



Stephenie Meyer owns Twilight.

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### **BPOV**

#### **1.**

Fuck Wisteria Lane. This is worse. I'm telling you, this is *worse*.

In the fanciest parts of Manhattan, my mother lives, eats, drinks, and breathes.

Okay, let's be honest here. She doesn't really eat. Only *normal* people eat. Anyway, I'm here for now. Waiting for Gran to kick the bucket. Nasty old hag, that one. Rich one, to boot. And I want my dough.

This doesn't make me cruel, you know. This makes me human.

She hates the world, and the world hates her.

The doctors say she's got about three weeks left to live.

Three weeks before I can return to Seattle as a millionaire.

Three weeks to suffer through the clusterfuck of uppity bitches, who *all* live in Mom's building, it seems.

I arrived yesterday, and I've already witnessed pill-popping, infidelity, butlers picking up Chihuahua shit, various cougars hitting on the pool boys up on the roof, and twenty-five-year-old blondes calling their "Daddies" for more money. By that, I'm not talking sugar-daddies. No, no. They're just women closer to thirty than twenty, still calling their fathers "Daddy".

This morning, for instance, I went up to the pool on the roof, and I met Rosalie King. She lives in the building with her husband, but when her spending limit has been reached, she calls Daddy for more money. She told me this. Just like that. 'Cause it's normal. *Here*. Not where I'm from.

I started working in high school. I've had chores since I was eight, and when I told Rosalie that, she asked me if I was serious. "Like...you *work*? Like...for money? And, like, what do you mean by chores?"

Yeah...

Anyway, time to head up to the pool again. 'Cause the cougars don't watch the pool boys for their ugliness, you know.

And maybe I'll learn something more about my new neighbors.

*It's only three weeks*, I tell myself.

## **2.**

Up here on the roof, there are about forty loungers spread around the pool. Approximately thirty-five of them are empty. *This* pimply dude picks the lounge next to mine.

"So, you're Mrs. Swan-Adams-Smith-Dwyer's daughter, right?"

Even though Mom does appear to be an avid collector of last names, I'm pretty sure "Mrs. Dwyer" is enough.

"Yes, and you forgot Wilkins. I think it's between Adams and Smith," I answer, not moving. Apparently, a simple "hello" isn't a good start. Whatever, I'm busy soaking up the sun, 'cause we don't have *that* in Seattle.

"Sorry," he chuckles. "I'm Jasper Whitlock."

Sigh. "Bella Swan."

"Nice to meet you."

"You, too."

Now...be gone.

"So...are you just visiting?"

Yes. I just want my two million dollars, and then I'm outta here. I'm gonna go back home to Seattle, donate a bunch of money to charity and open my own cupcake shop. Not that I say this.

"Yep. Three weeks," I say instead.

"Cool."

Yeah, isn't it?

"I live here with my mom and her fiancé," he tells me.

I wonder which childhood memory I just lost to get this new piece of information crammed into my head. Nah, kidding. I'm only nineteen. I have years and years before I start losing memories. I hope. Plenty of space to cram shit into yet.

"Good to know," I mutter, adjusting my aviator shades.

I lick my lips, still tasting the raspberry frosting I made earlier. It's waiting for me in the fridge, but I think I need another hour or so of the sun before I decorate the cupcakes.

"How old are you?"

So, he's still here, huh? "Nineteen."

"Oh...I'm seventeen."

"All right."

"Yeah...so, you're in college?"

For the love of... "Nope. It's not for me."

Which is true. I just want to open my damn bakery, and I'm already a master when it comes to sugary goodness. It's a hobby, obsession, passion...you name it.

"Darn, here comes Edward."

*Who?*

### **3.**

Behind the privacy of my aviators, I sneak a peek at whoever Jasper's talking to, and...

I think I can quite easily orgasm from just watching this...*man*.

"Oh, Jasper, aren't you going to introduce me?" I ask, sitting up in my lounge. Thank God for the skimpy bikini I'm wearing. The man is currently enjoying the view, that's for sure.

*Also, thank you, God, for blessing me with a nice rack.*

"Uh...sure," Jasper mumbles. "Bella, this is Edward. He's engaged to my mom." Well, fuck my life. Here I was, thinking my next three weeks could get interesting. Guess not. "And, Edward...this is Bella. She's-

"Renee's daughter," Edward fills in smoothly, offering me his hand. "I saw her yesterday when she arrived." He gives me a bikini-wetting smile.

"Nice to meet you, Bella."

*Oh, the pleasure is all mine, I assure you. Now tell me, Edward. You don't look old enough to have Jasper here as your stepson.*

"Pleasure's all mine, Edward," I reply, smiling slowly as I give him another once-over. Black board shorts and nothing else.

*Have mercy on me, you dog.*

Pity, he lets my hand go after a little while.

I've been provided with top notch eye candy for the next few weeks, but...can I keep my hands to myself?

Shit, these Wisteria bitches are already messing with my head. I have morals, people. I won't pursue a taken man.

"Yeah, so...anyway..." Jasper clears his throat. "I'll be down in a minute, *Edward.*"

Leaning back against the lounge again, I may or may not adjust my bikini so that it covers less.

Edward licks his lips, eyes on my cleavage. "Uh, that's..." He sighs and looks at Jasper, who is appearing to be annoyed. "That's great, Jazz."

Mmm, *fuck* me, big boy.

Okay, so he likes my tits a great deal.

I can work with that.

No, *wait*. I *won't* go after a man who's obviously taken.

*Be a good girl*, I tell myself.

#### 4.

A week goes by and I've created this little routine I'm mighty, mighty comfortable with. When I wake up, I prepare today's batch of cupcakes, and then I go up for a swim in the pool. After that, I bake, read, or go out for some random sightseeing. Oh, and I often call the hospital to make sure Gran's still breathing.

She is.

*Then...*I go swimming again, 'cause that's when Edward's on the roof.

I've learned that he's an author. He's thirty-four years old, engaged to Jasper's mom, who is forty-two, the lucky bitch. *However*, she is in the Hamptons, 'cause...you *know*...it's summer. So, it's just Edward and Jasper...and a few other tenants, of course. Many are in the Hamptons, but with a pool on the roof, some stay home.

Anyway, about Edward... Yum, he's delicious. Well, he is in my dreams. Pretty sure I'm delicious in his dreams, too, 'cause he sure as shit hasn't tasted me for real. I've quickly come to notice that he's a look-but-don't-touch sorta man. This bodes well for Maria – Jasper's mom – but not me. It's so very obvious that he's attracted to me, but he never does anything improper.

He's not very talkative, either. What I've learned has come from Jasper. No, when Edward's on the roof, he has his laptop on his lap, or he's swimming.

"I'm going shopping, darling!" my mom calls. "See you at dinner! Kiss, kiss!"

Buh-bye!

She's such a Gucci whore.

Gotta love her, though.

I'm going up for a swim, anyway. It's time to give Jasper a go, after all. With Edward being all faithful and shit, I need to move on. It's been months since I got laid, and Jasper's into me. Done deal, right? If I'm lucky, I only have two weeks and some legal bullshit left in this city before I return home.

Checking my watch, I give myself a nod before heading to change into an even skimpier bikini. Edward will be up there now with his laptop. He oughta see what I'm about to offer his stepson.

## **5.**

My bikini is white. Yes, *white*. Good thing I wax, 'cause...you *know*.

On the elevator ride up, my bikini bottom also rides up a little. In my ass. But I don't adjust it.

Partly because I can't. Both hands are occupied. And partly because I wouldn't even if I could.

My hands, yeah. I have a plate of cupcakes in one hand and my iPhone in the other. It just hit me that I'll be hitting on a boy two years younger than I am. So, I thought it was best to check the age of consent in New York.

"What a cougar I am," I laugh to myself, typing away on Google. It better not be eighteen, I swear... "Oh, praise Jesus and Wikipedia. Seventeen for New York."

The only cuffs I want slapped on me are the furry kind.

*What?* I don't like chafing.

The elevator dings and I step out onto the roof terrace with a bright smile on my face, but...

Hmm.

It fades when I see that Edward isn't here yet.

He's supposed to be here and see my whorish behavior!

"Bella!" That's Jasper, waving frantically across the pool. "Over here, Bella!"

Mutha' fuck...

## **6.**

"Hey, Jasper," I say lamely, plopping down in a lounge. I offer him a cupcake to make up for the lack of smiling. "Cupcake?"

"Ooh, *yum*. You made these?" he asks, and I nod. He's all smiles as he takes one of the three treats. One was supposed to be for Edward, but he's not here! I feel like whining. "Holy effing crap, Bella!" he cries out. "This is so scrumptious!"

I bark out a laugh.

Scrumptious? Who *says* that?

"You're so fucking cute, Jazz, I swear..." I shake my head in amusement and the boy laughs. "So...where's Edward?" I'm so casual, it *hurts*.

"He'll be here soon," he replies with a shrug. "He said something about buying a new battery for his laptop."

Aaaah. I see.

"Well, I'm gonna go for a swim," I say, standing up.

