

Disclaimer: I don't own Twilight, but I make this Daddy do kinky stuff

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Summary: Edward thinks he can stop at any time, but can he really? He just wants a little bit more, and then he will be satisfied. The things we do to get what we want...the lies we tell ourselves.

A short story about two people finding their way together

Chapter 1

EPOV

My brows knit together and yawns are stifled as I push forward. Just one more hour and then I don't have to worry about work for a whole month. With the laptop on my lap—on top of the covers—I send out my emails and thoughts about the new plans for the third hotel we're opening in Hawaii. My assistant—Jasper—will have a busy month taking care of my calls and fending off people who want meetings, but I cannot say that I care. This is what I do every year, and it's just for me. Rosalie thought I'd stop once we got engaged a year and a half ago, but she was sorely mistaken. I've taken a month off the past ten years, retreating to my house in Utah, and no one is welcome. A month of solitude in the mountains. Away from meetings, phone calls, conferences, investments, lawyers, airplanes, photographers, and everything else.

January is mine.

Every year.

Though, Rosalie loves to pull the guilt card on me, especially during the weeks right before I leave. The holidays that have just passed have been full of not-so-subtle hints about the wedding we have to plan, and that June isn't all that far away. She needs me here, she tells me, which is utter bullshit. She has no intention of letting me help plan the wedding, nor is it something I desire to do. It's something she does with her friends and wedding planners. Besides, I would hardly be spending time here in LA regardless. Had it not been for my annual vacation, I would've been traveling as usual. And Rosalie never complains about *that*. Out of the year, I travel for at least a hundred and fifty days. We've always been career-oriented, hence not getting married until now.

Speaking of Rosalie...

"Ready for bed?" she asks, coming out of the ensuite bath.

"Not yet," I answer distractedly, eyes focused on the email I'm writing to one of the board members.

She sighs dramatically—not a very attractive trait—and I'm fairly certain she is far from done. With my leaving tomorrow, this is her last opportunity to talk me out of it. Not that she will succeed.

"I want you, Edward."

I give her a pointed look that says it all before returning my attention to my laptop.

Sex is—I'm afraid—nothing I can take for granted these days. She has, for some bizarre reason, gotten the idea that we should have children, something I find ridiculous. I'm hardly ever home, and Rosalie—who is an

actress—doesn't exactly have a lot of free time, either. And I refuse to let nannies raise our children. No, children are not for me, and it's not all about lack of free time. I simply don't want them. I'm almost forty, for Christ's sake—well, I'll be thirty-nine this June. The last thing I want is to change diapers.

I digress.

Sex is off the table—and has been for months—because Rosalie has stopped taking her birth control.

After almost fifteen years with the woman, I know how she works. She's relentless and can be quite manipulative, but it's nothing I can't handle.

"Perhaps you should focus on finding your sister," I remind her, still typing away. "She normally shows up for the holidays, but this is the third year in a row she hasn't."

I don't think we've seen her sister since she graduated from high school almost four years ago.

A huff is what I get in response.

How very mature for a thirty-seven year old.

I sigh.

Though we both come from money, Rosalie's family is hard to get used to; it deserves its own soap opera. It's old money and drama, fancy luncheons and Cuban cigars. Rosalie's father remarried after Rosalie's mother had passed, and to say that my dear fiancée took offense would be the understatement of the century. That Mr. Hale—Marcus—also fathered a second daughter doesn't help. Rosalie was seething when Isabella was born. I would know, because it was the year I met Rosalie, and though we weren't together at that time, we were still friends, and I

was the one she called in the middle of the night complaining about her newest family member. When Isabella came into the world, Rosalie was seventeen; apart from their last name, they don't share a thing. Aside from a massive inheritance, that is.

"Doesn't take a genius to figure out that she's somewhere in the world spending Dad's money," she mutters. "God, I hate that Aunt Lily constantly pushes me to contact that little tramp. I, for one, am glad she didn't show this Christmas. Or her mother, for that matter."

I shake my head to myself.

Safe to say, when Rosalie's father died six years ago, plenty of drama ensued. Isabella and her mother were all but pushed out of the family, though Marcus' little sister—Lily—is adamant about keeping the family together, hence organizing events were *everyone* is welcome. Christmas dinner is very much included. Lily's twin brother—Eleazar—also wants everyone to get along, but his three daughters own that poor man and have successfully managed to get him to keep his mouth shut. Eleazar's youngest child, a son—Alec—is the only Hale who openly sides with Lily.

I can't say that I blame Isabella and Renee for not showing up. Renee is openly hated by Rosalie and her cousins, and when Renee met some baseball player last year, things only got worse. And Isabella doesn't have it any easier. When she was a child, she was happy and playful, but as she got older and the drama didn't cease, she rebelled against everyone and became quite the wild child.

Admittedly, I have a soft spot for the poor girl. When she was little, I always brought her something from my trips, at which she would light up like the sun. Now, on the other hand, she hates the world. The year following her graduation, I often saw her in gossip magazines, completely trashed after a night of clubbing. But after that, the girl just disappeared.

Rosalie's aunt is the only one who receives cards and emails from her every once in a while.

Girl.

I suppose she's an adult now.

She would be what? Twenty now?

She once told me that she wanted to be an actress—like her sister—but Rosalie heard it and didn't waste any time in ridiculing her. I think Isabella was ten at the time, and it was when she still viewed Rosalie as a sister she wanted a bond with.

I remember lashing out on Rosalie that day, and it was like something snapped inside of me. Her behavior was despicable and I told her as much, but there was something else, something I still, to this day, don't fully understand. All I remember is the feeling of complete control, which I had when Rosalie broke down and apologized—though she apologized to me, not her sister—and it's something I've craved since then, but not have had. Being in control of my business and my investments are one thing, but no one can be in charge of Rosalie. And I don't really understand why I would want that, or if I really *do* want that, but...

I sigh again and try to clear my head.

Whenever I think about Rosalie and the growing frustration I carry, it leads to cravings for something I don't have—something Rosalie can't give me. Something I'm not sure I want from her.

Not having sex anymore—and I won't unless Rosalie stops her stupid idea about children—has obviously led to finding another source for a release. To be almost forty years old and have to turn to porn is highly annoying, especially when I'm supposed to be able to just fuck my fiancée whenever I want. But I refuse to back down and, to be honest, I have found a few

things online that draw me in—things I couldn't discuss with Rosalie even if I wanted to.

It's confusing, but I can't see myself stopping.

"Are you *really* leaving tomorrow?" she asks, bringing me out of my thoughts. I give her a sideways glance, catching the pout on her face, and I have to refrain myself from rolling my eyes or something equally petulant. "By the time you get back, I'm off to Brazil, remember?"

Of course I remember. She will be there for two months, shooting her next film.

"We'll do what we always do," I reply, like it's obvious, which it is. We fly out and visit each other when we can.

End of story.

"*Edward.*" Marvelous, now she's whining.

I rein in my temper, though, because if I don't, we'll end up screaming at each other. Or rather, she will scream and I will speak through clenched teeth.

She just never...obeys.

~oOo~



Outside of Ogden, Utah: my home away from home, I suppose you could say.

The plan to read, watch movies, play the piano, perhaps catch something during the Sundance Festival, and simply enjoy the solitude for a month is what brings a smile to my lips as I drive down the road leading to my house.

It's in the middle of nowhere, completely surrounded by the snow-covered forest, and just the way I want it. Secluded also means that Rose has no desire to visit. She craves the spotlight.



When I arrive at my house, though, the first thing I notice as I step out of my car is that the lights are on inside.

There's also music blaring.

Sometimes, I lend out the house to close friends, but I would never mistakenly let someone borrow it in January. It's my month, so there's no explanation as to who it could be, and the security is tight. Plus, with the music playing, I sort of exclude burglars right away.

Frowning, I do a quick scan in my head of the people who have access to the house. I have keys, obviously, as do Jasper, my brother, Lily, Alec, and the company that takes care of the cleaning once a month.

My frown deepens when I pick up a few notes from the incredibly loud music, and I narrow my eyes at the house—as if simply watching the building will give me answers—but I can't help it. The music is far too familiar. Or rather, the genre. Because aside from wanting to be an actress, Isabella was once an aspiring concert cellist. The only thing stopping her was her hate for classical music. Instead, she loved—*loves*—metal, and after turning down an offer to study at some prestigious music academy in Europe—she was only fourteen at the time, I might add—she stopped playing altogether when it caused issues in the family.

I'm the one who gave her the CD currently playing inside the house.

I found it when I was in Helsinki on business, thinking it was perfect for her. It combines her love for the cello as well as metal, and I must admit that I enjoy the album, too.

So, is that it?

Is Isabella in my house right now?

I don't know who else it could be.

"Only one way to find out," I mutter to myself.

Chapter 2

EPOV

I hardly have to worry about making any noises—the music is extremely loud—but I still find myself entering the house quietly, careful not to slam the door shut, and mindful when I set down my bags on the hardwood

floor. My shoes and parka follow, leaving me in black dress pants and a grey pullover.

When the volume is cranked up even higher, I'm a hundred percent certain that it's Isabella who is here. The part of the song—in which four cellists play together, creating a powerful bridge when combined with a heavy guitar riff—was one of her favorites as a fourteen year old, and I assume it hasn't changed.

Pushing up the sleeves on my shirt, I leave the hallway behind me and pass the kitchen, the laundry room, the dining room, and one of the guest bathrooms. Then I reach the living room, and...my smile is wiped off my face. While it's definitely Isabella sitting on the couch in the middle of the room—with her back to me—the state of the room causes the relief I feel from seeing her to vanish into thin air. There are pizza boxes, clothes, empty bags, plates, and DVD cases littered all over the place.



I know that the cleaning crew was here just before New Year's, so it can't have been more than a couple of days since Isabella arrived.

At last, I think when the music stops. Not that I don't enjoy this music, but it has been about four years since I last saw Isabella, after all. There are more pressing matters than listening to four Finnish men play the cello.

"Isabella?" I say quietly, not wanting to startle her, as I walk farther into the room.

Quiet or not, Isabella is still startled and lets out a *scream*. "Holy fucking shit!" She jumps off the couch, facing me with eyes widened in fear. And I suddenly have the urge to repeat her sentiment. *Holy fucking shit*. Someone grew up in the past four years. My eyes take her in quickly, from head to toe, and though Ms. Isabella Hale was always a classic beauty, she has developed and matured into a stunning young woman. The fact that she's only wearing a black tank top and...*white cotton goddamn panties*...doesn't help.

I avert my eyes, reminding myself that I'm a gentleman.

"Oh, my God," she breathes out. "What're you *doing* here, Mr. Cullen?"

My eyebrows rise, though I make sure to not look at her. "It *is* my house, you know."

She huffs. "I know, but...Aunt Lily told me you weren't gonna be here this year. You can turn around, by the way; I'm covered."

Slowly, I turn to face her again, both relieved and disappointed to see a blanket hanging off her shoulders.

"Now, why would Lily go and say *that*?" I muse, confused. "And it doesn't really explain why *you* are here, does it?"

She smiles sheepishly, wringing her hands awkwardly, and shifts her weight from one foot to the other. I also notice how long her hair has gotten. It used to reach her shoulders, but now I'd imagine it's down to her lower back. Long, dark brown, wavy. It's beautiful. "I come here every year," she confesses, and my brows knit together at the admission. Lily must've provided her with a key, but I don't understand *why*. Isabella could've just contacted me, and I would've given her a key. "I usually

come in March, but she told me you'd be working in Hawaii this January, and..." She chews on her lip for a second, frowning a little. "I wanted some time away."

Away from what? From what I know, she's been "away" for four years.

I release a breath, ignoring the questions for now. "Well, I have no clue why she would say something like that, but I will most definitely be here this month, and..." Now what? I can't exactly in good conscience kick her out and tell her to come back another month. Besides, I've been worried about the poor girl. She hasn't had it easy, and I'd hate to see her leave without knowing when I'll see her again.

"It's okay," she says quickly. "I'm sorry about this. Let me just stay 'til tomorrow, and then I'll leave. I'm gonna clean up, too, of course."

I give the room a few glances before smiling wryly at Isabella. "You're right about one thing," I agree. "You *are* going to clean up this mess." She ducks her head, causing me to chuckle. "But you're welcome to stay. The house is certainly big enough." Three floors, to be exact. What could go wrong?

She lifts her head again. "Really?" I smile at the hope in her eyes. It's been a while since I saw that. "Shit, thank you so much, Mr. C. I promise I won't be in the way."

Mr. C.

That's what I was to her, despite the countless times I told her it was okay for her to call me Edward. We're practically family, for God's sake. Still, she never stopped calling me Mr. C and, in return, I started calling her Miss Bella whenever I visited after a business trip.

"No worries, *Miss Bella*," I reply with a grin. She smiles widely, and I shake my head in amusement. "Now, get over here. It's been four years.

You've had us worried." I give her a pointed look, at which she smiles sheepishly again.

But then her smile is gone. "Us?" she inquires dryly, walking forward. "Who could you possibly include in that?"

I snicker and give her a hug. "Touché." Though I wish I could include Rosalie, I can't. Not without lying. "I was worried," I amend, releasing her slowly. With my hands on her shoulders, I add, "I want to know what you've been up to the past four years, okay?"

"Yeah, yeah," she mutters. "What-the-fuck-ever."

"Hey," I say quietly, frowning down at her. "What happened to the soft-spoken girl I once knew? The one who'd blush if she accidentally said 'damn'."

She shrugs and steps away. "A lot of shit happened."

I sigh internally, really not liking this. I always admired Isabella's creativity, her personality, the way she'd get so passionate when speaking about her music, and how smart she was. Even at a young age, she could bring adults to their knees simply by talking. And back then, she sure as hell didn't curse freely. Now, though...

She's an adult now, I remind myself. I have no right to reprimand her about her language.

"Which I want you to tell me about," I tell her. "But not tonight. I've had a long day and could use a good night's sleep. Any plans for tomorrow?"

She shakes her head. "Nope."

"Good," I say with a firm nod. "We'll talk then. Is breakfast at nine okay?"

Another shrug. "Sure, whatever."

Rein it in.

I do. It's difficult, but I manage to rein it in. I absolutely loathe eye-rolls, shrugs of indifference, the word "whatever", huffs, sarcasm, and impoliteness. But again, I have no right to tell Isabella about how to behave. Lucky for me, I'm used to this from Rosalie. I have *years* of experience.

~oOo~

When I leave my bedroom on the third floor the next morning, dressed in jeans and a black Henley, I'm both well-rested and eager to see Isabella again. Passing the second floor, where I have four guest rooms, I hear the sound of a shower running, so I quickly conclude that she hasn't been up for long. And that conclusion is solidified when I reach the downstairs. The living room is still a complete mess. Not only is it a mess, but it appears it has gotten worse overnight. Added to the piles of crap there were yesterday, there are now more DVD cases, CDs, and blankets strewn on the floor. There are also two makeup cases on the coffee table, eye shadows, nail polish, and lipsticks scattered on the wooden surface.

How long was she up last night?

With my lips pressed together in a grim line, I walk through the living room and head to the kitchen.

Coffee. I need coffee.

About twenty minutes later—a quarter past nine—Isabella appears in the kitchen doorway, dressed in a white top with thin straps and a turquoise skirt that I usually see on TV...worn by gypsies.

"Good morning, Mr. C," she says lightly, walking over to the fridge.

I set down my coffee mug on the kitchen table, studying her over yesterday's paper that I read on the plane. And here, from my spot at the table, I can clearly see the godawful color on her toenails. Bright orange. As she stands by the open fridge, I take my time to look her over, and next come her fingernails. *Jesus*. Multicolored. A few are bright red, some are blue, her thumbnails are neon green...

"Good morning, Isabella," I mutter in afterthought, returning to my paper. I simply cannot understand why some women ruin their appearance by using makeup. Admittedly, some need it, as mean as it is to think that way. But Isabella certainly isn't one of those women, and...neon green nail polish?

I sigh.

"I was thinking we could go out for breakfast," I tell her, folding the paper. She looks over her shoulder, fridge door still open, and I notice the heavy makeup on her face. So much black. "I need to go into town anyway. The kitchen needs to be restocked and so on."

She shrugs. "Um, all right."

"Can you be ready in twenty?"

"Sure."

Only, she's not.

It's not until forty minutes later that she reappears in the kitchen, still dressed the same, announcing that she's ready to go.

"Tell me you're not serious," I state, watching her as we're in the hallway and how she just slips her feet into a pair of *sandals*. "There's snow everywhere, Isabella."

"Eh." She shrugs. Again. "It's not like we'll be out a lot."

With that said, she walks out onto the porch...only to light up a cigarette.

Rein it in?

To hell with that.

Chapter 3

EPOV

When I pass Isabella on my way to the car, I take the cigarette from her just as she's about to take her first drag from it. "No smoking on my property." I throw it to the ground, causing it to fizzle as the snow puts it out.

"Hey!" she protests from behind me. "What the fuck?"

I say nothing in response and quickly unlock my car, which makes me a little curious about where Isabella's car could be. Perhaps it's inside the garage—where mine would've ended up had I not been in a rush to enter the house last night.

"Get in the car, Isabella," I tell her, getting in myself. It's incredibly cold outside, and how she's surviving in a skirt and sandals is beyond me. And don't get me started on the knitted sweater she's pulled on instead of a real jacket.

"I was gonna smoke that, Mr. C," she huffs, joining me as I turn the key in the ignition.

Looking over my shoulder as I back out, I repeat, "Not on my property."

After that, we're silent for quite a while, though I can see her in my periphery, looking like she *wants* to say something. But since she doesn't,

I put on the radio and listen to the weather report, and that's how I find out that it's going to snow heavily over the next few days. It's why I eventually break the silence, approximately ten minutes before we reach town.

"If you leave the house, please be careful," I say, making a turn.

"Especially on the private road." Snowstorms have kept me inside many times over the years, but I've never complained. I have what I need in that house, and aside from a few trips to town to restock the kitchen, I have no plans on leaving. The Sundance Festival at the end of the month—and at the end of my stay—would be the exception.

"I'm not going anywhere," she replies quietly, looking out the window. "I came here to veg out in front of the TV, pretty much."

And to make a mess.

I don't say that, though. "And you've done this before?" I ask instead, remembering that she told me yesterday that she "usually comes in March".

"Um, yeah." She fidgets in her seat. "The past three years."

Lily must've known about it, since it's her key Isabella is using, which reminds me that I have to call her and ask why she would tell Isabella that I wasn't going to be here this month. I can't even come up with a guess as to why she would tell Isabella that.

"Why didn't you contact me?" I ask curiously, softly, unable to shake the worry I feel for her. I know she avoids most of her family, but I never thought she would feel the need to avoid *me*. We were so close when she was little; I'd hate to find out that something has destroyed our connection, or whatever I'm now supposed to call it. Then again, I can imagine—much to my sadness—how my being with Rosalie could cause

Isabella to distance herself from me. It's a thought that hasn't occurred to me before, but maybe it should have.

