully. ~But by getting the Volturi to come here, we can make sure others do, too. I grin, understanding where she's going. ~It will be the perfect opportunity to take out minor threats.

"Agreed."

Then we make our plans, my sister and I.

XXX

Alice and I omit telling our "family" about Irina coming here. She will work as a trigger, and we need for it all to happen.

So, when the day comes and Rosalie barges in, telling her husband about Irina showing up, Alice and I exchange a quick look.

The entire thing has been set in motion now.

A couple of days later, I'm ready to strangle Emmett, Rosalie, and even their little kid. Okay, maybe not, but holy fuck, they're all too much. Now that Rosalie is a vampire, and they got a kid out of the entire thing, they're being sickeningly sweet. They're the happy family, living in a fairytale cottage, and please, oh please, just kill me. Or them.

Luckily, Alice saves me and tells me it's time.

"The Volturi is coming," she announces when we're all gathered in the living room. She then proceeds to tell us about what Irina has done, and how she informed Aro of the vampire child that lives here. And when Emmett asks Alice why there was no warning, my sister shrugs and says, "I haven't been looking for Irina. I just didn't see it happening. I only watched out for Aro."

So, now we need help. Help as we stand up against Aro and his army.

Rosalie speaks up. "My dad... and my cousin who is still in town... I want them protected. I've only been allowed to talk to them over the phone, but... I need to see them. I want them here."

XXX

Emmett, who is incapable of saying no to Rosalie, allows for Daddy Hale and this cousin to stay here with us.

I can barely believe it. This is not some bed and breakfast!

Not only am I now going to put up with humans sharing our house, but they will also find out that we're not humans!

I am outraged. Alice is, too.

But there's shit we can do about it, because Carlisle and Esme are full of love and concern for the fucking species that we're superior to.

So, we contain the rage. We keep it bottled up.

Though, Jasper can feel it from me. He gives me a sideways glance.

~You don't agree with Carlisle and Esme.

Of course I don't, you southern piece of shit!

I don't say this. Instead, I just give a small shake of my head.

"All right," Carlisle sighs. "Who do we know who can come here to help us?"

XXX

The night continues with the dropping of names. Carlisle has many friends, and it doesn't take long before we have a list to go through.

It's extremely repetitive for Alice and me, considering that we've already seen all of this in her visions. The only thing we haven't seen, really, is the outcome. That's because we don't know how many of Carlisle's friends will actually show up. They haven't been approached with the question yet, which means there's no decision to base a vision on.

At the end of the night, Carlisle and Esme decide to bring Chief Hale and the cousin over tomorrow. They also decide that we're splitting up once they've settled in one of the guestrooms. After all, most vampires are

nomads. They don't carry cell phones. So, we're going to need Alice in order to track them down, and then we have to fetch them ourselves.

XXX

Emmett, Rosalie, and Hale are going to stay here and look after Chief Hale and the cousin.

Hale is a feisty little thing, and even though he looks like a four year old, I'm sure he can take down a human.

Have to admit, I cracked up a little when he drained a deer yesterday.

But I digress.

The happy family is staying behind.

According to the people of Forks, the Cullens are going on a much needed vacation that will help Rosalie get better from her "illness".

But in reality, Carlisle and Esme are going to Europe to hunt down a few nomads before moving on to Africa to do the same there.

Yours truly is going to Canada.

Alice is going to South America.

And Jasper's going to Texas.

This morning, he approached Carlisle and told him about the vampire he knew as a newborn. Maria. The hope is that she and her coven can be here, too. And though Jasper's wary of meeting Maria again, Alice's safety comes first to him. Which means we need as many people as possible.

This is good, because Alice and I see the southerners as one of the threats we wish to eliminate.

Hopefully, we'll get the chance to do that very soon.

I'm brought back to now when I hear a car coming closer, and it's soon followed by a squealing Rosalie. "They're here!"

Esme is quick to calm her down. "Have a seat, dear. Keep Hale close."

Rosalie obeys and takes a seat on the couch where Leah is already sitting with Hale.

I truly hate how our house now always reeks.

"Emmett, you too," Rosalie says. "Make sure I don't attack them."

Ah, too bad. That could be fun to witness.

The doorbell rings, and it's time to greet Daddy Hale and Rosalie's cousin.

Yay...

XXX

As expected, Chief Hale and the cousin freak the fuck out when they learn the truth about who we are. The cousin – Angela – even faints.

And Rosalie doesn't attack them.

Pity.

If I were human, I'd die out of boredom by now.

But luck – if you can call it that – is on my side, and it's time to leave.

We have three days to hunt down as many as possible.

Day one: I track down Garrett in Vancouver. Carlisle and Esme arrive in London. Jasper begins his search in Houston. Emmett also informs us that

the Denalis are on their way. I don't like that very much, but we need numbers.

Day two: I locate Peter and Charlotte outside Calgary. Alice arrives in Rio and quickly finds Zafrina, Senna, and Kachiri. Carlisle and Esme send an Irish coven to Forks.

Day three: I find Alistair. He's reluctant, but he owes Carlisle a favor, so he agrees to help. Emmett calls to tell us that the entire Quileute pack is going to help us, too. Carlisle and Esme manage to convince an Egyptian coven to be there for us. Alice calls me to let me know of a vision. A vision of a half-vampire girl. We keep it a secret, and she sends Zafrina and Senna to the States before she takes Kachiri to continue her search in Peru. And last but not least, Jasper finally tracks down Maria, Lucy, and Isabella.

I cannot wait to meet them.

I cannot wait to kill them.

XXX

"Alice," I greet into the receiver. I keep running. I'm almost back in Forks. Just another hour or so.

"Wh-ere... y-ou?"

The static is just too much.

"Can you repeat that, please?" I ask, slowing my pace.

"Mid-le... rain-forest... Are y-ou?"

"Again, sister!" I bark out. I got that she's in the rainforest, most likely still in Peru.

"Motherf-king... reception! WHER-E ARE YOU?"

I chuckle and speed up again. "Almost home."

"Wh-at? New plans! I... a visio-n... We C-AN'T -ill the Southern..."

"Wait, what?" I stop again, wondering if it's my phone or hers. But as I look around, I see that there's not much I can do about it even if it's me. I'm in the middle of the forest.

"...cov-en! Saw your m-te... Either... or Lucy... -sabella!"

I shake my head. "Can't fucking hear you, Alicia!"

"Argh! F-ck it! Congr-ts... -nd ha-ve fun!"

The click tells me that she's hung up.

Or maybe it was disconnected, I don't know.

But I don't understand shit.

Hopefully, it's nothing important.

XXX

Angela is sitting on the porch as I approach the house.

"Oh, um, h-hi," she stutters.

She's terrified of all of us, but I think I take the prize.

I snap my teeth and glare at her... and she gulps.

Yeah, I think that's why I take the prize. It's so fun to toy with her.

"Don't worry, Angela," I say smoothly as I walk up the porch steps. "I won't bite. Much."

She squeaks.

With a laugh I leave her there and enter the house.

And fuck me, the house is filling up nicely with the superior race. The ones I tracked down are all here. Same goes for the Denalis.

Although, Irina is not here.

They're all gathered in the living room with Emmett, Rose, and Hale.

~Carlisle and Esme will be back in a couple of hours. I give Emmett's thought a nod. ~Still waiting to hear from Jasper, though.

"Edward," Tanya purrs as I sit down in a chair. I could've taken the couch, but that would've given the succubus the option to sit next to me. "I've missed you, handsome."

I fix her with a bored stare. "Nice try, Tanya, but you're still not doing it for me." In fact, her name might as well have been Tanya Deflater instead of Tanya Denali. "Truly, I'm incredibly soft. You should be ashamed of yourself."

She glares at me.

I smile.

XXX

Seriously, though, why take the name of the town you live in as your last name? Denali. Makes no sense to me.

Can you not see it? Edward Forks. How ironic, what with the whole vampire-and-cutlery thing and all.

I shake my head. I ignore Tanya easily after that.

A few hours later, my cell phone rings, and I see that it's Jasper.

"Hello, Jasper," I greet, zapping away on the TV. Four hundred channels and nothing good. Fucking humanity.

"Edward. I just wanted to tell you that we'll be in Forks within half an hour."

All right. "Anything else?"

"No, um... Well, have you heard from Alice yet?"

I chuckle. "No. Goodbye, Jasper."

XXX

I suppose Kate, Carmen, and Eleazar care for Tanya. That is why I escape the house shortly after hanging up on Jasper – so that I don't kill her. Okay, that is not true. Her continuous flirting makes me want to snap her neck, yes, but the reason I don't... Well, that has little to do with the members of her family. I simply cannot afford to cause a rift between us now. That is all.

Regardless, I leave.

With the treaty void, I run through Quileute lands.

As fast as I can.

And that's when I catch a scent.

It hits me with so much force that I come to a screeching halt in the middle of the thick forest. It's sweet and alluring. Rich and almost... seductive. My eyes scan the area at blinding speed. My body turns, needing a direction. I don't feel it, but I hear the dark grey fabric of my slacks as it scrapes against my thighs in my quick movements. Same goes

for the fabric of my black, fitted pullover as my chest expands with deep breaths that fill my lungs with this exquisite scent. My mouth fills with venom, and I'm both furious and aroused. I bare my teeth. It's in my nature to be on guard, and vampires don't care for the unknown.

This is definitely unknown.

Something.

It's heavy and coming closer and closer.

Much too fast for something human.

Vampire.

XXX

I stand immobilized in a crouch.

Teeth still bared.

A low growl rumbles in my chest.

My eyes are narrowed, focused. My ears are trained, eager to pick up any sound that may carry with the wind or through somebody's mind.

It doesn't take many seconds before the thoughts invade my head.

Thoughts of three vampires. Jasper's one of them, so I quickly conclude that the others...

Wait.

I hear three.

They are supposed to be four.

In fact, as I enter Jasper's mind, I know that they are four. Yet, I cannot hear all of them, and with Jasper's eyes facing forward, I can't get a visual, either.

I snarl in frustration.

This is a sound they hear.

They're instantly on guard, so I straighten up from my crouch. "It's me, Jasper," I call through the forest. Not very loudly at all, but he hears. With the wind coming from their direction, I know that he can't smell me yet.

In the meantime, my brain has decided that the fourth vampire is gifted, able to shield her thoughts from me. It makes me curious, but also angry. Maria, Lucy, and Isabella are vampires that Alice and I plan to kill. It would be so much easier if I could predict their every move. And now I don't have Alice here to help me with her visions.

"Are you alone?" Jasper asks, and his voice tells me they're moving again. His thoughts say the same, but I always tend to tune him out as best I can. He's obsessed with my sister, after all.

"I am, yes," I reply. I want to crouch again. The scent is getting heavier and heavier, and if I didn't know any better, I'd say I was dazed. Or becoming dazed... whatever. But that cannot be it, no?

Perhaps dazed is the incorrect word, though.

Captured rings truer, but that only alarms me further.

I do not wish to feel captured.

XXX

I inhale deeply, hearing the quiet rustling of leaves and twigs as they run in my direction. The forest floor is soft to us, like cotton, but it still gives away a crunch when we pass.

Then, finally, I get more than sounds.

I get visuals.

Jasper comes into my vision first; he's quickly followed by three women, all dressed the same in skinny jeans and tight sweatshirts with hoods concealing too much for my liking. What I don't understand is why I don't like it. But I really don't, and this dislike grows when they keep their eyes downcast. It makes it impossible for me to see their faces, and I must know whose scent it is that leaves me both elated and dreadful.

"Edward," Jasper greets with a nod. ~Is something wrong?

Thoughts invade my mind, and I quickly single out the woman whose thoughts I cannot hear. She's standing to the right, and I notice slight movements from her chest. Quick breaths. Yes, her chest is heaving. Rapidly and in barely-there motions.

The other two females are perfectly still.

XXX

To answer Jasper's silent question, I give him a small shake of my head, but my eyes are still glued to the short vampire to the right. The beauty of her body is undeniable, and yet again I find myself swallowing back venom. This is new, this... this... force of... something.

"Maria, it's safe," Jasper tells... one of them. The female in the middle of the three, I conclude, as she raises her head.

Her eyes lock with mine, but only briefly. Then I return my gaze to my mystery woman.

"I am not so sure, Major," Maria responds. I detect a hint of Mexico in her accent, and in her thoughts – that are jumping at me in both English and Spanish – I'm a threat to a certain Isabella. That must be it. Her. Isabella. "Your... friend here... seems to upset my sister."

That's when she speaks up. In a hushed whisper. "Not upset."

I narrow my eyes at her, watching as her chest keeps expanding with each quick breath.

Suddenly, Jasper's train of thought mirrors my own.

He feels it now, just as he remembers how he felt back then when it was happening to him, and... I remember his thoughts...

When he mated with my sister.

Realization doesn't dawn on me slowly. It hits me hard, even harder than her scent did only moments ago, and it leaves me momentarily stunned.

The female... Isabella... hasn't even looked up from the ground yet.

She's a vampire that I had every intention of killing.

Had – past tense.

"Edward?" Jasper asks, astonished, and Isabella whimpers.

Christ, I'm mating with her.

XXX

I realize that my chest is heaving, too.

A million thoughts rush through me. Most of them are my own, for once. To accept that I no longer have control of myself, to accept that she now comes first, to accept that I will be stripped bare of all my secrets and hidden agendas, to accept that I'm suddenly undoubtedly owned...

It's not easy.

But what I'm struggling with is that I cannot even be upset about it.

I'm completely incapable of thinking a single bad thought about her... about this.

Mates are unable to lie to each other.

No secrecy, no betrayal, no deceit.

Just utter devotion, faith, loyalty, and...

Fuck.

Love.

I'm supposed to fight this!

This is not how Alice and I planned things.

Alice!

Thoughts of her last phone call. The incomplete sentences, the broken words, the static.

She saw this.

I suck in a sharp – unnecessary – breath, and once again my senses are invaded by her. By Isabella.

The words are out of my mouth before I even know it.

They are not soft-spoken or polite.

It's a fucking command.

"Leave us!"

XXX

I should have known better.

Really.

Because once my words are out, Maria and the other one – Lucy, I remember – are crouching protectively in front of Isabella. In front of my mate.

Unacceptable.

Reflexively, I crouch, too.

A growl emanates from my chest as I watch Jasper walk toward me with his hands up in caution. ~I won't harm you, Edward. Had I not been too furious about the two women keeping me from Isabella, I would've rolled my eyes at that shit. Preposterous. There's no way he could ever harm me. ~Take it easy. Don't scare her.

Scare her?

I'm not scaring her.

I'm just aching to have the threats standing between us wiped off the face of the earth.

"Don't!" I hear Isabella hiss. "He's not a threat!"

The sound of her voice causes a current of something unrecognizable to shoot through my body, and I feel how my entire being alters. That's

when she finally looks up at me, and... Fuck angel choirs, this is entirely different. Everything inside me shifts as her crimson eyes lock with mine. I feel stronger, more powerful, and goddamn certain.

I see fire in her expressive eyes, and the dark red shade of them sends sharp sparks of desire through my system. The reflection of my own golden ones almost sickens me, because hers are fucking divine.

There's no way this is a one-sided connection. She feels it, too. I'm positive.

"Leave us."

Isabella is the one repeating my words.



XXX

She is mine.

As much as I want to keep my eyes focused solely on Isabella, I don't. Not as Maria, Jasper, and Lucy very reluctantly retreat. In a half circle, we all move slowly, eyes on each other, until I'm the one standing in between them and my mate. With my back to Isabella, I let out a snarl, willing them to just vanish.

I feel so carnal, so feral, so possessive.

I feel like a fucking god.

~Hurt my sister, and I will destroy you.

Maria's thoughts are full of promise and venom, but she's not a threat to me.

She's not even a decent fighter.

"Leave!" I seethe menacingly.

Thankfully, they do. Still walking backward, they leave.

I don't move an inch until they are out of sight.

That's when I feel the soft touch of Isabella's hand on my back.

Vampires are instinctual creatures, and there's no stopping the quiet whimper that slips through my lips. A sound of submission or weakness, I always thought, but... not this time. It's just an intense need, and Isabella lets out the same noise.

It is with that need burning through my venom-filled veins I turn around and face her. She's so incredibly sexy as I gaze down at her. Young. She's very young. Late teens or early twenties. I stand a foot taller than her, and I'm overwhelmed by the protectiveness I feel. But despite her delicate features, I see raw strength, too. The roundness of her eyes makes her

look beautiful and even... cute. But the fierce redness shows what a lovely demon she is.

The shape of her jaw is soft, and I reach out to touch her. With my thumb, I caress the length of her jaw; she's so soft to me, yet unbreakable. Her perfect cheekbones are next, and they are just as lovely. But when my hand reaches her throat, I'm suddenly enraged when I see scars. Someone hurt her? Two, three... four of them. On her throat, neck, and collarbone.

She's a fighter, I realize, and I'm then filled with pride.

They're just faint scars – in a very familiar crescent shape – but I still have the urge to make them go away. Knowing that I can't, I settle for dipping down to run my nose over them. I nuzzle her, rubbing my scent on her. And it's not until then that I realize she's doing the same with me. I know that I have a few scars myself, and she's paying attention to them now.

In a swift movement, I have her pressed up against a tree.

I inhale slowly, exhaling over her skin.

Marking her.

My tongue darts out to taste the spot below her ear.

She whimpers and buries her face in the crook of my neck.

Each motion brings us impossibly closer to one another, and when she hitches her leg over my hip, I follow and wrap her other leg around me, too.

With her scent on my tongue, there's no way I can stop.

XXX

"More," she moans softly in my ear. I hiss when she slides her hand in between us. She doesn't stop until she reaches my very erect cock. "Mine, Edward..."

Yes.

"Mine," I echo quietly, pressing my body harder against hers. "You're mine, Isabella."

She whimpers again, and I rip off her jeans and panties.

"Yes!" she cries out.

With a firm grip on her delectable ass, I finally capture her mouth with mine. There's nothing slow and soft about it. This is frantic, animalistic, and all about claiming. She's not gentle when she pushes me off, only to unzip my slacks. Boxers and shoes follow, and as she starts stroking my cock, I push my pullover and t-shirt over my head. Then I find her mouth again, already addicted to her scent and taste. Our tongues slide together, and I can barely contain myself. My emotions are all over the place, and if something's out of order, I get irrationally furious. Like with her fucking shirt. It shouldn't be on her body anymore, and it's with a feral growl that I rip it off her.

"Fuck," I moan.

She is stunning.

Standing before me, completely naked, leaning against the tree...

I stroke myself in front of her, watching as her exquisite body reacts to me. Her round, full breasts... Constricted nipples... Curvaceous hips... Slim waist... Long legs...

I can see the arousal coating the bare lips of her pussy.

I swallow back venom.

"Now," she breathes out.

Reacting solely on instinct, I move toward her in an instant. My body covers hers – shivers run through me – and I once again wrap her legs around me. My mouth is back, tasting her neck and throat. I moan when she positions me at her entrance, and then there's no waiting. I slam in as she digs the heels of her feet into my ass.

I snarl.

Buried deep inside of her, we both pause for a second.

I cradle her face and slide my nose along her jaw and cheek, and when our eyes meet, we convey all the things we need to. They are words we can already take for granted as mates. There's no option, and we wouldn't have it any other way.