On my way to the pool, I give the other two cupcakes to Mr. Newton and his plastic wife. According to Mom, he's screwing Mrs. Denali on the thirteenth floor, and the missus is doing wicked things to the cabana boy up here. Oh, yes. There are two cabanas here. There's also a bar next to the elevator, and the two bartenders working there – again, according to Mom – are fucking just about anyone. Same goes for the pool boys, though one of them is supposedly gay and very much *into* Mr. Banner on the eighth floor.

If you know what I mean.

Know what I mean?

These people, I say...

Half an hour later, I've lost count on the laps I've done in the pool.

I slice through the water with ease, missing the days on my swim team back home.

After a turn, I speed up with an underwater dolphin kick before breaking for air. That's when I see the glorious man walking alongside the pool. At the same pace I'm swimming. It doesn't say much, 'cause I'm fast. Still, though... He's got his Ray-Bans on, but I'm pretty sure he's watching me

and trying to be subtle about it. The slight tilt of his head tells me that. Now, *he...is scrumptious.*

## **7.**

Ever see James Bond when Halle Barry comes out of the water in that white bikini?

*Snicker, snicker.*

I push myself up effortlessly, giving both Edward and Jasper a good view. Now, I'm not vain, but I know I look good. I work out, I eat well, and I take care of my body. Reaching up to twist my hair into a ponytail that doesn't drip, I effectively push my tits out. Jasper can't really hide his reaction, but Edward's good. While the youngest blushes and wrings his hands awkwardly, the older one just slides his laptop onto his lap. Oh, and he looks away after clearing his throat. Jasper's staring blatantly.

"Hey, Edward," I say politely. He only gives me a nod, the bastard. So, when I spread out my towel on my lounger – which is conveniently positioned between theirs – I bend over on Edward's side, giving him a lovely view of my ass.

"Fuck," he curses under his breath.

But I heard him.

"Bella?" Jasper asks as I lie down. "Want me to put some sunscreen on you?"

*This shit only gets better and better,* I tell myself.

## **8.**

"Oh, God..." I moan as Jasper massages sunscreen into my lower back. He's actually very talented. "Mmm, that feels so good, Jasper."

With my aviators on, I can stare all I want as I rest my cheek on my forearm. Edward's clenching his jaw, eyes on his laptop, but I wonder where his mind is.

I kid, I kid.

I know exactly where it is.

"Fuck, yes," I moan.

He rubs and kneads, presses and strokes. More lotion is added.

"Bella?"

"Mmm... Yeah, Jazz?"

He clears his throat. More than once. "Uh, do you wanna join us for dinner tonight?"

Oh, do I *ever*.

"Is that okay, Edward?" he asks as an afterthought.

And the man in question snaps his laptop shut. "Yeah. Fine. Whatever."

Then he leaves.

I smile and close my eyes. "Count me in, Jasper."

"Cool!"

Dinner tonight with Edward and Jasper.

**9.**

At seven PM, I knock on their door.

I'm wearing a short, stone-washed denim skirt and a snug, black t-shirt. Simple but hot.

I also have a new plate of treats with me. This time it's mini pies with blueberries and vanilla cream.

Jasper opens the door with a wide smile. "Hi, Bella!"

I almost feel bad for using him, but then I remind myself of the girl he spoke of a few days ago. Alice, I think her name was. She lives in the building, too, but she's in the Hamptons with her parents. Apparently, she broke up with him for some gardener named Alejandro. Yeah. He's just looking for some fun with me, I conclude. A rebound. And if Edward doesn't play his cards right, Jasper will get what he wants.

"Hey, Jazz," I respond, smiling. "I brought dessert."

"Awesome!" His smile widens as he ushers me in. Much like Mom's apartment two floors down, this one is...luxurious and huge. "Edward's in the kitchen."

"Okay, should we ask if he wants help?"

'Cause I'm a *helper*.

"Uh..." He shrugs. "If you want."

*I want.*

Sure enough, Edward's in the kitchen, looking amazing in a pair of cargo shorts in army-green and a white button-down. Sleeves rolled up to his elbows, two buttons left opened, and we have chest hair access, people. Just a dusting of it. *Uuungh.*

"Hello, Bella," Edward greets with a curt nod. Then his eyes return to what he's got cooking on the stove. "I hope you like Pasta Alfredo."

*The man cooks.*

"Oh, I like," I assure. "By the way, I made dessert for us."

"That's very kind of you," he responds, clearing his throat. What's with all the throat-clearing around these two? "You can put it on the kitchen island over there. And, Jazz? You can set the table in the dining room."

## **10.**

Jasper disappears with plates and glasses, and after I've set the pies on the kitchen counter, I walk over to Edward and the stove. My tits brush against his bicep when I check on the pasta and some sauce.

Unintentionally, of course.

"Mmm, that smells good," I moan softly. Without stepping back, I look up at Edward, seeing his clenched jaw and darkened eyes. "I can't wait to have a taste." I lick my lips for good measure.

There's nothing subtle about what I'm doing.

This is just his last chance before I move on.

"I bet you can't," he mutters through gritted teeth. I hold his stare, refusing to back down. "Bella, how..." He swallows hard, closing his eyes for a second. Then they open again, revealing...desire. "How old are you?"

I should really sue him for ruining my thong just like that.

"Old enough," I whisper, letting my eyes flick to his lips.

He clears his throat and I meet his gaze again. "You're seventeen. Like Jasper."

It was a statement. An incorrect one at that. "Nineteen," I correct.

Yeah, that's when Jasper returns to the kitchen.

Edward puts distance between us right away by getting something from the fridge.

Killing Jasper would be a felony. Illegal. I *know* this.

## **11.**

Dinner is...awkward. Edward's practically staring daggers at his own food, as if he wants to kill it, and I'm pretty sure the pasta's already dead. Not that it was ever alive, but... Oh, damn. I'm so uncomfortable that my thoughts don't make sense.

"A few friends of mine are having a party tomorrow," Jasper says, shifting in his seat. "Wanna come, Bella?"

I really do wanna come, but I'm talking about orgasms here. Not parties. Then again, a party could lead to orgasms.

"Sounds like fun," I reply, sipping on my Coke Zero. Edward had made a show of serving us soda while grabbing a beer for himself earlier. He even said that we couldn't have any, 'cause we were too young.

We hadn't even asked for beer!

"Just don't forget your curfew, Jazz," Edward mentions pointedly and I want to laugh all of a sudden. What's his *problem*? Who pissed in his shoes is what I want to know. "Your mother told you to be home-"

"At midnight," Jasper grits out, looking embarrassed. "Gee, Edward. I haven't forgotten."

Since they're both occupying the two heads of the dining room table – with me in the middle – I'm watching them like a tennis match.

It's sorta fun. In a very...disturbing way.

Kinda ironic, too, 'cause I think my ruined thong is from Björn Borg.

Epic fucking tennis player, by the way...who later started his own brand of clothing.

"Thought I'd remind you." Edward shrugs. "You're only seventeen, after all."

Yeah, that was lame, Daddy E.

I shove a piece of pasta into my mouth, wondering what Jasper will come back with.

"And here I was, thinking that it was the elderly who had issues remembering stuff," Jazz responds dryly, and...

Game, set, match. Jasper won that round fo' sho'.

## **12.**

If dinner was uncomfortable, dessert is like feasting on shit.

Jasper continues his flirting with me, and while I appreciate his efforts, it's kinda hard to enjoy the attention with Daddy E shooting glares at us. Jasper may not notice them, but I sure do.

I fucking *knew* there was something wrong with the people in this building. For a second, I thought Edward and Jasper were normal, but that can't be the case. I mean...*c'mon*...I'm not a prude. Definitely not. But hitting on a girl while the so-called "father figure" is sitting right *there*...

Can someone say "what the fuck?"

"This was really delicious, Bella," Edward compliments, forking a piece of one of the mini pies I brought. "Did you make the crust yourself?"

Umph? "Yeah. I did." My smile is curious because he seems genuinely interested. Is he just acting to draw my attention away from Jasper?

"You did really well," he says with a smile.

I'm confused. He's been so pissed...and now he's praising my baking skills?

He's just feeding me lines, right?

*Don't fall for it, I tell myself.*

"Bella?" Aaaaand we're back to Jasper. I give him a nod, letting him know I'm listening. "Wanna go for a swim? Just you and me. The pool area is pretty much empty at this hour."

Uh...

I chance a glance at Edward. *Shit.* The glare is back. Aimed right at the oblivious Jasper.

This is where I have to make a decision. Teasing Edward isn't right. He's engaged, and even though he's the one I'd much rather have a fling with, it would be so wrong. And Jasper...well, he's...cute. He's available. He's just looking for fun. Fun with him wouldn't break up a family.

God, it's like *Sophie's Choice*.

### **13.**

"Actually," Edward says, "that's a good idea, Jazz." I whip my head around, shocked to see him smiling. The glare is gone. *WTF?* "You should be a gentleman and go upstairs to make sure the pool area is cleared." Wait, what? Why is he rooting for Jasper now? But, but, but... "After all, you wouldn't want to be interrupted up there."

Okay, I don't...I don't understand. So, now Edward *wants* me to go up there with Jasper? All *alone*?

"That's a good idea," Jazz agrees, grinning widely. "I'll be right back, Bella."

With that said, Jasper leaves the table...and soon the apartment.

I swallow, turning to Edward again.

Standing up, he fucking *growls*. "Follow me."