Ogden, Utah



"Easier to call Lily," she mumbles, still facing the window. It's at that point we reach Ogden, and since the grocery store is closer than the coffee shop I want to take her to, I decide that we should buy the food first and get that over with. "Plus," she chuckles quietly, mirthlessly, "I wouldn't wanna risk Rosalie picking up the phone." She faces me then, a forced smirk in place. "How is my dear sister, anyway?"

A million responses come to mind, none of them appropriate right now. Not when it's Rosalie's little sister asking, and not when I haven't seen mentioned sister in years.

She's very well, working hard to keep her spot in the limelight, but at home she has a knack for getting on my nerves.

Oh, Rosalie is great. Very busy, always smiling at the cameras, though when the last picture is taken, she's pestering me about children.

She's doing fine, but she has changed a lot over the years. Or maybe my feelings have changed, and I'm finally beginning to see her for who she really is, only...I'm not doing anything about it.

"And how are *you*?" she adds, as if I wasn't already struggling to come up with a good answer. The last question is almost harder to reply to than the first. "Lily told me you're both busy planning the wedding."

Well, that's not really correct. *Rosalie* is busy planning the wedding, while *I'm* burying myself in work in order to not think about my soon-to-be sealed fate. To be almost forty years old and beginning to have doubts is more than a little troublesome, not to mention annoying. I want to have things settled, but I don't want *to settle*...if that makes sense. I have no desire to start all over with dates and new women, but my growing frustration that *Rosalie* seems to be the cause of...

I just don't know.

Like I said: none of these responses are appropriate when it's *Isabella* to whom I'm supposed to answer.

So, I finally go with a complete lie. "Things are good."

I add a firm nod for good measure, and then we arrive at the store.

~oOo~

The trip to the grocery store is a relatively quick one, but we still manage to fill two carts that will sustain us with food for at least two weeks. We don't speak much, but we do squeeze in a few conversations about dinners, what snacks we enjoy, drinks we prefer, and simple pasta dishes we can throw together for lunches. We also add toiletries, other necessities like batteries, candles—in case the power goes out—and so on. At the same time, I learn that *Isabella* hates to cook, and she claims that she isn't good at it at all. "I'm good with the microwave," she chuckles.

It makes me even more curious about what she's been up to since I last saw her. *Has she lived abroad? Gone to college? Stayed with her mother all this time in Florida?* But I don't ask her while we're shopping for food. I do get an opportunity when we're at the registers, because a stranger standing behind us in the line whispers—not quietly enough—to her friend that she recognizes Isabella, though I refrain from actually going for it. It's better to wait until we can talk in private.

That people may recognize Isabella is hardly surprising, considering the well-known family she was born into. With Rosalie as an actress, a father who was an oil tycoon, a grandmother who was a famous singer, and a cousin—that'd be Alec—who is an Academy Award-winning director, the Hales are certainly known in Hollywood.

I digress.

Since Isabella obviously hears the whispering stranger behind us, it would've been very easy to just ask her if maybe she's been working lately—at something that puts her in the public eye, I mean—but I don't.

When we're out of the store, however—and after a ridiculous argument about Isabella wanting to pay for half the groceries, an argument I won, thank God—I can't keep quiet anymore, because a young man comes over when we're packing the car and asks Isabella for an autograph. He also asks her if she's on tour, which is the last I can take of the confusion.

"Mind explaining that?" I ask, buckling my seatbelt. Isabella blushes furiously, something she tries to hide by facing the window, but I still caught it, and...I have to clear my throat at the sight of her rather... *attractive...trait*. She's always been a blusher, but I've definitely not reacted to it *this way* before. Hell, *that* would've been wrong on so many levels and, to be honest, I have no wish to analyze what "this way" really means. Therefore, I just start the car, make sure to look at the road before me, and wait for her answer.

"It's nothing," she says quietly, dismissively. "Just something I did last summer."

"It didn't sound like nothing," I counter carefully. I get that she doesn't want to talk about it, but... "He asked you if you're on *tour*, Isabella."

She sighs. "Um...I was just helping a friend when his band recorded their new album. Like I said, it's nothing. And I really don't get recognized often anymore. That back there was just a...I don't know...but it doesn't happen often."

I nod slowly to myself, letting the information sink in. While I'm thrilled to hear that she's still into music, I wish she'd open up more. Maybe it'll come in time, though. I'm aware that I'm impatient, something I've always been, and I suppose I can wait a little while longer. At least I have this month with her...or however long she's staying.

"Hungry?" I ask, changing the topic.

She nods. "Fuckin' starving."

Here we go with the language again.

~oOo~

After breakfast—or brunch, really—at a quaint coffee shop I often frequent when I'm here, we head back to the house again. While we ate, Isabella asked a little about my business and the new hotels I'm opening this year, and I have to admit it was refreshing to talk about my work without getting the impression that it was just polite conversation. Isabella seemed genuinely curious, and my answers led to follow-up questions. It was...nice. Very nice, actually.

As we unload the car, I tell her, "I can take care of this. You go clean up in the living room."

She smiles sheepishly. "Oh, shit. I forgot about that."

"Mmhmm," I chuckle wryly. "Good thing you have me to remind you then, huh?"

She rolls her eyes. "Whatever, dude."

Sigh.

"By the way," she says, stopping on the second porch step, "why does my smoking bother you? It's not like I do it inside, and I only smoke, like, four cigarettes a day."

I arch a brow at her and walk toward her, two grocery bags in my hands. "It bothers me because it's dangerous, of course." She harrumphs at that, and I go on. "It's not good for you, and I won't stand for it while you're living under my roof. End of discussion."

"So bossy," she mutters as we enter the house again. "I'm not really used to rules, you know."

That's what I feared. Like most Hales, Isabella grew up being spoiled and pampered, but *unlike* her sister and her cousins, she never seemed to let it go to her head. I've never gotten the impression that Isabella thinks of herself as above others, which some other people have the tendency to do in her family. But I still don't know what she's been up to the last four years; for all I know, she could've changed, and...

I'm being impatient again. Dammit.

Regardless, I believe people need rules. Always being allowed to do what you want isn't healthy, and I see total lack of restriction as a sign of neglect.

"Well, there are rules here," I say, leaving the two grocery bags in the hallway before going out to get the rest.

~oOo~

Once I'm done in the kitchen, I grab a bottle of beer and tell Isabella—who is busy tidying in the living room—that I'll be in my study on the third floor. It's time to call Lily, and to check in with Rosalie.

"Hey, is this clean enough?" she asks, out of breath, at which I stop and turn around. And...no, it's not clean enough. There are still DVD cases on the floor in front of the flat screen, the carpet is not lined up with the couch, she still has her makeup bags on the coffee table, and what looks like torn up napkins are littered on the couch cushions. "Um...just some vacuuming?" she adds, backpedaling upon catching my expression.

I shake my head in amusement. "Oh, Miss Bella. You're not used to cleaning either, are you?" Granted, neither am I. We have Mrs. Newton at home in LA for that, but I still know *how* to do it, for goodness' sake. "The other years you've been here, you've let the cleaning crew take care of things, am I right?"

She averts her eyes. "Maybe?"

I can't help but laugh as I walk up the stairs. "Get back to work, missy."

Chapter 4

EPOV

"She needs structure and stability, Edward," Lily responds over the phone as I power up my laptop. "Someone who can talk to her—someone who isn't afraid to stand up to Rosalie, Tanya, Kate, and Irina. I've already spoken to Alec, and he would, for instance, love a chance to work with Isabella, but I don't think it's a good idea right now."

That Alec wants to work with Isabella, I already knew. He's an excellent director and very famous for the music he puts in his movies. Three out of his six movies have been Oscar-nominated for Best Score, and with Isabella's talent, he'd be sure to climb even higher. Then, of course, it also matters that he genuinely cares for his cousin. And it helps that Alec is younger than his sisters and Rosalie. At twenty-seven, he's closer in age to Isabella than the rest of the Hale children—Rosalie and Kate being the next ones at thirty-seven.

"And you want me to do what, talk sense into her?" I ask as I log in. "I sincerely doubt I can be of help here, Lily. I haven't seen the girl in years, and I'm engaged to the person Isabella hates most of all—hate that definitely isn't unfounded."

"But you've always been clear about where you stand," she counters. "And I believe she will listen to you. You've defended Isabella plenty of times; she knows you have her back."

I sit back in my chair, thinking about my options. Of course I want Isabella to feel welcome in her own family, but I'm not sure I can help with that. The issue is that she *isn't* welcome by more than a handful of people, and those family members are loud. Rosalie and Tanya are definitely the worst, and while I want nothing more than to help Isabella, there's no way I can solely drown out their voiced opinions in regard to Isabella. Besides, I doubt she even wants to be close to her family. Not even Lily, Alec, or myself for that matter. If she did, she wouldn't have taken off for four years.

"I think it's a losing battle, Lily," I mutter, rubbing my temple. "Yes, I want Isabella in our life, but keeping everybody together is impossible. If I were Isabella, I wouldn't want to go anywhere near Rosalie or their cousins."

No matter how many times I yell at Rosalie for acting like a complete bitch toward Isabella, it only takes a short while for Rosalie to come back with vengeance.

"Yeah, my nieces are the sweetest, aren't they?" Lily mentions dryly, making me chuckle. *"I swear, Edward...had Rosalie not been family, I would've asked you what you see in her."*

I grimace and scrub a hand over my face, unable to answer.

We met because my parents are close friends with Lily and her husband, and thinking back, I know that it was Rosalie's looks that drew me in. She had a hot body and a pretty face, and she wanted me. What hormonal teenager would say no? I actually didn't jump into bed with her just like that, though, and it took a couple of years before we started dating, starting with long distance due to different colleges we attended, but...I don't know. I obviously saw good things in her, otherwise I wouldn't have stayed with her for almost fifteen years. Now, though...

So much has changed. *I* have changed.

"I'll do my best," I finally say, sighing. "I'll talk to Isabella while she's here. That's all I can do."

"And that's all I'm asking. Make sure she understands that she has you, Alec, and me on her side. And Henry, of course." I chuckle, hearing Lily's husband in the background. *"And I will do my best when I see Eleazar and Carmen next week."*

I could snort at that. There is no way Lily will be able to talk Eleazar into keeping his daughters on a leash.

"Well, good luck with that," I tell her, and after ending my conversation with Lily, I wish myself good luck as I call Rosalie.

Thankfully, the phone call doesn't last long, because she is getting ready for a night out with her girlfriends. When she asks me if I'm enjoying the solitude, I say yes. The answer comes automatically and naturally, and I find myself not wanting to tell her who's here with me. So, I don't.

With that out of the way, I turn off my cell phone and head to my bedroom to grab a book and my reading glasses, and then I end up in the library next to my study. I bring my laptop, too, because there are a few things I want to check out online—things I've checked out many times over the past five months.

It doesn't take long before I have that particular blog popping up on my screen.

There are a few new entries, all of which cause the same reaction in me.

Desire, need, want.

To be in control.

After making sure the door is locked, I make myself comfortable in one of the plush chairs.

Don't ask me why I even bothered to bring the book. Once my reading glasses are on, there's no way I'd read a thriller when I can read this...

...I order you to put on a pair of cotton panties—the most innocent-looking ones you can find—and then I tell you that we're going out tonight. I see the shiver that rips through your body. You want this so badly, baby girl. Trust me, I want this, too.

"Are you ready?" I ask, watching you as you descend the stairs. You've chosen a pretty dress in light blue, but I want to see what's underneath.

"Yes, Daddy," you say sweetly, coming to a stop in front of me.

I caress your cheek then allow my hands to go south, down your exquisite neck, collarbone, and chest. I see how you bite down on your lip as I cup your tits in my hands, and I can feel my cock stirring in my trousers. If I go much further, I won't be able to stop. Just a little bit more. I need to see.

"Will you show Daddy your panties, baby?" I ask softly, tweaking your nipples.

"Mmhmm," you hum before bending over. I bunch up your dress, revealing a pair of light pink panties with ruffled hems. I groan lustfully and cup your ass roughly.

"Dirty little girl," I whisper in your ear. "Can you feel how hard Daddy's getting?"

I curse under my breath, wishing that reading about this was enough. But it isn't. After months of finding blogs, journals, and stories—all about age play—I realize that I always want *a little bit more*. It started with video clips where the woman called the man "Sir" or "Master", which I quickly concluded was BDSM. But it was when I found a clip where "Sir" was replaced with "Daddy" that I came harder than ever before. Since then, I've not only read stories, but I've also done research about the fetish. And while I'm confused about why I would get turned on by something like that, I have to admit that it's something I want. Now I just feel ridiculous sitting here *reading*. I want...more.

I know I can't ever talk to Rosalie about this, nor do I want to, but isn't there a way I can have a bit more without actually seeking out someone to be physical with? Just one more step. Then I'll be satisfied. I hope.

A knock on the door startles me, and it's quickly followed by Isabella asking if I'm in here.

"Just a moment," I respond, placing the laptop and my glasses on the table. Then I adjust my semi-erect cock and walk over to the door, opening it for Isabella. *Jesus Christ*. With all the thoughts swirling in my head, seeing her in pigtails isn't exactly helping! "Something wrong?" I ask, clearing my throat.

"I'm done cleaning," she says, smiling up at me as she fidgets with one of the pigtails. "Wanna come look?"

I swallow, resisting the urge to look where her hair lingers on her...

"Um, yeah, sure," I mutter lamely for no reason. I'm not an overseer from colonial times, and I'm not her babysitter. I'm sure if she says she's cleaned, she has done just that. Still, I follow her down the stairs, only checking out her ass twice. Thank God for that gypsy skirt she's wearing, because I'm not sure I could take it if she wore something formfitting.

I obviously need to get my head out of the gutter, and perhaps I should refrain from reading about what I desire online. Because watching my future sister-in-law—who is more than eighteen years younger to boot—as if *she* is someone I *want*...no, that can't be right. In any way.

"Look!" she says when we reach the living room, but instead of following her gaze, I turn to *her*...and see how proud she looks. It's a little amusing, I have to say.

With a quiet chuckle, I face the living room, and...well, well. "How about that, Miss Bella?" I tease. "You *can* clean." The room is spotless again. I can even smell the hint of lemon, which means she's wiped off the surfaces properly. "Good girl." The words leave my mouth before I can stop them.

However, Isabella just smiles, still with a proud look on her face.

Then she says, "I'm hungry. Are you hungry? 'Cause I'm hungry."

I snicker and drape an arm around her, ushering her into the kitchen.

"Guess it's time to start dinner."

After retrieving one of my books on Mediterranean cooking, I ask if Isabella can go upstairs and grab my reading glasses.

"Sure thing," she says, hopping down from the counter. "Where upstairs?"

"In the library," I reply, flipping a few pages in the book.

I decide to make something Italian, so while I wait for Isabella to return, I pick out a bottle of wine to go with it.

Chapter 5

EPOV

It takes a while for Isabella to come back downstairs, and when she does, she has an odd look on her face. Her cheeks are slightly flushed, much to my chagrin since my cock seems to appreciate that, and her eyes are focused on the floor.

"Uh, here," she says, thrusting my glasses in my direction.

I take them and thank her, brows furrowing as I study her.

"No problem," she mumbles and hops up to sit on the counter again. "So... anything I can do to help?"

I purse my lips, wondering if something is wrong. She seemed happy a moment ago; what could happen in that short amount of time to change everything? Because now she just appears to be...*embarrassed*? Hmm.

"No, that's all right," I respond slowly, and she still refuses to look at me. Putting on my glasses, I ask, "Isabella, is something wrong?"

At that, her head snaps up. Her eyes go wide. "No. Nothing. Nope. Nothing's wrong."

I arch a brow at her, folding my arms over my chest. "Wow. You are one bad liar, Miss Bella." I smile to let her know that I'm teasing, but I can't deny that she has me intrigued. And even more when she blushes harder and gulps. With a smirk, I walk over to her slowly, as if I'm a predator, and keep my eyes locked with her wide ones. *Beautiful ones*. I haven't noticed it before, but her eyes are damn gorgeous. And this is the moment I also realize that she has washed off her makeup.

"I'm not lying," she says defensively, and I narrow my eyes at her. Smirk still in place. "I fucking swear."

"Watch your language," I command quietly, unable to hold it in anymore. I place my hands on the counter, effectively caging her in. A voice in the back of my mind tells me to back off, but... "You shouldn't curse," I add softly. Definitely time to back off. Especially when I hear that her breaths come quicker and how that starts to affect my body.

Am I scaring her?

"I'm an adult," she rushes out in a whisper. Her eyes, pupils dilated, are focused on mine, and I tilt my head. "Why do you care about my language?"

I choose my words carefully. "I care. Period. And..." I blow out a breath and, for some reason, her breathing hitches. "It's not you. The Isabella Hale I remember was..." She licks her lips, and I certainly catch the action. *Jesus*. Dangerous territory. I can feel my cock hardening.

"Was what?" she exhales, causing her sweet breath to waft over my neck.

Sweet. That's it. "You were this sweet girl," I murmur, and it's something I don't have in my life anymore. I have Hollywood, serious business, money, and deals.

"Sweet," she repeats quietly, and I take a step back before I do something incredibly reckless. "You say it like you're deprived."

I chuckle under my breath, but the sound dies out almost immediately. Deprived. Deprived. Deprived. Could that be it? No. There's no way...is there? No. While I'm willing to admit that things aren't as perfect as they seem, things are still...*okay*. And yes, the past five months have sent me on an involuntary journey toward self-discovery, which is just another thing adding to my pile of frustration, but...is there really so much that I miss?

"I hope you like pasta Alfredo and chicken," I mutter, stepping away from her. I know that I ended the discussion abruptly, but I have no desire to air all of this out with Isabella. Not when I don't have the answers myself. All I know, really, is that things started to change all those months ago when Rosalie began asking me about children. It led to my denying her sex, and it led to the stuff I found online. The articles, the blogs, the journals, the information...about different lifestyles, one of which is—without my consent—pulling me in.

It's not simply the kink of it, so to speak, though it certainly evokes an indescribable hunger in me—it's much more than that. What I've researched...the caretaking, the control, the affection, the responsibility...

In my quest for answers, I've also stumbled onto more than a few BDSM sites, and I know with every fiber of my being that I don't want to be anyone's Master or to have to tell my partner that she's allowed to speak. But there are aspects within BDSM that I feel drawn to—the D/s parts...or however I'm supposed to phrase it. I want that, and it's not all about sex. It's the entire lifestyle: to be responsible for another person, to be in

control of her, to make all the decisions, to look after her and out for her, to be someone's caregiver... Though, that's one thing I'm a bit confused about. Who is the caregiver and who is the caretaker? Because in my opinion—from what I've read about age play and D/s relationships—it's all very equal when it comes to care. They match each other's needs and therefore take care of *each other*.

"Mr. C?"

"Christ," I breathe out, startled. Giving my surroundings a quick glance, I see that everything is in order. I've been cooking on autopilot, something I tend to do, and Isabella is still sitting on the kitchen counter, now with a soda in her hand. "You scared me," I tell her, forcing a grin. "What is it?" I busy myself by preparing the seasoning for the chicken.