You're mine.

I'm yours.

I love you.

I'll protect you.

I'm completely surrounded by her. We kiss hard and passionately, scents swirling around us. She mewls and bites down on my bottom lip as I pull out of her, and then she moans and digs her nails into my shoulder blades as I push in again. She's tight, slick, and hot. Fuck. I move faster. We spur each other on, and soon we hear the tree crack behind her. That's when I hear my mate laugh for the first time. It's a soft, melodic sound. A sound of carefree youth. Had I not been sure that she's my perfect match

in every department, I would've screamed in agony at how whipped I feel. But she is my match. I know.

"Hold on," I mutter, lowering her to the ground instead. My cock pulses inside of her. "Comfortable?"

She smiles and nuzzles my neck. "Mmm, very."

My dead heart soars.

"Good," I whisper, finding her mouth once more. I kiss her sensually, starting to move again. In long, deep strokes, I fill her pussy over and over. Our bodies move in sync on the forest floor. Hands roam freely, memorizing, marking.

"Oh, fuck," she whimpers when I nip at her collarbone. My teeth itch to mark her permanently. "Yesss." I swivel my hips, feeling her wet pussy clamp down on me. My teeth graze her skin, further down, further down... Until I reach the top of her left breast. "Do it, Edward."

My muscles tense, and I slide into her with more force.

Then I bite down.

Hard.

With a cry filled with pleasure and pain, she arches into my mouth.

A growl rumbles deep in my chest, and my thrusts become harder and harder with each stroke. It's her fucking venom. If I thought I was surrounded before, it has nothing on this moment. With my cock pounding into her, with her scent around me, with her hands on my body, with our skin touching... and with her sweet venom coating my tongue and teeth... It's a fucking frenzy. I fuck her hard, relentlessly, and my teeth sink further into the flesh of her breast.

I can feel my orgasm approaching at raging speed, and when I push my own venom into her body, she gets closer, too. Again I swivel my hips, making sure my pubic bone stimulates her clit. She starts to spasm around me.

Satisfied with my mark on her, I swipe my tongue over it, making sure it heals.

The skin smoothes out but my mark is still there.

Permanently etched on her flawless body.

"Fuck, Isabella!" I growl. Her teeth sink into my neck; I'm momentarily blinded by pain, but the pleasure soon takes over, and I move even faster than I did before. I can fucking feel the way her venom surges through me. Two becoming one. My venom is sealed within her, just as hers flows in me now.

"I'm coming, sweet girl," I groan loudly. I bury my face against her neck when she licks my mark. She's so fucking close, I can feel it. She's everywhere, once again arching into me. Then she flutters wildly around me, and with a silent scream, she climaxes hard. I breathe in deeply, feeling my chest vibrate. Everything inside of me tenses, and I finally erupt. Deep inside of her, I come in several thick streams.

"Mated," she breathes out.

A sense of ease and contentment fills me, and I roll us over so that I'm on my back. Fuck, she's beautiful. Sitting up, I kiss her softly. She deepens it, and I tighten my hold on her when she starts purring in the crook of my neck. Soon we're both emanating the same noises as we nuzzle and keep rubbing off our scents on each other.

XXX

"Your mind is silent to me," I murmur against her temple. My fingers weave through her hair, combing out a few leaves and twigs. Her naked body is still on display for me as she sits on my lap, and I slide my hands down to gently cup her luscious tits.

I can feel my cock stirring, still inside of her. I know we need a few more rounds of lovemaking and marking before we return to the house.

"I'm a blocker," she sighs softly, sliding her nose along my jaw line. "And a shield. Few gifts work on me."

I hum, figuring it was something like that. "My sister saw you coming," I admit, lowering my mouth to her breast. "I assume Jasper told you about us."

"Mmhmm," she responds. I shiver when she scrapes her nails up and down my back. "You're a mind reader and your little sister has visions of the future."

I nod slowly, sucking a nipple into my mouth. My tongue swirls around it, my teeth nip.

"God, how I've waited for someone like you," she moans softly. My chest vibrates, and like the animal I am, I start purring again. I lavish her breasts with openmouthed kisses. "Never again will I need to settle for a mediocre fuck."

I chuckle darkly, two emotions flashing through me. Rage because others have been with her. Irrational, yes, since I've been with a few before her, as well. But then there's also the sense of surety. Because as she speaks... and the way she moves... I'm a hundred percent sure that she's hardcore like me. She's not some boring wallflower. She's a wicked vampire, devilishly exquisite.

"No more mediocrity for us, no," I murmur huskily, dropping an openmouthed kiss in the valley between her breasts. "You're all mine now, Isabella...?" I chuckle and look up at her. "Last name?"

She laughs softly, crimson eyes dancing in amusement. "I don't remember – I never really fought to keep my human memories. But it doesn't matter, does it?"

"Nope," I say, nuzzling our noses together. "You'll be a Masen soon enough."

She whimpers when I pinch her nipples.

"Masen, huh?" she breathes out. "Fuck, that sounds good." I nod against her cheek. "But I thought you were a Cullen."

Hell no.

I pretend to be a part of the Cullen family, of course, but I'm a Masen. Which Alice envies. My poor sister has to be a Cullen.

"To keep up the charade, I'm Mr. Masen at Forks high – also Esme's younger brother." I grunt when she rolls her hips over my semi-erection. "I'll tell you all about it. Later."

"Later," she moans.

She tilts her head back, exposing her lovely neck for me, and I see the next place I intend to mark.

XXX

I lean in slowly. "How old are you, beautiful?"

I lick my lips, breathing her in. My moan is quiet but full of lust as I brush my lips over the spot where neck meets shoulder.

"Was eighteen when Maria changed me," she sighs, threading her fingers through my hair. When my teeth graze her skin, she pulls me closer, silently giving me permission. "She found me in Arizona... 1938, I believe."

1938. That would explain why I've never seen the image of her in Jasper's thoughts. He left the south in 1929.

My teeth break skin, and she cries out as I push my venom into her.

By now, I'm rock hard again.

"What about you?" she whimpers as I seal the wound.

I close my eyes, savoring her taste on my tongue.

"I was thirty-three when Carlisle Cullen saved me and my sister from the Spanish Influenza in Chicago. 1917."

As a human, I cared more about my job than anything else. So, I wasn't married at that time, which was rare. I was, however, engaged to a woman for whom I had no desire. I can't even remember her name. All I remember is that Carlisle offered to change my fiancée, too, who was also dying. But I said no, and she died shortly after.

Then we started our new lives with the Carlisle and Esme. The only break we've had, really, was when we rebelled against Carlisle's diet. It only lasted for a decade, and it was during that time Alice and I started thinking about what we want. So, when we returned to the Cullens, we became the terrific actors we are today. And when we ran into Jasper outside of Boston in 1967, he joined us, as well. That he mated with my sister was perfect, because we have plans for him.

XXX

Isabella hums. "The golden-eyed doctor from the north. Yes, I've heard all about him." Tilting her head slightly, she eyes me curiously. "Your diet."

"Also for show," I tell her. "Alice and I need Carlisle for his experience. He has something we want."

Isabella grins wickedly and rocks against me, effectively bringing me deeper inside of her. "Sounds like you have some serious plans, my love," she coos. "I hope I will be a part of it."

"Of course you will, darling," I moan, and my eyes close in pleasure as she moves on me. "That's it, fuck me."

"My pleasure," she whispers.

And mine, sweetheart. And mine.

XXX

After four rounds of frantic fucking, I've found out more about my mate. Her gifts are extraordinary, but instead of just seeing what she can provide for us, I feel pride surging through me. My mate is un-fucking-believable. She's both a shield and a blocker. The shield protects her from many gifts, my mind reading being one of them. But it's her other gift that is out of this world. Isabella can actually block other vampires' gifts.

Unfortunately, though, Isabella's ability to block is complicated. She can only block another gift for a few minutes. It's an ability that exhausts her physically.

"What is it that you want, Edward?" she asks softly, dropping kisses on my chest. She's straddling me again. I'm still inside of her. I wish I never had to leave. "This plan. What's the goal?"

I twirl a dark brown lock between my fingers. Her long hair is soft, silky, full, and so fucking beautiful. Just like the rest of her. "The goal?" I hum when she wraps her pouty lips around my left nipple. "To have everything."

Her eyes flash to mine. They darken, and I see everything I need to see.

"Everything?" she whispers.

Slowly, I feel my mouth curve into a smile. "Yes, my love. Everything. Our plan is to take over, and I want... need you by my side."

We want the Volturi gone.

XXX

But there's no way we can defeat Aro and his arsenal as long as he hides behind all that armor in Volterra. We need a lot more people, too, of course. Plus, we still need more information on the vampires there. Which is why we need Carlisle. He used to live with them, and he knows. However, he is very secretive when it comes to the decades he spent there. In fact, he rarely even thinks about it. That's why Alice and I are still stuck with the Cullens. We don't have enough information.

"Hmm." She dips down, gently suckling on my bottom lip, and I moan quietly when I feel her nipples brush against my bare chest. She's so incredibly tantalizing and irresistible to me. My hands are there in a flash, cupping her soft and round breasts, squeezing a little. "Is there nothing else that can be done to get information?"

I smile against her cheek. Damn, I still cannot get over the softness of her skin against mine. It feels almost... I don't even know. It's indescribable.

"Yes," I murmur slowly, letting my nose travel along her skin, yet again.

"But we don't want people to get suspicious." I pause for a small moment,

sucking her earlobe into my mouth. My desire for her only grows and grows. "And since Carlisle knows the most, we stay with them." I grunt softly when she reaches behind her to cup my balls. The feeling is fucking sensational, and I know she can feel my cock stirring inside of her. "Every now and then, we ask a question or two that might stir a memory which I pick out from his mind." My head falls back to the ground then as she starts massaging my balls. My eyes close in pleasure. She never stops kissing me or nuzzling my skin and it's getting hard to concentrate. My mate wants to know more, though, so she tells me to go on before her lips find my neck. I swallow back venom. "Over the years, we've gathered some information." Holy fuck, this girl is good at distracting. "Carlisle slips every once in a while, and I'm there to pick up the tidbits from his head."

XXX

Unable to stay still any longer, I roll us over so that I'm on top. Then I slide out of her before I push in again. Heavenly friction.

"Alice also has visions that hold answers," I tell her, dragging my lips along her hairline. "Plus, sometimes Aro and Carlisle speak over the phone. Just polite bullshit, but we refuse to miss it – just in case."

Her nails scratch my back as I slam into her, and with the head of my cock rubbing against her deepest spot, I roll my hips to give us even more pleasure. She responds by moaning wantonly, loudly, making a flock of birds nearby fly away.

"Dammit," I moan. "Keep going, sweet girl." I lift up her ass a little, angling us better, and then I slide in again. "Moan for me, Isabella. Let me hear you."

"Fuck, Edward!" she cries out. Her head falls back, exposing her neck to me, and she lets go. I have her at my mercy. "So fucking good... ungh... Yes, right there!"

I keep thrusting forcefully, breathing heavily to capture our scent swirling around us. Our mixed arousal is heavy in the air, and even of that I feel possessive. Like the scent belongs to us and only us. The thought of somebody catching my mate's scent has me soon pounding into her with punishing force and speed. Not that Isabella is complaining, though. If anything, it only spurs her on. She moans loudly, she bites, she kisses, she suckles, she digs her nails into my skin, she pleads for more.

"You feel so fucking good, baby girl!" I groan.

Looking down at where we are joined, I moan loudly at the sight. My previous releases seep from her pussy thickly and sluggishly in between thrusts. My cock glistens from our fluids, and when I move my thumb down to stimulate her clit, I'm met with silky soft flesh that's completely soaked.

The feeling of her tight pussy squeezing me is accompanied by images of how I will fuck her as soon as I get the chance. Visions of me taking her from behind, of her sucking me off, of me tasting her sweet pussy, of her riding me again, of me bending her over a couch, or taking her up against a boulder...

"I'm close, little love," I grit out, slamming in deeply.

That's when her teeth sink into the flesh above my heart.

With a feral growl, my orgasm shoots through my body, making me tense fiercely. The raw pleasure is intense and earth-shattering. Isabella follows almost instantly, only prolonging my climax as her inner muscles all but suck me in. Though we're not left breathless or panting, we still collapse together in some sort of exhaustion. Once again I roll us over, preferring to have her resting on top of me instead of on the ground. The moment is nothing short of perfection. Still connected, we recover quickly but without hurry. There's no limit to our desire, and I know very well that I could be

hard within a minute or two. That's just how it is for our kind, and if you add a mated pair...

It's unlike anything else.

XXX

"Mmm, how I love this," she sighs in contentment.

Me, too.

She rubs her nose against my cheek, and I tilt my head to feel her lips on mine. Much like the other times, we turn into the animalistic creatures we are. Purring and exchanging scents, nuzzling and rubbing.

"I wish we didn't have to leave," she chuckles softly.

I agree, but... "I have a nice shower waiting for us in my room, though," I murmur against her thoroughly-kissed lips. "I want to wash, kiss, lick, and taste every inch of you, my Isabella."

She smiles and pecks me. "And I guess you have a mate to introduce, huh?"

I fucking feel how my eyes light up at that. "You bet your sweet ass that I do." For good measure, I give the sweet ass in question a quick swat.

"Damn, I can't wait to show you off."

"Like a prize?" she laughs, sitting up straighter.

Her hands are on my chest, and I cover them with my own. "Exactly, and what a fucking prize I ended up with."

The amusement in her eyes is suddenly replaced with complete adoration and love, and I mirror the look. There's simply no option anymore. I'm owned by her, but in exchange, I own her.

"Time to go?"

I nod, both hating and loving it. I can't wait to ravish her in my room, in my bathroom... and then when all of this blows over, I will finally leave the Cullens behind. We will be three Masens, plotting and living. Living large. And with that last thought, I make a mental note to purchase my mate a ring.

XXX

"Can I ask more questions about your plan as we go?" she asks as we stand up from the ground, and I give her a nod. I hate not being inside of her anymore. I actually feel bereft when we're not touching. Luckily, she seems to feel the same, and as soon as I've helped her clean up – using my t-shirt – we're back to holding each other.

"Damn, this is new," I chuckle, though the sound comes out all wrong. Even I can hear the anxiety seeping through. But I just never expected to feel this. It's almost painful not to be close enough to touch her.

"Don't leave me side?" she asks rather than states, clearly feeling the same. She looks utterly vulnerable. This is new to both of us, and it's going to take time to get used to. A part of me is worried about how I will react when we reach the house, because I know myself. I'm hotheaded and possessive. If someone's thought bothers me, I'm pretty sure that that someone is going to lose a limb. Especially if one of the males thinks about my mate in... unacceptable ways. It doesn't really help that Isabella is an extremely attractive woman. Even for a vampire. She's stunning, perfect, beautiful, and gorgeous.

"Never," I assure softly. "You're mine, baby."

My words relax her instantly, which elates me. It's important to me that I'm a good mate for her, and... I guess I should start by offering her

clothes. Because hers didn't really stand a chance in my path of destruction earlier.

XXX

"Take my pullover," I say, picking it off the ground.

I brush some leaves and twigs off it then offer it to her. I'm glad I'm so much larger than she is. The shirt will most likely look like a dress on her, and I'm not really comfortable with the idea of others seeing her bare legs. Correction; the idea enrages me.

Hell, I really need to keep myself in check now.

Once I'm back in my boxers and pants – shoes, too – I give the area a quick scan before my hand reaches out for Isabella.

"Fuck," I whisper, gazing down at her with renewed hunger. She looks delectable in my shirt. It ends mid-thigh, which isn't concealing enough for my taste, but I will just have to rush her to my room as soon as we arrive at the house.

My eyes take in all of her. Starting with the black Nike running shoes on her small feet... up her smooth, pale, exquisite legs... my shirt – that thankfully hides her curves pretty well – but then there's the cleavage. Goddamn. Since my shirt is way too big for her, her collarbone and even her left shoulder are left bare. And with me standing so close, I can easily see the roundness of her tits when I look down. So, I will definitely make sure nobody gets close.

Mine.

"I don't like that you're bare-chested," Isabella comments, frowning, making me look her in the eye. "Everyone will see you."

I guess my mate is as possessive as I am.

"We'll hurry to our room," I tell her, threading our fingers together.

XXX

"What have you learned about the Volturi so far?" she asks as we walk through the forest. We're both stalling, walking at human pace. Hand in hand, fingers laced together. "Perhaps I can add something." She smiles up at me. "I know of them, too, you know."

Most do, but yes, I already figured that Isabella had something to share with me. Maria is dying for power, which is why we need to end her. I can only assume that she's filing away each piece of information, just like Alice and I do.

"We know of Aro's closest," I sigh, draping my arm around her shoulders instead. "Aro himself, of course, and his mate. Then Marcus and Caius – Caius' mate, too. Demetri and Felix, Jane and Alec, Renata and Chelsea. And we know of their gifts."

We also have a fairly good image of how their goddamn fortress is built in Volterra.

She hums. "That's pretty much what I know, too. But then there's the guard. Do you know how many they are?"

"No. Do you?"

She smiles ruefully. "Close to fifty, at least."

That's what Alice and I feared.

"Which is why my sister and I have plans to take them out slowly," I admit. "But quick enough for their numbers to go down before they can recruit more."

"And how will we do that?"

I stop.

We. She said we will do that.

"You're smiling," she murmurs, giving me her own smile, though hers is curious.

"I just love that you include yourself," I tell her softly. She smiles in return... before she jumps onto my back. I laugh through my nose and hook my arms over her legs before shoving my hands into my pockets, which effectively locks her legs in place. "Piggyback riding, love? Really?"

"Yep," she replies. "Giddy up, old man."

I bark out a laugh. "Old man, huh?" Well, I suppose. Counting my human age, I am fifteen years older than she is.

"Mmhmm." She nuzzles my neck. "Now, continue. How will we take them out slowly? What's the plan?"

I take an unnecessary breath, readying myself to tell her.

XXX

"My sister had a vision recently," I start by saying. I keep walking at human pace, Isabella pressing herself to my back. "I take it that Jasper told you about the kid?" She snorts and nods against my neck, making me chuckle. "Right. Well, Alice had a vision of another half-vampire child. One in South America. She's tracking that child as we speak." And hopefully, she will return soon. I cannot wait to introduce Isabella and Alice to each other, and I'm sure my sister is just as impatient. "We never told the Cullens about that vision, because as it is now, there will be a fight when

Aro arrives." Which we want Carlisle and the others to believe. If they didn't, we wouldn't have the gathering of vampires that we have now.

"So, there won't be a fight?" she asks softly, dropping kisses on my neck.

"No," I answer. "The half-vampire child from South America will prove to Aro that Hale is no threat." Caius will still want a fight, but he will settle for killing Irina. That's a thought that makes me smile. "Anyway, there won't be a battle. At least not between the Cullens with their allies and the Volturi." It's what happens afterward that matters. "However, when everything is over, we will start."

And Isabella, she fucking giggles. "I can't wait."

My cock wakes up with vengeance, but I ignore the beast.

For now.

XXX

"The problem is that we can't take down the Volturi while they're in Volterra," I sigh. "And we can't take them down here, either. So, we will just have to find a balance." Thanks to Alice and me, we believe we have the answer. "The plan is to follow the Volturi after they leave here."