#### **14.**

When we reach the foyer, I'm confused. That is, until he grabs my arm and ushers me into the guest bathroom there.

Once inside, he pushes me up against the closed door.

"You think this is fun, don't you?" he seethes quietly, pressing his body against mine.

I can't stop the whimper.

He's so hard.

"For a whole *fucking* week I've watched you," he continues menacingly. I swallow hard, feeling his fingers grazing my throat. "Those bikinis of yours..." He grinds his cock against my stomach. "You've created quite a problem here, Bella."

I lick my lips, feeling arousal dampening my thong. "Then, fuck me," I whisper.

"Christ," he breathes out, and then he crashes his lips to mine. There's no asking. He takes. And I'm so willing to give. The kiss is hot, sexy, and

angry. I moan when he bites down on my bottom lip. The voice of reason is squished down.

"Edward," I whimper. His left hand travels up my thigh, under my skirt, not stopping until he cups my pussy. The material of my thong is quickly pushed aside and he slips two fingers inside of me. "Oh, fuck..."

"You're wet and ready for me," he mutters. He finger-fucks me into oblivion, all while kissing me hotly, wetly, and perfectly. "Now..." He breathes heavily, backing away. "Hands on the counter."

## **15.**

Hands on the counter.

I watch him in the mirror as he stands behind me.

Hungry eyes. *Angry* eyes.

He bunches up my skirt. He slides down my thong.

"This one's mine now," he tells me, pocketing the wet fabric.

I clench my thighs together and bite my lip.

"Spread those fucking legs," he snaps.

The sound I let out is like a whiny cry. I'm practically shaking.

I hear him unzipping his cargo shorts. I hear the ripping of foil, and then...

And then...

He positions himself at my entrance, grips my hips tightly, and then *shoves* his cock inside of me in one quick thrust.

"*Fuck,*" he snarls.

I choke on a moan. Tears well up in my eyes, and it's so intense. So *intense*. So earth-shattering that I have to squeeze my eyes shut for a moment. There's nothing romantic about the situation, but what he gives me feels so good. I feel stretched and filled.

"Edward," I mewl.

"Shut up," he breathes out, setting a fast pace. He fucks me hard from behind, one hand on my hip, another sliding up my front to grip my throat. "Fuck, so good." Our eyes lock in the mirror and I shiver violently. Again, I bite down on my lip. I want to scream. "This is what you want, isn't it?" We both moan when he grinds his cock into me. "You want me to fuck you until you break."

I cry out. Loudly.

He clamps a hand over my mouth.

And keeps fucking me.

Quivering, clenching, tightening. My moans and cries are muffled by the hand he refuses to remove, but I don't care. As long as he keeps fucking me with that cock of his, I'm all good.

"You're not going to fuck Jasper," he tells me, out of breath. His stare in the mirror is as penetrative as his dick. "Understood?"

I manage to nod.

"Good girl."

Hi grinds and swivels, pushes and pulls.

I'm close.

And then we both freeze when we hear Jasper returning to the apartment.

**16.**

Edward's eyes tell me to keep my mouth shut.

*"Edward?"*

I shudder as he removes his hand from my mouth.

He remains still, much to my dismay.

A knock on the door. *"Edward, are you in there?"*

Oh, he's in, all right.

I raise a brow, eyes still locked with Edward's in the mirror, and he smirks.

"Yeah, I'm in here," he replies to Jazz.

And slowly, so slowly, he starts moving in and out of me again.

The hand that covered my mouth earlier slides down my body again, and soon he finds my clit. My knees nearly buckle, but Edward holds me up. He rubs my clit softly, contradicting the slow but hard thrusts of his cock. More grinding. Then he adds his soft lips, too. On my shoulder and neck, he starts kissing me wetly and passionately.

*"Have you seen Bella? I can't find her."*

"Jesus," I breathe out quietly, lost in pleasure. "Don't stop, Edward."

"I won't," he whispers in my ear. Then he lifts his head and addresses Jasper. "She went downstairs. Try there!"

Yeah, I have a feeling Jasper's not gonna find me at home.

When Jazz leaves again, Edward picks up speed.

It doesn't take long until he pushes me off the ledge. The pleasure surges through me in hot waves that make me flush. Apparently, Edward likes that, 'cause he moans loudly and slams into me before following, thrusting lazily and deeply until he's finished.

## **17.**

"How long are you in New York for?" he asks as he disposes of the condom.

I smooth down my skirt, checking the mirror for any signs that would let everyone know I'm freshly fucked. "Another two weeks, give or take a few days."

It's all up to Gran, really.

"Good."

Does that mean he's glad he has me for two whole weeks? Or that he's glad I'm eventually going home. "Good?"

"Yeah," he mutters, running a hand through his hair. "Maria doesn't get back until late August."

Right. The fiancée.

A pang of guilt strikes me. I'm officially "the other woman".

Home wrecker...

"What's with the face, Bella?" He's chuckling, to my surprise. "Don't worry. She's probably fucking her yoga instructor or something. Or was it the tennis instructor?" He frowns, then shrugs. "Can't remember."

I...I can't believe it. I'm going to come off as the mother of hypocrites since I just had sex with Edward – who is so off the market – but...don't

these people take their relationships seriously? Is there something wrong with monogamy? Is being with one person not enough?

"So..." He smirks. "Two weeks, eh?" I nod. "Well, I'm sure we'll see plenty of each other before then." He winks.

## **18.**

Unfortunately, Jasper comes back before I can leave their place, so Edward distracts him in the kitchen while I sneak out. When I reach Mom's apartment, I text Jazz about feeling "off". He calls and tells me that he was just at my place, and I say that I'd been out real quick to buy ginger ale for my stomachache. Problem solved. And before hanging up, we make plans about catching up when I feel better.

Then, the day after, I call Jasper to let him know that I'm still not well.

This gets me out of the party he wanted to take me to.

After having dinner with Mom and Phil in a too-fancy restaurant, I feel my phone buzz on the way back to the building.

### **Jasper just left for his friend's party. Come upstairs. Now -E.**

Perhaps I should mention that my dad is half-Italian. Hotheaded and passionate bunch of people, ya know? And I inherited my dad's temper. Edward has no right to boss me the fuck around. Jackass.

### **First of all, I'm not home. Second of all, why should I come upstairs? ~B.**

I fire it off with a scowl, and it doesn't take many seconds before my phone buzzes again.

"Someone's popular," Mom coos. "New friends from New York?"

She wants me to move here.

So, I say, "Nope. My *bestest* friend from back *home*."

Then I open the text from Edward.

**Where are you? And are you serious? I think you know exactly why you should come here –E.**

*Grrr.*

**Dinner with Mom and Phil. What makes you think I'm available for you? ~B.**

**Cut the shit, Bella. You want my cock, and I want your pussy. Get up here! –E.**

Uh...

"Mom?" I ask sweetly. She smiles at me. "What's the driver's name?"

She's confused. "Eleazar."

I nod and send a quick text to Jasper, asking for the address to this party he's on his way to. 'Cause you see, I'm feeling *so* much better now. A party sounds just *delightful*. And when I've received Jasper's response, I tell Eleazar to drive there first.

"You're going to a party?" Mom inquires.

"Yep."

I may not be wearing a party dress, but that's easily fixed. Just you wait and see.

**19.**

"I'm so glad you're feeling better, Bella!" Jasper shouts over the music.

He's already on his way to Drunktown, and he can't have been here for more than half an hour.

"Me, too!" I reply. "Hey, Jasper? Where's the bathroom? I need to change!"

That's his cue to give me a once-over, I guess. So far, it's nothing special. Just a knee-length pencil skirt in grey, a black top, and silver colored pumps. But I have plans for my outfit. Thank God I'm wearing a black pantyhose, though, 'cause it wouldn't be possible to pull it off otherwise.

"I'll take you there!" Jasper beams at me.

And once I'm behind locked doors, I remove my top. Then I unbuckle the thin and glossy Gucci belt my mother gave me last week and pull up the skirt above my tits. That's how I end up with a ridiculously short dress. So, again; thank God I'm wearing pantyhose. The belt goes back on, though around my waist, not through the skirt's loops.

I let my hair fall down. My hands and fingers go through it, messing it up a little.

From my clutch, I bring out a deep red lipstick.

And now I'm done.

Let's party!

**20.**

When my phone buzzes, I ignore it.

The music's loud.

The expensive alcohol flows freely.

There's dancing.

Still, I can't get Edward out of my head. It bothers me.

He pissed me off with his demanding texts.

I shake my head, clearing it. Instead, I focus on the music, the dancing, the alcohol.

"Ooh, Alice is sooo pissed at you, Jasper!"

The hands on my hips freeze.

Looking over my shoulder, I see a girl shoving a phone in Jasper's face, and I narrow my eyes at the little screen, 'cause...

That's me. Right there. A photo of me. From this party. Dancing with Jasper.

Fuck Facebook. Fuck fucking Facefuck.

These spoiled bitches sure don't waste time, do they?

"She wonders who Bella is!" the girl yells over the music. I don't remember her name, only that Jasper introduced us earlier.

"She dumped *me!*" Jasper slurs. "She has no right to be pissed!"

He's trying to come off as cocky and annoyed, but his smile is smug and pretty fucking huge.