"You were, like, miles away," she says with concern in her voice. "Wanna talk about it?"

I give her a sideways smile and a small shake of my head. "No, that's fine. Thanks." She huffs and jumps down from the counter, ending up next to me. "Now what?" I sigh. I want her to let it go. Right now.

She bristles. "I'm not a kid anymore, remember? You can talk to me, you know. I mean, I know that we only reunited or what-the-fuck-ever last night, but...fuck."

"Isabella," I say slowly, giving her arm a light squeeze. "Stop it, all right? I know you're an adult; it's just that I have nothing to tell you."

Narrowing her eyes at me, she says, "Liar." And then she walks out of the kitchen.

I release a heavy breath and refocus on the chicken.

~oOo~

Over the next few days, conversation is stilted. We only talk at dinner, and since she's adamant that I'm hiding something, she rarely offers any responses when I ask her questions. What I find out is that she's been living in London and Paris a lot, and that it was only three months ago she bought an apartment in the US—in New York, to be exact. That's about it. The rest is just insignificant small talk. We hardly see each other the rest of the time. She's busy doing God knows what in her room, and I'm busy trying to sort out my life.

Midlife crisis?

Call it whatever you want, but I need to get things under control again. I was perfectly content up until five or six months ago, and while I wasn't the most jovial man before that, things were still okay. I wasn't complaining, anyway. But things have definitely changed, and now I'm struggling to make a decision in regard to my future. Staying with Rosalie doesn't hold the same appeal it once did, and I'm trying to find out when I was last truly happy with her. Since we're both so focused on our careers, it's easy to forget the fact that we're in a committed relationship with a wedding to plan—a wedding we've postponed a few times because we've prioritized other things. And it bothers me that I'm realizing all of this simply because of something I found on the internet. Have I really been missing out on that much? Because at first, when I started reading and watching those clips, I figured it was just in the bedroom where we don't really match. Thinking back, I know that we haven't been into the same things ever, but like I said, I'd still been perfectly content. Now, though, I feel the truth of "ignorance is bliss", seeing as it wasn't until I found out about age play that I've been filled with doubt.

The control slipping through my fingers is only causing my frustration to grow, and I find myself angrier and more confused than ever. I'm a year and a half away from forty; I'm supposed to know what I want in life. Not only am I supposed to know, but I'm supposed to have it already. Which,

I guess, is the main reason for stalling. Ending things with Rosalie after being with her for almost fifteen years isn't something to take lightly, and it would put me right back where I started when I was in my twenties. Then again, I don't want to suffer for the rest of my life just because I was too weak to do something about it *now*.

With a sigh, I remove my glasses to scrub my hands over my face. I'm in my library, again, reading on the laptop about that particular lifestyle... again. And I've taken one more step. Now I've started checking out social networks where people who live in different kinds of D/s relationships gather to exchange stories and experiences. There are communities, information everywhere, and...I'm still not satisfied. I want a little bit more before I make any decisions.

So...what else can I do?

Ultimately, I'm hoping a better taste of this will give me what I want, and then I can move on with my life. Perhaps this is just some phase...

"Time to make lunch," I mutter to myself and leave the library behind.

About forty minutes later, I call Isabella's name as I place two homemade pizzas on the kitchen table. She joins me after a moment, and I groan internally at the mere sight of her. Gone are the multicolored fingernails, and gone is the makeup... It's actually been like this for the past three days. She's dressed in cotton shorts and simple tank tops. She's dressed for comfort. Nothing else, and...*fuck*, I'm drawn to her.

A part of me feels like a sick bastard for lusting after my twenty-year-old future sister-in-law. I feel like a creep, but I just can't help it. Watching is free, though, right? Nothing wrong with looking.

"This smells amazing, Mr. C," she says, taking her seat. I sit down across from her and chug down some beer. "You're spoiling me." She smiles and grabs a slice.

Spoiling? Hardly. I'm feeding her lunch.

"If I wasn't here to make you food, what would you do?" I ask curiously.

She chuckles. "Order in?"

"In this weather?" I look out the window, and while we aren't completely snowed in, it's still enough for the delivery services to charge a fortune to come out here. "You're bad, Isabella." I snicker. "Perhaps I should teach you."

"To cook?" she asks, and her eyes light up a little. "You'd do that for me?"

Well, yes. What's so odd about that? It's not like I'm doing her a huge favor. I'd just teach her to make a few simple dishes. Nothing to get too excited over.

"If you want," I reply, taking a bite of my pizza slice. "Pasta's fairly easy. As is this pizza." I shrug. "You can't really fail with soup or grilled sandwiches, either."

She looks at me pensively, chewing and swallowing before speaking. "Do you cook a lot at home?"

I can't help but laugh. "No. Definitely not." It's fun when I'm either alone or when there's someone with me who appreciates it, but Rosalie is always on some diet, and I'm usually traveling, so...

She nods with a dip of her chin, eyes downcast—we're back to stilted—and I know that I have to apologize for the past few days. I've told her repeatedly that she can trust me, that she can talk to me, yet I've offered

nothing in return. It's not fair for me to ask for her life story when I lie and say that everything is fine in my own life.

"Isabella," I start off, my voice low. "I'm sorry for being so distant." She looks up at me, silently telling me to go on, and...I have no idea what to say. Or how much I want to tell her. But if I want her to share, I have to do the same. So, after taking a breath, I continue.

"Things aren't perfect at home; I have a lot to think about."

Chapter 6

EPOV

"What do you mean?" she asks, confused. "Aren't you two in the middle of planning your wedding?"

I grimace and take another sip of my beer as I choose my words.

"Cold feet?" she jokes, but she couldn't be more right.

"Pretty much," I answer, running a hand through my hair. "With good reason," I add with a mirthless chuckle. I go on as I fidget with the label on my beer bottle. "I've changed...I think." No, I'm sure. "There are things I've come to realize that I want." Things I don't want from Rosalie. "But I'm not sure if I'm just going through some..." I shake my head, and when Isabella chuckles, I look up at her. "What?"

"Midlife crisis, Mr. C?" Wonderful, she's teasing me. "So, buy a Porsche. Isn't that what men do when they get older?"

I laugh under my breath.

If only things were that easy. And see, that's the problem—or one of them—because I don't feel old or like I'm going through a crisis. There are just things I didn't know about before, and now that I do...

"It's a bit more complicated than that," I admit.

She shrugs. "So, go after what you want."

"You make it sound easy." I smile ruefully. "You can think like that when you're in your twenties, but when you reach my age, you want everything settled. Starting over..." I shake my head again.

"Gee, you make it sound like you're getting ready for retirement." She rolls her eyes. "You're only what? Thirty-eight?" I nod once. "Exactly. Stop talking like you're a senior citizen."

I laugh again, and it's this girl who brings it out of me. "Go after what I want, huh?"

And what is that?

"That's what I would do."

Right.

"Hey, can I ask you a personal question?"

She looks hesitant to go on, but I nod. "Sure. Ask away."

Only, she doesn't ask away. She starts fidgeting with her hair—damn pigtails again—and averts her eyes. I can also see a faint blush spreading over her cheeks.

"The, uh...the things you want," she starts slowly, quietly, "they're things Rosalie doesn't want?"

Hmm, I wouldn't know. It's more that I don't want them with her, though I sincerely doubt Rosalie would like it if I told her to call me Da... No, I can't even finish that thought. It doesn't feel right at all.

I go with honesty. "I don't want them with her."

"Oh," she whispers and looks down. "Is it..." Now she's blushing furiously, and I cannot understand what could cause that reaction. "What you want... is it the..."

"Sweetheart," I laugh softly. "Just ask."

"Fuck," she mutters, and then she covers her face with both hands, which makes her next words come out muffled. "Isitthedaddything?"

Isitthewhat?

"I'm sorry," I chuckle, perplexed. "Is it the what?"

"The daddy thing!" she blurts out, and while her eyes go wide, I squeeze mine shut. This is not happening. "I saw it on your laptop," she goes on, and I wish the floor could swallow me whole. "That day...when I went upstairs to get your glasses?"

Oh, for the love of... Embarrassed beyond words, I mirror her previous position and use both of my hands to cover my face. The only thing I can think of now is that she's going to run away screaming.

"Anyway, I figured it was something you and Rosalie were into-"

"Jesus, just stop talking, Isabella!" I groan into my hands.

"So, it's not something you do with her?"

"No!" I cry out, quickly getting up from my chair. If she's not going to stop running that mouth of hers, then I'm leaving.

"Hey, there's nothing to be embarrassed about, Mr. C."

When I spin around to face her again, I almost expect her to look casual, because that's how her last words came out, but she's far from it. She's still blushing scarlet and facing her plate, hands over her face.

"Let's not talk about it, all right?" I'm down to pleading with her. "You may say that it's not embarrassing, but it is. It's also humiliating for this to come out. So, just..." I groan again and take my leave.

~oOo~

The next two days are spent avoiding all contact with Isabella. I'm acting like a complete coward, I know this, but for her to find out about my desires really messed with my head. It's still messing with my head. Partly because she's still here; she hasn't run away, and she hasn't screamed. But mostly because I caught her last night.

Flashback

I curse to myself as I drop the bottle of water; luckily, I haven't opened it yet. Still balancing the tray with food that I just snuck downstairs to grab, I reach down and pick up the bottle from the floor. Then I open the door to my library, ready for another night of hiding.

Once I've placed the tray on my desk, I sit down in my chair...only to see my laptop already powered up.

In a moment of quick thinking, I give the room a brief scan, which is when I notice that I'm not alone in the room. Not only is Isabella Hale a terrible liar, but she's apparently also the worst hider. Because she's right now trying to hide behind the corner couch. Only, her feet are sticking out.

I can feel my mouth curve into a smile, but that changes when I return my focus on the laptop. It's clear that she's used it, and... *Goddammit*. I quickly check the cache to see what she could've found. It's my personal computer, for Christ's sake...the things she can find on this thing. But

that's not what causes me to freeze at that point. It's the pages *she* has visited that make me go rigid in my seat.

My eyes flick between the screen and Isabella's hideout.

Without thinking, I click on the addresses.

Daddy's little girl – a journey

My life as His baby slut

Confessions of Daddy's girl

Age play – an introduction

Finding your way in BDSM

BDSM and psychology

Last but not least, I notice the little notepad next to the laptop where all these addresses have been scribbled down.

Jesus Christ, what is she *doing*?

Knowing that I can't stick around in this room, I mutter to myself—though, loud enough for her to hear—about forgetting utensils downstairs, and with that said, I quietly grab the utensils from the tray before ducking out of the library. A trip to the kitchen to grab something I don't really need should be enough time for Isabella to get out. But to be on the safe side, I linger for a beat or two downstairs before heading up again.

End Flashback

By the time I had returned to the library, Isabella was gone and the cache had been emptied.

So, yes, this is messing with my head.

I don't understand why she would check out those sites; I don't know her intentions, and it's wearing on me. As is this ridiculous game of hide-and-seek.

During these past days, the only conversation I've had with Isabella was when she asked me this morning if we could go in to town soon, because she needs a new laptop after her old one crashed a few days ago...which explains why she used mine last night. But that's it as far as talking to her goes. And it needs to stop. I can't sit around here for another three weeks acting like a coward.

Time to face the music.

Chapter 7

EPOV

When I reach the living room, I see that "facing the music" will have to wait. Isabella is asleep on the couch, a thin blanket over her petite form. Walking over to her, I squat down next to the couch and brush a piece of hair away from her face, and I notice the small crease between her eyebrows. It shouldn't be there; it makes her look troubled.

"Isabella," I say quietly, gently squeezing her arm through the blanket. She begins to stir, but she's still sleeping. Unable to stop myself, I reach up and brush the pad of my thumb over that little line between her brows, smoothing it out. "Isabella, sweetheart, can you wake up?"

"Nnnngh...five more minutes," she mumbles.

I chuckle silently. "Don't you think it'd be more comfortable to sleep in a bed?"

At that, she lets out a little whine. "No. All the way up there..." She waves a hand tiredly in the direction of the kitchen, though I suspect she means for it to be in the direction of the stairs. "Too tired."

I smile at how incredibly cute she's being, and then the decision's been made. "Come on, Miss Bella," I say, grunting under my breath as I scoop her up in my arms. She's surprisingly light, but I'm not twenty anymore. It doesn't matter that I exercise regularly—carrying someone up two flights of stairs isn't the easiest.

"You're carryin' me," she yawns, half-asleep, with her head resting in the crook of my neck. "Mmmmph..."

"How perceptive of you," I tease. Even in this state, she manages to give my chest a playful swat. "Such a violent little girl." This is when I reach her room, and with a slight shove, I push open her door. And I sigh... because her room is a mess. "What do you have against cleanliness?" I mutter quietly. There are clothes all over the floor, and I frown deeply when I see her cello next to the bed. It's not in its case; it's just lying there on the floor.

"Cleaning is boring," she mumbles as I lower her onto her bed.

"Doesn't matter." I shake my head in amusement and pull the covers over her. Since she's only in a tank top and a pair of cotton shorts, I figure she can sleep in that. "You're fixing this mess tomorrow."

Stretching and yawning, she says, "On one condition."

"You're hardly in a position to bargain with me," I chuckle and sit down on the edge of her bed. She seems more awake now, and though her eyes are still closed, there's a smile playing on her lips and her words come out clear of sleep.

"It's just something small," she replies with a pout.

"All right," I humor her, and she cracks one eye open. "Out with it."

Both eyes are open now, and she regards me silently for a beat.

"Don't avoid me anymore," she whispers. I sober immediately, all traces of humor gone, and something constricts inside of me at her expression. She tries to hide it, but I still see the hurt. "Please?"

Fuck.

"I promise." I swallow and grab her hand on top of the covers. "I apologize, Isabella. And I won't ignore you. Okay?"

She nods and offers a small smile. "Thank you."

That's not right. She shouldn't have to thank anyone for not avoiding her.

"Don't thank me," I say, shaking my head at myself. I feel like a complete ass, and she's done nothing to deserve my treatment. "Let me make it up to you instead."

Her eyes light up. "How?"

Hmm. "I'll think of something." I smile and squeeze her hand. "Forgive me?"

"Pshh. Water under the bridge."

No. Not really, but I'll fix this. "Get some sleep, Miss Bella. Breakfast at nine?"

"I'll be there."

~oOo~

I wake up in the middle of the night, both thirsty and in need of the bathroom. Without flicking on the light, I make my way to my ensuite

bath, and after a quick visit, I stumble back to my bedroom, rubbing my eyes from sleep as I go.

Had it not been for the moonlight filtering through the blinds, I wouldn't have spotted the sleeping girl on the couch by the wall-sized window. Alas...

Good thing I don't sleep naked.

But before I wake her, I head to my closet and pick out a pair of light blue pajama bottoms to go over my boxers.

She's facing the back of the couch, only a blanket covering her, and she's in a fetal position. It makes her look vulnerable, and I walk over to her, confused and worried. We've been here for almost a week now, so I can't say that I know why she'd be up here. In my room. As far as I know, she's a sound sleeper.

"Isabella," I murmur, sitting down next to her. My voice is full of sleep, and I can't stop the yawn from escaping me. "Isabella, wake up."

"Y'gotta quit wakin' me up," she mutters sleepily.

I chuckle drowsily. "I won't apologize for wondering what you're doing in my bedroom."

"Oh," she mumbles and stretches out her body. The blanket slips down in her movements, revealing a sliver of skin between her tank top and shorts- Nope, those aren't her shorts. Just panties. *Jesus*. I drag a hand over my face, willing myself to look away, but it's damn hard. Her stomach is toned, but looks soft, and I have to fight the urge to touch her. "Sorry," she yawns, "but I had a nightmare, and..." Grabbing my arm, she pulls herself up in a sitting position. And I'm suddenly watching her tits. Okay, this has got to stop. It's not like I haven't seen her in that tank top before. But...she's worn a bra before. That's gone now.

Wait. Nightmare?

"Nightmare?" I ask, concerned.

She smiles sheepishly. "Let's just say that I shouldn't have watched *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* before bed." Relieved that it's nothing worse, I chuckle a little. "That's some scary shit." She shudders. "Anyway, when I was convinced that I heard a chainsaw running, I came up here. Hope you don't mind."

"It's okay." I smile in amusement. "But you could've woken me up, you know. This couch is hardly made for sleeping on."

She shrugs. "It's all right. I'd rather sleep on this than get chopped up."

Good God, this girl. "No one's getting chopped up," I laugh quietly and stand up. "Come on." I extend my hand to her. "The bed is big enough for the both of us." It's king-sized, for crying out loud. Plus, I'm used to keeping to myself since Rosalie happens to be a bed-hogger. I don't know how many times I've woken up with her foot on my ribcage.

"You have chest hair," Isabella observes, causing me to look at her in surprise. My eyebrows shoot up at the same time. "Who knew?"

Who *knew*? What kind of question—and let's not forget the original observation in the first place—is *that*?

"I don't even know how to respond to that." I shake my head and walk over to my side of the bed. And, for the record, it's only a little. A light smattering of hair. I'm not like my brother, anyway. Emmett even has hair on his back, which I know because when we were in our twenties, he dragged me along the first time he wanted to wax it off, and...why am I thinking about this? Crazy girl. Without a filter, apparently.

"Just sayin'." She shrugs and sits down on my bed. My bed. Christ. "I like it."

"Okay," I chuckle incredulously, "I think that's enough out of you, missy."

I settle on the bed, pulling the covers over my chest, and try to ignore Isabella's...noises.

She moans and hums. "Fuck, this is one comfy bed, Mr. C."

"Language," I sigh, while I internally talk down my cock.

Isabella's giggle does *not* help in the matter. "Fuck, fuck, shit, goddammit, *fuck.*"

I squeeze my eyes shut.

What I wouldn't give to just be able to...give her a fucking spanking.

A shiver runs through me, and I clench my jaw as less than gentlemanly thoughts assault me. At a raging speed, my mind conjures images of what I desire. Images of me...of *her*...flashing through me. Things I'd do...things *she* would do. Backward, sideways, bent over, moaning, whimpering, begging...

Fuck me.

"Goodnight, Mr. C," she yawns.

"Goodnight," I mutter quietly, through clenched teeth, and I'm so *fucking* hard.

I know what the next step is.

Putting a face to my fantasies.

Maybe that'll satisfy me.

Chapter 8

EPOV

Waking up the next morning, I realize that "keeping to myself" doesn't apply to Isabella. We've both ended up in the middle of the large bed, and she has curled herself up against me. In return, I have both my arms around her, and my face is buried in her hair.

It goes without saying that my cock is hard as steel, currently nestled against her thigh.

Thankfully, she's still asleep.

I breathe in deeply, letting my senses get invaded by her. Having her this close feels better than I could ever imagine. Her faint, flowery scent almost coaxes a moan out of me, though I manage to keep it bottled up. But there's no way I'm not taking that next step. In fact, I need it right now, so I slowly and carefully detangle myself from her, and then I head straight for the shower.