Isabella hums softly, snaking a hand around me to settle it on my bare chest.

"We will bring down a few of them, then?"

I nod. "Precisely. If we're able, we will try to get Felix and Jane. Those two are the biggest threats."

Felix is – as far as I know – the strongest vampire in existence, and he needs to go. Then we have Jane with her ability to set you on fire. Not

literally, of course, but it apparently feels like it. According to what I've learned, she completely paralyzes you with pain. She needs to go, too.

"And why do you need the Cullens' allies here for that?" she asks curiously.

I hesitate.

Will the answer upset her?

"We don't need them here for that, exactly," I respond pensively. Here it goes. The moment of truth. "We need them here because we aren't just planning to take out the Volturi."

We're also planning to kill the two you call sisters. Amongst others.

XXX

"We need to take out other threats, as well," I say flatly, coming to a stop. We're still in the middle of the forest, but if I keep walking, I will soon be able to pick up the thoughts of those in the house.

"Other threats?" she asks, and I notice that her tone is also flat.

Detangling herself from me, she ends up standing in front of me with an eyebrow raised.

"Maria and Lucy," I tell her. "They're both hungry for power."

Alice and I also wish to kill the Denalis. They are too annoying for our liking, and Eleazar possesses a gift that bothers me. With him around, no one can keep a gift secret. Last but not least, the Egyptian coven. Perhaps not Benjamin and Tia, but definitely Amun and Kebi.

"We're going to need help," she sighs, frowning. I'm surprised by her thoughtful expression. "Maria has many friends in the South."

I purse my lips.

I open my mouth to speak then, but I close it again.

So, she's fine?

"Are you all right, Isabella?" I finally manage to ask her, and she looks up at me, this time frowning in confusion. "With what I've told you, I mean."

The left corner of her mouth quirks up.

"You are my mate, Edward," she coos, reaching up to caress my cheek. Goddamn, she's heavenly. Without hesitation, I palm her ass to bring her closer to me. "This is our show." I let out a low snarl, starting to kiss her throat. "Mmm, they can all go fuck themselves."

With that said, she pushes my pants down, and I end up fucking her against a tree.

It's just a quickie, but we need it.

Then, twenty minutes later, we run toward the house. Hand in hand.

XXX

I'm not surprised when the thoughts invade my head.

Standing outside the house...Carlisle, Esme, Emmett, Rosalie, Jasper.

~Oh, you've finally found your mate, Edward! Jasper told us! We're so happy for you!

Esme is over the moon. Apparently, it doesn't matter that Isabella's eyes are red.

Carlisle, on the other hand... ~Hopefully, you can persuade her to try our lifestyle.

I will do no such thing.

~Maria and Lucy are checking out the town. Only Peter and Charlotte are inside. The rest are hunting, and Rose's father and cousin are at the cottage.

I nod in acknowledgment to Jasper.

~Isn't she a little young for Edward? She's my age, for chrissakes. I smirk at Rosalie's thought. ~But wow... she's stunning. How can anyone compete with that? She glances at Emmett, and I want to laugh at her insecurities.

And to answer her question... "You don't compete with that, Rosalie," I chuckle as I pass her on the porch. "We can deal with introductions later. I need a shower."

With Isabella tucked to my side, I quickly usher her up the stairs and into our room.

"I thought there were going to be a lot more people here," she says quietly as I close the door behind us.

"They're hunting," I explain, cupping her cheek. She smiles softly, leaning into my touch. "So fucking beautiful," I whisper, and I'm about to kiss her, but my phone chirps. "Probably my sister," I mutter and fish the phone out from my pocket.

She is gorgeous, brother. I cannot wait to meet my new sister. By the way, please let her know that she can use anything in my wardrobe. I will see you tomorrow night ~Alice.

Tomorrow. Noted.

Isabella smiles when I show her the message. "I can't wait to meet her, either."

XXX

Two hours later, and three rounds of shower sex, we're ready to join the others downstairs. Well, we don't want to, but it's time. I still have a part to play, so we leave my room very reluctantly.

Thanks to Alice's generosity, Isabella is dressed in a pair of baggy army greens – which are suddenly sexy because my mate is wearing them – and a very tight wife-beater in black that pushes her delectable tits together.

I'm relieved to find out that Isabella loathes frilly shit. Give her combat boots and she will smile. Give her a pair of heels and your head will roll. At least, that's what she says. The only thing she enjoys, really, when it comes to delicate is sexy lingerie.

In other words, she is perfect.

"Was that a wall we heard breaking before?" Emmett snickers when I sit down with Isabella on my lap. In the living room, it's just the Cullens, but I can hear a few vampires outside. I can also hear a few of the mutts, much to my disgust.

"It was, yes," I reply with a smirk, and Esme tells me in her thoughts that she's already planning the repairs. "Thank you," I tell her. She's all smiles, and I'm beginning to have better thoughts about her. Perhaps she isn't completely docile.

"All right," I sigh, sensing Carlisle's impatience. "This is my mate – Isabella. And, Isabella, this is my family." Her eyes flash to mine, and we share a quick exchange. Don't worry, my love. It's all for show.

Isabella rewards me with a thought. I learned that in the shower earlier, that she can lower her shield. Which was what caused a forceful orgasm that left a tiled wall in shambles.

~They look so tame and innocent, my love.

I stifle a smile, settling for giving her thigh a squeeze.

XXX

Once we're done with introductions, we start talking strategies. Unfortunately, both Carlisle and I need to keep up with appearances, and the same will apply to Alice and Jasper as soon as my sister returns. This means that I will go into work tomorrow.

Apparently, a few students are still curious about Rosalie's sudden disappearance before Christmas. Especially since it was Emmett whom she supposedly "disappeared" with. The plan was for her to wait 'til her high school graduation before Emmett changed her. Alas, that shit didn't happen, and now I have to pay for it by pretending to love my job as a teacher.

"Ooh, I want to be your student, Edward," Isabella says, grinning devilishly as she turns on my lap. I cock a brow at her, smirking when she lowers her shield. ~Perhaps I will forget to do my homework and you'll have to punish me?

"Wicked little girl," I whisper against her cheek.

She wiggles her ass over my growing cock. ~But you fucking love it.

Oh, do I ever.

Carlisle clears his throat, reminding us that we're not alone in the living room. Not that we really forgot. It's more that... we don't give two shits about it. Then again, I have to pretend that I care...

I sigh.

It's truly hard to pretend when my mate is a sinful temptress.

"If you choose to enroll, Isabella," Carlisle frowns, "I must beg you to keep a low profile. No killings in town, and please wear contacts."

"Duh," is my mate's response.

Carlisle's frown deepens; he's concerned that Isabella will be bad influence on me, and I fight the urge to roll my eyes. Physically, he's only ten years older than I am. Still, he enjoys playing the part of my father. Imbecile.

I'm thankful that we don't have to fuck around much longer with this act. Soon we can cut our losses and move on.

"Can we talk about the fight now?" Jasper asks impatiently. "According to Alice's vision, we only five weeks until the Volturi arrive."

Ah, yes. Important matters.

XXX

Jasper's words about how long we have until the Volturi get here works like a school bell, and it doesn't take many seconds until the living room is packed with vampires. The only ones missing are the Denalis. And the humans, of course.

Maria and Lucy stand in a corner, afraid that they have lost Isabella.

Which they have.

"Human blood would make you stronger," Charlotte says pointedly to Carlisle.

~Smart cookie. Don't you think, Edward?

I smile into the kiss that I drop on Bella's neck. I love her fire, her wit, her bluntness.

"Out of the question," Carlisle says, stubbornly shaking his head.

~Perhaps I can convince him...

My eyes quickly find Esme, to whom the last thought belongs, and I'm surprised. But if she's on board with drinking human blood – all in the good name of growing stronger to defend ourselves – then maybe there's a chance. Because Emmett's thinking the same thing. Nothing is off the table when it comes to defending your mate.

"There will be a fight, Carlisle," I lie, and he grits his teeth together. "I want to be as strong as possible."

Jasper agrees. "I need to be able to protect my Ali."

Idiot. She's not your fucking Ali, you blind fool.

~This is so wrong!

"It's not wrong," I tell Carlisle. "We need strength."

An hour later, Carlisle and Rosalie are the only ones who will not drink human blood before the fight. Even Esme will go to Seattle the weekend before.

We're about to move on to fighting techniques, but that will have to wait, because I can hear Tanya approaching the house.

The bitch is furious.

XXX

"Edward!" Tanya shrieks, storming into the house. I tighten my hold on Isabella, who tenses up on my lap. "I go out on a fucking hunt, and when I come back, you've mated?"

Isabella hisses and digs her nails into my arms.

~Who's this, Edward?

"Shh, my love," I soothe her quietly. "She's just a delusional nobody."

Tanya growls, and I shoot her a glare, while Jasper informs me of Isabella's and Tanya's feelings – as if I couldn't guess that last one. The blond succubus is jealous, and my mate is territorial.

"Tanya, get over yourself," I snap. "Did I not tell you that you and I would never happen?"

~I will kill her. Edward, please let me kill her.

"We'll see, little love," I whisper in her ear. Truth be told, she can definitely kill Tanya, but now isn't the right time. It might cause issues between Carlisle and the Denalis, and we cannot afford that now.

"Please calm down, T," Kate cautions her, stepping forward. "They're mated. Nothing you can do about it."

~We'll just have to see about that. Tanya's thought makes me growl.

I will definitely keep an eye on her.

"Can we please continue with our plans now?" Alistair sighs, seemingly bored. "We have five weeks."

"Yes, let's talk," Leah says, entering the house with Jacob and Sam. Fucking great, the mutts are here. "I need to know how to protect my Hale."

"He's my Hale," Rosalie grumbles.

I roll my eyes.

"What is this, a soap opera?" Isabella mutters. In her mind, she sings.
~Who let the dogs out?

I laugh.

XXX

It's amazing what money combined with our allure can get you.

My contact in Seattle – Jenks – is a richer man since midnight yesterday when I demanded papers for my mate. So, it didn't take long to get Isabella enrolled into high school, and when she and I left our room this morning, I was grateful for not having to part with her today.

Now, though, it's different.

It's after lunch, and I've spent the past few hours growling under my breath, because Isabella's arrival has caused countless human dicks to stand at attention. That she's related to me, Alice, Jasper, and Emmett is clear. What is not clear is why Alice, Jasper, and Emmett aren't here. Well, it's clear to Isabella and me, but not to the students. So, she has spent her morning explaining – to nosy little brats – that Alice and Jasper will be back tomorrow. As for the human boys, she's been fending off leers and questions about dates.

And I have fought the urge to kill each and every one of them.

Throughout the entire morning, I've watched her through the eyes of others.

But now I will have her close. In my classroom.

It's a good thing that I have Isabella's words from this morning to occupy me, really, because she made an excellent point.

"We're going to need help, love. Who knows? Maybe we can find someone at Forks High who we can change?"

My mate is a genius. So, as I've struggled not to kill useless humans for their thoughts about my future wife, I have also studied them for a potential change.

When the bell rings, I leave my tiny office and enter my classroom.

XXX

"So, how are you related to Mr. Masen?" Jessica Stanley whispers to Isabella as they enter the classroom. I almost roll my eyes. Since Isabella is listed as Bella Brandon, Jessica fears that my mate and I aren't related by blood. She wants us to be, because the Stanley girl is another delusional nobody. In her head, she thinks she's close to seducing me.

"He's my uncle," Isabella whispers back, sending me a coy smile. I shake my head in amusement. Dirty little girl. "Why do you ask?"

Jessica's positively giddy by her admission.

"Oh, I was just curious," Stanley replies as they take their seats. In the meantime, I give polite nods as the students greet me. "He's so hot, isn't he?"

I stifle a smile. She really shouldn't have said that to my mate, and it's a good thing Isabella can control herself. The growl she lets out is thankfully too quiet for Jessica to hear.

"Enjoying school, darling?" I whisper under my breath.

~This child wants you, doesn't she? She glares at Jessica, who is momentarily distracted by another student. ~Answer me, Edward.

I snicker quietly. "She does, yes."

When the last student has filed in, I close the door before heading for the board.

"Hello, everyone. Hope you had a good lunch," I say, rolling up the sleeves on my black button-down. A choir of, "Hello, Mr. Masen" rings out, and I turn off the lights. "First of all, welcome, Ms. Brandon, who is new in Forks." Isabella smiles angelically, and I'm the only one who can see the wicked gleam behind her muddy brown contacts. It's such a pity that we must hide her exquisite red eyes. "Second of all, we're going to watch a movie today." The students like this. "So, while I put on the movie, you can all change seats, because I want you to sit in your assigned groups."

It's pitiful how these children know nothing of true music.

"Where do you want me to sit, Mr. Masen?" Isabella asks sweetly.

On my cock, baby.

"You can join Ms. Mallory, Ms. Adams, Mr. Yorkie, and Mr. Newton in the back," I tell her instead. "But before that, I need to have a word with you in my office."

I push play on the archaic VHS player. "I will be back in five, class. While I'm gone, watch the movie. There will be a test."

Groans.

But instead of focusing on the students' complaints, I focus on the scent of Isabella's arousal.

XXX

"How can you stand this every day?" she asks as I unbuckle my belt. My grey dress pants are next, and I push them down my hips as Isabella kneels before me. "The children here are just so incredibly stupid."

"They are, yes," I moan quietly, and she strokes my cock expertly. Of course, it's already hard and throbbing for me. "Hopefully, we will leave within two months." With that said, she sucks me into her mouth and down her throat. "Fuck, that's it, baby. Suck me."

The suction is out of this world, and the scent of her arousal gets heavier in the air when I start fucking her mouth.

This won't make her climax, though.

"I need to be inside you," I grunt. Fuck, images of me taking her over my desk assault me. "Jesus, fuck."

~Let me please you with my mouth, love. You deserve it after everything you have to suffer through here.

"Oh, God..." My head lolls back when she plays with my balls. Tugging, squeezing lightly, all while she sucks my cock hard. Another thing hard is my grip on her ponytail. I use it to guide me deeper down her tight throat, and when she swallows around me, there's no stopping the growl that escapes me. "You're gonna make me come, Isabella."

~Mmm, but I want you to.

I suck in a sharp breath, tasting the air around me.

Then I come.

An instinctual shudder rips through me as I literally hear my release sliding down her throat.

"Goddamn," I exhale, staggering back until I reach the desk behind me.

~Oh, baby. Did I suck the smarts out of you? We have class now. Zip up.

She's obviously very pleased with herself.

Her smugness riles me up. I've never met anyone who is... well, like me.

"Perhaps you have something else to do," I tell her, tucking my soft cock back into my pants. "After all, I doubt my cum feels spectacular in your system." I wink at her.

She waves me off. "No rush. I'm quite used to having cum inside me."

In a flash, I have her pushed up against a wall.

"I have no desire to hear about the other men you've fucked, are we clear?" I grip her throat, then loosen my hold on it immediately. Because as much as she infuriates me by saying something like that, she fucking owns me. I will never be able to say no to her.

"Jealous?" she coos as she caresses my cheek.

"You fucking know it," I snarl, fighting the rage inside of me.

She smiles. "But you have nothing to worry about, Edward." I breathe deeply, allowing her to calm me down. "I love you completely." I nuzzle her neck, inhaling and exhaling. She's all mine. "I may own you, my love, but you own me, too."

Damn straight.

"I love you," I mutter, kissing her cheek.

"I love you, too," she responds softly. "Now, get back to class."

I narrow my eyes at her. "And what are you going to do?"

A sneer. "I think I need to discuss something with that kid... Jessica."

Oh, Isabella. "Sweet girl," I warn softly. "Don't do anything stupid, all right?"

And her sneer morphs into an angelic smile. "I assure you, it's nothing stupid."

XXX

"Ms. Stanley," I say, entering the classroom again. To the humans, it's dark, but not to me. "Ms. Brandon wishes to speak with you outside."

Jessica leaves her seat, thinking what "Bella" could possibly want. "Yes, Mr. Masen," she responds. ~Oh, God. He's so freaking sexy. I hope Bella can give me some pointers.

Stupid child. She's most likely walking toward her own death right now.

Ah, well.

"Enjoying the movie?" I ask in the darkness.

"It's about jazz and blues, Mr. Masen," Mr. Crowley complains. "I wanna see some 50 Cent or somethin'!" He starts cheering, to which several other jocks follow. "50 Cent, 50 Cent, 50 Cent!"

I pinch the bridge of my nose.

And twenty minutes later, I dismiss the class when I can smell human blood.

XXX

"Isabella," I sigh, closing the door to the girls' bathroom behind me. My throat is on fire, and my cock is definitely waking up, but it seems we have some cleaning up to do before I drill into her again. "I thought you said you weren't going to do anything stupid."

Jessica is on the floor, bent in an awkward position, and she's completely drained.

Isabella, my exquisite mate, is standing next to the body, licking her lips and fingers.

The sight forces me to swallow back venom.

"But she wanted you, Edward," she says with a pout. "She actually had the nerve to ask me for help to seduce you."

That's what I figured. Jessica, what a clueless little brat.

"But are you going to kill each girl who wants me?" I murmur, appearing right next to Isabella. I cradle her face and swallow back more venom, eyes fixed on her slightly redder lips. "Fuck, you're sexy," I groan. Then I kiss her hungrily, not caring about an answer to my question. It doesn't matter, anyway, because I want to kill each man that leers at my Isabella.

~Are you mad at me?

I shake my head, still kissing her forcefully. My tongue traces hers, and I moan at the taste of human blood. Had it not been for the dead body at our feet, I would've fucked Isabella right here, right now. Alas, we have to hide the fucking kid.

"I can never be mad at you, love," I chuckle softly, kissing the corner of her mouth. "Now, come on. Let's bury the body, okay?"

"Fine," she mumbles. "But when are you going to fuck me?" Ah, the pout again. "It's been forever."

"Trust me, I know," I tell her, and then I grab her hand to guide it to my erection. "Feel how much I want you?"

"Mmm..."

This woman is seriously making things difficult.

XXX

When Isabella charges at me, I see how feral and able she is. Moving gracefully and quickly, we dodge each other's blows with barely any margin for error. She's a fighter, plain and simple. I may be faster than she is, but we are almost equally strong.

I let out a grunt when she plants a foot against my chest and shoves forcefully. Yes, she's truly fucking experienced, and I end up on my back with a victorious woman straddling me.

"Gotcha," she says, grinning down at me, as the vampires around us chuckle.

Many of us are gathered here, in the massive field behind the house, training and practicing, exchanging tips and pointers.

"You sure did," I murmur, reaching up to kiss her. "You're in the lead now, aren't you?"

She hums in affirmative as we kiss.

"By one," she adds before sucking my bottom lip into her mouth.

"Good girl," I praise huskily, and she rolls her hips over my hardening cock. "Fuck," I breathe out.

Somewhere behind us, Tanya makes a noise of disgust. She's really getting on my last nerve, I have to say.

Perhaps we should just kill her and be done with it.

Not right now, though, because suddenly I hear Carlisle joining us outside, and his thoughts are all over the place.

"Just got a call from Rose's father," he says, eyes on me. "A student named Jessica Stanley disappeared today."

No, really? You don't say.

XXX

"Isabella slipped," I respond, standing up. I shrug and wipe some dirt off my jeans. "It happens."

"Edward and I buried her far away from here," Isabella adds, and I smile down at her. "There's no way a human can find her."