He obviously *wants* this Alice to see this photo, and now she has.

Ugh, teenagers. I may be one but I sure as hell don't act like one. Well...I didn't before I came to New York. I don't know what's wrong with me, really.

Yeah, and then a very childish idea comes flying into my head.

"Hey, Jazz... Does Edward have Facebook?"

## **21.**

As it turns out, Edward doesn't have Facebook. But Jasper has his own blog, and both parental figures in his life subscribe on his posts. I know, I *know*. It's too good to be true. I'm embracing my childish side. Let me.

"There," Jasper chuckles, showing me his phone. I smile, spotting the image of the two of us dancing, now posted on his blog. Fucking A. "You know... one might almost think you have a thing for Edward." He arches a brow at me, but it looks sort of odd, 'cause he's completely shitfaced by now.

"Yeah, he fucked the shit out of me yesterday," I tell him, cringing as a new song comes on. I have nothing against hiphop, really, but this... No, thanks. I don't really like LMFAO, is all I'm saying.

*...Girl, look at that body*

*Girl, look at that body...*

"You did *what?*" Jasper shouts over the beat.

*...I got passion in my pants*

*And I ain't afraid to show it...*

I stifle a smile. "I said we lucked out yesterday!" I shout back, lying. Jasper's kinda cute in a ha-ha sort of way when he's confused and so, so drunk. "I'm just saying that Edward seems to be a very understanding guy! He didn't put up a fight when we wanted to go to the pool alone, remember?"

And he grins so widely. "Too bad you got sick, though!"

Yeah...

*...I'm sexy and I know it*

*I'm sexy and I know it..*

My phone buzzes again. This time I definitely don't ignore it.

**Didn't you say you were having dinner with your parents? -E.**

Oh, Daddy E. That was like three hours ago.

**22.**

**Yeah, hours ago ~B.**

I escape the loud music and a very handsy Jasper by going to the bathroom.

**And where are you now? -E.**

I snicker.

**Wouldn't you like to know? ;) ~B.**

Of course, he *does* know.

**Let me guess. You're at a party with Jasper -E.**

**Oh! How could you possibly know that? LOL ~B.**

**Do you like to play games, Bella? -E.**

Not really, no. I have no idea what I've turned into here in New York. Or rather, why. Back home, I'm a simple girl. I'm close with my dad and my

friends. I party sometimes. I have fun. But I still work hard. I take care of my own. Out here, though... I've turned into some brat.

**No ~B.**

I chew on my lip.

**Then get that sweet ass into a cab. Get over here and let me fuck you -E.**

Taxi!

**23.**

"Took you long enough," he grunts, pulling me to his body. He closes the door behind me and then pins me to it. "How drunk are you?" he whispers against my jaw.

I'm a puddle of goo.

"Not too drunk," I whimper when he sucks my earlobe into his mouth. He's hard, so hard. I shiver. "Oh, God..."

"And what did you tell Jazz?"

His hands skim up my thighs. Up, up, up, until he palms my ass.

"That I felt like leaving."

"Good girl."

I gasp when he picks me up, but then my need for him takes over and I kiss and nibble as he carries me to God knows where. With arms and legs wrapped around him, I focus solely on how he tastes, feel, and smells. He can take me wherever the fuck he wants. I'm beyond caring at this point.

It's only a moment later that he lowers me on one of the plush couches in their living room.

Clothes are shed.

This time, *I* roll on his condom. It makes him moan.

## **24.**

Our bodies slide together as he moves in me. I meet every thrust, and he cups my ass with one hand to grind ever deeper. His breath is hot against my neck. Legs tangled together. Panting, writhing, moaning. Our hands move, roam, touch, squeeze. I fucking claw at his back, which makes him snarl and speed up.

"Edward," I cry out, arching into him. "More...oh, fuck..."

"Hitch your leg over me," he moans, and I obey. His long fingers caress my skin, sliding up and down. He never falters. His thrusts are measured, deep, slow. But not too slow. "Fuck, you feel so good... Can't *fucking*...get enough of you..."

I'm whiny and clingy, something I've never been before, but Edward doesn't seem to mind. In fact, he just gives me what I want. More and more. He kisses me hard, sensually, pushing his tongue into my waiting mouth. I fist his hair, he grunts, I shiver, we moan.

"Do you know what you do to me, Bella?" he pants, forehead to forehead, nose to nose. "Losing my goddamn mind..."

His cock...it reaches spots I never knew I had.

When I'm close, he picks up more speed, and I can hear our skin slapping together. I can hear how wet I am. I can hear our labored breathing.

A hot whisper in my ear that makes goose bumps appear on my skin.  
"You're so close, baby."

I'm not close, because I'm suddenly *there*.

Coming.

Coming.

Crying out.

I feel him tensing.

I hear his strangled groan. "Oh, Jesus *fuck*."

*Uuungh...*

In the end, we're a panting mess on the couch.

But since it's almost midnight, I don't linger very long. Jasper will soon be home, and...yeah.

"No more games. *Please*," he whispers against my jaw before I leave.

No more games. Two weeks left, and no more games.

*Two weeks will be enough*, I tell myself.

## **25.**

Over the next four days, Edward and I meet up at least twice a day to screw each other's brains out. We're good at it. Jasper continues his flirting up by the pool, which triggers a few rounds of angry sex with Edward. Hence my not telling Jasper to back off *completely*. I fucking love Edward's possessiveness.

Speaking of the pool, that's where I am right now. As usual, Edward's typing away on his laptop, and I gotta say that I'm a bit curious about what he's writing. All I know is that he's an author.

"What's your book about?" I ask, stretching lazily in my chair.

For the first time in my life, I'm tanned. It feels glorious.

Edward cracks a small smile but keeps his eyes on the laptop. "Well, it's not the next big thriller or anything."

"He's a chef," Jasper yawns from the lounge behind me. "It's a cookbook."

Oh? I'm intrigued. "Really?" I ask, sitting up to face Edward better.

That he can cook, I already know. Since that first night, I've eaten dinner with Edward and Jazz a few more times, and it's always been delicious.

"Yeah, really," he confirms slowly. "Though, it's not really a cookbook in that sense. There are recipes but it's more about spices than anything else. Getting to know the ingredients."

"Spices?"

He nods. "I enjoy coming up with new recipes, which means I need to know my way around spices. This book is divided in sections. Asian spices, Mediterranean, South American, African... The list goes on. Each section comes with an introduction, a few recipes, and advice on how to use the ingredients, as well as where you can find them."

I'm impressed and even more curious now. "You've been to all these places?"

He chuckles quietly, eyes still on the computer. "Most of them."

Wow.

Before I can fire away the next round of question, my phone buzzes next to me.

**On my way home from the hospital. We need to talk about Gran, darling ~Mom.**

Uh... I still have a week and a half to go, right?

**26.**

By the time Mom arrives at the apartment, I've already been here for twenty minutes. To pass time, I've decorated the batch of cupcakes I made this morning. They're pretty, but not pretty enough for my portfolio. So, I don't bring out my camera this time.

"There you are, darling," Mom greets softly, entering the kitchen. She gives my plate of cupcakes a smile, and though she'd never go as far as eating one, she finds my passion for baking endearing and sweet. She's never once told me that my dream to open my own bakery is nonsense or that I should do something better with my life. It's just that she would've preferred I did it all out here, in New York. Which isn't going to happen. I love Seattle too much for that.

"They're gorgeous," she praises, nodding at the cupcakes. "Are they another addition for your webpage?"

I shake my head, finishing sprinkling the white chocolate flakes on the dark frosting. "Nah, I've made prettier." Putting the bowl of flakes down onto the kitchen island, I face my mom. "You wanted to talk?"

She sighs, removing her fancy gloves. Even in the summer, she insists on wearing them.

"I went to see Gran at the hospital." This much I know. "She was actually awake." We both snort. The times we visit and Gran's awake, she's all about barking out demands. Not even Mom can say that she's fond of her own mother, and if she can't, then who would? Pfft. "Which means she wants us to do something."

Well, of course. "What is it this time?"

We humor Gran, 'cause as long as she's alive, she can change her will.

"She wants us to attend a few social events for her," she sighs. "The first of the four is this Friday."

"Mom," I whine, resisting the urge to stomp my foot. "I hate those kinds of things!"

Mom doesn't really enjoy fancy events, either, but she grew up with that shit. She endures it. However, one of the reasons it didn't work out with one of her ex-husbands was because his job required for them to attend many benefits and banquets. Even Mom has limits, hence marrying Phil, who is a baseball player. There's not a lot you need a tux for when you play sports, but it still gives Mom the luxurious life she loves.

"I know you do, sweetie," she replies, smiling sadly. "But we gotta suck it up."

Ugh.

"Ten days left," I remind myself. If the doctors are right, she's got about ten days left.

"Ten days," Mom echoes. "But look on the bright side; you're close with that boy, yes? Jasper Whitlock?" I frown in confusion but manage to give her nod. "Well, good. He will be there on Friday, too. Maria and Edward, as well."

Horse shit.

**27.**

I knock on their door. Or maybe I pound on the fucker.

I know Jasper's up by the pool with a few friends.

When Edward opens the door, he smiles and moves to usher me in, but I stand firm in the doorway.