~oOo~

With the hot water cascading down my body, I place my arm against the tiles, my forehead resting on my forearm, and my free hand goes to my throbbing erection. My Armani body wash certainly doesn't smell like Isabella, but it'll do.

I groan under my breath as I grip my cock, working it slowly but hard. In my mind, Isabella is on her knees before me, watching me as I stroke myself. She wants it, and I want her to beg for it.

"What do you want, baby girl?"

She whimpers. "Your cock, Daddy. Please. I want it in my mouth."

I swipe my thumb over the head, imagining her taking that same thumb in her mouth to taste me. I'd chuckle and call her a greedy little girl, at which she would plead for more.

"You want Daddy's cock?" I ask quietly, in a rough voice laced with want. "Does my girl deserve it, though?"

"Please!" she begs. "I'll be a good girl, I promise."

I smile and caress her cheek. Then I tap her jaw with one finger. "All right. Open for Daddy." She obeys right away, opening her mouth, and I suck in a breath as my cock slips past her soft lips. Like a naughty little girl, she suckles the tip of my erection. "Mmm, so eager," I moan. "You want my come, don't you?" She nods and looks up at me with those big eyes of hers. Fuck, she looks good with my cock in her mouth. "Suck me hard, baby girl," I command, still caressing her cheek tenderly.

My orgasm takes me by surprise. There's no warning, no tingling in the back of my head, no tensing, I just explode. I squeeze my eyes shut and pump my cock roughly, milking it 'til the last drop. And by the time I open my eyes again, I catch one stream sliding down the wall and down the drain.

The satisfaction is there, but it's brief.

Panting and catching my breath, I...I still want more.

~oOo~

At eight fifty-nine, I watch as a barely-awake Isabella enters the kitchen.

"Good morning, sleepyhead," I murmur with a smile. She smiles tiredly in return and takes a seat at the kitchen table. "No more nightmares, I

hope?" I inquire as I pour my coffee. Next to my mug, I already have Isabella's orange juice prepared.

"No, you scared the chainsaws away," she chuckles, rubbing sleep out of her eyes. I grin. "Anything I can help with?"

"No, thank you." I walk over with our beverages then return to the counter where I've plated our breakfast. Toast, scrambled eggs, and a few strips of bacon. "Any plans today?" I ask and sit down. It's still snowing heavily, so I doubt we can go into town today. Perhaps tomorrow or the day after.

"I've got some cleaning to do," she replies with a rueful smile.

I laugh through my nose. "That will hardly take all day, now will it?"

"I suppose not." She chuckles and forks a piece of bacon. "Nah, no plans. What about you?"

I take a sip of my coffee before answering. "Nothing much. Maybe I'll watch *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*." I give her smirk, and she flushes bright red, averting her eyes, too. I clear my throat. "Sorry, but you had that coming, Miss Bella."

"It's a *really* scary movie," she mumbles with a weak glare. "I swear I'm a glutton for punishment or something. I can't stop watching horror movies, even though I always end up with nightmares."

I chuckle. "Have you seen *Amityville*?"

"No, not yet, but I saw it in your cabinet." She grins. "Wanna watch it with me?"

Yes. I really do. But I shouldn't, should I? It feels like I'm walking on some proverbial fine line here, and I'm not sure how far I could go without

actually crossing it. Then again, the improper attraction has to be mutual for any lines to be crossed, so...

"Sure," I say as casually as I can. In my head, I conjure plans to keep her in my bed for many nights to come, but I remember her saying that it's only when she watches horror movies right before bed that she gets scared. So, I guess that's out...unless I ask her to watch it with me after it gets dark. *Jesus*. What am I doing?

"So, after I've cleaned my room?"

I smile and nod. "Sounds good."

We eat in silence for a while—a comfortable silence—and I make mental notes for a few things I need to get done. I really want Isabella to be able to count on me, and I didn't take it lightly when I asked her if I could make up for avoiding her. Now I just need to come up with something she will like.

I don't mind buying gifts—and I've already planned to give her a new laptop, since hers is broken—but I want to do something else, too. Something that isn't material. Money has never been an issue for Isabella, so I'd like to give her something she couldn't get for herself with just a snap of her fingers.

"Hey, before I clean my room, can I just borrow your laptop for a while?"

I look at her over the rim of my mug, taking a slow sip from it as a million thoughts rush through my head. The cache has been emptied, so it's not like she can find any of the sites I frequently visit on it. Which means there's no harm. And...I must say that I'm curious about what she will do on it. But then I give myself an internal eye-roll. She most likely wants to check her email or something equally innocent. I'm really being paranoid.

Or is it wishful thinking?

I tell myself it's not.

"Of course," I say, clearing my throat. "I'm going to clear the driveway of snow, so take your time."

"Thanks." She smiles. "By the way, clearing the driveway?"

I nod. "I'm going to have the private road cleared, too." I check my watch and decide to call Jacob Black after breakfast—the man who owns the company that always plows the snow around here. "If we're lucky, we could probably be able to go into town tomorrow or Friday."

"Great! I have some things I need to fix."

Since I'm known to be a control freak, I want to know what "things" she's referring to, but I sigh and keep my mouth shut.

~oOo~

It takes me two hours to get the driveway done, and by the time I reenter the house, I've gotten a good workout. I'm shivering from the cold as I remove my jacket and shoes, but I'm still in need of another shower after the time I spent out there.

"*Mr. C!*" I hear Isabella call from upstairs. "*Is that you?*"

"No, it's the reaper!" I call back.

"*You're so funny!*" she laughs sarcastically. "*Now, I'm done with my room. Wanna check?*"

Leaving the hallway, I walk through the downstairs before reaching the living room and the stairs. I take two steps at a time, soon ending up outside her room. The door is open, revealing a clean room and a smiling Isabella. She's proud again, and I can't help but chuckle.

Upon entering her room, I place an arm around her shoulders, and this time my words are deliberate.

"Good girl," I murmur, smiling down at her. It feels like I'm playing with fire. A part of me is still nervous about her knowing my...*wants*...so to speak. But another part of me wants to push, of only a little. I can't help myself, though I'm confident that I can stop before it gets too far. I only want a little bit more.

Isabella doesn't seem the least offended or put off, however. Her smile just widens.

She blushes, too, and looks away demurely. "Thanks," she whispers, and if I'm not imagining it, she seems to move her body closer to mine.

Definitely wishful thinking.

I sigh internally.

"I'm gonna take a shower," I say, removing my arm from her. "And then we'll watch the movie?"

"Okay." She nods quickly, her lovely cheeks still pink. "Um..." She looks up at me, smiling rather shyly—another thing my cock seems to appreciate.

"I can fix us some hot chocolate if you want?"

My jaw clenches and my spine goes rigid, not because of her question, but because of her expression. Shyness and innocence mixed with what I'm seeing right now...almost something...*seductive*?

Clearly, I'm losing my mind.

"That sounds..." I swallow, forcing myself to look away. "...great."

~oOo~

When I return to the living room half an hour later, I've showered, jerked off, dressed in light blue pajama bottoms and a black t-shirt, checked my laptop after Isabella's used it—the cache has been emptied again, much to my intrigue—and I've made a quick call to Rosalie.

It was the reality check I needed. Even if I only reached her voice mail—for which I'm all too thankful—I needed to remind myself that I'm still living in the real world. But the problem is that as soon as I spot Isabella on the couch, two mugs of hot chocolate waiting, the real world fades just as fast as I forced it upon me. It's just gone. All I see now is the exciting bubble I seem to have created with Isabella...*Rosalie's little sister*.

"You're back!" she says, jumping off the couch. My eyebrows shoot up in surprise; she seems so...happy. "Just a second." She holds up a finger and runs toward the kitchen. "I put one of the pies we bought in the oven!" she calls, already out of the living room. "It should be done any minute!"

In a slight daze, I make my way to the couch, her words going on repeat in my mind. And her *exuberance*.

I can only bask in the warmth that seeps into me. And as I take in my surroundings, I notice that Isabella's kept herself busy while I was in the shower. The movie is ready, the mentioned hot chocolates are set on the coffee table—on coasters, I might add—and a couple of candles have been lit. Sweet Jesus, what *is* this?

"Here we go," she sings, rejoining me in the living room. Two plates with what looks like apple pie and whipped cream are set on the table, quickly followed by two forks that she pulls out from the pocket of her pajama shorts. "I couldn't carry all of it in my hands," she explains sheepishly and sits down next to me. Very close, too. This is going to be hard. Certainly no pun intended. "In the store, you said you preferred whipped cream over ice cream, right?"

I nod dumbly, still in a daze.

"Great." She smiles. "Should I push play?"

That's when I finally gather my wits. "Isabella..." I shake my head, chuckling a little. "What is all this?" I wave a hand at the pie, the chocolate with marshmallows in it, the lit candles...

She offers a small shrug before getting comfortable against the cushions.

Again, she looks shy. "Wanted to do something nice, I s'pose. You've been so sweet, ya know...letting me stay here and stuff."

Oh.

I smile softly and pull her close to me, happy that she seems very willing... and I drop a kiss on the top of her head.

Friendly enough, yes?

"Any time, Isabella," I tell her quietly as she snuggles closer. God, this feels so good. While I'm sure she's in my embrace for the comfort I may bring as an older family member, that's definitely not how I see it. And to make things worse—or better, depending on how you look at it—she draws a blanket over us and rests her head on my chest, my arm still around her.

Aside from the desire I have for her, I care for her deeply, and I hope this is a good start for us. In the end, I want her to open up to me and let me into her life. I want to help her.

"Ready to push play, sweet girl?" I ask softly, kissing her hair again.

Crossing that line soon.

No, I'm not.

I'll stop before it's too late.

"Yeah, I'm ready," she mumbles and places a hand on my stomach.

Well.

Let the movie night begin.

Chapter 9

EPOV

"Isabella, are you sure you don't want me to turn off the movie?" I ask quietly, but she just shakes her head furiously. By now, an hour into the movie, she's practically sitting on my lap, but she refuses to look away from the TV. Since we're so close, I can actually feel her heart pounding, and with each scary sequence on the screen, I hear her gasps.

She has one leg hitched over both of mine, the other pulled up under her, her right arm snaked around me—resting on my lower back—her left hand fisting both my shirt and the blanket, and said blanket is drawn to her chin. She's really a sight to behold, and had I not been paying attention to the movie, I would've been thoroughly amused by how adorable she is. I probably would've been hard as a rock, too, alas the movie really is a good one. That doesn't mean I'm not able to appreciate her close proximity, though, because I certainly am.

"Jesus fuck, they should just get out of that house," she breathes out.

I agree. I'd also say that the characters have every reason to scream out profanities, what with their lives being in danger and all, but Isabella isn't in the movie. She has no reason to say fuck. *All. The. Time.*

With my hand on her knee, I give her a gentle squeeze. It was either that or tugging on one of her pigtails that I may or may not be playing with behind her back. "Language," I remind her.

"Sorry," she says quickly, and then we watch as the youngest child in the movie ends up on the roof because the ghost child lured her up there. In my arms, Isabella tenses. "Shit, I could just kill that motherfucking ghost!"

"Hey," I murmur, gently gripping her chin. I tilt it up, coaxing her to look at me. Pointed look. "What did I just tell you?" I ask softly.

Her pupils dilate, and her breaths come out in quick puffs that I can feel against my face due to our closeness. She smells of the apple pie we ate earlier, and my mouth waters as I think of apple pie mixed with...*her*. And with that thought, my eyes flick to her mouth...her soft-looking lips...and before I even know it's happening, I brush the pad of my thumb over her bottom lip. *Definitely soft*. I groan internally as my cock starts to harden, and I force myself to look her in the eye again.

"Behave," I whisper huskily.

Her breathing stutters. "Or what?"

Crossing lines. Crossing lines.

"I don't think you want to know," I warn quietly, still gripping her chin.

She swallows hard. "Maybe I do."

There's no way she does. What I want to do is spank her, fuck her in every opening, and make her scream. I want to release her hair, only to fist it in my hand as I pound into her from behind. I want her to suckle my cock as if it was a pacifier, and I want her to beg for Daddy to *fill her up*.

I chuckle under my breath, the sound husky and low, as I caress her cheek.

"You're blushing, Miss Bella," I whisper, lowering my head to brush my lips over her cheek. I smile against her heated skin, and I can still feel her heartbeat, though I doubt it's pounding in reaction to the movie now. A spark of confidence has empowered me, it seems, and I know there's no backing off just yet. One more whisper. "Don't play games with me."

"Now..." I breathe out and back away. "Watch the movie."

I face the screen myself, feeling in control.

Maybe our attraction is mutual, after all—if only a little—but she has no idea what she's getting into with me, regardless of what she's read online, and I won't stand for her to play games with me. I won't let it happen, because in my house, she lives by my rules. And I'm basking in that knowledge.

For the rest of the movie, Isabella is not only silent, but I can tell that she's not paying attention to what's going on. Still close and still clutching my shirt, but that's it.

Later, when the movie is over, it's still quite early in the evening, and we haven't had dinner yet, so I excuse myself to put something together. And...Isabella follows. She doesn't say anything, and I don't want to push her, but I hope that she's finally at least thinking about opening up to me. Plus, if she does that, it means I haven't creeped her out or anything.

For a long while, she sits silently on the counter, watching me as I prepare dinner. Just something simple: leftover chicken from two days ago, and baked potatoes with aioli.

"I never really felt at home, you know," she says suddenly, quietly, without moving. I move, however; I give her a glance that says I'm paying attention to whatever she wants to say. Not wanting her to feel on the spot, I continue with my tasks instead of just staring at her. "I know

Dad loved me... Mom, too. But...I dunno... We all wanted different things, I guess."

I can't be positive, but since I know how important music has been in her life, my guess is that she's referring to just that when saying "wanted different things", because it's certainly true. Marcus, her father, wanted her to play classical music. Renee wanted her to skip music altogether and take ballet classes like all the other girls did. Still, she never said it outright, and when push came to shove, Renee stood behind Isabella's decision. The same can't be said for the rest of the family.

"When you gave me that first album with Apocalyptica, I felt like someone really sided with me for the first time."

A pang of something unpleasant courses through me at her admission, and I feel awful that I haven't been there for her more. Especially after she graduated high school. While I did look for her and tried to call her, I could've done more. Aside from that, I also wish she had more family members who stood by her and, of course, that Isabella accepted that help. Lily and Alec are definitely on her side, for instance. Alec won't let his three repulsive sisters talk him down, and God knows that Lily and her husband put up with more than a little bullshit for supporting Isabella.

"I should've been there for you," I sigh, checking the oven. "You never did anything to deserve what Rosalie and your cousins said."

"You *were* there, Mr. C." She offers a small smile when I look at her. "It's not really about that anyway..." She averts her eyes. "I knew I had a few people who were there for me, but I was just so..." She takes a deep breath. "I was so fucking pissed."

"You had every right to be," I tell her, and this is obviously a moment where I don't even have a wish to reprimand her for her language. Hell, I'd love to spew out my fair share of profanities, too, and a lot of them

would be directed at myself. Now that I've come to realize that Rosalie isn't the woman I once saw myself spending the rest of my life with—and maybe she never was—I don't even want to think about how hurt Isabella was when I, after everything Rosalie has said to her, still went home with her.

Make no mistake, I always gave Rosalie a piece of my mind if she said something to Isabella, and I defended her younger sibling passionately. But in the end, what matters is that I haven't broken things off with her. Which I'm admitting to myself now that I need to do. As soon as I get back to LA.

Thinking back, it's almost a crime to say that what Rosalie and I have—*had*—is a loving relationship. Work has always been prioritized, on both sides, and we've traveled so much. Apart from the brief period in the beginning of our relationship where we went on customary dates, I can't say that either of us has been very affectionate to the other. We just sort of fell into it. Dating led to labels, labels led to "I love you"—which I'm not even sure I meant at the time—and those three words, along with convenience, have held us where we've been for more than a decade. There wasn't even a proposal a year and a half ago, it was something we agreed it was time for.

I'd like to say that I've been incredibly in love with Rosalie, but I can't. I've certainly loved her, but passion and affection...that deep in-love feeling...it hasn't been there. But I haven't missed it, either. Like I said, we've had our priorities. There's been a sense of comfort, knowing that you're not alone, and there's been contentment.

"I've made so many mistakes," she mutters, which brings me out of my musings. "Too many."

"We all make mistakes, sweetheart." I smile wryly, hoping she understands that I'm referring to her sister. Judging by her chuckle, I'd say she does.

"So...you're not gonna get married to Rosalie?" she mumbles, looking down at her nails—nails free from polish.

"No. I'm not," I admit, for the first time out loud, and it brings a smile to my lips. "But we're not talking about me now," I add, pointedly but softly. "I'm the listener tonight."

She flushes for some reason. "Right." She pauses, a hesitant look on her face. "Um, what do you want to know?"

There's only one answer to that. "Everything."

"That could take a while," she chuckles.

I smile and tap her on the nose. "I have time, Miss Bella. Why don't you start at the beginning?"

"You mean after I left," she states quietly, a sad expression taking over her features. I leave the cooking behind, because this is more important. Instead I stand in front of her, my hands on either side of her—on the counter. "Well, I'm sure you saw me in the gossip rags."

I did. She turned into quite the party animal after she left LA. London, New York, southern France...if there was a party, she was in attendance. That was how her life was for a year. After that, I'm clueless.

"I'm not judging you," I assure softly. "We all make mistakes, remember?"

She bobs her head, eyes downcast.

"I wanted to forget," she whispers, and when she looks up again, her eyes are full of unshed tears. I smile sadly and step closer to her, making her part her legs for me. My hands move to her waist. "I remember looking up to Rosalie so much, and then..." Yeah. Rosalie bullied her. Christ, I feel like such an ass. "Tanya, Kate, and Irina sure didn't make things better."

"I'm so incredibly sorry, my sweet," I murmur.

She just shakes her head and averts her eyes again. "I knew where you stood. I knew I had your support." That doesn't make me feel better, though. I should've done more. "Anyway..." She sighs heavily and drops her forehead to my collarbone. I take that as an invitation to hug her to me. "I went to parties for almost a year... I drank a lot. I never gave the day after a thought. There was no tomorrow." While she speaks, I slowly rub her back. "I ended up in the wrong crowd, but I managed to get out before it was too late." I can feel myself tensing up. "My so-called friends started doing drugs, and...any other shit, basically."

"But you didn't," I say, hoping.

"No." Thank God. "That was pretty much when I had my wake-up call. I just left it all behind. Shitty friends, shitty boyfriends, shitty life. I walked out."

I breathe out and kiss her hair.

"I didn't do much the next two years," she continues, sniffing. "I kept to myself, traveled a bit, and then I met Alice—a friend of mine—and she introduced me to a better crowd."

She goes on. "I met Alice's brother, or more importantly, the band he was in. And I started missing the music."

That makes me wonder if that's what it was about when we were in Ogden and that guy asked for Isabella's autograph.

"You started playing again?" I guess quietly.