"In Isabella's defense, the human was provoking her," I say, wrapping my arms around her.

"That doesn't matter!" Carlisle growls, and I clench my jaw in reflex. "She killed someone!"

"Dude. I was thirsty," my mate shoots back as I start kissing her neck. Openmouthed kisses. My hands cup her ass, pulling her closer to my body.

Scanning the thoughts around me, I'm pleased to hear that most of them don't see the big deal. It's just one human. Besides, we're vampires. Humans are food. End of story.

Well, the wolves are furious, but who cares about them?

"Calm down, honey," Esme murmurs softly, running over to Carlisle.

He does, thankfully. Calm down, that is. At least on the outside. On the inside, he's angry, worried, and resigned.

I don't care.

We continue training for the battle Isabella and I know won't take place. Alice knows, too, of course, but she isn't back yet. After checking my watch, though, I realize that she will be soon. And I remember the text she sent this morning, asking if she could meet us outside of Port Angeles. Partly because she wants to meet my mate without anybody around, and partly because she has news.

"Baby, how about a run through the woods?" I suggest, brushing my thumb over her lips.

It's been a while since I fucked her.

XXX

"Fuck," I snarl, slamming into her wet pussy from behind. She pulses around me, and her thoughts are loud, pleading, willing, begging me to just fuck her already. But I don't. "I'll come in two fucking seconds if I move now," I spit out.

"But I need to feel you, Edward," she mewls, and I tighten my grip on her hips as she tries to move closer. "Please... Please fuck me."

I clench my eyes shut, breathing in deeply. But instead of breathing in the forest, all I get is our mixed arousal.

"Christ, put up your shield again, baby," I groan. My dead heart heats up when I have the privilege to read her mind, and her love for me is

endless, but it also renders me stupid. I can barely function, and if she wants to get fucked, then she better not let me read her thoughts.

Her mind goes silent then, and I know she's put up her shield again.

"I love you," I whisper, dropping a kiss on her shoulder.

After straightening, I pull my cock out, only to ram in again. Ripples of pleasure shoot through me, and I'm now unstoppable. I fuck her hard and fast. Our skin slaps together, fueling our movements. When the tree she supports herself against cracks, we quickly find another tree.

"You feel so good," she whimpers when I swivel my hips. She tries to reach for me, so I lean forward and bury my face in her neck. "God... I love you, Edward..."

"Isabella," I moan, looking down to see my cock sliding into her. "Oh, fuck... I'm close..."

Reaching around her, I start rubbing her clit in persistent circles. When I press down, her legs start to shake and her pussy clenches down on me.

A few more thrusts... and she screams.

I follow with a fucking explosion. Teeth gritted together, every muscle tensed.

"Oh, Edward," she whimpers, leaning against the tree.

Unfortunately, we don't have time for thirds. My sister will arrive in Port Angeles at any moment, and Isabella and I have already paused twice along the way.

XXX

"What if she doesn't like me?" she whispers against my chest.

I kiss the top of her head, tightening my hold on her waist. "She will adore you, baby."

I know she will. Alice has always been afraid I would mate with a weakling, but I sure as hell haven't. Isabella is fierce, wicked, and decadent. Alice will love her.

"Are you sure?" she mumbles, looking up at me. "I just don't want to cause any-"

I silence her with a pointed look. "Enough of this," I tell her, softly but firmly. "She will approve of everything, I assure you. From your personality to your clothes." I wink.

She's in another pair of army greens – my favorite on her – and a black, rather tight, hooded sweatshirt. Oh, and the combat boots. She's the sexiest sin to walk the earth.

Being somewhat of a nomad, my mate hasn't really had the life I've had when it comes to money and luxuries. But that changed quickly, and I've already given her a credit card or seven. And we're currently waiting for her new clothes and necessities to arrive. Lingerie, for instance... I cannot wait for her to wear it for me.

"I love you," she sighs softly, and I pick her up. Wrapping her legs around me, she whispers against my neck, "I don't think I can live without you anymore."

"Good," I chuckle quietly, kissing her cheek. "Because it's mutual."

We stand still for a moment – there, at the edge of the forest – just savoring our little moment while we wait for my sister.

And then she arrives.

With a wicked grin.

XXX

"Oh, you did so well, brother," Alice coos, walking toward us. Much like Isabella, she's dressed in army pants and a fitted sweatshirt. But instead of a long ponytail, my sister has her short pixie-cut. ~She's even more gorgeous in real life. Thank God you didn't mate with an airhead.

I smile at my sister, releasing Isabella only momentarily.

"Isabella, this is my sister – Alicia Masen," I introduce, keeping a hand on my mate's lower back. "And, Alice? This is my Isabella."

Alice smiles widely, not hesitating to throw her arms around Isabella.

"So nice to finally meet you, Isabella," she gushes. "And please, call me Alice. Only Edward calls me Alicia... sometimes."

Isabella smiles, relieved. "Nice to meet you, too, Alice."

~She's perfect, Edward.

"She is, yes," I agree, kissing my sister's cheek. "And welcome back."

"Thank you," she replies politely. Then she rolls her eyes. "Though, I do not look forward to seeing more of Jasper."

I laugh through my nose. "Well, he's quite ready to see you."

"I bet," she mutters with another eye-roll. "But none of that right now," she adds dismissively. "Let me be Alice Masen for a few moments before I return as Alice Cullen – the adorable mate to Jasper Whitlock."

XXX

That my sister had news turned out to be an understatement.

"So, the Amazons are on our side now?" I ask, astonished.

Alice grins and nods. "Yep. The Volturi killed their mates decades ago, but their pain is still fresh."

Of that, I have no doubt. If I lost Isabella, I would hold a grudge until the end of time.

As if my mate's thinking the same thing, she squeezes my hand.

"Retribution," Isabella murmurs. "I can understand that." I look at her curiously, and she explains. "That's why I don't mind killing Maria, Edward." She gives me a small smile. "I love my life, I really do. But I resent Maria for the way she took me. I've forgotten almost everything about my human life, but I will never forget how she destroyed my family."

Alice gasps, already seeing Isabella's story in a vision, which means I see it, too.

"Fuck," I hiss quietly. Apparently, Maria had been watching Isabella for a while before she made her move, suspecting that my mate was gifted. In the middle of the night, she kidnapped Isabella from her home. And in order not to leave any traces behind her, she set the house on fire. Isabella's parents and two brothers were killed.

"Why did you stay with Maria?" Alice asks softly, frowning in concern.

Isabella shrugs. "She is a vicious fighter, both incredibly strong and fast. I wanted to learn from the best before I took her down."

Makes sense.

"And we will, baby," I promise her.

She smiles up at me before turning back to Alice. "Anyway, what about the Amazons? Edward and I have practiced a little with Zafrina and Senna, but they haven't told us anything."

True. Wanting that answer, as well, I turn to Alice, and I see the answer in her mind. However, I let Alice reply verbally. "Kachiri is currently meeting Zafrina and Senna outside of Seattle." Isabella nods, most likely remembering how they left Forks when she and I did. "Kachiri will fill them in, but she assured me that everything will be fine. They've been looking for a way to get their revenge for a long time."

In my sister's mind, I see the four guilty vampires. Four Volturi guards who killed the three sisters' mates.

"Felix, Jane, Caius, and Oliver," I say frowning. "Never heard of an Oliver."

"Just a guard," Alice replies with a shrug.

"So... What happens now?" Isabella asks.

XXX

"That's up to my brother," Alicia says, grinning up at me. "He's the strategist."

I smirk, shaking my head in amusement.

"Ooh, our king," Isabella coos, fluttering her lashes dramatically, and Alice laughs.

Another shake of my head. Look at what I have to deal with. Two tiny demons, trying to be funny.

"What about the other kid you found?" I ask, returning to seriousness.

Thankfully, Alice and Isabella sober.

"Kachiri has her in Seattle," my sister replies. "The vision is still correct. Aro will see the kid and understand that Hale is no threat."

Good. That's good.

"All right, so we are six vampires with the same goal, then," I conclude.

That we have the Amazons on our side is excellent, and it's thanks to Zafrina. Her gift is spectacular. Plus, they're all decent fighters.

"How many are Aro bringing here?" I ask pensively, folding my arms across my chest.

Alice's eyes glaze over for a second, then she tells us, "Twenty in all."

I nod thoughtfully.

The goal is to bring down Felix and Jane from the Volturi, and then Amun and Kebi, Maria and Lucy.

If we're lucky, we have time to kill the Denalis, too.

"I suggest we take out Felix and Jane last," I say firmly. "With them traveling in a bigger number, it'll be easier to track them once they've left."

Isabella nods slowly. "Sounds good, because I know Maria and Lucy will want to return to the South as soon as possible."

"Same goes for Amun and Kebi," Alice says. "Amun is wicked afraid of Aro because of Benjamin."

Indeed. It's a shame, really, that Benjamin and Tia are as docile as kittens. They're bonding very well with Emmett and Rosalie, even

contemplating changing their diet. Pity, because it wouldn't hurt to have Benjamin on our side. His gift is unlike anything I've seen.

XXX

After discussing a bit more, we return to Forks.

On the way, Alice and Isabella make plans for tomorrow. It's school again, and unless Isabella finds any other children to drain, they will try to find out if there's anyone at Forks High who isn't completely useless.

The police will most likely be there to question students about Stanley's "disappearance", but that's a case that will remain unsolved.

No proof, no trails.

Then, when we're close to our house, Alice puts her game face back on, and Jasper is happy to say the least when we come into view.

"Alice! Oh, Alice!"

It's sad, really.

~How can he not see that Alice doesn't feel the same, my love?

I actually think I know. I'm not positive, but after studying Carlisle and Esme in the past two days, I believe it's because we're only two mated pairs in the Cullen family. Emmett and Rosalie are definitely true mates, as are I and Isabella. But I don't think Carlisle and Esme are. I think they love deeply, but they're not mated.

Carlisle is too opinionated. He can say no to Esme, though it doesn't happen often. But with the upcoming fight, he is adamant to stick to drinking from animals. The rest of us, though, we're going to drink human blood. Emmett and Jasper only have one reason for "straying", and that's because human blood makes us stronger. And if you're truly mated, you

don't see wrong or right. You see a way to protect your mate, and you go with that option. Yet, Carlisle doesn't.

As for Rosalie, she hasn't been a vampire for more than a few weeks. Her humanity is still there, as is her revulsion for killing humans. She doesn't blame Emmett from drinking human blood, though, which only strengthens my theory. You simply cannot be mad at your mate, and if you can, it doesn't last long at all.

I digress.

Perhaps it's because Carlisle and Esme aren't really mates that Jasper hasn't seen anything weird about Alice's lack of excitement around him. She is a very good actress, mind you, but there's nothing consuming about their "love". Same goes for Carlisle and Esme. I know this now, because what I feel for Isabella...

It's out of this world.

Question is, now that Jasper is suddenly surrounded by true mated couples, will he grow suspicious?

All I can offer to Isabella is a look telling her that I'll explain later.

When we're alone.

XXX

The next few weeks pass quickly.

As predicted, the police have nothing to go on when it comes to Jessica going missing, and Chief Hale is not allowed to talk, much to his own despair. Not that anyone would believe him if he did tell the truth. Plus, I'd snap his neck like a twig if he thought about outing us.

So, I spend my days in school, the hours around twilight with my mate, and the nights training for the upcoming – and not-happening – battle. Then, before sunrise, I sometimes hunt.

This morning, Alice and I went hunting alone.

To celebrate the last hunt where we don't get satisfied.

Come tomorrow, we start hunting humans.

At last.

Carlisleis both devastated and furious, but no one really cares.

"I think Alice and I found someone," Isabella says under her breath, entering my classroom.

Alice follows. ~Eric Yorkie. He's quiet. Smart... for a human, but still gullible. He's perfect for bait.

I give them a small nod in acknowledgment before starting the class.

And at the end of the day, we decide that Eric Yorkie is the one. Soon, he will have a short second life.

XXX

With Isabella's ring in my pocket, I go out to find her.

We're going to hunt tonight. In Seattle.

Human blood.

I intend to marry her, as well.

"Where is Isabella?" I ask Esme as I reach the porch.

Her eyes are on Carlisle and Garrett, who are both practicing, as she speaks.

"She went hunting with Tanya."

My eyes snap to Esme. "What?" I grit out.

~Obviously, Isabella isn't going for the rich scent of animal blood.

"Obviously," I reply in a growl.

Apart from a few comments and sneers, Tanya has stayed in the background, but I've still kept my eye on her. Not that my mate isn't capable of defending herself, because she is, but that means little. I want to be the one keeping her safe.

~I wouldn't worry, Edward.

"Who took the initiative?"

I'm ready for battle.

"Tanya."

My eyes find Kate, and I zero in.

XXX

Isabella's POV

When Tanya asks me to join her for a hunt, I already know that only one of us will return. She is certain that she is the one; I can tell. Same goes for her sister. Kate watches us as Tanya and I disappear into the forest, and I wonder how she will react when I'm the one returning. Not only will she lose Tanya but, when the Volturi leave, she will have lost Irina, as well.

"I'm surprised you agreed to join me," Tanya says as we run.

Bitch, please. I spent my newborn years in the dirty South. Takes wicked strength to survive that shit.

A run with Tanya is nothing.

"Well, I am most curious about your diet," I reply in a doll-like voice.

She sends me a sneer before picking up speed and, honestly, she is delusional if she thinks she can take me. Ever since my change, I've been trained to be a fighter. Hell, I can almost take Edward. Had he not been so fucking fast, I would've been able to bring him down every time.

Edward Masen. I sigh softly, ducking my head as I run through the thick forest. Damn branches.

I'm blessed. Really, I couldn't have mated with a greater man.

He owns me so.

His cock... Mmmmm... It deserves to be worshipped. Which I do every night.

And his big heart, of course. Such a kind man. He is so incredibly loving and giving. Simply put, he's a god. Perfection personified.

"He is my mate, did you know?" Tanya spits out.

Mate? Yes, I guessed. "It's not mutual," I reply flatly, swallowing venom. I even doubt Edward is aware, and he's a mind reader. "He can't stand you, really," I add with a smile.

She comes to a screeching halt, and I guess we've run far enough. Taking in my surroundings, I notice that we're in a clearing full of wildflowers. A

babbling brook is nearby, and the sun filters through the trees in visible rays.

I'm sure Emmett would love to take his fair Rosalie to a place like this. They're all about butterflies and rainbows, after all. Pitiful, really.

"Let's skip the charade, shall we?" she growls, sinking into a couch.

I tilt my head. "Charade?" I laugh. "If this has been a charade, then you're the worst actress ever."

She growls again, and I mirror her position.

Bring it, kitty cat. Let me hear you meow.

XXX

Isabella's POV

"For weeks now, I've heard you two! You just never stop!" she shrieks angrily. "It should be me!"

I narrow my eyes as we move slowly in a circle, both still crouching. In this moment, I'm in my element. She will die. It's as simple as that. First of all, the way she speaks of my mate... I snarl. Second of all, she annoys me just by walking around. She thinks she's special.

"But can you blame me, Tanya?" I'm goading her, I know. "If you had the chance to sink down on that fat cock, you'd never want to leave, either." Her glare is lethal... to weaker vampires. "Mmm, so deliciously thick... long..."

"ENOUGH!" she roars, and then she charges.

When she jumps – feet first – I duck skillfully. Then I spin around to grab her before she's even hit the ground. I fist her hair, slamming her down

onto the forest floor. She screams, and the second she jumps up, I pull her hair down. I laugh when a large chunk of her blond hair is ripped off from the scalp.

This is just one of my many tricks as a fighter.

"Oh, Tanya. You're positively dripping with venom," I say, pretending to be sad. It's true, though. Venom trickles down from her head, and that's the spot I will toss my lighter soon enough.

Not one to give up right away, however, Tanya charges again. She manages to get a swift kick to my chest, and I'm slammed into a tree several feet behind me. Fuck. I shake my head, clearing it. And Tanya's back, standing right in front of me with a sneer on her face.

In a split second decision, I haul myself up the tree, using it as leverage when I push off it. I land behind her, and I don't waste time. Grabbing both her shoulders, I squeeze as hard as I can. In the meantime, I also plant my knee against her spine. Again, she screams. She's also unable to turn around, and I finally go for her neck.

I hiss. My teeth are coated in venom.

And I bite down.

That second, when she is stunned by my venom pushing into her body, I bring out my lighter.

She screams a third time, most likely because she knows the game is over.

Before I kick her off me, I smash down the lit lighter against her skull.

Bonfire.

"Good riddance, bitch," I mutter, feeling my mouth curve into a smile as I watch her burn.

XXX

Back to EPOV...

I speed through the forest as fast as I can, easily following my mate's scent.

It's only a matter of time before others will follow.

The pillar of smoke...

It doesn't belong to my Isabella. I would feel it in my body if something happened to her.

And if it did... My wrath would spare no one.

"Isabella!" I snarl, getting closer and closer to the fire.

I breathe out a sigh in relief when I hear her soft chuckle, but I don't slow down.

"I'm fine, my love."

When I reach a clearing, I see her. Her red eyes are shining from the fire, and I keep running until I have her in my arms.

"Christ, baby," I breathe out. Cradling her face, I search for traces of the fight. "As much faith I have in your strength..." I swallow hard, shaking my head. The thought of losing her... "Don't ever fucking leave without me knowing. Are we clear?"

My furious glare is enough for her to know that I'm not fucking around.

"Okay," she whispers with a nod. "I promise, Edward."

I close my eyes, dropping my forehead to hers.

"Thank you," I murmur quietly. "I know you're extremely capable, baby girl, but I..."

"Don't want me to face a fight alone," she finishes softly. "I understand, sweetheart."

Good.

"You're everything to me," I tell her, brushing my thumbs over her cheeks. "I want to be the one protecting you. The only one."

She smirks. "My chauvinistic bastard, how I love you."

This woman just knows how to make me smile.

Unfortunately, our sweet moment is over when I hear the frantic thoughts of a few approaching Denalis.

And my fury is back in full force.

XXX

When Kate enters the clearing, eyes full of horror when she spots the fire, I charge right at her.

"Edward!" Carmen and Eleazar cry out, but I don't care.

I slam into Kate's body, pushing her up against a tree, and I hold her up by a grip on her throat.

"I heard your thoughts before I left," I hiss through clenched teeth. Her eyes widen. "You knew... You fucking knew why Tanya wanted Isabella to join her."

"I... I..." She's got nothing, and I'm glad she understands that if she used her gift on me now, Isabella would slay her. ~Please, I didn't... I mean... she's my sister...

"Was your sister," I spit out, and I smile internally at the devastated look in her features.

"Edward." Great, Carlisle's here, too. "Please calm down. Let's talk in a civilized manner."

"Shut the fuck up, you chipmunk," Isabella snarls at him.

Chipmunk, love? Really?

~I'm losing Edward. This isn't the man I once saved.

I ignore Carlisle's pathetic thoughts.

Jasper is next. Hell, are they all here? Jesus...

"Edward, listen to Carlisle," he says, trying to calm me down. Luckily, Isabella blocks Jasper's gift.

"Oh, shut up," she mutters. "Why don't go do your homework instead?" She's brilliant. I could not love this woman more. Jasper, on the other hand, is fuming. He hates that my mate can block gifts. "And you know," she muses, "counting to three by saying, 'there's one, there's anutha', and there's one mo'" is just not correct, you hillbilly. Now, shoo."