"What are your plans for Friday?" I ask him.

His brows knit together. "I have no idea. Why?"

How can he not know? "My mom tells me that you're attending some fancy fucking dinner with Maria and Jasper. Mom and I are going, too."

I swear to God, I'm not jealous. Honestly. But I have no desire to see Maria, either. I'm fine with this since she's in the Hamptons, but if she's coming here...

This is just a fling. Apparently, the people in this building are free to fuck around – despite vows and/or proposals – which I'm only okay with since I'm going home soon. Fat chance in hell I'm going to grow attached to deceitful and unfaithful bitches and bastards.

"Um, I haven't heard anything about that," Edward mutters, bringing out his phone.

And ten minutes later, he's spoken to Maria. Sure enough, they're all attending on Friday.

"Is this going to be an issue?" he asks uncertainly. "She's only in town for Friday. Then she'll return to the house in the Hamptons on Saturday."

I shrug. "I'm fine as long as you don't fuck her."

This amuses Edward. "She's my fiancée, Bella."

Not my fucking problem. "Doesn't matter. I'm not spreading my legs for you if she's doing the same."

He gives me an odd look, one that I can't understand. It's almost like he's trying to read me or whatever. "What are you saying?" he asks, looking baffled and confused. "Do you care about who I sleep with?"

Duh. "When you're fucking me, too, then hell yeah." Now I'm annoyed. "I don't share, Edward. Take it or leave it."

He harrumphs, looking down while slowly shaking his head. "Well, this is...interesting...*refreshing*." The last word is whispered. Then he looks up at me again. "I didn't think people cared about monogamy anymore."

What a sad fucking life he must lead if he believes that.

Or maybe that's what he prefers – to screw around as much as he likes.

"Well, you have nothing to worry about, Bella," he murmurs then, chuckling a little. "I won't be with her."

Um, good.

In fact, I like his answer a bit more than I'm willing to admit.

## **28.**

Back home in Seattle, only boredom would drive me into checking Facebook. Now that I'm here, it's my way of talking to my best friend. Oh, and that I'm bored. Edward's being interviewed for some food magazine, which I'll admit only makes me more curious about his work, and Jasper's shopping for a tux, as per his mother's request.

Which leaves me alone with my phone. I'm even using one of the cabanas today. I'd be outside by the pool, but the sun makes it impossible to see the screen on my iPhone. How Edward can see his laptop screen is beyond me.

I sip on my Cuba Libre, thanking the bikini gods for their powers. When the bartender asked for my ID, I only let the towel drop a little as I told him I'd forgotten it downstairs.

"Ah, man," I mumble under my breath. The crops I planted a few weeks ago have died. Fucking Farmville. Worse than the tamagotchi I had when I was little. I killed that little fucker, too. A dinosaur, I think I had.

There's a new alert then and I forget all about the electronic shit I've neglected and killed in my days on this earth.

Jasper Whitlock has sent me a friend request.

What to do, what to do...

The thing is that I'd rather leave this place behind once I return home, which is going to be difficult if I have a lust-sick puppy stalking me on Facefuck.

"Eh, fuck it." I add him.

To pass some time, I check his wall, and-

"Dickface!" I hiss.

Posted right there, on his wall, are pictures of me. In a bikini. Photos he must've taken up here on the roof when I wasn't watching.

Oh, that son of a bitch is dead!

**29.**

When Jasper returns to the building, it's unfortunately at the same time as Edward comes back from his interview. This mean I can't go off and kill Jasper just yet. 'Cause I'm pretty sure Edward would stop me.

So, I swim.

It helps releasing some of the tension, but whenever I reach the far end of the pool, I see them both sitting there. Edward with his laptop, and Jasper with his phone. So, I swim some more, releasing more tension. It's a vicious cycle. Every time I see them – or rather, Jasper – I see red and speed up.

In the end, I'm pretty sure I break my own record from the nationals when I was fourteen.

I was a badass swimmer when I was younger, but it can't compare to this.

Unfortunately, I can't go on forever.

Out of breath, I leave the pool and take my lounge between theirs.

"Hey, Bella," Jazz says cheerily. "You sure can swim fast."

I'm pissed, but I can't show it right now. "Hey," I reply lamely. Then I think back on the cupcakes I brought with me. I was going to give them to Edward and Jasper, but there's only one left, 'cause I may or may not have devoured those fuckers to calm myself down before I dove into the water.

There's no way I'm giving Jasper my baked goodies now.

Unless...

"Oh!" I gasp, shooting out of my seat. Yes! "I'll be right back, guys."

I take my box with me, nearly dropping my towel when I reach the elevator. I'm on a mission. I'm gonna poison the little asstard.

Now, now, don't worry. I'm not literally going to kill the guy, but I remember him telling me that he's *slightly* allergic to kiwi. Apparently, it gives him a rash.

**30.**

"Mind explaining why you just ran off earlier?" Edward asks amusingly as I return to them by the pool. I have two cupcakes with me. One is going to give Jasper something to remember.

"I had to get these," I reply sweetly, holding up the container with two cupcakes.

Edward smiles softly – a look that does weird things to me – and Jasper gives a shit-eating grin, which I just want to smack off him.

No worries. That grin won't be there when he starts scratching.

"You spoil us," Edward chuckles, nodding in thanks when I give him the one I didn't squirt kiwi juice into. "What flavors have you used?"

Another thing about Edward, he seems like an interesting person. We obviously share a hobby when it comes to cooking and baking, though he's more for dinners whereas I'm the one for desserts.

"The main ingredients are chocolate and orange," I respond, handing Jasper the other cupcake. Enjoy it, fuckface. That's for taking photos of me and posting them online. "I was inspired by the chicken you made the other day," I continue, taking my seat again. "You used orange peel?"

He nods, smiling widely. "That's where the flavor is – in the peels." He hums when he takes a bite, and it makes me want to take a bite out of

*him*. "This is really good, Bella." He licks his lips, eyes on the cupcake, and I know he's trying to guess the other ingredients. "There's more, though, yeah?"

I smile. "Want me to tell you?"

"Hell no. I'll figure it out." He winks.

I knew he'd say that.

*Don't fall for him*, I tell myself.

For a while, it's quiet and peaceful. I'm on my back, soaking up the sun and enjoying the time I have here, and the guys are eating their cupcakes.

Jasper ruins the quiet moment, effectively pissing me off.

"I love your cupcake, Bella." He winks not-so-slyly when I turn my head to look at him.

Is he serious? *Honestly?*

Wow. "I'm sorry." I laugh a little but not really. "Was that an innuendo?"

"Um..."

"Cause, dude..." I shake my head and sit up. "What's the cupcake supposed to be? My pussy?"

"Uh... No- well...um."

"There's only one cupcake, so it can't really be my tits, now can it?"

"N-no, I-I..."

"And," I lean in a little, as if I'm going to whisper a secret, "I think we both know you haven't seen my pussy." I straighten and cock the bitch-brow. "So, how the fuck can you love my pussy?!"

The poor dude runs away, tripping over a lounge for good measure.

I sigh, feeling much better all of a sudden.

Leaning back in my seat, I get comfortable again. Chillin', relaxin'. Yeah, I needed that little episode.

"So..." Ah, Edward. "Your time of the month?"

**31.**

I snort. "My time of the month. Really, Edward?"

He chuckles and shrugs a little. "All I know is that you offer him a cupcake one second, only to bite his head off in the next."

Eh. Fucker deserved it. I get that he wants to make his ex jealous, but to post pictures of me in a bikini... Yeah, that shit won't fly well with me.

"Whatever." I wave him off. "Have you figured it out, by the way?" I ask, nodding at his half-eaten cupcake.

His crooked smile is killing me. "I have, actually." When he turns in his lounge a little, I do the same so that we can face each other better – fully. "And I have to say I'm impressed, Ms. Swan."

*Giggle, giggle.*

"Elderberries, correct? And...honey."

Shit, he actually nailed that one. "Good taste buds," I mutter, a bit disappointed that he got it. Impressed, but disappointed. I wanted to

make something he couldn't guess the flavors of. "I'll get you the next time," I vow.

He winks. "Best of luck to you, baby."

*It's only a fling*, I tell myself.

## **32.**

"You look gorgeous, darling," Mom coos, standing behind me as I check the mirror. It's the night of the fancy event, and I'm in this ridiculous dress. White, silky, airy, long. There's no back to it, so I'm not wearing a bra, and the slit...jeesh, it reaches my thigh. It's beautiful, I admit, but... I dunno. It's not really me. I love skinny jeans or denim skirts, depending on the weather. T-shirts, tight or otherwise. Cool tank-tops... But extravagant dresses? Eh.

"Thanks," I sigh, smoothing my hands over the silky fabric. At least I don't have to see Jasper tonight. He called me, frantic, two nights ago, asking if there was kiwi in his cupcake. Oops, I'd said. Since then, I haven't seen him, but Edward tells me Jasper's all red in the face, itching like a madman. Mission complete.

Anyway, after all that itching and scratching, he's not in any position to join us tonight.

Pity.

Or not.

"Your limo's here, Renee!" Phil calls from the kitchen.

And ten minutes later, Mom and I are on our way downtown.

"I made a few calls," Mom tells me softly in the car. "We've been seated with Maria and Edward, so at least there are people we know now."