She nods against my collarbone. "Yeah, they wanted some fill-ins on their new album, and I helped out." I smile at that and kiss her hair again. She really was a gifted cellist, and I hope I get the chance to hear her once more. If I'm not mistaken, she took up playing the violin, too, for a while, and I know that she has a beautiful singing voice, as well. Light, but still soulful and rich. "We became friends," she says softly. "They even asked me to go on tour with them, and I did. It was only in Europe, so I didn't worry too much about my name ending up out there."

"That man, the other day, he knew who you were," I mention.

She chuckles quietly and leans back a little. "Coincidence. He happened to like the band, and therefore recognized me." She shrugs a little and wipes her cheeks. I frown, hating the sad expression on her face. "Usually, when I get approached in the States, it's because of my name and who I used to be," she adds a little bitterly. "But it is what it is. Here, I'm just Rosalie Hale's little sister."

"You're so much more than that," I say sternly. "Don't belittle yourself."

"Whatever," she mutters. Then she slides to the side and hops down from the counter. However, before she can leave, which she was trying to, I reach out and grab her wrist.

"Don't walk out," I tell her, quietly but firmly. "Talk to me."

"I don't want to," she whispers tearfully, looking away. "Just leave me alone, Mr. C. I'm tired."

People have left her alone all her life. That's the last thing I'm going to do now.

"Forget it," I reply and pull her closer. "I can see that you don't feel well, so there's no way I'm letting you be alone."

She tries to glare at me, but I stand firm. She doesn't have to speak more right now—I refuse to push her—but going up to her room just to make sure I don't see how upset she is... No way. It's clear that she realizes I'm not backing down; first her glare weakens, and then her resolve crumbles. Tears well up in her eyes, quickly spilling over, and it's without thinking that I pick her up and carry her into the living room.

I don't know how long we sit there on the couch, her on my lap, but it feels like hours. She cries into my neck, clinging to me, and I'm damn certain that it's her heartwrenching pain that makes me feel like we've been sitting here for longer than we have. Her shoulders are hunched, trembling with each sob, and her tears soak my shirt. All I can do, really, is be here for her. I hold her, murmur words of comfort, caress her hair, and just let her cry it out. It's obviously something she needs.

"I'm here, you know," I remind her gently. "You can count on me, sweet girl."

She whimpers against my neck and nods. "I know." Good. "I don't know why I'm such a mess right now," she cries, sitting up straighter. This time, I don't give her the chance to wipe away her tears. I do it instead. "I'm just tired. I want..."

She doesn't finish her sentence.

But I'm not sure she has to. If she really knows I'm here for her, then maybe she's letting things go. Perhaps she's sick of keeping everything to herself, and now she's turning to me for support. One can only hope, and if that's the case, then I can also hope that there's relief somewhere in her, too. And, in my opinion, it's quite clear what it is that she needs. Which is stability. Comfort. Someone to rely on...

"I always loved this place," she admits, fresh tears rolling down. "That's why I come here. It feels safe."

"You're always welcome here." I smile carefully. "And it's nothing you have to hide, sweetheart. You can stay for as long as you want."

She smiles, too, though it wavers quickly. "I like it even better when I'm not here alone."

A spark of heat shoots its way through my body, lingering in my chest; it's pleasant and, well, heartwarming. I want her to enjoy my company, and to hear that she is...it feels indescribably good. It also causes a flare of hope to bloom inside of me, but I push that down. It's foolish and irrational to think that she could... Just no. I'm simply going through a change in my life, and my feelings are obviously taking me on a crazy ride.

"I don't have any father issues," she blurts out then, so suddenly, and my eyebrows shoot up in surprise and confusion. "W-what I m-mean is," she stammers, "there's nothing wrong with me." I frown deeply, wondering... well, a *lot* right now. "I'm just tired." She takes a calming breath. "I'm sick of making the wrong choices. Hell, I'm even sick of making the right choices! I just...I want to relax. I want to *let go*." While listening to her rambling, I notice a blush creeping over her cheeks. "Granted, I know that my upbringing may have caused whatever I'm feeling right now, but I still feel them, and I *like* them—the feelings. And sure, I didn't have the easiest childhood, but even though I didn't get along with Dad all the time, I know he loved me. He showed it, you know. He didn't favor Rosalie or anything. It wasn't until he died that Rosalie had free rein..." She shakes her head, perhaps getting off track...or maybe *on*. I'm not sure. "And while I think my mom is a bit flighty, changing her style, opinions, life, career...everything...I know that she has my back."

Right. Sure. Of course. But... "Why are you telling me this?" I can't help but ask.

She huffs a breath, looking pretty damn cute when she blows a piece of hair away from her face. And the way she crosses her arms over her chest only serves to make her look cuter.

The white tank top, the cotton shorts in light pink, the pigtails...

I could go on and on about things that draw me in.

"I'm talking about what I want," she finally says.

I quirk an eyebrow. "Which is?"

"Something I don't need. I want it—I want it badly—but I don't *need* it. Okay, I can even say that I *crave* it. But I don't-

"Need it; I got that," I chuckle. "But I still don't know what it is you want. And crave. But don't need. But want. Badly."

At last, she smiles, probably from my teasing, and this time her smile doesn't waver. It does, however, turn shy.

Curious.

"It's embarrassing," she whispers.

And then she slides closer and throws her arms around me.

Chapter 10

EPOV

Before I know it, she starts crying *again*. Quietly this time, and she's trembling like she's beyond nervous—maybe anxious—and with the night she's had so far, she's overwhelmed and stressed.

"Don't cry, sweetheart," I murmur, caressing her hair. "Talk to me. I will do whatever I can to make it better."

She sniffles. "Promise?"

"I promise." I don't think she knows just how wrapped around her pinky she has me. "Name it."

She doesn't talk right away, but I'm glad to hear that she stops crying.

For a while, I just hold her, and she remains glued to me with her arms locked around me.

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"Do you think I'm pretty, Mr. C?"

I blink, wondering if I heard her correctly.

Slowly, almost cautiously, she leans back and regards me. And I can see in her eyes that her question was serious.

Silly little girl.

"No. I don't," I say softly, cupping her cheek. "I think you're beautiful. I think you're sweet, utterly adorable, and stunning." And sexy, gorgeous, hot, sinful...

She flushes, and I trace her cheek with my thumb, feeling my mouth watering at the lovely sight.

"Do you..." She swallows. "Do you find me *attractive*?"

New territory. *Dangerous* territory.

Fuck.

She continues before I can answer, though. "I've read some things," she confesses in a rush, causing me to stiffen. "Things that..." Sweet Jesus, things that *what?* The next words come out in a whisper. "Things that turn me on."

My jaw clenches as I stare at her. I want to know a lot more at the same time that I want her to shut her mouth. It all depends on what she's read, of course, but my pounding heart sure hopes she's read something that I find myself wanting, too.

Christ, connect the pieces, already. Or better yet, face reality.

I need more to go on.

"And what would that be?" I grit out through clenched teeth.

I'm not angry; I'm wound up, hopeful, exhausted, and powerless.

Out of control.

Ready to snap.

"You already know," she breathes out, eyes welling up once more. "You have to know."

She's right. I do know. There's no need for her to clarify. But things just got even more complicated. It's one thing to wish, to dream, to fantasize. It's a whole other matter to look your desire in the eye and be able to walk away, something I *have* to do if I want to honor my commitment to Rosalie—the woman I am supposed to *marry* this June.

Though, when I look at Isabella, I'm not sure I can say no to her—not now, not ever—which I've convinced myself in the past that I'm able to. To say no and walk away, that is. And what a foolish lie I've told myself.

"Isabella," I groan under my breath, wanting, fighting, craving, struggling, *needing*. She cannot do this to me. Yet, I want it. Need it.

She *wants* me, for some unknown reason, and it's tearing me apart...in every way possible. The good and the bad. Will she want this tomorrow? Next week? Permanently? Is she just teasing me? God, that would *break* me.

What exactly is it that she wants from me?

Her next word is a broken whimper as she wipes away the last of her tears.

"D-Daddy?"

I suck in a breath, completely stunned and rendered speechless.

Jesus fucking Christ.

To actually hear it... To hear her say *that*...

I curse internally, unable to look away from her teary eyes, and it all comes crashing down on me. In a moment of clarity, I see it all. Nothing has been innocent. Her opening up to me, the change of her outfits, her willingness to make me happy... She's been researching. And now she *wants*.

I can't stop, I admit to myself...for the first time. I had at least believed that I was strong enough to stop before it got physical. Now that we've come this far, there's no way. Not when I'm sitting here, holding her as she lets go of years of grief and hurt. I'm battling more than desire and attraction; there's something deeper, too—an urge to protect her, a need for...

More.

With a total disregard for what's right and wrong and what we're supposed to do—what we're supposed to *talk* about—I can only reply one way.

I tuck a piece of hair behind her ear.

"Daddy's here, baby girl."

A million different things get released as my words leave my mouth: relief, yearning, heat, need, possessiveness... The list goes on, and judging by the look on Isabella's face, I'd say she feels something similar, which is almost unfathomable. But I do see it, and just as I could only reply one way, the same applies for my actions. There's only one thing I can do.

I lean forward, so does she, I cup her face, she whimpers, I lick my lips, I cover her mouth with mine.

Lines beyond crossed.

I don't care.

Not right now.

I kiss her like I own her, but she surrenders willingly, so quickly, in my arms. I don't know the extent of her knowledge, but I can't bring myself to ask right now. I don't want to. I just want this. I want to let go, like she said she wanted the same, and I do. When she parts her lips, I push my tongue into her mouth, tasting her for the first time. *Fuck*. I moan against her soft lips, and then again when she clings to me...like she's *desperate*, and that's another thing I want. I want her to need me, depend on me, *ache* for me. Beg for me.

"*Daddy*," she mewls, and I groan in return. So much is let go of. With the thickening tension, the relief is still palpable. Not to mention how confident and greedy I get. After months of wishing, weeks of wanting,

and these last days of needing, I finally take. The confusion clears, and I take what's offered.

"Christ, baby," I moan when she grinds herself against my hard cock. I can feel the heat through her shorts, and I move my hands to cup her ass and pull her impossibly closer. Roughly. I take. "I can feel your pussy, Isabella," I say huskily as I start kissing her neck. Open-mouthed kisses to taste her skin, to suck on it, to mark her.

She moans and cries out. "Please! I...I...I want more, Daddy."

I shiver.

You'll get more, baby girl. Don't worry.

"Let Daddy see your tits," I whisper.

"Okay," she gasps, quickly pulling off her tank top. I stare at her hungrily, catching my breath, reveling in her eagerness. And when the top is gone, I curse, my eyes taking in perfection. Her breasts are mouthwateringly exquisite. A handful, perky but still rounded, with constricted nipples in a color between dusty pink and creamy brown. Without a second thought, I cup both of them in my hands, which makes her moan and lean forward again. *Offering.*

"You're perfect," I murmur, giving her a quick glance before I lower my mouth to her breasts. In return, she pushes out her chest... *So eager.* As am I. I lavish her tits with wet kisses then suck one of her nipples into my mouth. "You taste so good," I moan. Her skin is hot, slightly flushed, and gooseflesh appears wherever I bring my hands and mouth. Her response to my touch is one that I already crave, and I depend on it to make decisions.

"Daddy," she whimpers, "can I take off my shorts, too?"

I chuckle huskily and kiss my way up her chest, ending with a soft kiss on her lips. "My greedy little girl." Her breathing hitches. "You want to show Daddy your pussy, too?"

"Yes," she breathes out. "Please."

I nod once, resisting the urge to grin like I've won the lottery. I don't know how far she's willing to go right now, and I will let her set the pace tonight, but it's clear that she wants more than just light kissing.

"Up you go," I say, helping her off the couch.

Her eyes, dark and shining with excitement, remain locked with mine as she pushes down her shorts, and that's when I break our gaze. Standing right in front of me, I drink her in. In the back of my mind, I register that my right hand goes to my clothed erection, and I hear another whimper coming from Isabella, but I'm too busy watching her to care.

She's a vision. Slender and supple, completely naked... Leaning forward, I allow my hands to slide up her legs, starting with her calves. So smooth and soft. And when I reach her thighs, I lean forward with my mouth, too. I can't help it, but as I stare at her bare pussy, all I want is a taste.

"Mmm, I can smell you," I whisper against her hipbone. "Will you let Daddy lick your pretty little pussy, baby girl?"

"Yes," she moans. "Oh, God...*please*."

I don't hesitate; I'm too starved for that. Sliding my hands behind her, I cup her bottom and give it a squeeze as I drop my mouth to her pussy. Again, no hesitation, no waiting. I flatten my tongue and firmly lick the length of her sex, at which her knees nearly buckle. My own reaction is a low moan against her wet flesh. God, she smells intoxicating, and don't get me started on her taste. It's heady and addictive, with a hint of sweetness from whatever product she uses in the shower.

I devour her.

I lick her, kiss her slick folds, even sucking on them a little, before moving up to wrap my lips around her clit. My fingers follow and tease her opening—gently circling.

"Mmm, you taste so fucking good," I mumble, letting my tongue press down on her clit. She whimpers and places her hands on my shoulders. "This is Daddy's pussy now, baby." I hope she knows this isn't a one-time thing. "Are we clear?"

I look up at her, still circling her entrance with two fingers.

Tell me, little girl.

"Your pussy," she gasps, nodding quickly. Satisfied, I slam both fingers deep inside of her, hungry for her reaction. "Oh, my God! Yes, Daddy!"

I smile to myself and return to sucking on her clit.

No more teasing, though. I finger her deeply in firm strokes, curling my fingers, uncurling, in and out, all while I tongue her clit. And it doesn't take many minutes before I have her trembling and pleading for Daddy to get her to come.

I swallow a few drops of her arousal, moaning at the taste.

"Is my little girl close?" I ask huskily as I add a third finger. Fuck, that's a tight fit. "Jesus, your kitty's perfect."

"So close," she whines. "Oh...mmm, yesss..." I hum against her pussy, which seems to do the trick. "Yes! *Ungh*...coming, Daddy!"

As her climax crashes down on her, she holds her breath, and while I slow down my movements, I don't take away the pressure. Instead, I rub her a little *harder*...but slower.

The fact that I've just given Isabella an orgasm with my mouth and fingers goes on a loop in my head.

I finger-fucked and licked my twenty-year-old sister-in-law.

Okay, she's not really my sister-in-law, but it's a title she's supposed to claim in a few months. It won't happen; though the fact remains, she's been family for years. *We've* been family for years. And all I can think about right now is that I want to impale her on my neglected cock.

"Mmm, that was sooo good." Isabella hums and straddles me again. I smile and chuckle a little, because she starts planting kisses all over my face. It makes me feel *worshipped*. "Thank you, thank you, thank you, Daddy."

I palm her ass and pull her over my straining erection. "My pleasure, sweet girl." I nuzzle her nose with mine before kissing her lips. "Your pussy's fucking delicious."

She giggles and squirms.

My chest feels light.

"I want to make you feel good, too, Daddy," she whispers into the kiss. "I really do. By the way, did you notice that I didn't curse?"

I smile softly, reveling and savoring. This moment means so much to me. My hands roam her sides, up, up, up, until they're filled with her tits. "Such a good little girl," I murmur and kiss her jaw. "Maybe Daddy should give you a reward."

Her eyes light up, and I wonder if I'm imagining how innocent she appears. It's almost as if she's giving in completely to instinct, therefore showing how she truly feels. There's no mask.

"I know how you can reward me," she says and rubs her pussy over my cock. I raise an eyebrow at her, simultaneously stifling a moan, because I can definitely feel her wetness soaking through my pajama bottoms and boxers. "We can go upstairs," she suggest with a soft kiss. "And then I can suck your cock."

She's *killing* me.

Then there's Isabella's pout. "Please, Daddy?"

Talking will definitely have to wait.

Chapter 11

EPOV

As soon as my back hits the mattress, I have a giggling Isabella climbing on top of me. Christ, she's beyond words, and the relief is still rolling off of me in waves. While I'm wary about the future, Isabella's eagerness makes it easy for me to live in the moment.

"Is it my turn now?" she asks sweetly, tugging on the waistband of my pajama pants. I nod and prop myself up on my elbows. "Mmm, Daddy's hard."

Of course he is.

"That's all on you, little girl," I chuckle huskily. She flushes and tugs on the pants again, at which I lift up my hips so she can pull down the two layers of fabric. Down, down, pants and boxers. Her breathing hitches, eyes fixed on my erection. "Look at you, baby." I shake my head at her, both aroused and amused. "So cute."

With her naked body still on display for me, it's easy to see that I have a great effect on her.

It matters more than I thought possible.

"Oh, yes," she whispers, kneeling in between my parted legs. And all traces of humor are gone. She's right here, with me, in my bed, about to suck my cock. "Mmm." She hums and lowers her head—I watch hungrily, full of anticipation—then kisses the tip of my erection. *Fuck*. "You're so big, Daddy."

I'm not huge. Above average, sure, but she's eyeing my cock as if it's intimidating. Though, for her tight little body...maybe it is—something I find arousing as hell. I love that I'm so much larger than she is.

"Fuck, Isabella," I mutter. "Your dirty little mouth is going to get you into trouble."

It really is, and I'm not talking about foul language now. I'm talking about her way of working me up to the extreme simply by speaking. But, for the record, I will allow curses in bed. That doesn't mean I'm not proud of her for not cursing downstairs earlier, but I will talk to her later about what's allowed and not. Much later. Later, later, later, fuck, she sucks me in. No teasing. She gets me wet and harder than I already was, and the *suction*... Jesus, I moan. I also thread my fingers through her silky hair, guiding her down on me. *Deeply*. Damn, she can do this.

"So good," I groan and push her down gently. "That's it, baby girl. Suck Daddy's cock."

She whimpers around me.

My breathing becomes labored.

When was the last time I received a blowjob?

Fuck if I know.

She goes faster.

I give into instinct, which I never have before. No more stifling.

Motherfucking perfection.

I fall back completely on the bed, my head landing on my pillow, and it makes it possible for me to place both hands on the back of her head. One is releasing her hair from those cockteasing pigtails, and the other is caressing her cheek. Then, with a fistful of her hair, I test the waters by thrusting upward while I push her down harder.

"Holy hell," I breathe out harshly, screwing my eyes shut. She moans, suckles, sucks, kisses, and licks. "Out of this *fucking* world." I grunt and focus on the pleasure she's giving me. "Yeah," I pant when she gives my balls a gentle tug. "Shit, perfect. Can you lick them? Lick my balls, sweetheart."

"Daddy," she breathes out, licking her way down my erection. "Mmm, my Daddy..."

I smile, out of breath.

My Daddy, she said.

Claiming.

"My little girl," I murmur, my voice rough with desire. "Mine, baby."

She nods, flicking her tongue over my sac. At the same time, she strokes my cock expertly, and I cover her hand with mine, not because she needs guidance, but because I love the feeling.

"So wet," I groan. My cock is soaked with her saliva and my pre-cum. It feels unbelievably good. I tighten the grip a little, and I say, "I want your

mouth again." And she obeys. She sucks me in again, not stopping until I hit the back of her throat.