I laugh, amused by her wit.

Focusing on Kate again, I lower her to the ground to whisper a few words in her ear. I whisper them softly, so, so quietly. But it's a promise.

"You will die for what you've done."

I run a quick scan through the minds of the audience, satisfied when I find out that they didn't hear my vow.

"But not yet," I add, backing away from her.

In a few swift movements, I'm back with Isabella in my arms.

"Let's go to Seattle, darling," I murmur, and she smiles radiantly. "I'm thirsty."

XXX

When we reach Seattle, we start by breaking into a store for new clothes. We swam across the sound, after all, and I don't want to get married in wet rags. Not that Isabella knows we're getting married yet, but she will.

"Goddamn, you're sexy," she moans softly when I exit the shop.

I smirk at her, and I make a mental note to wear a leather jacket more often. Along with the black jacket, I chose a pair of stone-washed jeans and a grey button-down. My Doc Martens will have to do, because this store didn't have shoes, and I'm eager to make Isabella a Masen.

"As are you, my love," I tell her, letting my eyes drink her in. Fuck. My jeans are getting tight, but it's her blood-red corset. Tight, black jeans... and the corset. So tight, pushing her tits together... "Christ, Isabella."

I swallow back venom, forcing myself to step away slightly. It's almost midnight, and Alice is waiting at Jenks' office. We can fuck later. We will fuck later.

"Come on, baby," I say, grabbing her hand. "We have an appointment."

XXX

We fly over rooftops. She's curious, but I told her earlier to wait.

Before we reach Jenks' building, I pull her to my body, because it's not just about getting married. It's also about proposing.

"Ready to tell me, love?" she asks, smiling up at me.

I tilt my head, taking in her beauty. Her crimson eyes... Ruby lips... so luscious and soft. It's my favorite color on her – red.

Blood red.

"I am, yes," I murmur, reaching into my pocket. No fanfare. She knows how completely she owns me. I hold up the ring for her. "Marry me, Isabella. Carry my name forever. You'll make me the luckiest man on earth."

Her eyes widen, flickering between the ring and my own eyes.



A double band in platinum, diamonds everywhere. A round ruby in the middle, diamonds around it.

"Oh, Edward," she breathes out.

"Say yes, my love," I whisper.

Her eyes meet mine, and a slow smile spreads on her lips. "Yes, Edward. Fuck, yes!"

I swallow hard, kissing the inside of her hand before sliding the ring onto her finger.

"Thank you," I rasp, and then I kiss her hungrily. Thank you, thank you, thank you. I will cherish you forever.

~I love you, Edward... so, so much.

I can't wait another minute. "We're getting married, darling. Now."

She gasps, and I tell her about Jenks, who is currently waiting for us.

"Alice is there, too," I add softly, placing a kiss on her forehead.

"God, let's hurry then!" she exclaims excitedly.

XXX

When we finally reach Jenks' office building, Isabella and I both come to a screeching halt.

Esme. I can fucking smell her.

"What's Esme doing here?" Isabella asks.

I scan the building in front of us, quickly tracking down three humans and two vampires. Jenks, two human witnesses, Alicia... and Esme. Thoughts... I read the thoughts. And Aliceknows we're here.

~Esme has something to tell us, dear brother. I assure you, though, everything is perfect. Now, get up here.

That calms me down, and I thread my fingers together with Isabella's before opening the large door.

"It's okay," I tell my mate.

In the elevator, Isabella steps away from me to fix her already flawless hair. Our eyes meet in the mirror, and I shake my head in amusement. She's fucking perfect, but she still fluffs her hair, adjusts her corset, and reapplies her lipstick.

"Beautiful," I murmur.

She smiles, rather shyly, actually. That's a first, but it's just another thing to add to the list of things I adore about my mate. She never ceases to amaze or surprise me.

"You have a ring for you, as well, I hope," she says softly, and I smile.

I tap two fingers over the left pocket of my jeans. "You bet, baby."

Then we reach the fifteenth floor, and we walk hand in hand toward Jenks' office, where Alice and Esme are waiting for us.

"Fuck, you're gorgeous, Isabella!" Alice gushes when we enter the office.

My sister is dressed pretty much the same, though I'm glad to see that her corset isn't just as revealing.

~I hope you don't mind my being here.

I shake my head, walking over to Esme. She looks timid.

XXX

"You have a reason," I state quietly, reading her mind. And I understand. She's here because she wants to see true mates get married. Which means she's figured out that Carlisle isn't her real one. I can't say I'm surprised. Forks is full of mated pairs now. Charlotte and Peter, Carmen and Eleazar, Isabella and myself, Tia and Benjamin, Emmett and Rosalie, Amun and Kebi...

It's probably only a matter of time before Jasper catches on. However, unlike Jasper, Esme hasn't really mated with Carlisle. There's a love, but no mating connection. Not even a one-sided one.

"Are you okay?" I ask her, glancing over at Isabella and Alice, who are both talking to Jenks.

Jenks knows enough not to question Isabella's eye color.

"No," Esme whispers. In her eyes, I see both grief and fury. She loves Carlisle, but she feels betrayed. For decades, we've lived in secluded places. Esme has never really experienced a world where Carlisle isn't the family leader. His words are all she knows. This includes diet, rules, explanations...

"He told me we were mates," she hisses under her breath. "But after seeing you and Isabella... the rest of our visitors..."

I nod, understanding. "When did you start suspecting?"

"I always wondered why Carmen and Eleazar were so close..." She trails off, but I pick up the rest as she remembers past visits with the Denalis. They're the only vampires she's encountered. A few nomads, sure, but no mates. And since Alice hasn't mated with Jasper, Esme has had no reason to doubt Carlisle.

"I started wondering more when Rose woke up as one of us," she continues. "You followed shortly with Isabella." I nod, looking over at my

mate again. ~The night most of you decided to hunt humans to prepare for the fight, I understood that Carlisle and I didn't share the same bond.

I had figured as much. Before Isabella, I didn't understand the connection, but I do now, and it's easy to see who's mated and who's not.

~Are Alice and Jazz really mates?

I chuckle and look at Esme again. "Alice is Jasper's mate, but that's as far as it goes."

She frowns. ~Alice is pretending? I nod. ~Oh. That doesn't seem very fair to Jasper, Edward.

I smirk. "Never said we played fair."

"It's time, Edward," Alice announces, and I walk over to Isabella, leaving Esme to her thoughts.

Time to finally make Isabella my wife.

XXX

"I will love you forever," I murmur, squeezing both her hands. "I will be faithful, I will protect you, and I fight for you." It's out of my control, no matter what, but even if I did have a choice, Isabella would be it. "And I will make sure I'm a good husband for you."

She doesn't know about the wedding ring I also bought her, so she lets out a quiet gasp when I pull it out of my pocket. It's just a simple platinum band with diamonds encrusted around it, but it matches her engagement ring.

Once it's on her finger, I kiss it before it's her turn.

"I will do my best to be a perfect wife for you," she says softly. "I will love you, cherish you, be faithful, and protect you with my life." She smiles widely, sliding the titanium ring onto my finger. "Eternity, Edward."

"Eternity," I echo quietly.

A few moments later, Jenks declares us husband and wife.

As agreed upon, he hands me our new papers. Papers that we will use as soon as we're out of Forks.

Edward and Isabella Masen.

What Carlisle and the rest of the Cullens don't know is that I've also emptied fourteen of our seventeen bank accounts.

It's money Alice and I have earned us.

It's ours. The Masens' money.

Alice and Esme give us hugs and congratulations, but they know that we're eager to get out of here, so they keep it brief.

In my mind, I make a decision to tell Alice to keep an eye on Esme. As soon as I've made the decision, my sister sees it in a vision, and she gives me a nod in understanding. Esme knows a great deal about us now, and if she spills the beans...

More than one head would be rolling.

~I don't foresee any problems, brother. I think we have Esme on our side, as a matter of fact.

Good.

"Let's go, Mrs. Masen," I tell Isabella with a wink. "Dinner's on me."

I can't wait to see her feed.

XXX

In the middle of a crowded nightclub, Isabella and I are on the hunt for human blood. Her shoulders against my chest... my hard cock against her lower back. Grinding little minx. And men notice her, of course.

I swallow back venom, burying my face in the crook of her neck to prevent a killing spree.

I breathe her in.

My teeth are fucking itching for a surface. To break skin...

A low growl emanates from my chest when a man nearby starts gawking at my wife's tits.

"Easy there, my love," she moans softly, reaching up to weave her fingers through my hair. I suck on her neck, and my hand moves up her stomach, not stopping until I cup one of her breasts in my hand. "Oh, fuck... Mmm..."

Still kissing and sucking on her neck, I look up to find the human still watching. His eyes are wide as I squeeze Isabella's breasts, and his thoughts are jumbled. He's turned on, he wants the woman in my arms, he couldn't care less about the one he's currently dancing with.

"I want to snap his neck," I whisper in her ear.

She shivers. ~Who's stopping you?

No one.

But then there is, because the thought that enters my mind belongs to someone from Forks.

~Holy shit! It's Mr. Masen! Whoa... is that... Bella? But, but...

I turn around, quickly finding the fucking student.

Correction. Two students from Forks High.

~Oh, my God... I mean... they're related!

I smirk.

Snack time.

XXX

It only takes a second to fill Isabella in, and then we're walking toward Mike Newton and Ben Cheney.

It's funny, because Isabella and I are the ones who are caught. Teacher and student, together in a nightclub in Seattle. Oh, and the fact that we're supposedly uncle and niece, of course.

Regardless, the two boys are the ones looking very caught. Which they are. I mean, we can't possibly let them leave this place alive.

"Mike and Ben, right?" Isabella asks them... as if she can't remember.

The two boys nod dumbly, eyes still wide and jaws dropped.

"M-M-Mr. Masen," Cheney stutters.

His thoughts are too incoherent to read, but I manage to pick up a few things. He's terrified that I will tell his parents about their fake IDs.

Oh, Benjamin. Don't you worry. I won't tell them. Neither will you, of course, but that's another matter.

I cock a brow at them. "I'm pretty certain you need to be twenty-one in here."

~Holy fuck, Bella's hot. Jesus, that corset... those boobs...

I sneer at the Newton kid.

"Keep your fucking eyes off my wife," I snap angrily, towering over him.

~Wwww...ife? I thought she was his niece or something.

Ben is also confused, and he narrows his eyes at my mate. ~She's not a student? Wait... her eyes, they're not brown anymore...

My throat is on fire, and when I look over at Isabella, catching her as she licks her lips, I know she's thirsty, too.

"How about we go outside and talk things over," I say smoothly, not leaving room for argument. "Come on."

XXX

Confusion slows them down as I take the lead. Their internal struggles prevent them from making rational decisions, such as... oh, I don't know... running for their lives, perhaps? Not that it would work very well in their favor. I do love a good chase, and my beautiful girl has admitted that she enjoys playing with her food. I know, she's so adorable.

I digress.

It's not until we reach the back alley that Ben and Mike start thinking about something other than having their teacher catch them with fake IDs. Or that their parents currently think they're having a guys' night at the arcade in Port Angeles. Or that they've seen said teacher touch the supposed student – who he is related to – highly inappropriately. It's like

a warning bell going off inside of them, and suddenly their instincts kick in, telling them that something is... off. Dangerous, even.

And that's when Isabella slams Mike into a brick wall.

"Mmm, you smell good," she purrs, licking her lips. Mike's eyes widen, and he's overwhelmed with both horror and arousal. The latter makes me growl at him, and he's left with only horror. Much better. "In fact..." She trails a finger along his jaw, her red painted nail digging in slightly. "Good enough to eat." She laughs softly, shaking her head. "Pardon me. I mean good enough to drink."

She's magnificent.

"Isn't she gorgeous?" I murmur to Ben, gripping his neck. "I could watch her forever."

Ben gulps, and my nostrils flare slightly when I can practically smell the fear rolling off of him in waves.

"Isabella, darling," I say, and her eyes snap to mine. My cock twitches in my jeans. "Not here, remember?"

She nods quickly.

Seconds later, we have the two petrified humans thrown over our shoulders as we make our way up the fire escape. When Mike brings himself to scream, I warn Isabella in advance and she knocks him out with a swift face punch.

I snicker.

XXX

"I'm too thirsty to play," she mutters with a pout when we reach the rooftop. "Ah, well. There will be others."

~Oh, God... What are they? I... I... what will they do?

"We're going to have dinner," I answer Ben's thought. I throw him off me, and he lands on his back, staring up at me with terror written all over his face. It only fuels my thirst. I'm a predator. If he runs, I chase. If he looks scared, I smile.

"Do you know how long I've waited for this?" I ask, squatting down. I chuckle and grip his chin. "No, of course you don't. How could you possibly know that I've waited for decades to sink my teeth into a human neck again?" So many years wasted on animal blood. The short period of time Alice and I spent feeding on humans has only worked to aggravate us. We remember the sweet, rich taste of human blood. "Now it's finally time to return to our true nature."

~No, no, no, no, please... My parents, my sisters... Please, no...

I inhale deeply.

And I grimace as my eyes find Isabella. Mike is half awake and currently pissing his pants. I shake my head, furious that he has tainted the scent of blood in the air.

"I'm afraid it happens quite often when you fuel their fear," Isabella sighs.

"Pl-please," Cheney whimpers.

I look down at him again, deciding that enough is enough. I don't want him to soil himself, too. So, I fist his shirt and pull him off the ground. My mouth fills with venom. I bare my teeth. I close in. Thump, thump, thump, thump. His heart, pulse... I lick my lips. Heat radiates from his skin, beckoning me. Again, I inhale. And I groan.

I'm vaguely aware of a slowing heartbeat, meaning Isabella's already drinking from Mike.

I go for the jugular.

With a low moan, I close the last distance, and my teeth pierce Ben's skin with ease.

Blood fills my mouth.

XXX

It's sensational and arousing, making me shiver and shudder. I drink greedily. Blood trickles down my throat with each pull. Warm, rich, sweet, thick, satisfying. More and more. I moan quietly, tasting, tasting, tasting. My tastebuds all but cheer in victory. No more animals. Only this...

Another moan escapes me when I feel hands on me.

I keep drinking.

Isabella's done, and now she's here. Touching me as I feed.

~So sexy, my love.

She unzips my jeans, freeing my hard cock when she pushes two layers of clothes down my hips.

Oh, fuck me...

She sucks my cock into her mouth.

Hard.

And Ben's heart stutters before going silent.

In the air, I can smell Isabella's wetness. She's fucking touching herself as she sucks me.

~I need you, Edward. She whimpers around me.

My eyes roll back as the last drops of blood slide down my throat. I'm harder than diamond, sated at last, but another hunger is making itself known. It's raw, animalistic, and consuming. With a growl, I toss the body away from me, and then I push Isabella down onto the ground. Her jeans are already gone, and she's ready to take me in. But before I do that, I need something else on my tongue. She gasps when I lower my mouth to her pussy. Hands, my hands, they're roughly kneading her ass, keeping her still, keeping her pussy in my mouth.

"Oh, fuck!" she cries out.

My tongue delves deeper, wanting more and more. It's frantic and needy. Fucking instinctual.

She squirms as I eat her out.

~Edward... Oh, God... Edward!

My fingers fuck her. My tongue tastes her sweet juices.

There's nothing human in me.

And when she comes in my mouth, I groan at the explosive pleasure. Blood and Isabella's arousal... it fucking completes me.

I don't even let her recover from her orgasm. Giving my cock a few hard strokes, I guide myself into her soaked pussy.

"Fuck," I rasp hoarsely, overcome with too many urges.

Rough and wild. We fucking claw at each other as I pound into her relentlessly. Our kiss is hungry, tongues sliding and devouring, teeth clashing together, lips sucking... Oh, Goddamn... More, harder, deeper, faster. She cries out, almost sobbing my name, and I respond by kissing her harder. We breathe harshly, panting and moaning. Legs tangled for

leverage. She meets my thrusts. I can feel my insides tensing, coiling, readying for eruption. In and out, grinding, sweet spot found.

"Edward," she chokes out. ~I can't... oh, fuck... too much... More, love. All of you.

"Come on, baby," I urge breathlessly. My cock slides into her, and I swivel my hips, forcing myself deeper even though I'm already all in. "So fucking beautiful," I moan.

Moments later, we're swallowing each other's moans and snarls as we climax together.

Our wedding night is off to a great start.

XXX

"Carlisle is on the warpath," I mutter as Isabella and I run toward the house.

Being back in Forks is bittersweet. The forty-eight hours we spent in Seattle were nothing short of perfection, but it's here in Forks where everything will end. Soon, we will leave this place for good.

With that thought, I kiss my wife's left ring finger. Then we pick up speed, darting through the forest at raging speed.

"How come? We haven't done anything wrong," she says, frowning in confusion.

To Carlisle, we have. Everything is out of control in his opinion.

"With so many vampires in the area, more and more humans go missing," I explain quietly, dodging a branch. "Though he expected it from our visitors, he sure as hell did not see it coming from Emmett, Esme – his

own wife," I give her a pointed look, and she nods, "myself, of course, and Alice and Jasper."

Carlisle is surrounded by reddening eyes.

Mine are crimson already. I may or may not have indulged in more than a few humans in Seattle.

Alice is almost the same. She's still in Seattle. Jasper joined her there yesterday, and they will return tomorrow. Esme is also there. And Emmett headed to Tacoma while Isabella and I were gone, and his eyes are quickly going from amber to red.

"Then we have the mutts," I chuckle, hearing Jacob's thoughts from the porch, where he is silently fuming. "Thanks to Leah imprinting on Hale, the dogs aren't allowed to do anything to jeopardize this."

Isabella snickers. "Maybe we should gag the pups."

"I would still hear them," I grumble.

"Aw, poor baby," she replies softly, jumping onto my back. She kisses my neck, and I wrap her legs around me, holding them in place. "I suppose you don't want me to block your gift?"

Tempting, but... "No, thank you, little love. I need to be on guard."

She purrs against my neck. "My protector."

Always.

And then we reach the house. Our short honeymoon is over.

I will definitely take my mate on a long honeymoon once this is all over, but now we only have one thing to focus on: the upcoming meeting with the Volturi.

Carlisle has joined Jacob on the porch when I pass the garage.

"Your eyes," he sighs heavily, shaking his head.

I lock Isabella in place as she growls.

~Self-righteous, sanctimonious prick.

"I agree, baby, but keep calm," I murmur quietly, walking up the porch steps. "Hello, Carlisle," I greet with a smirk. "How was your weekend?"

XXX

Carlisle stares at me blankly for a moment.

I stare right back.

He's given up.

Jacob and Isabella are quiet.

~Can I have a word with you in private?

I give him a nod, knowing that he's harmless. "I'll be right back, darling. Carlisle and I are just going to talk," I murmur, letting go of Isabella. Once she's back on the ground, I give her a soft kiss. "Wait for me in our room."

~Hurry back to me, my love.

I give her a wink.

And fifteen minutes later, I find myself in the meadow where Isabella killed Tanya.

"I've lost you, haven't I?" Carlisle asks quietly.

You never had me. "Isabella and I will leave after the fight, yes," I confirm.

~And Alice and Jasper? Are they leaving, too?