Oh...

### **33.**

Edward Cullen in a tux.

Yeah...

I'm surprised I didn't die as soon as I saw him.

He hasn't seen me yet, though. When I saw him, I headed to the ladies room to calm my horny ass down. I needed it. Now, on my way back to our table, I see that he and – who I presume is Maria – have reached the table, as well, and are talking to Mom.

Maria, that filthy whore- Christ. What's *wrong* with me? I shake my head, clearing it. Here we go. Maria...*deep breaths*...is a beautiful woman. Sandy blonde hair with big curls. A dress in dark purple...plunging neckline to show off... Oh, yeah, there's no way those tits are real.

I hate her.

Don't ask me why, 'cause I'm in denial.

It has *nothing* to do with the hand she has on Edward's arm.

*Grrr.*

I'm suddenly envisioning her death. I would snap my teeth and crouch like some blood-crazed vampire...

"There's my girl!" Mom exclaims cheerily, and the seven people at the round table snap to me. Hello, spotlight. And...hello, Edward. I see him giving me a slow once-over, I see him swallowing hard, I see his eyes darkening, but...for the life of me, I can't focus on that. My eyes are on the ho-bag, whose hand is now on Edward's *chest*.

"Oh, what a beautiful daughter you have," Skankface coos to Mom. "I can definitely see what my son is talking about."

Bitch, please. Your son may do the talking, but your fiancé is the one doing the fucking.

### **34.**

Since I don't really give two shits about why we're here – other than Gran ordering us to – I'm not surprised that all I can offer is the WTF-face when a man at our table asks what I'm going to bid on.

Maria – who I want to impale on my stiletto – explains that this is a silent auction. The money goes to some charity...or whatever. I honestly can't find it in me to care right now.

"We should bid on the Paris trip, Ed," Maria says, drawing one of her claws down the lapel of Edward's tux.

"I think I just threw up a little in my mouth," I mutter under my breath.

"You did what?" she asks, and I guess I didn't speak quietly enough.

Ah, well. Think fast.

I smile sweetly. "I said that this halibut is like a slice of heaven in my mouth."

"Oh..."

Whore.

"Are you okay, sweetie?" Mom murmurs in my ear.

I can feel Edward's eyes on me, and no, I'm not okay. It's gone too far.

The little bits of information, the comfortable talks, the few times we've been alone for more than half an hour... I've gotten to know a little about Edward Cullen. And seeing him with Maria makes me want to vomit. It's just that what I've learned doesn't make sense if he loves her. The way he talks about his work, his travels... He speaks passionately about it all, and the way his face lights up... It's nothing like how he is right here and now. Now he's fucking rigid.

Shit. I...*like* him. As in, *like*-like him.

Gran better quit breathing before I actually lose it.

"Actually, I need some fresh air," I answer, excusing myself from the table.

### **35.**

A few moments later, I'm leaning against a brick wall outside. I'm in an alley, and I don't give a flying fuck about the dress. Too much is going on inside my head. Hell, I even asked one of the valets for a cigarette, which I'm currently holding onto for dear life. I only smoke on rare occasions. A party every once in a while, but this... Fuck, I need to calm down.

It's been two weeks here in New York. Two weeks and I'm so confused.

I feel like a kid who is stupid enough to question whether what I feel for Edward is lust or...that other thing. I'm young – only nineteen. I can blame my age. I don't know any better.

When I think about it, I don't know that much about Edward at all. So, how could I possibly have feelings for him? All I know is that he's thirty-four years old. He's a chef, but he hasn't worked in a restaurant in five years because he'd rather spend his time coming up with new recipes. He loves cooking, and he's very passionate about it, but he doesn't like

working in a team. He also loves to write, hence combining his two passions. The book he's working on now is his fourth.

I know what he likes in bed.

I know he's engaged to Maria Whitlock.

"Fuck," I mutter, bringing the cigarette to my lips. What does he see in her? Am I that blind? I have to be. There's something I'm missing. I'm sure of it. 'Cause *nothing* I've seen tells me that Edward is pretentious, pompous, or into this...extravagant lifestyle. In fact, he seems laid back, very easy going, and genuine.

As I exhale some smoke, I hear someone approaching.

### **36.**

I already know it's Edward. I don't even turn to look.

"Fresh air?" he asks quietly, coming into view. He stops when he's right in front of me. Hands in his pockets. I shrug. He tilts his head a little, looking down at me as I take another drag from the cigarette.

We're silent for a while. I look down. No movements other than my hand bringing the cancer-stick to my mouth. Then, a moment or two later, he comes closer, takes the smoke from me, and he throws it away after taking a pull from it.

I watch as he tilts his head up and exhales into the night.

Then he closes the distance. His lips on my forehead. It's oddly intimate.

It sorta feels like I'm crumbling.

"You look so stunning, Isabella," he whispers against my forehead. I shiver. "I wanted to tell you sooner."

Yeah, but that would've been weird. No worries.

His hands move to my hips, a soft grip, fingers caressing, and his lips move down to my temple. Slowly. Moist lips.

"Will you tell me what's wrong?" he murmurs, still kissing me. Still slow, still soft, still...

There it is. He's being *tender*.

I swallow. "I just wanted some fresh air," I answer weakly.

His next whisper is against my cheek. "Liar." Gentle nips at my jaw. I'm melting. My hands slide up his arms. Shivers. A breath against the corner of my mouth. "Baby..."

*It's just lust*, I tell myself.

*There's nothing more*, I tell myself.

*A fling*, I tell myself.

I whimper when his mouth covers mine in a hungry kiss.

### **37.**

Before I even know it, Edward sinks to his knees.

My breathing hitches when his hands move up my thighs.

He bunches up my dress. "Hold this."

I do and my other hand finds his hair. That always makes him moan quietly, this time as he nuzzles my pussy. My eyes close. I shiver. He pushes my thong aside, and...his tongue...his fingers...

He hums and moans against my soaked flesh. He draws more and more arousal from me. His fingers fuck me, his tongue licks and circles... Swirling around my clit, more humming, and I'm losing my fucking mind. I'm sure of it. I whimper his name and he urges me to throw my legs over his shoulders. I do, and I'm literally straddling his face.

It's weird, but even out here, in a fucking alley, he makes me feel...worshipped. He devours me, pleases me, gives...and gives.

It doesn't take long until I'm clenching around his fingers.

The orgasm shoots through me, making me feel feverish and out of breath. Goose bumps appear and one shiver sets off another.

He doesn't stop until I'm begging him to.

And once I'm back on the ground, albeit wobbly, he returns to kissing me.

Sensually, almost...*desperately*.

I can taste myself in the kiss.

"Meet me tomorrow," he breathes out, lips still connected. His hands cup my face. "Meet me tomorrow. *Please*, sweetheart, I need..."

*Sweetheart.*

"Okay," I whimper, reaching for more. My fingers pull and twist his hair. I'm wanton and needy, ready to savor the time I have left with him.

I can feel him. He's rock hard against my stomach, so I'm a bit confused when he backs away.

His eyes are so dark.

"Don't you want me to...?" I'm more than ready to put my mouth on him.

I *want* to.

My own eyes show him that I want to.

But he shakes his head and drops another kiss on my forehead.

"Go back inside, beautiful," he tells me softly, brushing his thumb over my lips. "I'll be there in a minute. And tomorrow we'll talk."

*Talk?*

### **38.**

It's past midnight when Mom and I get back to the apartment. After Edward and I had rejoined the others at the dinner, I felt a little better. It was easy to see that Edward tried to keep Maria's hands off him, which both thrilled and confused me. Even if it was what I wanted, he had no obligation to actually obey me. But knowing that he did made it easier for me to sit through the dinner without finding another escape.

"Goodnight, Mom," I yawn, walking toward my guest room.

"Oh, I don't think so, Isabella," she chuckles, grabbing me by the shoulders from behind. Then she spins me around and steers me toward the kitchen. "I feel like talking."

But, but, but... "I'm tired," I whine.

She's not having it, though. With a pointed look, she silently tells me to sit my ass down.

"Fine," I sigh, sliding onto one of the stools at the kitchen counter. "What do you want to talk about?"

Standing on the other side of the island, she asks a question that nearly makes me fall off my stool.

"How long have you and Edward been seeing each other behind Maria's back?"

**39.**

Deep breaths.

"Maria may not have noticed, but I sure did," Mom continues. I'm frozen in my seat. "The way he looked at you, the way you glared at Maria, how you disappeared, how he followed..." She tilts her head, studying me, maybe. Her own expression is blank. "It's quite clear to me that something is going on between you."

Right...

What do I say?

The truth. "Um... It started with a mutual attraction," I mumble, looking down at my lap. Fidgeting fingers, of course. "And..." I sigh. "In the end we acted on it." I release a breath. "We first had sex a little over a week ago." Has it really not been more than a week? Wow. "Since then..." I offer a one-shoulder shrug. "...we've met at their place a couple of times...um, a day."

Looking up at Mom, I plead with my eyes. I messed up and now I need my mom's advice.

"Oh, sweetie," she sighs, a sad smile on her lips. "And with him working from home, you being here on vacation – sort of – I take it you've started to get to know each other?" Her guess couldn't be more correct. So, I nod. It's true. Even if it's not much, I *have* started getting to know Edward, and apart from him being engaged, I love what I've learned. "You've developed feelings for him?" she asks softly.