My hips buck, she hollows out her cheeks, I moan her name, she massages my balls, I hear the wet noises from her sucking.

I've never felt this kind of pleasure before.

"Christ." I place my hand on the back of her head again. "Can I fuck your mouth, baby?"

She nods furiously and releases my dick. "*Please.*"

My eyes nearly roll back for a second.

She's *begging*. Begging *me* for something. Again, I feel worshipped.

Slowly but surely, I start thrusting into her hot mouth. Deep strokes, but I keep them slow. My back arches, causing my head to dip further into the pillow, and I can feel my orgasm approaching.

Heat spreads through my body, and even more when she tugs harder on my balls. I hiss under my breath, and...close, close, close.

"Fuck, baby," I curse, feeling a tingling sensation traveling down my spine. "Daddy's gonna come."

She hums around me and redoubles her efforts.

My abs tense, my thighs tremble, I stop breathing, I reach that moment where you either pull out or come.

Point of no return.

"*Isabella*," I warn again, this time through clenched teeth. My face contorts as if I were in pain, but that couldn't be further away from the truth. *She's going to swallow.* "Oh, *fuck.*"

Everything coils inside of me right before I erupt, and with a last push into her mouth, I release down her throat. Ripples of pleasure, mixed with violent shivers, shoot through my body. It courses quickly, spreading, taking over, consuming.

God...*damn.*

When I return to reality, I'm panting. My chest heaves repeatedly, and the shivers won't stop. One sets off another, and *Isabella* kissing her way up my chest certainly won't make them stop. It's more the other way around.

Holy fuck.

I scrub my hands over my face.

A part of me, I think, is in shock. The turn of events, the night in general, tasting *Isabella*, seeing her naked, feeling her exquisite body against mine, having her mouth on me...it's all crashing down on me. I'm filled with hope and gratitude, almost leaving me overwhelmed. Hell, I'm pretty sure I am overwhelmed. Still unbelieving.

"Was I a good girl?" she whispers against my jaw. I groan under my breath, feeling her supple tits brushing against my chest, my chest hair, my fucking nipples.

"Good doesn't begin cover it," I murmur thickly, and yes, I'm definitely overwhelmed. "You're perfect." I finally open my eyes. What I see is her soft gaze and her hair falling around us like a curtain.

I'm humbled.

"You want this, too?" she asks, eyes welling up.

I nod and reach up to kiss her. "So fucking badly."

"With me?"

There's no one else. "Only you," I admit, rolling us over. I kiss her cheeks then just look down at her—at her watery smile and shining eyes. "Not temporarily," I go on quietly. I swallow hard, ready to lay all my cards on the table. "I want to talk; I want this with you. All of it."

I don't know how much she wants from me, but I'm desperate to find out.

Do I see a relationship with Isabella that goes beyond the fetish?

Definitely.

Now that I've gotten a taste, I want it all.

"What about Rosalie?" she asks hesitantly, chewing on her lip. "What about our family? And the press! Christ, this is gonna get out, Edward."

I can only smile, because she's clearly thinking about it. And...she called me Edward. Not Mr. C.

"Fuck them," I tell her, quietly but firmly. "While we'll keep certain things secret," I give her a pointed look, conveying that I'm talking about what we call each other behind closed doors, "I don't want to hide *you*."

My publicist at Cullen Hotels—not to mention the Hales' publicist and Rosalie's personal one—is going to...well, shit a brick. The situation is like Christmas for the paparazzi: hotel owner Edward Cullen replaces Rosalie Hale, A-list actress, with her younger sister, the black little sheep, Isabella.

Yeah, I can see it. It won't be pretty in the beginning. I will be painted as a cheater, which...fuck...I am. I don't know how Isabella will be portrayed, but it's quite clear that Rosalie will be the victim.

It's worth it, though. It has to be.

I swallow nervously. "Do you want to hide *me*?"

After all, Isabella is a public figure, too. Perhaps even more of one than I am.

"No," she breathes out, shaking her head. *Relief*. "These past days..." She averts her eyes. "I've been feeling...*more*. For you."

I exhale, dropping my forehead to hers. "Same here," I confess. "I want this, sweetheart." I just had to say it again.

"I want this, too." She smiles when I kiss her soft lips. "But can we talk more tomorrow?" She pouts. "I'm tired, Daddy."

Jesus.

We definitely have limits and rules to go over, but I can't fucking deny the girl. Plus, falling asleep with my little girl sounds perfect right now and, to be honest, I need to let things settle. This is no time to be impatient.

"You'll be the fucking death of me," I mutter, kissing her once more.

She giggles. "Language, *Daddy*."

Chapter 12

"G'mornin'," I hear Isabella yawn behind me. I look over my shoulder, watching as she takes her seat at the kitchen table. She sees the two notepads immediately. "What's this?"

I respond as I finish plating the waffles. "You may have slept like a rock, but I couldn't." That's true. I was awake for hours, staring up at the ceiling, thinking. Thinking about what I want. "So..." I blow out a breath. "For my peace of mind, I'd like us to talk now." With that said, I take the two plates of waffles, put them on a tray and place my coffee and her juice on it, too. Then I walk over and take my seat across from Isabella. "I hope that's okay."

"About what we're gonna start," she concludes sleepily.

"Yes."

She hums and nods slowly, eyes on her plate. "Well, one thing I wanna include is a freaking good morning kiss."

My eyebrows shoot up...before I bark out a laugh. A nervous one. The thing is that it completely slipped my mind, and it's because I'm anxious. I'm desperate to have this talk so that I know what I can expect. It's not like I'm experienced; I'm so new at this.

"I'm sorry," I say, clearing my throat, and my first thought is to round the table and swoop her up...or something. Then I realize that I don't have to. Not anymore. She can come to me. So, I scoot out my chair and give her a raised eyebrow as I tap my thigh.

She smiles widely and hurries over, eliciting a quiet grunt from me when she plops down on my lap, one leg on either side of me.

"Good morning, Daddy," she whispers.

Fuck, that sounds so good.

My body heats up, hands sliding up her exposed legs, and when I reach her tiny pajama shorts, my hands continue under them.

“Good morning, baby girl,” I murmur huskily. With both hands cupping her ass, I pull her closer to me. “Is this better?” I nuzzle her jaw then brush my lips over hers.

“Yes,” she breathes out. “Mmm...”

Covering her mouth with mine, I kiss her hungrily, all while kneading her little bottom. A low moan slips out as my tongue slides with hers, and I’m about to deepen the kiss further when she rolls her hips over my hardening cock. That’s not the plan, so I end the kiss with a few soft, chaste ones. Before I lose my mind.

She pouts, breathing heavily.

I chuckle quietly and cup her face, brushing the pads of my thumbs over her soft cheeks. She’s so beautiful, and her smile...as she looks at me...it makes her even more beautiful. Then there are her eyes, dark and round, shining and expressive...

“What?” she asks, curious.

I shake my head and kiss her on the nose. “You’re just so fucking beautiful.”

She ducks her head and blushes.

If that isn’t a sight that makes me want to fuck her silly, I don’t know what is.

“Back to your chair, baby,” I say, kissing her temple. “It’s difficult to think when you’re on my lap.”

“Don’t you mean *hard* to think?” she teases with a wriggle of her ass.

“Watch that mouth of yours,” I mutter and help her up. “You’ll find out that I don’t enjoy cockteasing.”

There's plenty of stuff she'll realize that I don't approve of.

Her sassiness being just one thing.

"Okay," she sighs, taking her seat again. "I'm ready. Where do you wanna start?"

That's easy. "I need to know how much you've researched."

She ponders for while and eats a couple of bites from her waffle. In the meantime, I study her and sip my coffee.

"I know about limits," she says finally and licks her lips—lips that taste of vanilla and sugar from the waffles, no doubt. "I know that you're supposed to negotiate or whatever...before you enter a relationship such as this one." That's good. "I know that there are countless ways to *have* a relationship like this one. Some do it 24/7, some have scenes and playtime..." She trails off and forks another piece of waffle. "I know that it's about more than just kinky sex."

I grin wryly, because that's an understatement. Kinky sex, as she so eloquently put it, is welcomed by many out there, but what I have started to crave goes way beyond that. While I've never wanted children, I do want someone to take care of. Someone who I'm solely responsible for, someone who I provide for, and someone who I'm in charge of. I want more than just fucking. I want the affection, the obedience, and the commitment.

With Isabella, I also want it to grow into more, and I can definitely see it happening.

I can *feel* it.

"The things I've read, it makes so much *sense*..." She clears her throat, frowning a little, and her eyes aren't really focused on anything in

particular. She's deep in thought. "I want to let go," she says softly, at last meeting my gaze. "I'm tired of running, of not having a home where I feel comfortable, and I'm sick of not belonging." After the way she's led her life, I can't say I'm surprised to hear her say this. My heart is practically aching for her, and I want to take care of her more than anything I've ever wanted in the past. "I mean, I don't want to become some quiet little mouse that has no say." Her brows knit together, creating a crease on her forehead, which makes her look troubled again. I hate it and reach over the table to squeeze her hand in a comforting manner—one that says I'm here for her. "I still want to work with my music," she continues, and I'm glad to hear it. The last thing I want to do is smother or stifle her. After all, that's how I've felt for the past...decade or so. "But right now I just wanna take it easy. I wanna be able to pick a project that I really love. I don't wanna work *all* the time. And I don't wanna do it just to distract myself."

I want her with me, I realize. When I travel, I want her by my side. Then, when she works, I want to be there. Not necessarily in studios or when she has rehearsals, but close enough that we share a bed each night. No separation.

"I sorta liked one version of a 24/7 relationship I've read about," she says pensively, her cheeks coloring. I'm all ears. And eyes. "Um, it was a couple who were married...the man was always Daddy, but they still went out on dates as equals. I guess what I mean is that I'd rather have a relationship—like this one—with specific times where we're just Edward and Isabella, rather than be Edward and Isabella who play occasionally."

I feel like I've won the lottery. "I think that sounds perfect, but we need to talk at length about that, because I'm fairly certain it's easy to get overwhelmed. To go from what we've had before...to an intense relationship..."

“Hmm,” she nods slowly, “but isn’t that what we’re doing now? Talking?”

I chuckle. “Touché. I’m just saying that we shouldn’t put on too much pressure in the beginning.” And here’s my truth, “I want what you just said, I really do, but I want to take time to get to know you, as well. I want us to have dinners together, learn more about each other, and find a good balance. And I want us to have a good foundation before we go public with our...romance, so to speak.” It will be a while, without a doubt, because I have to end things with Rosalie, and I believe things will get uglier than they need to be if I take Isabella out on a romantic date the minute after I’ve broken up with her sister. “We already know that the press will have a field day with this.” I finish with a rueful smile.

Her smile mirrors my own. “I’ll be the home wrecker.”

I frown deeply. “We should probably release a public statement, because that’s the last thing I want people to think about you.”

I also don’t want people to believe I’m a heartless creep, but Isabella comes first. The most important thing to me is that her name isn’t ruined by this. Which is why we should keep this private for a while.

“We’ll deal with it when that time comes,” she says firmly, and I agree. “I think we should move on to the next topic now.”

Judging by the mischief in her eyes, I have a feeling I know what it is.

I smirk. “And what would that be, baby?”

“Sex,” she giggles, looking so fucking cute. Damn, Isabella’s rubbing off on me. I realize that I’m cursing a lot more, even though I keep most of it in my head. “Limits and stuff...”

I shake my head in amusement. “All right. Who should go first?”

"You," she says quickly, blushing again. "I want to know what you want... from me."

I raise an eyebrow at her, simultaneously flipping open the notepad. I speak as I remove the cap from my pen. "There isn't a lot I don't want from you, baby girl." She can see that as a warning. After my months of reading about this, I know exactly what I want. "Now, I've read all about checklists, but you and I won't go that route," I tell her, making two columns on the empty sheet. "Instead, I want us to write down what we know right now—soft limits and hard—and then we will discover new things together." She nods in understanding, turning serious, for which I'm glad. "Before we start, I want you to know that there aren't many things that will be deal breakers for me."

It's important that she knows this. If there's something she doesn't want, we will talk about it, and if she still says no, that will be the end of it. Sex, for me, is only a part of our relationship, and there are certainly things I can go without. That's how I've lived my life, after all. And this isn't something I'm going to be sad about or anything remotely close. Isabella is already my dream come true.

"There are plenty of deal breakers for me," she huffs. "I won't wear diapers, Edward. I read about some people who do that."

I snort, something I'm not sure I've ever done before.

"Rest assured." I cough and clear my throat. "No diapers will be involved."

Jesus Christ, this girl.

"Let's start with the basics," I suggest. The kinkier stuff can come later, and believe me, there are hard limits for me, too. "Are you a virgin?" I'm almost a hundred percent sure she's not, but I still want to know for sure.

"No."

Right. "And," I can't help but smile to myself, "we know that oral sex isn't off the table." Just thinking about last night... I sigh internally, counting my blessings. "Vaginal sex—"

"Also not off the table."

I chuckle and I look up from the notepad. "I should hope not, sweetheart. But I was more thinking about protection and safety. I'm clean," I sigh, knowing it's time to admit more truths, "and I haven't been with anyone in over five months."

She coughs and splutters. I can't say that I'm surprised about her reaction.

As for getting myself tested... I was particularly angry at the time and hoping I'd catch Rosalie doing something stupid, which would give me a reason to leave her. I know. It was foolish. I should've just ended things right away, without needing other reasons than my lack of love for her, but I didn't. I went to the doctor for a vasectomy about seven or eight months ago—that's when Rosalie started talking about having a child—and when the doctor asked about my history, I told him I wanted to get tested for STDs. I did, came out clean, and I didn't return to that particular doctor, because I was embarrassed. My behavior was far from good. I mean, Rosalie has never given me the impression that she has cheated.

Ironic.

The few times I was with Rosalie shortly after that, I insisted on wearing a condom, and then I was cleared by a second test a month and a half ago. Admittedly, I'm still thinking about having a vasectomy.

"Five months," Isabella finally says in disbelief. "So, things have been bad between you for that long?"

I smile ruefully, just a small one. "These last five months have been more of an eyeopener for me. Before, I never really knew what was wrong. I was content—no real reason to complain." I take a breath. "As for sex... Rosalie wants children." I gauge Bella's reaction: so far, so good. "I don't. So, I stopped...being with her...because she went off the pill."

Her eyes narrow, eyebrows knitting together, too.

"Children aren't for me," I sum up, nervous that this is a deal breaker.

Does Isabella want children?

If she does...Christ, I really hope she doesn't. It's not that I don't like children, but they're not for me. At almost forty, I have no desire to wake up in the middle of night because someone is screaming bloody murder. I also love my job, and I travel a lot. I can bring Isabella with me, but I can't haul an infant with me all over the world.

"Okay," she answers with a shrug. I stare at her blankly, because things can't be that easy, can they? "Edward," she chuckles, "with the childhood I've had, the mistakes I've made as a teenager..." She shakes her head. "I can't see myself having children, either. The last thing I want is to be responsible for someone else. I've already stated that I'm ready to let go of everything—it's what I want. So, no...I don't want to be a mother."

If I thought I was relieved before, it had nothing on what I feel right now.

It feels as if it's too good to be true, but I'm willing to push down my cynical side and savor this.

"And I'm clean, too," she says, getting back on track. "I haven't been with anyone in about seven months or so." She shrugs. "And I get the shot."

I stare at her...not thinking gentlemanly thoughts.

Chapter 13

EPOV

"Let's move on," I say, coughing into my hand a little. Though the last thing I want is to move on. I'd much rather stay on the topic and fuck my Isabella. Properly. Alas, we have to finish this, so I look down at my notepad. Then I raise a brow at Isabella. "Anal sex."

She blushes and ducks her head, which I allow because I love the shy look on her. The modest, the demure, the submissive.

"Not off the table," she says quietly. "Um, honestly? I've wanted to try it before, but only with someone I'm serious with. And there hasn't been anyone I've trusted before you, so..."

I nod to myself, pleased and humbled beyond words. I love that she's honest, not to mention careful. I've never had anal sex before either, but I've read enough to know that it's nothing you rush into. And the fact that she trusts me? Knowing that I have her trust—it's indescribable.

"Is that something you want?" she asks, making eye contact.

I give her a smirk. "Oh, I want." Leaning forward, I grasp her hand on the table. "In all seriousness, baby...don't feel pressured, all right? If there's anything you don't want, let me know."

She nods. "I will."

"Good girl."

The next few hours or so pass quickly, and my erection is ever-present. We decide to take things slow sexually, meaning we won't go into too much at the same time. No toys, no bondage, or anything else we'd like to try within BDSM. Truth be told, there isn't all that much we find appealing, and I'm glad that we seem to match very well. While we both want to try out a few things, such as blindfolding, spanking, use of dildos, bullets,

vibrators, handcuffs, and anal plugs, it's nothing compared to what's out there. But for now, we will focus on getting to know each other's bodies without toys. The only exception would be when we start preparing Isabella's ass for my cock.

Next we talk about behavior. Or rather, I tell Isabella what I expect from her. And I can tell that this topic excites her. When I tell her that foul language outside of sexual activities will result in spanking, her breathing picks up. When I tell her that masturbation is forbidden without asking for permission—at all times—I see how her chest flushes. And I know, from seeing her naked last night, that her blush reaches her tits.

With each thing I bring up, Isabella gets worked up. Make no mistake, I get worked up, too, but I'm able to hide it, much to my satisfaction.

After behavior, we move on to how we'll act in our everyday setting. What to call each other, how to act, what's allowed, and so on.

She wants me to be Daddy at all times—that's what she wants to call me—unless we are in the company of others, of course. And I can't tell her how good that makes me feel. A part of me feels like a pervert...while another part rejoices in that fact. That part *wants* to be a pervert—embrace it—and do insane things to Isabella. All the dirty things I want to say, the things I want to *do*...now I will be able to.

Moving on here.

After settling that, I bring up Isabella's appearance. I tell her that she will have full rein on what she wears when she works or when she's out in public. But when it's just the two of us, I want her in innocent clothes—absolutely no makeup—and I tell her that I prefer simple cotton. Lace and satin are kryptonite for some—perhaps in black or dark red—but for me it's white or other light shades...only cotton. I don't wish to see her in a fucking thong.

The Daddy in me is aching for pastel colors on her. Simple tops, baby-doll dresses, soft camisoles, shorts that end right below her sexy ass, and cute slippers on her feet. I want her comfortable and relaxed.

Isabella shivers when I tell her this.

She also shivers when I tell her that I want to bathe her every night.

I watch how her pupils dilate, how her chest heaves.

And I know that I can't take it anymore.

These past hours have been like foreplay—torture.

"I need to fuck you, baby girl," I finally grit out. "Now."

She whimpers and nods quickly, and that's it. I stand up, my erection straining in my pants, and I grab her hand before I usher her up the stairs. Actually, it's more like I drag her along. Not that she's not willing—she sure is—but I'm acting as if I'm possessed and crazed.

When we reach my bedroom, I pick her up, only to toss her onto the bed.