Yes. "Probably."

Unfortunately, Carlisle has always been good at hiding his thoughts from me. But his tight fists and clenched jaw tell me that he's pissed.

"It's Isabella's fault," he spits out.

I swallow back venom, fighting my instincts to behead him.

"Say that again, and I will kill you," I reply calmly, though my glare is lethal and full of promise.

We're done using Carlisle. Our reason for staying here was always to learn more about Aro and his guard, but with this opportunity staring right at us, there's no way we're going to sit by and let it pass. This gathering is perfect for us. We have the chance to take out our biggest threats, apart from the Romanian coven, but... all in good time.

"Why are you even sticking around?" he growls angrily, bitterly. His "family" is shattering, and there's nothing he can do about it. "Why don't you and Isabella just leave now?"

I have two answers for that, both of which are actually true. Though, I keep quiet about the part where I want to rule the fucking world. "I'm doing it for Emmett," I tell him. He frowns in confusion, and I continue. "I personally don't understand it, but he never wanted this life." A part of Emmett – a big part – always resented Carlisle for changing him after he was attacked by that bear as a human. And after waking up as one of us, he's been alone until finding Rosalie. He never embraced the spectacular aspects of being a vampire. "With Rosalie and Hale, he's happy again."

If he wants to live out his never-ending life with his little family, he can do that. I stand firm; I think he's a pathetic excuse of a man, and he's throwing away many opportunities, but... to each his own, I suppose.

Besides, he saved me once when I stumbled upon my singer. She was hanging up clothes in a backyard when Emmett and I ran passed in the forest behind her home. I was crouched and ready to drain her, but I didn't see the house full of people, who would undoubtedly have witnessed the whole ordeal. And I would've been forced to slay them all to cover my tracks, which would, in the end, attract Aro's attention. So, thanks to Emmett holding me back, I was able to leave.

I still drained the bitch, of course, but I returned when she was alone.

"This doesn't sound like... the new you," Carlisle says, not really believing me. "Your reasons... helping Emmett... that's selfless, Edward."

I shrug. "What can I say, Carlisle? I'm a fucking angel," I chuckle, and he glares at me, failing to see the humor. Pity. I thought it was funny. Whatever, it's not like I'm going tell him the main reason I'm sticking around instead of leaving right now. "So..." I sigh. "Are we done now?"

His shoulders slump. "It looks like we are."

XXX

In order to prepare our departure, Isabella and I jump on the wave of disappearances in Forks. Jessica Stanley – missing; last seen at Forks High. Benjamin Cheney – missing; last seen outside his parents' house. Michael Newton – missing; last seen outside his friend's house. And as of two days ago, same goes for Edward Masen and Bella Brandon; last seen in Port Angeles. Esme and Carlisle reported us missing, and that's that. To the public, we're done in Forks.

So, with only three days until Aro arrives, Isabella and I find ourselves breaking into Eric Yorkie's house in the middle of the night. He's the last piece. After this, we'll be ready.

"Alice is jealous," I whisper as we make our way up the stairs in the quiet and dark house.

It's most crucial now that Jasper doesn't figure out that his connection with Alice is one-sided, so she's spending these last days pretending to be madly in love with our pathetic major. Safe to say, he's reveling in it.

In the meantime, Alice is bathing in envy. She wants to have fun, too.

Isabella snickers, shaking her head in amusement. ~You mean she wants to be here?

I chuckle under my breath, opening a door to find Eric sound asleep. He's dreaming about the car he's working on. "Yeah," I whisper, ushering Isabella into the room. "She and Jasper are hunting nearby. I can hear her thoughts."

Small bursts of fire, little flames, lick my throat.

It's a very good thing that Isabella has changed humans before, because I would undoubtedly drain the poor child.

I walk over to the window, opening it widely. It will be our exit in a couple of seconds.

"He won't wake too easily," she murmurs, listening to Eric's breathing.

I join her at the bed. "We'll be out of here before he can scream, anyway," I mutter. "All right, here we go."

After giving Isabella a swift kiss, I haul Eric out of the bed and over my shoulder. Then I fly out the window, heading straight toward the woods.

Isabella is hot on my trail after closing the window, and we don't stop. Not even when Eric wakes up. First there's a groggy "what the hell?", and then a sharp gasp. The last one is Isabella's cue to silence him before he can scream, which she does by breaking his nose. He faints from the pain.

We continue running.

XXX

When we reach the abandoned house outside of Sequim, we're greeted by three Amazonian women and one half-vampire girl. She's over ninety years old, but doesn't look a day over eleven.

"I'll get started," Isabella says, taking the human from me. Then she runs into one of the bedrooms while I talk things over with Kachiri, Senna, and Zafrina.

Kachiri hasn't been in Forks at all yet. According to the Cullens, she's trying to find more vampires to help us.

"We will watch over the human," Zafrina promises. "I told Carlisle we wouldn't be back until the morning of the fight, regardless."

I nod once. "Thank you."

Glancing at the hybrid child, I'm curious about Hale. Will he stop growing when he looks like an eleven year old?

I chuckle quietly. Poor Leah. Or something.

"You're Neya," I state quietly, remembering that I've actually not introduced myself to the child. A few days ago when I led Kachiri and the girl here, I was too busy making sure we were alone as we ran in the forest. The wolves are running all over the place, annoying the hell out of me.

"You are Edward," she replies with a cheeky grin. Her crimson eyes are full of mirth. She's tiny, without a doubt two feet shorter than I am. Black, curly hair, reaching her shoulders. Pale skin, much paler than the other three from South America. "And your mate is Isabella."

That's when Eric lets out an ear-shattering scream.

XXX

"It's a good thing that we're in a secluded place," I laugh softly when Isabella joins us in the small living room. "Did everything go well, darling?"

She smiles, jumping onto my back. She has a thing for piggyback riding.

"Yes," she replies, nuzzling my neck. "It was a bit hard not to drain him, but..." She trails off with a shrug.

Eric screams again, and we all know that it's going to be a while before he finally shuts up.

"Pleasure to officially meet you, Neya," Isabella murmurs, reaching out her hand. Still, she remains on my back. "Wow, you're adorable."

"Nice to meet you, too, Isabella," the little girl replies timidly, shaking my wife's hand. Her smile is shy. "You are very beautiful." ~I wonder if I will always be lonely, or if I will find someone, too.

I frown.

"Don't you belong to a coven?" I ask quietly, quickly getting my answer. She travels alone, always hiding, only leaving the jungle to feed.

"Parents?"

She shakes her head, lowering her eyes to the floor. ~My mama died when I was born, and my papa was long gone.

Christ. "So, you've survived alone? All this time?"

She nods with a shrug. ~I did have a brother once, but he is dead. In her mind, I see the image of another half-vampire, though he looks older. Maybe seventeen or eighteen. ~We did not have the same mama, but the same papa. My brother perished in a fight with a vampire decades ago. Since then, I've been alone.

Huh.

And here I was, thinking that the Volturi at least knew how to handle their job.

I never thought they were wrong, per se; it's just that I want the fucking power instead.

Though, leaving a hybrid alone from birth... Yeah, I doubt the Volturi ought to condone that. I don't care personally, but a blood-craving infant doesn't sound very safe when it comes to protecting our secret.

"What am I missing?" Isabella asks curiously.

"I'll tell you on the way back," I murmur.

It's time we return to Forks, anyway.

XXX

Before we know it, the day has come.

We all run in silence toward the massive field where we will meet the Volturi.

~I want to join you when this is over, Edward. Can I?

I look to my left, watching Esme as she runs with Carlisle. They're holding hands, but I know – from watching them over the past few days – that she's faking it as much as Alice is.

Glancing to my left, I catch my sister's subtle nod. ~I told her everything earlier this morning, brother. She's hurting. We can help her.

Because that's just what I want. Play happy family.

I growl softly, conflicted. It's just supposed to be three Masens. I'm not looking for a new family. I want a small coven and a huge guard.

~We're going to need people we can trust, Edward.

I sigh, knowing that my sister is right.

So, I give Esme a nod.

I don't need Jasper's gift to feel the gratitude rolling off Esme in waves.

~Thank you.

"Everything all right, my love?" Isabella asks, squeezing my hand.

I give her a reassuring smile. "Definitely."

And I suppose it is.

Twenty minutes later, we are all gathered on the field.

XXX

"I love you, sweetie," Rosalie murmurs to Hale, squatting down at his level. My brows furrow as I read her mind, and I wonder how I ever missed what she's been up to. "Remember that?"

Emmett is confused. "Wh...?"

"Always, Mommy," Hale mumbles. "I love you, too."

Rose lets out a tearless sob. "Leah, can you please come forward?"

Leah does. Slowly, paws almost dragging in the ground, she steps out of the woods and joins us. Reading her mind, I find out that she's aware of Rosalie's plan. She's not surprised when Rosalie picks up Hale to position him on Leah's back.

"Rose?" Emmett's worried. He shouldn't be. Neither of them has to worry. There won't be a fight, and soon they will know. But right now, I'll let them believe it.

"Leah, I want you to run," Rosalie tells her. "In the bag... there are money and papers..."

And it dawns on Emmett. He looks fucking devastated. Like I would look if Isabella were in danger.

~Edward. When Alice glances my way, I run a hand through my hair, as agreed upon earlier.

It's the sign... and she gasps, letting her eyes glaze over.

She is a good actress.

"Alice?" Jasper asks worriedly. "What do you see, honey?"

XXX

"Kachiri," Alice breathes out as the so-called vision ends. "She will be here soon." Everyone is watching her, willing her to go on. "She's bringing someone."

"Who?" Carlisle asks.

But before Alice can answer, I snarl instinctively.

My eyes are fixed on the edge of the forest across the field.

I hear the thoughts.

I push Isabella behind me.

"They're here," I spit out.

And everyone takes their position.

A moment later, they appear. Twenty of them, as Alice had foreseen. Not counting their witnesses. They're not here to participate in any fight, therefore staying in the shadows.

Aro, Marcus, and Caius are in the middle.

Three vampires I've only seen in Carlisle's thoughts, as well as in a few paintings in his library.

"Carlisle, my dear friend!" Aro exclaims joyfully.

Let it begin.

XXX

My mind is working hard and fast, gathering information from the Volturi.

I quickly locate the witch twins.

They're waiting for Aro's command.

~Just say when, my love.

I place my hand on top of Isabella's, which is splayed on my stomach, and I give it a squeeze.

And when Aro taps a finger against his thigh, I give my wife a quick nod.

We can all feel her shield as it descends on us, protecting us in a bubble.

In the meantime, Aro and Carlisle speak politely, even though we all know it's a charade. Aro wants to see Hale for himself, take his hand and read him. He is also fascinated. But underneath it all, his decision is already made. It's a decision he's made reluctantly, however, which makes me zero in on Marcus and Caius. Ah. Marcus sees no reason for fighting, and Caius does.

Even more when all the wolves step out of the woods.

Caius is petrified of the shape-shifters.

Aro's eyes widen, and he taps his thigh again, this time twice – very subtly – but I have my eyes on him.

"Get ready, baby," I whisper under my breath. My eyes search frantically; I need to find the source. Who's the command for and for what? And then I find him. Alec. One of the twins. "It's Alec," I inform quietly.

XXX

Alec's gift to numb you – take away your senses – is extraordinary, and I hope Isabella's shield is strong enough.

"I can feel it," she mutters, tensing behind me. ~His sister, too. Jane. I growl. ~It's all right, Edward. I can handle it.

The game continues for Aro. He pretends to go back and forth with his decision. He greets Hale, much to Emmett's and Rosalie's chagrin and fear, but as Isabella promised, she blocks Aro's gift just as he touches Hale's hand. Befuddled and slightly alarmed, Aro backs away, wondering why the hell he can't read the boy.

"He's a shield," I speak up, lying through my teeth. But if Aro reads Hale's every thought, he'll find out about my mate's gifts, and he will covet her for her abilities. Same goes for several other vampires' gifts. Zafrina, Benjamin...Alice. He knows about me, but not about my sister.

When Carlisle told Aro – shortly after mine and Alice's transformations – he stopped at telling about my gift. Aro wanted me – still does – which Carlisle noticed, hence shutting up about Alice's gift.

"How fascinating," Aro replies lightly, grinning gleefully. But on the inside, he's becoming more and more set on having us all killed.

XXX

Aro is about to speak up; he's about to tell his two brothers to vote. It's another charade.

Before he can, though, I pick up the thoughts of Kachiri.

"We have company," I say, loudly enough for Aro to hear. He tilts his head at me, and I speak again. "Proof. That Hale is no threat," I clarify.

Caius sneers at me.

Aro decides to humor me. "Enlighten me, dear Edward."

And I jerk my chin in the direction of the spot where Kachiri will appear with Neyla in... five... four... three... two...

A collective gasp resounds and it's not just from the Volturi. Only Isabella, Alice, Esme, the three Amazons, and I knew about this.

Had we told everyone about Neyla from the beginning, we wouldn't have this gathering here today. We wouldn't have the opportunity to hunt down Jane and Felix. We would've had to spend a lot more time tracking down Maria and Lucy, Amun and Kebi... the Denalis. But now they're all here.

As is Aro's reason for saying no to a fight.

"And what do we have here?" Aro asks, forcing a smile.

The mutts growl, and I catch Sam's thought. ~Why is he pretending to ponder? He wants to fight!

Yes and no. He wants most of us dead, but he covets gifts, and he knows several of us possess them. Because he's now aware of the fact that both Jane's and Alec's invisible attacks are futile. He just doesn't know how or why. He doesn't know that my flawless wife is the reason.

"She is half-human," I answer Aro. "She is also close to ninety years old."

Neya looks at me, and I give her a nod, silently telling her to take the hand Aro offers.

Again, Isabella blocks Aro's gift as he reaches for the hybrid girl.

He grits his teeth, not really believing that she, too, would be a shield.

But there's little we can do about that. We simply cannot let Aro read anyone who is aware of our secrecy.

"And why can I not read this one?" Aro snarls, glaring at us all.

XXX

We remain quiet.

When Aro finally releases Neya's hand, I feel Isabella relax behind me. I know this is hard for her. Her ability to block gifts is physically exhausting her; the gift is not as powerful as her shield.

"Aro," Caius hisses. "Let us be done with this!"

The main man is stalling. His eyes travel over us; he's wondering about abilities. My chest vibrates with a quiet growl as I pick up the thoughts. His suspicions... He wants to know if someone here is a blocker. It's an ability he's never experienced first hand, though he has heard of it. It's a gift he wishes to possess, but since he can't, he's willing to settle for the vampire who does possess such a gift.

My Isabella.

"You have no reason, Aro," Carlisle says, cautioning. "No valid reason."

Aro's witnesses agree.

My eyes snap to Caius... "Rules have been broken!" he barks out to Aro. "Someone must pay!" With that said, he demands for Irina to come forward.

Kate, Eleazar, and Carmen snarl.

XXX

Irina will die. Alice's vision is still correct.

And mere minutes later, we all watch as Felix beheads her.

"Block Kate's gift, love," I whisper under my breath in a rush. Then I turn to Carlisle. "Stop her!" I bark out. "Garrett, Peter, stop Eleazar and Carmen!"

Kate cries out, unable to get Carlisle off of her. Her ability to electrocute people is rendered useless as my mate keeps her block in place. As much as I would love to send Kate and the rest of the Denalis off to a sure death – Aro would kill them – we don't want to fight here. Not with all of them, and not all at once.

"We won't fight, Aro!" I growl.

He's seething. Caius, too. They thought for sure Irina's death would trigger our fight.

But it doesn't, and after going back and forth, the Volturi have no choice but to leave.

In the end, having witnesses here made sure they couldn't break one of their own rules. The word would've spread, had they killed us without reason, and if there's one thing Aro wants, it's to remain on his throne.

Unfortunately for him, he won't for long.

That throne will be mine soon.

And I have big plans.

"Is it really over?" Charlotte asks, focusing on my sister.

Alice nods. "It's over."

Only, it isn't.

While the others cheer, I exchange glances with Isabella, Zafrina, and Alice.

XXX

We all stay silent as Carlisle thanks his friends.

Peter and Charlotte are the first to leave.

Alistair follows. As does Garrett.

The only reason Maria and Lucy linger is to talk to Isabella. When my mate has nothing to say to them, they leave.

I give Alice a nod, and she brings Jasper with her as they follow.

Benjamin and Tia decide to stay for a while, having bonded quite well with Emmett and Rosalie.

This means that Amun and Kebi are reluctant to leave, and before they finally do, we watch as the rest of Carlisle's friends bid their farewells.

~I will see you in Sequim.

I nod at Zafrina and she leaves with her two sisters, as well as Neya.

Eric will wake up as a vampire at any moment now.

Last but not least, Amun and Kebi are on their way.

Esme gives me a look, and she silently asks me what happens now.

"Five hours," I tell her imploringly.

~Five...? We're leaving in five hours?

"Isabella and I are going hunting now," I answer, lying, still looking at her intently. But with Carlisle nearby, I can't exactly spell it all out. "We'll be back in five hours."

~You'll be back for me?

Yes. "Exactly," I reply, and she sighs in relief, afraid that we would leave her behind.

And a few moments later, Isabella and I take off to find Amun and Kebi.

XXX

We run fast, easily tracking Amun's and Kebi's scents.

"We should be able to reach them soon," I say quietly.

They only had half an hour head start, and Isabella and I are faster.

~Do you have your lighter?

I nod. I have more than one.

I've only killed a handful of vampires in the past, and I had Alice with me at the time. With our abilities, we can't be defeated unless we're severely outnumbered. My speed and mind-reading, Alice's foresight and grace... The nomads we encountered during our rebellious period decades ago really didn't stand a chance.

Now, though, I have a mate to protect. I'm foolish, I know. Isabella is a skilled fighter and has killed countless of our kind, but that matters little when Isabella is everything to me. Not even the bond I share with my little sister comes close to the connection between mates. Worrying comes with the territory.

"Be careful, all right?"

She laughs. ~You have nothing to worry about, love. They're not even decent fighters.

I'm aware.

Before I know it, I'm inside Amun's head. They're close.

"Get ready," I whisper under my breath.

XXX

Then we pick up speed, running through the thick forest with all senses kicking in to prepare for fight.

~Go for the easy kill. I nod at her request, already knowing. They will be confused, seeing us running toward them, and that second of confusion will give us the upper hand right away. We want this to be quick.

Being a little faster than Isabella, I speed up further, quickly putting a small distance in between us. Scanning Amun's thought before Kebi's, I know that they are still unaware of our approach.

~Edward, slow down!

But my eyes are already on my target. Straight ahead, I spot Amun.

It's not until I'm a few steps behind him that he turns, sensing my presence, but I'm faster. He cries out in shock as I slam into him, and whereas his hands move to my chest – to brace himself – I go for his neck.

I know that Kebi's closing in, ready to defend her mate, but it's fruitless. My venom pushes into Amun, and I bring out my lighter before he can get his control back. With a swift step backward, I throw the lighter with precision. The wound on his neck ignites, and the job is done just as Isabella reaches Kebi.

~You couldn't wait, could you?

I ignore Isabella's internal huff, instead focusing on helping her.