"I think so," I admit, looking down again. "I know it's stupid..." But I can't help it. "There's just something about him."

**40.**

He's intense. He's passionate.

"I wouldn't say it's stupid, Bella," Mom replies pensively. "It's a complicated situation, but we can't help who we fall for."

That makes me look up.

Her smile is rueful. "I was very much in love with Charlie." I know this, but it didn't work out. They were equals when they met in college, both looking for the same type of college experience. But after that...they were so different. Dad's a simple guy. Mom's as close as you can get to a princess without the title. It just didn't work. They tried – for my sake – but... "We were too different," she sighs, looking forlorn. But then she returns to present with a genuine smile. "I was lucky enough to fall in love twice."

Phil. I know Mom loves him. She didn't love the other men. "Why did you marry the other dudes?"

"Convenience," she replies simply. I grimace. "I know what you're thinking, sweetie, and you're right. It's not the right reason to get married, but many do. Some feel like it's time to settle down, so they find a suitable match, hoping for the best." She pauses. "And some do it for status."

Could Edward fall into either of these categories?

It can't be money or status, though, right? He's successful. People know about him, both as an author and as a chef.

Or does he love her?

That thought makes my insides churn.

If he's in love with her and cheating on her at the same time, he can go to hell for all I care. Then again, if you really love your partner, you're faithful. It's just that simple. No excuses.

"What should I do?" I ask, weakly and helplessly.

**41.**

"Well...can you see yourself in a relationship with him?" she asks.

I shrug. "How could I? I don't know him well enough for that." I chew on my lip, thinking about what I *do* want. "I want to date him," I whisper. "I want the chance to get to know him properly. Without secrets and sneaking around."

And if I'm honest with myself, I can see how easy it would be to fall head over heels.

It's a gut feeling.

"If we put Maria aside for now, is there anything about Edward you don't like?" she wonders.

I don't have to think very long. "Yes. It bothers me that he can cheat on his partner so easily." It's sort of related to Maria, of course, or very related, but it's still one of the things that really messes with my head. "I know...it makes me a hypocrite since I still see him..." I trail off, feeling foolish and conflicted. "In his defense, Maria's apparently not faithful, either, but two wrongs don't make a right."

Mom smiles gently at me. "You were always smart, Isabella. What does your heart tell you?"

Ugh. My heart...really? "That I want more of him," I confess. "But my head tells me that there's too much standing in the way."

I belong in Seattle. I have a detailed plan for what I want. Hell, I've even started scouting locations for my cupcake shop. I have my friends in Seattle... Dad lives there, too. My life is there.

Edward's life is here.

"Hmm... well, for what it's worth, I don't think Edward sees you as a casual distraction," she tells me firmly. "After you left for..." She chuckles a little. "...'fresh air' as you put it, he looked very distraught and worried." She smiles and I feel hope and other stupid shit fluttering inside me. "In the end, he followed you, leaving Maria behind." True... "What does that tell you?"

It tells me that I have plenty to think about.

"You'll make the right decision, sweetie. I know it."

I'm not so sure. "He says he wants to talk to me tomorrow," I say hesitantly. "Do you know what it could be about?"

Mom just smiles. Almost widely. "Only one way to find out."

## **42.**

This morning when I woke up, Edward had already texted me the instructions to get where he wanted us to meet up. And that's where I am now. Central Park, near Tavern on the Green.

I don't have to wait long for him to show up.

I snicker and shake my head, spotting the bag in Edward's hand. It's from Dean & DeLuca, of course.

"Such a food snob," I tease as he reaches me.

Internally, I'm close to freaking out. I'm nervous. There are butterflies.

"Shush," he chuckles, draping an arm around me. It feels so good. As does the kiss he drops on my forehead. "C'mon, sweetheart. Let's find a good place to sit."

It doesn't take many minutes for us to find a good spot.

Edward even brought a blanket.

And food.

*This is not a date*, I tell myself.

### **43.**

Shoes off, I plop down on the blanket. I sit Indian-style, watching as Edward rummages through the bag from Dean & DeLuca. Smoothies and sandwiches come first.

"Any allergies?" he asks, holding up two wrapped sandwiches.

I shake my head. "I'm lactose intolerant, but I have pills for that."

"Good. I mean, it's not good that you're lactose intolerant, but that you—" He stops there, laughing...*nervously?* and runs a hand through his hair. I smile, relaxing a little. "Never mind. Try this one," he says, handing me one of the wraps. "I think you're going to like it."

He doesn't give me an option, but this is different. It's like he's asking me to trust him.

I think.

Maybe.

"Thanks," I reply, taking it from him. And he's right. The sandwich is delicious. Pastrami, mustard... "Can't get any more New York than this, can it?" I smile.

He gives me a small smile. "I love New York."

My heart sinks a little.

He loves New York like I love Seattle.

#### **44.**

With every bite of my pastrami sandwich, there's a knot tightening in my stomach.

It's proof. Edward admitting that he loves New York, or more importantly, my reaction to it... It's proof of how I want more with him.

This is what I have swirling around in my head as we eat. If Edward notices my mood, he doesn't let on. He asks questions about me. Many of them. What are my plans upon returning to Seattle? What's my dad like? Who are my best friends? How's Gran? How would I describe a perfect day in Seattle? What do I want for myself? Do I like traveling?

*I want to open a bakery when I go home. I want to call it The Cupcake Shop.*

*My dad is easygoing, casual, and funny.*

*My best friends are Emmett, Angela, Diego, and Bree.*

*Gran? She's still breathing.*

*A perfect day in Seattle... Visiting Pike Place for brunch, going to the marina, maybe take the ferry to Bainbridge.*

*What I want for myself? I want comfort mixed with a little thrill. A normal, ordinary every-day life...and a few adventures every now and then.*

*Traveling...of course. I love it. Though, I hate flying. But it's worth it.*

On autopilot, I answer Edward's questions.

It makes me homesick.

But the thought of home also twists and pulls at me.

Edward's here in New York.

Hell, I don't even know what he wants.

He's engaged, remember?

So...why is he currently looking oddly wistful?

#### **45.**

"Tell me about your friends," he says before raising his smoothie to his lips. "You mentioned four of them, yeah?"

I smile down at my lap. "They're two couples..." But they never make me feel left out. We all grew up together, *sorta*. "Emmett and Angela just got engaged." I leave out the drama that comes with Emmett and Angela's story. Emmett was our teacher in high school. Yeah. "They're so in love," I murmur, maybe to myself. "They never let any obstacles stand in their way."

They actually did sneak around for a while, but only 'til Angela graduated. After that, they told everyone.

"Obstacles?" Edward inquires.

I can't help but chuckle. "Emmett's sixteen years older than Angela. He's also our old teacher." To hell with it. Out comes the truth, as well as details.

He smirks. "Really?" I nod. He laughs a little. "Wow. But they're happy?"

"Very. He's a goof at heart. She's an old soul. They just...match."

He looks away for a moment. It's clear that he's deep in thought.

When he speaks again, it's quiet. "So, she's nineteen like you?" I nod with just a little dip of my chin. "And he's thirty-five."

Yeah...

And Edward's thirty-four. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that he's thinking about age difference, and most likely not Emmett's and Angela's.

"Are they on the same page?" he asks, still looking away. "I mean...marriage, children..."

## **46.**

Fuck this. No more beating around the bush.

"What do *you* want, Edward?" I ask softly but imploringly. It's so evident that he's not really asking about my friends here. "Do you see any green-eyed children with Maria?" There. I'm done ignoring the pink elephant. "You obviously see marriage." There's resentment in my voice.

He finally looks at me, but only fleetingly before he averts his eyes yet again.

"I'm ready to settle down," he sighs quietly, picking lint off the blanket. "I want stability. I'm sick of women just being after my money or...status. With Maria I don't have to worry about that, 'cause she has her own

money." He lets out a bitter chuckle. "This may surprise you, and maybe you won't even believe it, but you're the first one I've been with since Maria and I..." He waves his hand...instead of finishing his rant with "got engaged", I assume...or guess, and I admit that I'm relieved. I love the fact that screwing around isn't something he "tends to do".

He sighs. "But no. I don't see children with her."

"Why?"

I can't imagine not having children. I grew up without siblings and hated it.

I want two children of my own.

"Because I can't have children with someone I'm not in love with," he states bluntly.

"You're such a fucking douche," I blurt out and his widening eyes snap to mine. "You're seriously going to marry someone you don't love?"

Dickward.

"It works for us," he says, defensively but weakly. "We're hardly the only ones marrying for comfort." So? That only proves that Edward and Maria aren't the only ones who are fucked in the head. "We have an understanding. It's as simple as that. I don't love her. She doesn't love me. But we both want something constant, and..." He releases a breath. "We're...comfortable...around each other."

"Wow," I reply dryly. "Sounds like you're going to be so happy together."

He chuckles darkly. "What do *you* know, Bella? You're just a *kid*."

Well, if that wasn't a slap in the face...

**47.**

"Fuck you, Edward." I shoot him a glare before I stand up. "You know what? If it's so fucking childish to think that marriage is for people in love...then I guess I *am* a kid."