"Undress," I command quietly, gruffly, and pull off my own shirt. As soon as it's over my head, I throw it on the floor then move to unzip my pants. My fingers are quick, and I see that Isabella is just as needy. With an impatient whine, she removes her shirt and squirms out of her shorts. The sight of her naked body is almost too much. Hell, five months—that's how long it's been, and even then...when was the last time I was really satisfied? Was there ever such a time?

I think I'm about to find out.

"Spread your legs," I murmur next, as I join her on the bed. Again, she obeys, and then I just watch. Kneeling between her parted legs, I watch her flawless body—all on display for me. "Fucking beautiful," I whisper. My

hands slide up her thighs. "So soft." When I reach her pussy, I let my thumb graze the slick lips, which elicits another whimper from her. "It's my pussy now." With my index finger, I part her folds, starting at her clit. Just one slow stroke, I slide my finger down to her entrance. But one isn't enough, so I slam in two.

"Fuck!" she cries out, almost arching off the bed. "Please, please, please—"

"What do you want, sweet girl?" I keep fingering her deeply, adding a third, too. "Tell Daddy what you want. I know he'll give it to you."

"Oh..." She lets out a whine. "Your cock, Daddy...*please*."

My fingers leave her hot pussy and I grip my erection. "You want this?" I lower myself over her and slide my cock between her wet folds. "Fuck." I shudder and push the head of me against her clit. That makes her moan. She also tries to pull me down on her, but I don't let her. Not yet. "Look at that, little girl. You're soaking Daddy's cock."

"*Ungh...*"

I chuckle huskily and keep teasing her. In truth, I'm teasing myself, too, and I know I won't be able to do it much longer. Especially not when I place the tip of my cock at her wet opening and add pressure.

"Christ." One inch disappears into her, and I suck in a breath through clenched teeth. "You need to relax, baby girl." She really does. Hell, she can't be more than 5'2", 5'3" at most, more than a foot shorter than I, and...she's so slight and supple.

I dip low and kiss her soft lips—they're slightly parted—and I feel the quick breaths she takes.

A moment later, she finally relaxes fully, and I push my hips forward another inch or two.

"Mmm, oh God," she breathes out, locking her arms around my neck. I let her, reveling in the feeling of covering her slight body with mine. Her skin is flawless, but my focus remains on kissing her. Slowly, but deeply. At first, anyway. Because with each inch of my cock that disappears into her, our kiss grows hungrier and hungrier.

"Fuck, baby girl," I pant, fully sheathed in her. Christ, I can barely believe this is happening. Her pussy just feels so damn amazing, and, and—it's *Isabella*. My sweet little girl.

My sweet little girl.

"Out of this world," I admit, groaning as I pull out. Then, with a swift push, I'm inside of her again. Out then in. Out. "Fuck." *In*. She clings to me, kisses me deeply, whimpers, moans, begs. And I start going faster, harder, *deeper*, anything to get more and more and more.

She lifts her hips when I slam in.

"Yes!" she cries out.

"That's it, sweet girl. Let Daddy fuck you."

"Oh God, oh God, oh God..."

I shudder violently, visibly, and grind my soaked cock into her.

When it's not enough anymore, I flip us over so that she's riding me. It gives me access to her tight body, and my hands want to touch what now belongs to me.

"Oh, Daddy," she moans breathily, swiveling her hips over my cock. She has her hands placed on my thighs for leverage, which also pushes her chest out. I'm quick to sit up and suck a nipple into my mouth.

She slams down on my cock.

I pull her down at the same time.

We fucking lose it.

"So good," she pants as I cup her cheek with one hand. I kiss her hard and slide my tongue along hers, needing more of her taste. It's always her taste, I realize. It drives me to the brink of insanity. Then, with my free hand, I start rubbing her little clit. But I change hands after a few seconds, because I want the taste of her pussy closer. Which is why I stick the pad of my thumb past her lips...all while I kiss her.

We both taste her.

Gathering more arousal from her, I brush two fingers over her mouth before kissing her again.

She tenses up and starts breathing choppily, like she wants to hold her breath altogether but can't.

"You're close, aren't you?" I breathe out and add pressure to her clit. I can feel how her muscles flutter around my erection, and I'm relieved. Because I won't be able to hold it much longer.

She nods quickly and throws her arms around me. "Yes, I...I...oh, fuck... *Daddy...*"

I decide to push it with the dirty talk.

Just...a little bit more.

I want to know how far I can go.

I want to know just how dirty she is.

So, I lean in and whisper in her ear. Darkly, huskily. "Such a dirty girl." I reach up and squeeze her tits, and she grinds her pussy against my pubic

bone. "You know what I think you are right now?" She whimpers. "I think you're Daddy's little baby slut."

That does it.

She begins to tremble, and this time she stops breathing completely.

"Look at you," I grunt, watching as her head tilts back. She's so lost in us. So fucking beautiful. "You can't stop fucking Daddy's cock, can you?"

With a breathless wail leaving her mouth, her orgasm takes over.

I squeeze my eyes shut when I feel her pussy pulsing around me, and it's my downfall. My climax surges through me quickly, beginning at the base of my neck and sending tingles down my spine. My thighs throb, my balls tighten, and my cock releases in her. I feel everything—like my senses have become stronger and more sensitive. Not only do I feel it all, but I register it. From the first stream of cum pulsating out of my cock to the last one that I sluggishly push into her with a lazy thrust of my hips.

Several minutes later, we haven't changed our position any more than I now have my back against the mattress. But I'm still inside of her, and Isabella is still on top of me, resting her face in the crook of my neck, as we try to regulate our breathing. I can feel her heart pounding, and I'm sure she can feel mine.

One thing is clear.

I'm not letting this girl go.

"We are so doing that soon again," she giggles breathlessly and lifts her head. Her eyes are indescribably gorgeous, but what I notice the most is the happiness in them. She hums softly and leans into my hand as I caress her cheek. "Mmm, my Daddy."

With a gentle tug on her hair, I pull her down for a kiss. "And you're my sweet little girl, aren't you?"

She nods and smiles against my lips. "As long as you'll have me."

There's no way she can understand just how much those words mean to me.

"Is that so?" I grin and tighten my hold on her, loving the feel of her tits against my chest. "And what if I decide to never let you go?"

If possible, she looks even happier. "Oh, I can live with that."

Chapter 14

EPOV

"Is it really that difficult, sweetheart?" I chuckle quietly, thoroughly amused by Isabella's inability to make a simple choice. "Just pick one."

She huffs and pouts at me, only to divert her attention to the selection of Sony VAIOs again. In Ogden, they didn't have enough to choose from, and here in Salt Lake City, there are evidently too many.

After a few days of not leaving the house, we needed this day trip. Plus, Isabella still needs a new laptop, so I suggested this morning that we'd get out of bed and go into town. Admittedly, I need a break from all the fucking. See, I'm not twenty anymore, and my muscles are sore and protesting. Which seems to amuse Isabella.

"But there are so many," she mumbles, grabbing my pinky. Though we're hardly A-list celebrities, we still need to be careful when we're out in public. A coincidence it's all it'd take—like the fan of Isabella's who recognized her on the spot last week. We don't need drama in our life. Plus, with the Sundance approaching, Utah has the tendency to turn into a celebrity hot spot. However...I love that she wants as much contact as I

do. I can barely keep my hands off of her at the house, so this is definitely a test of epic proportions.

“Have you at least narrowed it down?” I ask and kiss her temple.

She nods and takes a step closer to me. “Those two.” She points at one black VAIO and one silver. The black one has a 17-inch screen and the silver one only has an 11. “Writing is easier with the larger one,” she comments, and I definitely agree. When she composes and writes, a mini-laptop won’t make things easy for her. “But then when I travel, which I do often, a smaller one is easier to carry around.”

Also true, and if she traveled a lot in the past, it’s nothing compared to what’s going to happen in the future. She has already eagerly accepted my invitation to join me for all my travels this coming spring—something I’m more than thrilled about—but it comes with a few downsides, too. For instance, we’ll practically be living out of our suitcases.

“So, take both,” I say like it’s obvious, because it is. “You can always use a memory stick to transfer your work.”

Unlike her sister and cousins, Isabella isn’t a big spender. It doesn’t matter that she’s technically a millionaire; she rarely splurges, and no purchase is ridiculously outrageous.

She chews on her lip, eyes on the shelves. “But isn’t that too much? I mean, I already need to buy a new iPhone—”

“*You* are not buying anything,” I tell her firmly. “I told you this yesterday, Isabella. I’m paying.”

I want to give her a new laptop, and as for her iPhone... Well, she dropped it in the snow yesterday when we used the hot tub I have behind the house. She’d played some music on it and was about to change songs when the phone slipped out of her hand.

"Da- *Edward*." She flushes. I stifle a smile. "I have my own money."

I'm very aware. "But we went over this," I remind her pointedly. "You agreed when I said that I wanted to take care of you from now on."

This is a subject I refuse to be swayed on. I'm the provider. End of discussion. It doesn't matter if it's food, clothes, airplane tickets, or a fucking car. I'm more than capable of spoiling her, which is exactly what I intend to do. And she's going to let me. We had this talk yesterday, and we covered it all. Why she's going against me now, I don't know.

"I *know* I agreed, but it doesn't feel *right*." She actually stomps her foot. It's cute. It makes me want to bend her over and turn her ass red.

I arch a brow at her.

She scowls at me. "Okay, so what do you suggest I do with my own money then, huh?" She folds her arms over her chest.

"Honestly?" I dip down, brushing my lips over her ear. "I don't give a *fuck*, Isabella." She shivers. "But you will not give me attitude. Are we clear on that?" With that said, I straighten and tuck a piece of hair, which had escaped her pigtails, behind her ear. "Now, take those two," I point at the two laptops, "and then we'll drive over to the Apple store."

"Fine," she mumbles, ducking her head. Then she looks up again with an apologetic expression. "I'm sorry I acted like a brat."

I smile softly and pull her close to me, unable to help myself. "It's okay, sweetheart," I murmur and tap her on the nose. "We have plenty of adjustments to get used to. It will take time." I cup her cheek and kiss the other, letting my lips linger. "But you're going to let me pay now, right?"

She nods quickly, her eyes flickering to my mouth. "Yes, Daddy," she whispers.

I groan internally.

“Behave, baby girl,” I murmur huskily as my hands slide down her back. Due to her ski jacket, it’s rather difficult to touch her properly—although that’s probably a good thing, seeing as we’re in public. “Come on. Let’s go. We need to get some lunch, too.”

~oOo~

Despite her reluctance to accept gifts at the store, when we sit down in a restaurant to order lunch, Isabella is practically bouncing in her seat as she keeps her bags close. Oh no, she refused to leave the new laptops and phone in my Rover. She insisted on having it all close.

“Gah! I’m so excited to open this when we get home!” she squeals behind her hand. I chuckle and watch as she tears off her beanie and jacket, only to dive into the bag with her iPhone. “I always love finding new apps. Oh, and these are just too pretty...” She trails off, lovingly brushing her fingers over one of the four different cases I bought her, too. She seems particularly fond of the clutch case from Michael...something Kors? I don’t know.

“Check your menu for what you wish to drink,” I tell her, shaking my head in amusement. “We came here to eat—not to fondle iPhone cases.”

“Fine,” she giggles. “By the way,” she picks up her menu, “have I thanked you yet?”

I smirk and look down at the choices of fish. “Only a hundred times or so.”

When the waitress comes over, I order us the salmon with asparagus and roasted baby potatoes, knowing very well that had Isabella would’ve gone with pizza or hamburger...if she’d had the choice. And that’s a big no for me. While she’s freakishly strict about taking care of her skin and hair, she eats like fifteen-year-old boy. If it’s greasy, it’s good. So, I’m actually

a little surprised her skin is as flawless as it is. Because I remember when I was a teenager...if I ate a pizza, you could see it on my face the day after.

Isabella is also crazy when it comes to candy and ice cream.

I love gourmet cooking and rich desserts, but there's a difference between "stuffing your face" and "enjoying every once in a while".

"When was the last time you had a big, fat Whopper, Edward?" she asks, sipping her water. She grins and twirls a piece of hair from a pigtail around her finger. "Or a bucket of fried chicken, or-"

I cough and hold up my hand to stop her. "I get it, baby girl. I get it." So, now she thinks I'm a snob? That's hardly the case. "Unfortunately, I don't eat very well when I'm traveling," I admit. "Late nights and days packed with meetings usually result in ordering in too much Chinese food or pizza. *But,*" I stress, "I refuse to eat that crap when I'm home or when I'm on vacation."

"I guess I can't wait for us to travel, then." She smirks.

Again, I shake my head at head, amused. "You act like vegetables are out to kill you." She has eaten what I've cooked so far, but her distaste for greens certainly hasn't escaped me. We will just have to work on that. "Speaking of..." I smile when the waitress returns with our food. "You will like this, sweetheart. You just need to give it a chance."

She eyes her plate as if the asparagus is going to jump up and bite her. "Well, while I pretend to enjoy this," she mutters, "we could talk about what happens in two weeks when we leave."

I nod in assent. We really do need to talk about that, and this is a good place. Because every time we've tried to have this conversation at the house, we've ended up fucking. Not that you'll find me complaining.

"I think leaving LA is a good idea," I say pensively, cutting into my salmon. "I could buy us an apartment in New York." I know that Isabella is partial to New York, hence her living there, and I honestly don't see the appeal of LA anymore.

When Isabella hasn't replied, I look up to find her smiling softly at me. Her eyes are also full of unshed tears, which concerns me. "What's wrong?" I ask, covering her hand with mine over the table.

She shakes her head minutely and brushes her fingers under her eyes. "It's nothing. I promise. I'm just...I guess a part of me still can't believe you're willing to do all this for me. I mean, it's not just you. You have your entire company, too, and even though you have an office in New York, relocating the main office doesn't happen with just a snap of your fingers."

I frown. "I would do anything for you, Isabella." And the truth of that statement hits me hard. Taking a deep breath, I let the words settle, and I admit to myself that I'm clearly falling hard for my little Miss Bella Hale, regardless of the small amount of time we've spent together. It's not that I didn't expect it to happen, but I didn't think it'd happen so soon. Nor did I think about the intensity of my feelings. It's unlike anything I've felt in the past.

I revel in it, embrace it.

"This is for *us*, by the way," I correct her quietly and squeeze her hand. "I want this just as much. And until the relocation is complete, we'll just travel back and forth for a while."

"I'm still thankful," she says with a small shrug and a shy smile.

I pick up her hand and kiss her knuckles. "I'm not letting you go," I say simply. "Now, does New York sound good?" Really, I have no preference. As long as it's a major city we move to, I couldn't care less. I already have

several offices across the country; relocating is nothing. In fact, we could even start fresh outside the US. "I also have offices in Paris, Frankfurt, and Sydney." Though, Sydney probably won't work. I dabble in real estate, too, and that's mainly what my office in Australia is for. That office practically runs itself, thanks to Charles Swan, a close friend of my father's.

"Edward?" Isabella asks, and I look up. She smiles. "I don't care where we end up—as long as we're together. Pick a city, but..." She bites down on her lip for a second. "Maybe we should stay in the States, though." My brows furrow. "I'm just saying that leaving a city is one thing, but if we move to another country, it might look like we're running."

Ah. She's right, of course. While it's going to get rough as soon as we go public with our relationship, there will be no running or hiding. I refuse to do that. So, yes, she's absolutely correct.

"Maybe you shouldn't even leave LA," she adds thoughtfully. At that, my eyebrows shoot up in disbelief. "Just listen, okay?" I hesitate then nod, and she takes a breath. "First of all, you mentioned that you're opening a new resort in Hawaii, yes?" Another nod from me. "Exactly. That means we'll be there for an extended period of time soon. And you also said that Rosalie is going to Brazil in two weeks to start shooting her next movie." True. "So, I'm thinking LA won't be too bad since we won't even be there for a while. We all know that gossip dies eventually; this is no different. It might take a while, but we can always avoid LA for a few months before we go back. But to actually move your entire main office from there...it will just look like you're fleeing."

Well. Isabella is smart.

"So, what do you suggest?" I ask, smiling.

She grins. "I think we should make your house here in Utah our permanent home, and then we can have apartments in LA and New York. LA is where you work when you're not travelling, and New York is usually where I work." She shrugs. "But when we're not on the road, I want to be here."

Sounds perfect to me. "Consider it done." I nod. "I'll call my Realtor as soon as we get back to the hous-" I chuckle. "As soon as we get *home*."

Isabella beams at me.

Chapter 15

EPOV

About two hours ago, I left the house to pick up a few things I've ordered online, and Isabella told me that she'd have the living room cleaned by the time I got back. So...I must say I'm more than a little irritated when I return home to find Isabella asleep on the couch, music blasting—don't ask me how she can sleep through that—and garbage all over the place.

I don't know how it's physically possible to trash a room that fast.

Since the Sundance Festival begins tomorrow—which means it's our last week here for now—I took this morning to tend to a few phone calls in my study, and I told Isabella to just relax. Well, relax she did. I see candy wrappers, dirty dishes, and soda cans. Now, I saw this before I headed to Ogden, too, but—like I said—she promised she'd clean up before I returned.

Clearly, that didn't happen.

Walking over to the stereo, I crank up the volume to its max—only for a beat or two—but it works, and my little Miss Bella jumps up.

"Holy fucking shit!" she screams.

I turn off the music completely and face her with my arms folded over my chest.

She could not look any cuter, I'm sure of it. She's only wearing a snug t-shirt—a light pink one—and a pair of white ruffled panties.

"Oh." She blushes and ducks her head. "Daddy, you're—you're home."

I stare at her. "And you haven't done anything about this mess yet."

Her defense couldn't be weaker. "I, uh...I fell asleep?"

That much was obvious, baby girl. "Well, you have twenty minutes to finish." I look down at my watch. "I'll get started on dinner." I start to walk past her, but she grabs my arm and looks up at me with a pleading look. Not that she can fool me. Over the past several days, I've seen her pout, her innocent doe eyes, and heard her beg. Usually, it's been about cleaning up after herself. Now, I admit that I have a few OCD tendencies; I want my house clean and tidy. But is asking her to not leave her cello on the floor—without a case—too much? And is it too much to do as I say when I tell her to put dirty dishes in the dishwasher?

I think not.

"Did you have something to say?" I ask, arching a brow.

She shifts her weight from foot to foot and releases my arm. And the pout makes a comeback. "Can't I do it after dinner? Please?"

I smirk. "No."

"But, but." She huffs. "Cleaning is boring."

If I had a nickel for every time she's said that this month...

"There are other things I can think of that are a *lot* more fun." She gives me a wicked grin.

I'm not amused, and I definitely know what she's doing. I almost fucked her 'til she couldn't form a sentence the day before yesterday, and she walked funny for a few hours after that. So, I didn't take her yesterday, and now she's horny. This is Isabella's way of getting attention, to get fucked, to make me go crazy.

Which will happen. But on my terms.

Never will I allow her to manipulate me.

"Bad little girl," I sigh, touching her cheek. "Are you trying to fool Daddy?"