XXX

I know it's not necessary – she doesn't need my help – but I don't care. In a split second, I join her. She's on Kebi's back, trying to get a grip on the Egyptian's throat. But, apparently, Kebi is a better fighter than Amun. Who knew? Anyway, I grab her from the front, shoving my elbow upward. The impact with her face sounds like a clap of thunder, much like when I slammed into Amun, and this gives Isabella what she needs. Kebi's head is tilted back, and I watch as Isabella rips it off.

"Fucking bastard," she mutters as she throws Kebi into Amun's fire. Then she faces me, and I try to withhold my smirk. "Wipe that smugness off,"

she snarls at me. Sexy. My cock twitches. "I wanted to play, too, you dick!"

I walk toward her slowly, unable to wipe the grin off my face.

"Dick and play in the same sentence, baby," I murmur huskily. "You can definitely play with my dick if you want."

She huffs and folds her arms over her chest, but I know I'm wearing her down.

"Mmm," I hum, breathing her in. My mouth goes to her neck. "Come on, little love. You know you want it."

She growls. "No."

"Shhh." I kiss her neck, reaching up to squeeze her tits. She whimpers when I unzip her hoodie. "Just let me fuck you a little."

XXX

"Harder!" she cries out.

I pound deeper, harder, faster. Both of her legs are thrown over my shoulders. I grind my cock into her tight pussy, grunting and moaning as we go rougher and rougher. The forest floor will have a fucking imprint of her back by the time I'm done.

"Still mad at me?" I groan, letting my head fall back. I slam into her, over and over again, fucking lost in the pleasure. "Jesus, baby... that's it... squeeze me."

~Can't... be mad... "Oh, God!"

Looking down, I watch as my cock slides deep inside of her. I feel her muscles fluttering around me. In and out, relentlessly, without pausing.

Not even when I feel my balls tightening, alerting me of my climax. I keep fucking her sweet pussy. I groan. My abs tense – visible proof of what's going on inside of me. Coiling, tingling... I moan loudly.

"Close, close, close," she chants breathlessly.

I stare at her breasts, and... yeah. With a flick of my wrist, I rip the bra off her.

When Isabella comes around my cock, I grind my teeth together. I fight and struggle, denying myself the release. She keeps moaning and thrashing under me, and I keep pushing my glistening erection in and out of her.

Then it's my turn.

I slip out of her. I stroke myself roughly and Isabella gasps.

I come hard. With a loud groan. I fight to keep my eyes open. One... two... three... four streams of cum cover her stomach and breasts. The last stream trickles down my cock, and I rub the head of me against her pussy, the sight triggering even more liquid.

"So... fucking... hot," I moan through shudders.

~Um, yeah... I'm using your shirt to clean off, though.

Fine by me, my dear. Fine by me.

XXX

Alice's POV

Before we're too close to Lucy and Maria, I stop.

I haven't told Jasper yet why we're here, and it's time now.

"I had a vision," I tell him, making sure my face shows devastation.

"Jazzy..." I whimper, and he's in front of me right away. Always so eager to take away my pain. "Maria wants me dead, baby."

"What?" he breathes out, horror flashing in his eyes. "What do you mean, darlin'?"

Gullible fool. He's so blinded by his own love for me.

"I saw it." I whimper again. "She wants you back. She's going to kill me, Jazzy!"

He growls. "I'll never let that happen, Ali!" Of course you won't. "You're mine, and I'll protect you, all right?" He rubs my arms and kisses my cheeks. "Why the hell haven't I felt something from her? I mean, if she plans on killing you, I would've felt anger radiating from her when you were around." He frowns in thought.

"That's because she hasn't been triggered to make the decision yet," I cry against his chest. If only I could produce tears... "But I've seen it happen, and it's going to happen soon." Looking up at his face, I plead with him.

"We have to kill her, Jazzy. We have to."

He studies me, still frowning, but I put on my best puppy-dog look.

"Or... don't you love me?" I ask in a small voice.

Hook.

Line.

Sinker.

His eyes widen. "You're my everything, Ali!"

A few moments later, we're running again. Running toward Maria and Lucy.

Jasper kills them both for me.

I'm such a lucky gal.

XXX

EPOV again...

"Everything's going accordingly?" I ask as Alice joins us in Sequim. Eric's going to wake up at any moment now, and we have a lot to do. I chuckle and nod in thanks as she throws me a new sweatshirt. Evidently, she foresaw that I didn't have one.

Even though Isabella used mine to clean off after we made sweet love in the woods, she still smells like me.

I fucking love that.

She does, too.

"Yes," Alice replies, flitting into the room where Eric is. Isabella and I follow. "Aro will send a small party to each fire." Her eyes glaze over and I watch in her mind as she tries to determine Eric's role in the plan. With two fires – one from the Egyptians and one from the Southerners – we don't know where to lead the newborn just yet. It all comes down to who Aro will send and to where.

"I can see Felix..." Her brows furrow as she searches the future. "Ooh, he's sending Caius, too!" A slow smile spreads on my lips. "Yes," she nods to herself, "Caius will take Felix and Alec to the fire you started." That's excellent. We will probably be able to kill- Oh, yes. Felix and Jane aren't the only ones dying. "And Aro's sending Demetri, Jane, and two other guards to the fire Jasper and I started."

Walking out to the living room area again, I ponder my options. Who to send, who to... Hmm.

Decisions, decisions.

We will need Esme and Jasper.

"Where's Jasper?" I ask my sister.

"I left him at the house," she tells me. "He thinks I'm hunting."

All right.

I rub my chin, tracing my bottom lip with my thumb, and my eyes find a smiling Isabella.

She already knows my plan, just from knowing me so well, and she obviously approves.

"Here's what we're going to do..." All eyes on me.

XXX

"We will lead the newborn to the fire where Felix will show up," I decide firmly. "He will work as a distraction, and when Felix charges – because we know Caius will order him to do the job – we launch at Felix." He will be the most difficult one to take out. Caius sees himself as a god and will only fight to protect himself. As for Alec, he's only dangerous because of his gift. Which means... "Isabella, you're going to block Alec's gift and take him out."

She nods quickly, re-lacing her boots. "Understood."

Turning to Zafrina, I say, "And you're going to project images into Felix's mind. That will make it easier for me and Jasper to take him out."

"That leaves Caius," Zafrina hisses. And he was in charge when the three sisters' mates were killed. "I want to kill him."

"You can definitely do that," I allow quietly.

~What am I going to tell Jasper in order to get him to help you, brother?

I sigh, thinking things over.

Isabella, Zafrina, Jasper, and I will be on one team. Four gifted vampires, not to mentioned highly skilled fighters. That leaves Kachiri, Senna, Alice, and Esme to deal with Demetri, Jane, and two other guards. Definitely not optimal, and there's no way I'm counting in Neya – who is desperate to belong in a coven, which means she's now with us – or Eric. Neya is a little girl, and it doesn't matter that she's fought before. This is nothing compared to what she's used to. And Eric... well, he will be too blood-crazed to form a single thought. So, the question is...

Should we send Jasper with Alice's team instead?

Probably.

If Felix fights blindly, I can probably take him out myself, and Isabella can help once she's dealt with Alec.

"Take Jasper with you instead," I tell Alice. "That way, you can tell him what-the-fuck-ever because we all know you have him wrapped around your little finger." I smirk, and Alicia grins wickedly.

~Oh, do I ever, dear brother. Consider it done.

But then she's sucked into a vision, and we both watch it as it plays out.

Oh...

XXX

Alice and I watch each other as the vision ends.

I raise a brow in question.

"Are you okay with that?" I ask her when she says nothing.

Jasper won't make it.

In the vision, Jane uses her gift on Alice, which Jasper will save her from by killing Jane. However, when he rips off Jane's head, Demetri will be there to kill Jasper.

I'd send Isabella with Alice, but I want her with me.

The original plan was to use Jasper when we reached Italy. His gift would help us, making it easier to take out the immortal walls of muscle Aro surrounds himself with. He would be able to calm them all down while we killed them. But now, when we've gained support from the Amazons as well as my mate, I'm sure we can manage without Jasper. After all, Zafrina's gift knows no bounds.

"Oh, I'm more than okay, Edward," Alice chuckles lightly.

Very well. "Then, you're free to go get Jasper and Esme. Fill them in, and if Esme refuses to help, she can forget about joining us later."

~Don't worry. She's with us. I've seen it.

"Good."

With a quick nod, my sister leaves. And a few moments later, Eric's heart falls silent.

Welcome to immortality, newborn.

XXX

"Neya, sweetheart, would you mind doing me a favor?" I ask, pushing up the sleeves on my hoodie over my elbows. She nods as the rest of us move toward Eric's bed. "There are humans about two minutes away from here." I focus on their faint thoughts, quickly counting three hunters. "Three of them." Finding hunters in this area is far from challenging. They're pretty much everywhere. "I wonder if you could track them down and bring one of them back here."

"Of course," she chirps. "And what of the remaining two?"

I give her question a dismissive wave. "Doesn't matter. Kill them or feed. As long as you're quick about it."

Taking her task seriously, she's out the door before she can even reply.

Then it's just the five of us left. The three Amazons, Isabella and me.

"He can probably hear us, yes?" Senna inquires as we all peer down at the newborn.

I nod. "Most likely."

And three quiet minutes later, he hisses before jumping up in a crouching position on the bed.

In a swift movement, I have Isabella positioned behind me.

The newborn growls and I bare my teeth, hissing at him.

His thoughts are coming from every direction, too fast for me to get a read. He senses right away that he is outnumbered, which means his only option is flight. It's instinct.

"We mean no harm," I lie, putting my hands up. Neya enters my mind as she comes closer and closer to the cabin. "We can explain everything."

~Where is Neya?

"Seconds away," I whisper, answering Isabella's thought. I'm stalling until then. Until Eric can smell the blood. "Are you all ready?"

"Yes," they all reply.

Suddenly, the newborn's mind is cleared. There's only one thing left.

One thought, one need.

Blood.

He can smell the human Neya's bringing.

That's when I turn around and run.

Out the door, I run as fast as I can. When I reach Neya, I grab the human from her and keep running.

I can hear Eric's snarls as he follows.

XXX

"You need to stall, Edward!" I hear Isabella scream from a great distance.

They're on my trail, but far behind. Eric, on the other hand, is only thirty-something feet behind me. With his newborn strength, it's half a miracle that I'm able to outrun him. Especially since I have a two hundred pound hunter thrown over my shoulder. His weight is hardly anything, but it still slows me down enough to feel the thrill of actually being chased. I never feel chased. Not with my speed. Now, though, with Eric running so close...

It's a rush.

And... "Why the fuck would I need to stall?" I mumble under my breath, dodging a branch.

"Stall!" Isabella screams again. "Caius hasn't reached the fire yet!"

Ah. Very well.

Taking a sharp turn, I run in a new direction.

Slowly but surely, we make our way toward Amun and Kebi's fire.

I assume Isabella has Alice on the phone to narrow down the exact moment I'm to reach the fire. All I know for sure is that Demetri's team will reach Maria and Lucy's fire several minutes after Caius's team will reach Amun and Kebi's. In fact, if everything goes accordingly, our fight will almost be over by the time Alice's fight begins.

"Now!" my mate barks out.

The human gets jostled as I turn again, and the low moan he lets out – most likely due to the nausea and dizziness – makes the newborn snarl.

The trees get blurry.

Then, when I can spot the fire ahead of me, I push myself to the limit and beyond.

Once I reach the fire, I throw the human off me before I jump up. Sixty feet in one leap. By now, Eric is crouching over the human, and I haul myself up a tree. As far as it goes.

A few minutes pass before Isabella and Zafrina join me in the trees.

And just as Eric finishes off the human, I hear the thoughts of three Volturi.

XXX

Caius is annoyed and confused upon seeing the lone newborn by the fire.

Alec is slightly skittish, looking around for any threat. In his mind, I find out that he doesn't like being separated from Jane.

Felix... oh, Felix. He may be big and freakishly strong, but he's a dumb one. He just stands there, waiting for a command.

They can all smell other vampires, but they have no names to go with the scents.

"Kill him," Caius sighs, waving a hand at Eric.

Half a second later, Felix is battling the newborn.

That's our cue.

After exchanging quick nods, the three of us jump down.

Isabella crouches and lets out a hiss at Alec.

Zafrina growls at a wide-eyed Caius.

I sneer at Felix, who is about two moves from ripping off Eric's head.

"Alec!" Caius snarls.

Too late, my friend. Too late.

Isabella blocks Alec's gift before jumping him, and Zafrina projects images into Felix's and Caius's minds.

Just as the images of fire reach Felix, I slam into him. For a quick moment, I even have help from the newborn. Eric only wants to run, but the instinct to defend himself keeps him here, and he goes for Felix's neck while I rip off the behemoth's left arm.

"Caius!" Felix growls, trying to fight us off.

Not wanting a newborn to deal with once this is over, I take the chance when he bites Felix in the shoulder. I wrap my fingers around Eric's hand, and with a quick flick of my wrist, I've ripped off his hand. He cries out, and I push both of us off Felix before I deliver a forceful kick into Eric's chest that sends him into the blazing fire.

Before I charge at a raging Felix again, I throw his arm into the fire, too.

"You fucking bit me!" Isabella screeches. "Oh, you are so dead, you little witch twin!"

I grit my teeth, denying myself a look in her direction.

XXX

Caius cries out.

I hear teeth snapping.

Felix curses, still fighting me blindly. If only he wasn't so fucking strong.

When he swings his only arm, though, I see my window. Dodging it quickly, I send him flying when I plant my foot against his stomach. Before he regains his balance, I'm there to tear his leg off. Placing my foot on his thigh, I bend over and grab his foot. Then I pull.

"Aaaargh!" he screams. In the back of my mind, I register Caius going silent. I can't hear his thoughts. "You son of a bitch!"

"Well," I breathe out, stomping on Felix's chest. "I can't really remember my mother, so..."

With that said, my hands find his throat.

He lets out a strangled growl, and then he's gone.

After throwing his head and torso into the fire, I turn around just to see Zafrina doing the same with Caius.

That leaves Isabella and Alec.

I smirk, watching as she delivers one hell of a blow to Alec's chin. He's knocked backward, and even before he hits the ground, Isabella is there to push him down so hard that his body sinks a few inches into the dirt. The head is next. My cock swells a little at that, but I can't help it.

"May you rot in hell forever," my wife mutters, throwing Alec's head into the fire. "Fucking biter."

I'm standing in front of her in a flash. "Where are you hurt, my love?" I whisper, cupping her neck.

"Just my arm. It's okay."

Pushing up her sleeves, I see a crescent-shaped mark on her left arm. Fury and worry wash over me, and I bring her arm to my mouth. Soft kisses over the healing wound... I swipe my tongue over it, willing it to heal faster.

"It's all right, Edward," she says softly, placing her hand on my cheek. I turn into her touch, purring quietly as her scent invades my senses. "We need to go," she whispers, and I nod reluctantly.

"Are you sure you're okay?" I mumble.

"Positive."

XXX

We arrive at the other fire just as Demetri throws Jasper into the fire.

It's a battle.

Senna and Kachiri charge at Demetri.

On the ground, Isabella and I see a torso rattling around.

"Get the runner!" Alice screams at Esme.

Jane and one guard are dead.

Leaving Demetri and... the guard who's running.

Esme speeds after him, but I see right away that she won't catch up.

"Help the ladies with Demetri," I whisper in a rush to my mate. She nods, and then I take off after Esme and the guard. Through the thick forest, and fuck... they're heading straight for Forks. Not good. I pick up speed. After a few seconds, I pass Esme. And another few moments later, I catch up to the Volturi guard. Having already dealt with Felix, this one doesn't stand a chance. He does, however, manage to sink his teeth into my left collarbone. It's a sacrifice I'm willing to make since it gives me the opportunity to tear his head off.

End of.

By the time I return, Demetri is gone, too.

"Where is Zafrina?" Senna asks.

I rub my collarbone, grimacing as the venom stings like a motherfucker, and I tell her that Zafrina's putting out the fire from our battle. She'll be back soon enough.

"What's wrong, Edward?" Isabella asks worriedly, appearing next to me.

I chuckle quietly, shaking my head. "Nothing, baby. Just my turn to get bitten, I guess."

Isabella gives me the same treatment I gave her before, and she quickly soothes the sting by grazing her tongue over my wound.

Soon, we're running again. This time toward Forks, where Neya will join us, and then we're leaving Washington for good.

Before we leave, though, we're taking down the Denalis.

Which Isabella, my sister, and two of the Amazons will take care of.

XXX

"What are you talking about, Esme?" Carlisle hisses, following Esme as she flits around the house. We're packing and we have two hours before Isabella, Zafrina, Kachiri, and Alice return. "You're leaving?"

I check my phone; no texts.

In my room, I pack clothes and CDs into three duffel bags.

"You lied to me, you bastard," Esme growls downstairs. "You told me we were mates!"

Carlisle screeches to a halt.

I snicker and shake my head at the idiot.

~I like Esme. She is nice.

Looking over my shoulder, I see a grinning Neya in the doorway.

"I suppose," I chuckle softly. I have a feeling it's mutual, though. Esme always wanted to be a mother. With Neya, she has the opportunity to be that for eternity. I don't see the appeal of children, but I do see the vast difference between Neya and Hale. Whereas Hale is a weakling just like his parents, Neya is fierce. She's also a sweetheart, and I'm willing to

admit that having her and Esme with us isn't all bad. As long as they don't get in my way.

When I reach my safe, I fill one last duffle bag. Wads of cash, birth certificates, passports, credit cards, bank statements-

"Shit," I mutter, turning to face the wall-sized window.

Emmett's here.

XXX

Ignoring Carlisle and Esme in the living room, and ignoring a confused Emmett in the doorway, I pass them all.

Esme's SUV is already out and soon my Aston is out, too.

"Mind telling me what's going on?" Emmett asks as I place the duffles in the trunk of my car.

"We're leaving," I say flatly, closing the trunk. I turn to him. "A word of advice... You should leave, too."

~I don't... "What?" ~What on earth is he on about?

I sigh. Patience is not my middle name. "Long story short: Caius, Felix, Alec, Jane, Demetri, and two other guards are dead." His brows furrow. "Yes, we killed them. Jasper's also dead," I add with a wave of my hand. Moving on... "Anyway, my guess is that once Aro finds out his minions aren't returning, he's going to come looking for him. He will look here, Emmett," I tell him imploringly. "So... do yourselves a favor and take the mutts to Isle Esme or something." I grin. "Go on a vacation. An extended one."

He gapes at me. ~Wh... but... I mean... uh?

I sigh again. "Listen, I'd love to stay and chat," I lie. "But we're in a bit of a hurry."

To add to my frustration, Carlisle and Esme start shouting at each other inside. Both internally and verbally.

Can vampires get headaches?

"Edward?" And that would be Neya standing on the porch. "Do you want me to pack Alice's stuff?"

Well, at least one is helpful. "Thank you, sweetheart. That would be great." She smiles and turns to leave, but I halt her. "Neya?" She looks at me over her shoulder. "Can you drive a car?" A nod. "Excellent." I throw her the key to Alice's Porsche, and she beams at me. "You can take it out of the garage when you're done packing."

As I pass Emmett again – on my way inside – I tell him one last thing. "Take my advice, Em. You, Rosalie, the kid... and the dogs if you want... Whatever. Just leave."

Then I walk back inside.

I see my target.

XXX

"But I only wanted what's best for you!" Carlisle shouts.