Grabbing my bag and my shoes, I leave him.

"Bella, wait!"

Fuck that.

I keep walking. The grass is soft and the sun is warm. It's a beautiful summer day in New York, but...

I'm fucking seething.

"Bella!"

Fuck. I didn't expect him to follow.

But that's what he's doing.

"Bella." And he's here, grabbing my arm...

Spinning me around to face him.

My glare is intact as I look up at him.

"Why do you care?" he asks me, out of breath. Hands on my shoulders. There's a storm raging in his eyes. Anger and...something else. "Why do you care about my views on marriage?"

"Go fuck yourself," I whisper harshly. "Do you really want me to spell it out for you?"

Just like that, his anger is gone. His eyes soften. "Yes. I need it," he admits quietly, pleadingly. The hands on my shoulders move up to cup my face. "I need you to spell it out for me."

I grit my teeth. He's being so unfair. "You're a coward," I whimper.

My eyes well up and I hate it.

"I'm sorry." He swallows hard. "I'm so sorry for calling you a kid when you're clearly the more mature of us. And I'm sorry for needing you to take the first step."

The first step... Does that mean he wants more, too?

He just wants me to take the first step, and then... And then what?

"What do you want me to say?" I ask in a small voice. "That I want more with you?" I lick my lips and blink back tears. "I do. I want more with you. I want to get to know you. I want to let myself fall completely-" I stop there. Enough is enough. "But you live here, remember? I'm going home as soon as possible." Besides... "I want to marry for love. Not convenience. And I want children. *Commitment*. No fucking around. I want..." I blow out a breath. "And I love Seattle."

I'm young. Very young, but...I still know what I want. I'm willing to compromise. I'd be unfair if I wasn't willing to surrender anything, but I just can't see myself living in New York. And I won't ever think marrying for comfort is enough. I want pure happiness. Is that so wrong?

Am I too naïve?

**48.**

My internal rant is cut off when Edward kisses me.

He weaves his hands through my hair and deepens the kiss, and I tilt my head up, giving him everything. The soft moan he lets out when our tongues meet almost sets me on fire. I can taste his raspberry smoothie. As delicious and amazing this kiss is, though... I need answers.

"Edward," I breathe out, my left hand on his cheek.

"I want it, too," he whispers in between kisses. Soft pecks. "I didn't know someone like you existed." I smile as he keeps kissing me. "Bad experiences in the past..." Forehead against forehead. "You really want what you just said?" I nod. "With *me*?" I nod again, and...his smile is beautiful. "And you're not bothered by the age difference?"

"No."

"Good," he breathes out...in relief, I think. "Me either."

Before I give out my girly squeals, I have to ask... "New York...Seattle?"

He just smiles. And tucks a piece of hair behind my ear. "I'm coming with you, baby. If you want me to."

"But..." Oh, God. Could it really be this easy? "You said you love New York."

"I do," he chuckles. "But we can always visit, can't we? Plus, I love Seattle, too. And..." He sighs and kisses me on the forehead. "With you there, I'm pretty sure I'm going to love it even more."

I swallow. "I need more convincing. It feels like you're giving up too much. I don't want you to resent me later."

He chuckles again, and I notice how happy he looks. Is that because of me? "I could never resent you, Bella. You have nothing to worry about. Honestly, I'm not sacrificing a thing. I have *you*, don't I?"

Way to make a girl cry. "You do," I whisper, not trusting my voice. "And of course we're gonna visit." I never visited before. Mom always visited me, but...it's different now. "I have Mom here, too."

"It's settled then, okay?"

I breathe. "Just like that?"

"I hold onto what's important," he tells me softly. "I will cherish you, I *want* to cherish you. *Only* you."

Then he laughs a little. Quietly. "You've changed my fuckin' life, Bella Swan."

**49.**

I scowl without opening my eyes. "Whoever you are, you're blocking the sun."

I'm enjoying my last day in New York by being lazy by the pool on the roof.

"It's me."

Ugh. Jasper.

After Edward broke it off with Maria, Jasper's been stalking me like a puppy. He can't believe I've spent all my time in New York with Edward instead of him. I expected a minor war coming from Maria, but I was wrong. Edward and she broke up without fuss. The problem's coming from Jasper.

"You're still blocking the sun," I point out.

Thankfully, he moves. But he doesn't leave. "So, you're really going tomorrow? And Edward's coming with you?"

Oh, I smile so widely.

I was only supposed to be here for three weeks, and it's been six weeks now. But Edward had some stuff to take care of before he could move, and I had no intention of leaving his side until we could leave together. Besides, I had some Gran-biz to finish. She took her last breath two days after Edward and I were at the park, and since then it's been paper signing and funeral bullshit to go through.

But we're done now.

"Yep," I sigh contently. "We're on the first flight out tomorrow morning."

Mom's been sniffing and crying a little, but she's happy for me. Correction: she's happy for *us*. She likes Edward. She can see that he's good for me. Perfect, even. And after he promised her that we were going to visit often, she was completely sold.

I guess New York isn't all bad.

The studio apartment Edward bought in the meatpacking district helps, too, of course. That's where we're going to live whenever we visit.

He calls it *our* home away from home.

I tell myself that I can't possibly have fallen in love with him already.

Yeah, I'm so full of shit.

"So, you have a thing for older guys?" Jasper mutters bitterly.

I chuckle. "I have a thing for *Edward*."

And Jazz fucking whines. "What was so wrong with *me*?"

"I don't even know where to begin," I yawn. "But how about...the photos you posted of me on Facebook?"

"He did *what?*"

Oops. I open my eyes, seeing Edward standing behind Jasper. I guess he's back from his meeting with his editor.

"I erased them!" Jasper cries out. I know he's telling the truth, 'cause I checked. "I promise!"

Jasper takes off as if his ass is on fire, and I give Edward the come-hither look.

"Don't worry, baby," I laugh quietly. On the lounge, he covers my body with his, humming as I thread my fingers through his hair. "They were innocent enough and they're gone." I kiss away his scowl. "How did the meeting go?"

He smiles into the kiss. "Very well. We'll be gone for six weeks, starting October fourth."

Fucking A. Six weeks on a book tour with my sexy chef. "That sounds amazing," I sigh softly. "We're going to have so much fun."

"Yeah," he nuzzles my nose, "but that's 'cause you're coming with me."

Pfft. "You're saying you wouldn't have fun if I didn't go with you?"

He hums and I nibble a little on his bottom lip.

"There's no comparison, sweetheart," he whispers. "And then when we return to Seattle..."

I smile. "We're going to open my cupcake shop!" I finish excitedly.

"Damn straight." He laughs through his nose. "Fuck, you're cute when you get all excited."

"It's a gift," I admit solemnly.

Who knew a little trip to New York could give me the world?

**50.**

***A glimpse into the future...***

"Not yet!" I laugh, smacking away Emmett's and Dad's hands. "You'll have to wait!"

Decorating cupcakes isn't the easiest when you have hungry men in the shop.

We're opening the third cupcake shop today.

The past four years have flown by fast. It's what happens when you have fun.

It's our second shop in Seattle. The third one is in New York, and I have a trusted team of employees out there. We visit them about once every other month.

"What about me, sweetheart?" I hear Edward ask from somewhere behind me. I can even hear the pout in his voice. Fuck. "Being the husband should give me some perks-"

"Do not finish that sentence," I warn playfully, spinning around to face him. "Perks, Edward... Really?"

Dad and Emmett just laugh at him.

Had we not been so busy, I would've drawn it out. I would've let him sweat. But we are busy. The shop opens in four hours and, thanks to Edward's status in the food world, I know there will be plenty of people coming. Plus, we're leaving tonight for another one of Edward's book tours. This time we're bringing the boys. How we are going to cope on the

road with two kids – one who just learned how to walk and one who loves to give his daddy heart attacks by hiding from him – I don't know...

Still, we love it. It's challenging, but we're no quitters.

"Sorry," he says sheepishly.

Angela snickers. "C'mon, Bella. Everything's fine. Just relax, all right?"

Deep breaths.

"Okay. I'm calm." I think.

"Good," Edward chuckles, pulling me close. "Now, let's go home. We have some packing to do."

I turn to Dad, but before I can say a word, he speaks. "Sue will stop by with the boys in a couple of hours."

Okay. Yeah. Good. I'm calm.

Edward wastes no time ushering me out to the car.

Fucker even snatches a cupcake on the way.

"It's your fault!" he says defensively. I fasten my seatbelt with a little too much force. "I can't help that you make delicious cupcakes."

He has a way with words, I'll give him that.

"Smooth talker," I grumble, trying to withhold the smile.

"Oh, if it's smooth talking you want, I have more," he assures with a wink as he pulls out from the parking space. "Thank you for giving me two beautiful children, thank you for loving me, thank you for being my wife, thank you-"

"Okay, okay!" I laugh, cutting him off. Leaning over, I kiss him on the cheek. "You talk the talk, baby."

"It's all true, though," he murmurs, threading our fingers together. "I love you."

"I love you, too."

I also love that he loves my cupcakes.

"You have frosting on your cheek, by the way," I mention.

Another wink from my husband. "Then lick it off, will ya?"

My pleasure.

**The End**