"You never gave me a fucking choice!" Esme screams.

The good doc gasps upon hearing such a foul word coming from Esme's mouth.

I snicker, walking toward them slowly.

"What's happening to you?" he cries out, devastated. "This isn't you, Esme!"

"Shut the fuck up!" Esme growls, crouching. "You have no right- no right... to even speak to me!"

I'd yawn if I were human. Alas, I am not.

"Esme," I say calmly, getting attention from both of them. "Watch and learn, okay?"

She frowns in confusion and I turn my head in Carlisle's direction.

A slow smile spreads on my lips.

When he gets around to screaming, my hands are already around his throat.

My teeth sink into his neck.

I squeeze.

I rip his fucking head off.

Good riddance.

"Your choice," I spit out, facing Esme as I hold up Carlisle's head. His body is doing the chicken dance on the floor. "Want me to put him together again?"

Esme stares at me. She swallows hard. Eyes flicking between me and her sad excuse of a husband.

An exhale. "Torch him."

Good girl.

XXX

Emmett never heard Carlisle's final cries, but he sure as shit smells the fire in the backyard. And this time he's joined by Rosalie, Hale, Benjamin, and Tia.

"What the hell, Edward!" he exclaims.

But this is Esme's show, so I keep quiet.

"He kept me in the dark," she snarls. "All these years... He played me!"

When my phone vibrates, I tune out of the discussion completely.

Everything went well. We're on our way back. One hour, my love.
~Isabella.

And then another text...

Aro will reach Forks in half an hour. We will meet you in Seattle instead. ~Alice.

Very well, then.

"Can't believe Carlisle's dead," Rosalie breathes out.

"Believe it," Esme mutters.

"Esme!" Emmett cries out.

"Hey!" I let out a sharp whistle. They all look at me. "Aro will be here in half an hour, so I suggest you all shut the fuck up and get out of here."

That sure works.

"Give me ten minutes," Esme says, and I laugh when I read her mind. She's actually going to set the house on fire.

What a spitfire. I never thought she had it in her.

And ten minutes later, we say goodbye to Emmett and his precious family.

I speed out in my Aston.

Neya follows in Alice's Porsche.

Esme takes Carlisle's Mercedes.

In the rearview mirror, I watch as the house goes up in flames.

Farewell, Forks. It's been a treat.

XXX

"Oh, fuck, I've missed you!" Isabella cries out, jumping into my arms. I laugh, catching her with ease, and press her up against a brick wall. "Kiss me, my sexy bastard."

"Mm, my pleasure, baby," I murmur, closing my mouth over hers. With her legs wrapped around me, I grind my hardening cock against her pussy. She whimpers and I push my tongue into her mouth. "Damn, I missed you, too, Mrs. Masen."

"When you two are done, we have a plane to catch." Ah, Alice.

Isabella laughs, tilting her head back so I can kiss her neck. "When we're done, Alice?" She purrs and nuzzles my nose. "We're never done," she whispers.

Fuck, how I love this delectable woman.

"Damn straight," I mutter, kissing her again. Unfortunately, we do have a plane to catch, so... "We'll continue this on the flight," I promise her.

XXX

Eight hours later, Isabella and I leave our private bedroom on my plane.

We're somewhere over the Atlantic, and Alice is demanding our attention.

With the three Amazons on one side of the aisle, I choose the other where Alice sits with Neya and Esme.

"Fine. We're here now," I say, pulling my wife with me as I sit down.

"What's wrong, sister?"

She can't stay mad at me. I'm all she has. "You're sure you don't need another hour or two?" she asks dryly.

And I laugh as I kiss Isabella's neck. "Oh, Alicia. Let's not talk about that, all right? You won't like the answer." Turning to her, I say, "Now, tell us what you've seen."

XXX

"We will have six hours in Volterra before Aro returns with his remaining minions – fourteen in total," my sister tells us matter-of-factly. "I've looked, but I can't see more than ten guards in Italy..." She frowns, staring into space. "According to Isabella, there should be at least thirty."

Yes, but perhaps they're not always in Volterra. "They could be on assignments," I point out.

She nods pensively. "True."

"They could also be hiding around Volterra," Isabella adds quietly. "I doubt Aro wants them all within the walls of his little city."

Another nod from Alice as she looks into the future. "Hmm, yes..." She gives a dismissive wave. "Regardless, we won't have any issues until Aro returns. The ones we'll encounter before then..." She smiles. "Piece of cake."

Not any issues until Aro returns?

I cock a brow at my sister.

She starts singing "Bloody Kisses" by Type O Negative in her mind.

Backward.

XXX

Isabella is right.

Members of the Volturi reside all around Volterra. Thanks to Alice's visions, we track them down without difficulty. We follow scents everywhere, and with Zafrina's and Isabella's gifts, we take them down quickly.

Inside Aro's not-so-humble palace, we run into ten vampires, just as my sister had foreseen.

Zafrina makes them all see fire, and apart from a few minor injuries, we succeed.

Then we're in the great hall.

Three chairs – thrones – await us.

First, though, I have an important task to take care of.

"Please see yourselves out," I tell my coven. With a sigh in satisfaction, I sit down in what used to be Aro's grand chair. Mine. "I have to talk to my sister." Alice smiles at me. "Besides..." I turn to Isabella and the others. "I'm sure you're eager to hunt after our journey."

They leave dutifully, and I'm incredibly relieved to find out that my wife doesn't require any reassurance of our love or anything. She trusts me.

Staying quiet for a while, Alicia and I wait 'til everyone is out earshot.

"Speak, little sister," I murmur, smiling.

She smiles back. ~We're finally here. Indeed. "Only Aro and his remaining thirteen stand in our way."

"Yes."

"But..." She tilts her head at me. "There is something bothering me."

"And what, pray tell, would that be?"

XXX

"Well, I couldn't help but notice..." She pouts at me. "After we took care of the Denalis and we were on our way to Seattle... Isabella said something to me, Edward."

I arch a brow at her, resting my elbows on my knees.

She laughs a little. ~I'm just being silly.

But she's not sure.

"Isabella called herself your queen," she chuckles.

I smirk internally.

Uncertainty creeps forward in my dear sister's features. "Is she?"

Cocking my head to the side, I study her for a moment before replying.

"What were you hiding from me on the plane?"

She purses her lips and folds her arms across her chest, as if she's being defensive. ~I just wanted privacy for this discussion. That's why I hid it.

This is it. What I want to know is that we're still on the same page, Edward.

The same page. As in, the same page we were on before Jasper brought three Southerners to Forks. The page we've been on for decades. About the two of us taking over.

"Are you doubting your own brother, Alicia?" I ask quietly, coldly.

"No!" she exclaims, eyes widening. "Of course not!"

"Good," I reply firmly. "Trust me, sister. You will be my second-in-command."

She beams at me. ~That's all I wanted to hear.

Ah, but there's more I want to hear.

"There's one more thing I picked up on earlier," I say, leaning back in my seat. "And I quote: 'We won't have any issues until Aro returns'... Mind explaining the 'until' part?"

XXX

"Oh, that's nothing," she laughs, waving me off. "Now that you've reassured me, everything will be perfect. Besides, what I saw wasn't set in stone. It was just an option at the time, but I know you will make the right decision now."

Her words are truthful, but she still doesn't show me the vision in which I evidently made a choice.

Between her and...?

I have no idea, but I decide not to push her.

I can't afford anything to go wrong at this point, and I believe it's vital that my sister stays in the dark when it comes to a few of my plans.

It's for the best.

"How long until Aro arrives?" I ask, changing the subject.

Her eyes glaze over for a second. Then a smile. "Two hours."

Perfect. "I suppose we have some work to do now, then."

It's time to gather a few humans.

XXX

Two hours later, we stand as a united front in the great hall.

Seven humans are cowering in fear along the walls.

We've all fed. We're ready.

"Three minutes," Alice whispers, standing on my left.

Isabella is on my right. "And we're sure only two of them have gifts?"

Well, four of them are gifted, but I hardly count Aro and Marcus. Their abilities do nothing to help them fight. Chelsea and Renata, however...

"Yes, my love," I answer, eyes on the massive door. "If you find it difficult to block both, go with Chelsea."

Renata's ability to take our attention away from herself and Aro is powerful for sure, but it won't keep them safe forever. Chelsea, on the other hand, has the power to break our bond as a coven. We do not want that.

"I wouldn't worry," Isabella mutters. "I've blocked more people than that. I just want to be sure I'm not missing anyone."

"Two minutes," Alice hisses.

And I start picking up thoughts from the Volturi. They're traveling fast.

"Neya," I say quietly. "Make the humans bleed, please."

Aro's guards haven't hunted in a few days.

"How much?" she asks lightly, appearing in front of two humans.

"Enough to keep them alert," I murmur, cracking a smile at her. "Snap off a finger or something."

"On all seven of them?"

"Yes."

The air is soon filled with human screams, and the scents of their blood swirl around, making our throats burn. Luckily, we have restraint since we just hunted.

"One minute, brother."

XXX

By the time two Volturi guards slam open the heavy oak door, we're all ready for them.

Zafrina is waiting for my signal, as is Isabella.

But I let Aro enter first. A furious Aro.

"You killed them all," he seethes.

His guards crouch, but I know that once Chelsea is blocked, their connection and loyalty to Aro will diminish. Blood will be the first thing on their minds. First priority.

"I did, yes," I say, feeling the corners of my mouth curl up slightly.

"You don't stand a chance," my sister snarls.

Aro knows that I have gifted vampires in my coven. He just doesn't know who they are.

"Your time is over." It's a fact. "It's my turn now." My smile is sinister.

In the eyes of Aro's followers, I see the faces of those standing next to me.

All smiles are sinister.

"You're outnumbered!" Aro snaps, sounding much more confident than he is.

"But are we really, Aro?" I counter, smirking. "Isabella, my love. Zafrina. If you please..."

One by one, they cry out. Zafrina makes them see the fiery pits of hell.

Isabella blocks Chelsea and Renata.

Aro and Marcus watch in trepidation as their warriors are rendered useless.

They start growling, feeling competitive and hostile in the air that smells of blood.

When Aro's eyes find me again, they're filled with fear.

And I'm really not in the mood to chit-chat anymore.

"Charge!"

XXX

The sounds of thunder resound upon impact.

We're all thrown into a vicious battle.

Isabella takes out Chelsea.

"Nice try, bitch!"

I behead several of the blind guards.

"Aaargh!"

My sister goes for Aro.

"Zafrina, your left!"

Esme and Neya focus on guards.

Kachiri fights Renata.

"Distract them with the humans!"

Senna and I lock eyes before charging at Marcus.

"Behind you, Esme!" I growl as I crash into Marcus. He snarls and punches me in the chest, and I almost lose my footing. Almost. "Oh, you're gonna have to do better than that." I deliver a blow to his chin, and he crashes into a marble wall. Senna and I follow. Gripping his shoulders, we push him down. Senna knees him in the chest... and I go for the head.

Done.

"Now, Edward!" my sister screams, and I whip around.

I see her fighting Aro. I see a guard closing in, still loyal to his master.

XXX

I have a choice.

With everyone fighting, I'm on my own.

The decision is made, and Alicia's eyes widen as they meet mine.

I leap across the room, aiming for Aro instead of the guard who jumps on my sister's back.

"Edward!" she cries out. "NO! Aaaaaahh!"

Sorry, sister. But your time has come, too.

As I tear Aro's body apart, I feel the heat of fire behind me.

"Push them into the fire!" Isabella barks out.

The Volturi guard who started the fire is soon a part of it. After feeding the flames with Aro, I snap off the guard's hand – which leaves him with a highly inflammable wound – before kicking him in. After all, he killed my sister. He deserved to die.

"Four more!" Kachiri shouts, throwing Renata's body parts into the fire.

I latch on to the nearest guard. I growl as he tries to fight me off, but it's futile. He's blind and blood-crazed. He doesn't stand a chance.

And only a few minutes later, it's over.

We have defeated the Volturi.

"Edward," Isabella breathes out when I pull her close. "We did it, my love."

"We did it," I echo quietly, burying my face in her hair.

"Your sister," she whispers.

I chuckle softly and drop a kiss on her forehead. "It was for the best."

If Alice had issues with Isabella ranking higher than her, it was only a matter of time before the two would've become hostile. And as much as I cared for my sister, nothing could compare to the bond I have with my mate.

"Are you sad, sweetheart?" she asks me in concern.

"No," I laugh through my nose. "Why would I be? I have everything I want."

Alice was a simple sacrifice.

XXX

"Isabella and I will be back in two hours," I say, keeping my eyes on my wife. "Until then, entertain yourselves."

~We will clean up, Edward.

I give Esme a nod as I pull Isabella with me toward the door.

When we reach the reception area on the ground floor, I approach the human sitting there.

"Giovanna, right?" I ask smoothly.

She knows what I am.

"Si," she all but whispers. Her thoughts are focused on the minor war her ears were privy to. She's concerned, she's afraid, she's intrigued. "What can I do for you, sir?" she asks in a heavy Italian accent.

"You can bring yourself and two humans to the sleeping quarters below." I smirk. "The master suite. And be quick."

She wonders if this is the moment someone will finally turn her into a vampire.

That won't happen.

Mere minutes later, I usher Isabella into the grand suite where Aro once resided.

Extravagance. Wrought iron. Gold. Heavy fabrics in dark red. Cherry wood.

How ironic. A four-poster bed that giant... when we don't need sleep.

"Let's show this bed a good time," I murmur huskily, sliding my hands down her chest. She whimpers when I reach her breasts. "What do you say, baby?"

I pinch her nipples.

She hisses. "Fuck, yesss."

XXX

I feast on her sweet pussy.

Deliciously naked on the bed, she is at my mercy.

Writhing.

"Fuck, your tongue," she moans.

I look up at her just as my tongue slides inside of her.

Knock, knock.

Isabella snarls in frustration. I laugh softly and jump off the bed.

"Don't cover yourself up," I tell her. I may still be in my jeans, though they are unzipped, but she's completely naked, and I want her that way.

Opening the door, I see Giovanna and two other humans. One man and one woman. Tourists from Spain.

"Come on in," I say, and Giovanna ushers the other two into the suite.

They all stop short when they see my sinfully sexy wife on the bed.

"Mmm, what a treat, Edward," she purrs, licking her red lips.

Three hearts stutter.

I move behind them all – at my pace – and no more than a second later, I sink my teeth into the Spanish woman's neck.

She screams.

I drink.

Thankfully, I'm not extremely thirsty. Stopping isn't too hard.

"Could you block me, love?" I ask, not wanting their thoughts for what we're about to do. All I want is pleasure. Consuming pleasure.

Isabella nods, and I throw one of the humans – the man – across the room to her. She breaks his legs, preventing him from running. I do the same with Giovanna. Then I pull the two women with me.

My mind is silent.

I revel in it.

"Please fuck me, Edward," my mate whimpers softly.

And I'm more than willing to oblige.

But... "I want you to ride me," I tell her.

Positioned on the bed, on my back, Isabella straddles me after pushing down my jeans.

"This cock belongs to me," she breathes out. I chuckle... but it morphs into a moan when my wife sinks down on me. "Oh, Edward..."

"Goddamn, baby."

She rocks against me, taking all of me.

And I take a hold of the Spanish woman, who is barely alive...

My thumbnail presses into the frail skin on her wrist without effort.

I slice her arm right open.

Her husband cries out, but with the sexiest creature on earth riding me, it's easy to tune him out.

Venom pools in my mouth, and I sit up. "Drink, my love," I moan. I hold the woman's arm to Isabella's mouth and watch hungrily as blood trickles down... down... down... her chest, her breasts, her stomach...

When the woman is dead, Isabella throws her to the side.

"You feel so good," she whimpers, leaning in to kiss me. I respond with hunger and need, tasting her own flavor as well as the blood. With my hands on her hips, I push her down on me hard. We both moan into the kiss. Then she breaks it. She tilts her head back, silently giving me access and permission.

"Fuck," I breathe out. I lick the drops of blood off her breasts. I suck and kiss, nibble and tease. And in the meantime, she keeps fucking me. Slowly, deeply, sensually.

I bite her.

Mark her.

Taste her.

"Your turn," she moans, and when I seal her wound, I see the woman she's holding up. Giovanna. "Let me see you drink."

Keeping my eyes locked with Isabella, I sink my teeth into the human's neck.

My eyes roll back.

Blood slides down my throat, soothing the dull burn.

And my wife is making a mess.

By the time I've drained the last one, there's blood everywhere, and all three humans are tossed to the side.

My cock swells inside of her addictive pussy.

Flipping us over, I make Isabella submit to my hunger for her. I grip the headboard and start fucking her in earnest. I barely even notice that she's not blocking my mind-reading anymore. She cries out, I cry out, we touch, we kiss, we lick off blood, we fuck, we fuck, we fuck, we're animals. In the bloody sheets, we're tangled together. Crimson eyes, full of desire. Deep thrusts. We roll around, fucking, loving, taking, giving. She coats my cock with her wetness.

"Edward, I'm-" She stops there, unable to continue.

I feel her coming, coming, coming.

"That's it, my dirty little angel," I growl. "Fuck." I slam into her. My fingers dig into the soft flesh on her hips. Muscles straining and tensing. Insides coiling and twisting.

And then I'm coming, too.

Pulsing and throbbing, I grind my cock into her pussy as I spill my cum inside of her.

Sweet mother of fucking...

"We are... so... doing that... again," Isabella whispers breathlessly.

Most definitely. "Just say when," I pant, rolling us over. Cupping her neck, I pull her down for a kiss. "I love you." She owns me. She's the only one I'd ever obey, and I would do it without blinking. "Fuck, how I love you, Isabella."

"Mmm, I love you, too, my sexy husband," she whispers into my neck. She licks and nibbles, rubbing against me. I start purring when she sucks on my earlobe. Scents swirling. She starts purring, too. "Can't believe you're all mine. What a lucky bitch I am."

I chuckle quietly, dropping an open-mouthed kiss on her shoulder.

"We're both lucky," I amend in a murmur.

But now we have a job to do.

"How about a shower before we go upstairs to the others?"

~I think that's a good idea. She laughs softly.

XXX

Once we return to the great hall, I take my seat.

The room is clean and ready for new leaders.

Isabella ends up on my lap. She is my equal, and we will rule together.

Esme takes the chair to the left. Neya standing by her side.

Zafrina takes the one to the right. Two sisters next to her.

"The Masen coven," Senna muses. "It has a certain ring to it."

Fuck, yes.

"So... Edward." Esme smirks. "What happens now?"

We have an empire to build.

We have a world to change.

An army to create.

This is our start.

Our beginning.

The dawning of a new era.

And now, for the part I never spoke about out loud. Until this moment.

"I'm sick of hiding," I say quietly but flatly. "We're the superior race. We shouldn't have to hide."

The Amazons, Neya, and Isabella are all for it. Without hesitation.

Esme has questions. "Aren't the humans a threat with their... weapons?"

"Not if we destroy... kill... wipe out the governments," I reply slowly. "Not if we create anarchy in the world."

Esme's eyes flash with greed. She wants this. She's ready to give in to her dark desires.

"Oh, you are so wicked, my love," Isabella whispers seductively. "We can have the world in a vice-grip."

I want hysteria.

Panic.

World chaos.

Fear.

Complete disorder.

I want blood on my hands.

The End