She tries to look away, but I don't let her.

"It's not working," I whisper in her ear. She shivers. "Let me guess. You want me to fuck you hard, maybe even spank that tight little ass of yours until it's red? Is that it?" My lips brush over the spot below her ear, and she nods. She wants it rough. "Trust me, my little slut; you will get that spanking."

"Please, Daddy," she whimpers.

I shake my head and stand up straight. "Tsk, tsk, so desperate. Now, would it really be a punishment if I gave it to you when you wanted it? Hmm?"

She gulps. "P-punishment?"

"For trying to play me, of course." I give the living room a glance. "And for not doing as you're told." I grin down at her. "Daddy's going to have such fun with you." I kiss her on the nose, amused by her scowl. "But not now."

~oOo~

While I make us dinner, I hear Isabella stomping around in the living room as she cleans. I hear the huffs, the curses, and the whines.

She's evidently ready for more. More, as in moving forward in our Daddy/Little Girl relationship. And I'm sure the bag I have in the hallway will satisfy her to no end. Well, I suppose there will be some pain, too. In the beginning.

"Daddy, I'm finished!" she yells.

"Good for you!" I yell back. I take out a spoon and scoop up some of the sauce I'm preparing for the lamb chops. "Salt," I mumble quietly. It needs more salt. Butter, too.

"Ugh! Can you come look?" Oh, the yelling.

Little brat, giving me attitude. She will regret this after her bath tonight.

"I'm busy right now," I tell her. "We'll deal with that later. Dinner's almost ready, so you might as well just come here. You can set the table."

More stomping. More huffing. "Fucking crap." And more cursing.

"Your punishments just keep piling up, Isabella," I mutter.

I hear her snort behind me. "Whatever."

I grind my teeth together.

~oOo~

Dinner is a quiet affair and, afterward, I tell her to fill up the tub in our ensuite bathroom.

She stomps off.

I sigh and head outside. It's time to check in with Rosalie, who's called me a few times today, and I can't put it off any longer. We've spoken a handful of times since I got here, but it's always been short and pointless, and I've made sure to go outside. Not that I'm hiding it from Isabella, but I don't want her to worry. I'm already hers; calling Rosalie is just to keep up appearances until I can break things off with her face-to-face.

"Rosalie Hale's phone; this is Eric speaking."

Rosalie's PA. "Hey, Eric, it's Edward," I say, shivering from the cold outside. "Is Rosalie around?"

"Why, yes. Just a minute, honey!" he sings. I shake my head, amused. He couldn't be more gay if he tried. *"Rosalie, darling! Your handsome man is on the phone!"* I grimace. *"Yes, yes, I know. Here you go."* And Rosalie's voice filters through. *"Edward?"*

I clear my throat. "Hi. You called?"

"Oh! Yes. I needed to tell you that I'm leaving for Rio a bit early. What day are you coming home?"

"Next Sunday," I answer. I hope to God she's not leaving before then. I don't want to postpone talking to her.

"Okay, good. I'm leaving on Monday, so I'll see you before." She pauses, and when she speaks again, her voice is quieter. *"Is there any way you can go with me to Brazil?"*

That would be a no. "Sorry. I have work." It's partially true. Isabella and I are off to Hawaii in a little over a week. "And...uh, we need to talk when I get back, Rosalie."

I'm not a heartless bastard; I do feel guilty. I'm betraying Rosalie in every way but, while I'm not heartless, I *am* selfish. Keeping my hands off my little Isabella is impossible. I crave her. I lo—fuck.

"Talk?" she asks stiffly. "About what?"

I sigh internally, regretting that I opened my mouth in the first place. "We'll deal with that when I get back." I pinch the bridge of my nose. "Listen, I have to go. I'll call in a few days."

I hang up before she can say "I love you".

Because I wouldn't be able to say it back.

~oOo~

After taking a few moments to rejoin the bubble I've created with Isabella, I go up the stairs and toward our bedroom. I can hear the water still running, and even from here, I can smell the cotton candy-scented soap she uses in the water. The girl loves her bubbles.

She doesn't notice me when I appear in the doorway, seemingly lost in her thoughts. She's fully submerged in the water, sans head and the top of her shoulders, and I know very well what's hidden underneath all those bubbles. This has been our routine for some time now, and I love teasing her as I drag the soft sponge and my hands all over her body. That always makes her so needy for me.

There won't be much that is sweet and sensual about tonight, though. I'm going to punish her for acting out, and I won't be nice about it. She has to learn that if she wants something, she can just ask me. There's no need for her to act like a brat in order for me to ask what's wrong.

Before I enter the bathroom fully, I remove all my clothes. The lights are dimmed low, creating a cozy atmosphere, and a few candles have been lit on the counter.

Usually, I wash her as I kneel on the floor, but this time I'm going in, too. The tub is definitely big enough. Hell, three or four people could easily fit in there.

It's when I step into the tub—on her opposite side—that she realizes I'm even here.

She looks a little nervous, which makes me smirk.

"Comfy, baby girl?"

She gives me a slow nod as I sink down in the hot water. "Um. Yes."

Now, now, where's the brat? She's being so shy all of a sudden.

"Can...can I make you feel good, Daddy?" she asks uncertainly.

Ah, I get it now. She thinks that if she's sweet, I will forget all about my plan for chastising her. Maybe that means she knows I'm serious about this. She gets that my punishments won't be sexy or bring her pleasure.

I am wound rather tightly, though, so an orgasm sounds like a good plan to me.

"Or maybe you wanna cuddle with me?" she continues nervously, a blush creeping forward. She pouts. "I need to be close."

I chuckle and stand up in the tub, water running down my naked body. "Sweetheart..." I chuckle some more. "What you need is a mouthful of Daddy's cum." I point down to my hard cock. "Be a good little girl and suck."

Her breathing hitches and her eyes grow lustful. Gone is the brat. She obediently kneels in the water and scoots closer to my erection. Then she slides her hands up my thighs and drops a soft kiss on my tip. I thread my fingers through her hair, making sure to grip it tightly, because I don't want her to think for one moment that I have forgotten my promise to punish her.

It begins right now.

As soon as she opens her mouth, I shove my cock down her throat.

"Fuck, that's it," I groan when she gags on me. My head lolls back; I slip out then push in again. But I need to see, so I open my eyes—which I had closed without realizing—and look down at her. "This is what happens when that mouth of yours gets into trouble." I set a fast pace, fucking her face roughly. I pause every once in a while so that she can breathe—that goes without saying, really—but I still show her. "God, so good," I moan. "Play with my balls, too, little girl." And she does so right away. I think she's beginning to understand, at least, that I'm not joking around. "Mmm, perfect. You like this, don't you?"

She whimpers around me and nods.

I caress her cheek and feel how my cock fills her mouth as I thrust. "Yeah, I knew it. You're Daddy's Little Cocksucker."

Fuck.

My muscles tense, my balls tighten, and the familiar tingling sensation starts making its way down from the back of my neck. I breathe heavily and keep pushing in and out of her waiting mouth. When I pause, she's there to lick, kiss, and stroke. In a matter of seconds, my orgasm takes over, and I give her a quick warning before I spill my release down her throat in three thick streams.

I groan and close my eyes.

Relaxed and temporarily sated, I know that I will be able to not lose it when I punish her. No rash decisions, no acts stemming from anger and frustration.

"You'll be my good girl in no time," I chuckle breathlessly. She blushes a little and leans into my hand as I cup her soft cheek. So gorgeous. "Now, let's get you washed off before we move this to the bedroom."

And she's nervous again. "Yes, Daddy," she whispers.

I'm glad that she's nervous. I will never be one to push her into making mistakes; I'm not like that. Chastising doesn't give me pleasure, and I don't want her to fuck up. I will push her limits—just as she pushes mine—but I won't purposefully rile her up with the intention of causing the brat in her to make an appearance. If she's a bad girl, I will treat her like one. That's it.

When I clean her body, I'm more thorough than necessary. I spend extra time soaping up her tits and pussy, which makes her mewl and beg for me.

"Gotta clean your little clit, baby," I say softly as I rub my fingers over it.

"*Please,*" she cries pitifully and bucks into my hand. "I want more, Daddy."

I tsk her but utter nothing else.

And when we're all done, I tell her to go to our bedroom and get on all fours on the bed.

Chapter 16

EPOV

I make her wait on the bed for quite a while as I get dressed in a pair of black slacks and a dark grey button-down. I leave the shirt unbuttoned—sleeves pushed up to my elbows—and then walk downstairs to retrieve the stuff I had ordered off the internet. Everything addressed to me out here doesn't arrive at my house. Instead I have a PO Box in Ogden. I find that more comfortable, because I like the seclusion of my house, and that includes not having strangers driving near it, even to deliver mail.

Entering our bedroom again, I'm glad to see that Isabella is in the same spot I left her, still on all fours on the bed, still deliciously naked.

With the bag in my hand, I walk around the bed so that I can see her face. Which is flushed, I note. Her eyes are downcast. *So submissive of her*. Her cheeks are tinted pink. Her lips are moist and parted. Her brown hair, damp from her bath, hangs down the sides of her face, so I gather it in my fist and yank it back. It makes her head tilt back, and her eyes finally meet mine.

She gulps.

"Why do I have to punish you today, Isabella?" I ask quietly in a steely voice.

Her chest heaves, drawing my attention to her perky tits for a second.

"Because I was bad," she whispers.

I nod curtly. "That's right. Now, we're going to use safe words for this." Letting go of her hair, I trail a finger along her jaw. "Did you study the notes I gave you about the color system? Green, yellow, red?" She nods. "Good girl." When my thumb brushes over her lips, she licks the pad of it. "Suck," I whisper, and she does. She sucks my thumb into her mouth and swirls her tongue around it. I smirk. "The word you use if everything is green is 'lollipop'." She mewls. "Yeah, you love things to suck on, don't

you?" Her eyes darken. "Yellow is 'sugar snaps'. Because that's the only vegetable my little *Bella* can eat without whining like a baby."

She whimpers and pouts around my thumb.

"Red is 'cleaning'," I finish, removing my thumb from her mouth. "No need to explain why I picked that word, right?" I chuckle darkly. "Okay, can you explain the use of safe words for Daddy?"

She takes a breath. "When everything is good, it's 'lollipop'. Nothing is wrong then. If it's yellow, I will say 'sugar snaps', and you will slow down. We will talk about what's bothering me." I nod along, turned on beyond words. It feels like I'm finally whole, really. Like I've found my element, however twisted it may be. "And if it's red—if I want you to stop immediately—I will say 'cleaning'," she whispers.

"Very good." I smile and present her with the bag. "I have no intention of making you uncomfortable—well," I chuckle, "I bet it will sting, but...you know what I mean. I want you to trust me, so I will show you what I'm going to use on you today." Reaching into the bag, I bring out a bottle of lubricant, a small vibrator, and anal beads. Considering that I will spank her 'til her ass is red, I'm pretty sure the intrusion she'll feel from the beads will fade in comparison. "Aside from all this, I will use my hands a lot," I tell her, smirking. Her blush reaches her tits. "And..." I slide my hands down her chest and pinch her nipples gently. It also makes me come level with her face. "...my cock, too, of course," I whisper in her ear.

She cries out when I pinch her nipples harder.

By now I'm hard again and ready to begin. So, I leave her field of vision, taking the toys with me, and walk to the other side of the bed. What I'm greeted with is the sight of Isabella's perfect ass, all on display for me. I grin and join her on the bed, kneeling behind her. My hands palm her

cheeks roughly, eliciting a gasp from her, and then I let one hand strike her left cheek, most likely leaving a burn behind.

"Daddy!" she wails.

I pay her no mind.

After massaging the spot I spanked, I unzip my slacks and release my cock. My plan is to carry out the entire punishment with my cock buried inside her. I can only imagine how she'll clamp down around me each time I smack her ass or push another bead into her back entrance.

"Why am I spanking you, baby slut?" I ask, tracing two fingers along her wet slit.

She whimpers. "Because I was a bad girl."

"Because you were a brat." I nod even though she can't see me. "Daddy hates brats."

"I'm sorry," she whines as I slam two fingers inside of her pussy. "Aahhh!"

I spread around her arousal, pleased that she's soaked. But it won't be enough for what I have planned, so I reach for the lube and pour some into my palm.

"What are you sorry for exactly?" I ask next, gently caressing her tightest hole. She stiffens for a second but relaxes when I start playing with her clit with my free hand. At the same time, I inch closer to her pussy with my hard cock. "Tell me, Isabella."

She exhales sharply when I push my slippery index finger into her ass. *God, so fucking tight.* "For swearing," she gasps. I stop rubbing her clit and grip my cock, slowly dragging it along her sex and toward her drenched entrance. Her heat causes a shiver to run through me. "For not

obeying." I hum, agreeing. She *should* be sorry for not obeying me. Really, truly, *fucking* sorry. "For not being nice to you, Daddy—I'm, I'm sorry."

With the tip of my finger inside her ass, I also push the head of my cock inside her pussy. Then, at the same pace, I slide my finger and my erection deeper and deeper into her.

"How does this feel?" I ask through clenched teeth. What I want to do is just slam into her, but I need to be patient for her sake. I push in a little farther. "How does it feel to have my finger here?"

"It—it stings," she admits, panting. "But it's also..." I swivel my hips and bury my cock to the hilt. "*Uuungh*, Daddy!"

I moan and close my eyes for a moment.

I release a breath, slowly moving in and out of her, both my finger and my cock. "I can't wait to fuck your ass, Isabella." Leaning over her, I kiss her spine. "Is that something you want, hmm? Do you want Daddy to push his cock into your little bottom?"

"Oh, *fuck!*" she cries out and tries to push back at me. Damn, she wants even more. I feel like I've died and gone to heaven. "Please, please, please, please!"

A husky chuckle escapes me and I withdraw my finger from her ass. Seeing as she is relaxed, I know that she can handle more now. Thankfully, the beads aren't much thicker than my thumb, so the difference between my index finger and a bead isn't too great. That was one of the reasons I didn't go with a butt plug at first—because the plugs are slightly larger, even the smallest. And I want this to be as pleasurable as possible for her. Not the punishment, but the preparation for us having anal sex. That I've started prepping her ass for me at this moment is

because I figured she'd be more focused on her to-be-red ass than whatever I'm doing to her bottom. And with that thought, my hand makes impact on her left ass cheek again, causing her to scream.

"Goddammit!"

"Such a filthy mouth you have," I mutter. "I think it's my cock that turns you into a foul-mouthed little slut."

For a moment, I fuck her roughly and hard, digging my fingers into her hips. She cries out and meets my thrusts, her silent way of telling me she loves it. Then, when I'm so deep inside of her that I can't even see an inch of my cock, I spank her right ass cheek once, twice, three times.

I groan and tilt my head back when I feel how her pussy contracts around my erection. It's almost as if she's sucking me in deeper.

When I hear her sniffing, I'm quick to ask if everything is okay.

"Lollipop, Daddy," she whimpers pitifully.

"Fuck," I moan and spank her again. "You saying that...it just reminds me of your greedy mouth. Always so eager to suck on something." I pound into her and reach around her to circle her little clit. Christ, she's so wet. I'm sure she's conflicted by my actions, too. I know the spankings hurt, but she loves it when I fuck her hard and bring her closer to a release. Unfortunately for her, she won't get an orgasm tonight. Perhaps, if she's a good girl, I'll wake her up tomorrow morning with my face buried between her thighs. After all, good girls get rewards. Bad girls get spankings.

"What else are you sorry for, my bad girl?" I ask, breathing heavily. I slow down, too close to coming, and grab the anal beads. Stilling completely, I also grab the bottle of lube. She will no doubt need more of it.

"I'm s-sorry for acting out," she cries quietly. Looking up from what I'm doing, I see that she's hanging her head—in shame, I hope. She sniffles some more. "I'm sorry for not telling you what was on my mind." That's good. Communication is important in every relationship, but it's downright vital in ours. We push each other's limits every day, and we will continue to do so until we know more about one another, so she can't go on and act like a brat when she wants something.

I'm not a mind reader.

"And what exactly was—or is—on your mind?" I wonder, adding the slippery lubrication on the beads. It's a simple strand in black silicone with five egg-shaped beads on it. I want to insert at least two today.

"More of this," she moans loudly. "I want more, Daddy."

I nod, having already figured this out. Still, I needed confirmation, and now I have it. Isabella wants what I want; she wants it kinky, hard, and more. Not only in the bedroom. By that, I mean she wants us to do other Daddy/Little Girl stuff—stuff that isn't limited to sex.

I know for instance that she loves it when I coddle her—when I treat her like she's my little girl, when I bathe her, when I pick out her clothes, even when I feed her. Granted, many of these things often *lead* to sex, but that only means we get excited by the same stuff.

"I need you to relax now," I tell her quietly, placing a hand on her ass. I caress her reddened flesh and bring the strand of beads up her thigh, wanting her to feel them. When I reach her hole, I add some pressure and slowly push the first bead inside her. Again, she stiffens. Which feels fucking amazing on my erection. "Relax, baby girl," I say softly. "It will feel better soon."

She takes several deep breaths, each one calming her down a little more.

"I'm so proud of you, my little sweetheart," I murmur, impressed. "That's it—let Daddy play with your ass."

I can't help but groan when I notice the effect my words have on her. Since I'm still deep inside her pussy, I feel every constriction, every drop of arousal that coats me, and every shudder.

"Please, please, please, Daddy!" she all but sobs out. "I need—I need—"

She's cut off when I force a second bead into her tight ass.

"I know what you think you need," I state. "You don't have to tell me. You want me to fuck you, to lick you, to give you an orgasm. Well, very little of that will happen today." I spank her ass gently, knowing that her automatic response is to tense up, and I don't want her to hurt herself with the beads inside of her. "Now, I want you to try your hardest to relax your muscles. Understand? I'm going to spank you, lightly at first, and see how much you can take with the toy inside."

"Okay," she breathes out. "I'll do my best; I promise."

I smile and drop a soft kiss on her spine. "I know you will, baby. Because you want to be Daddy's good girl, don't you?" This time, she nods quite furiously. It makes me smile again. "Good. Are you ready?"

"Y-yes," she stutters and fists the sheets.

That won't do. "I want you to hold this to your clit," I tell her, handing her the small vibrator. Reluctantly, she lets go of the sheets and takes the vibrator. "Run it on low; you're definitely not allowed to come." Not that I think she will.

The first few times I smack her on the ass, she cringes from tensing up so hard. But then it gets easier. I carry out my punishment, my cock inside

her, and spank her over and over. In the meantime, I tell her what she's done wrong and how she's supposed to act instead.

In the end, I don't only hear how sorry she is. I see it, too.

I wouldn't have chastised her so fiercely if she had messed up without knowing what she did wrong. But to purposely rile me up in order for me to take things to the next level—introducing toys and becoming more demanding—is something I won't ever accept.

Then, when I'm done with her, I focus on my own wants. I fuck her pussy with long, deep strokes, all while twisting the anal beads that are still in her ass. It makes her moan and clench down on me, which effectively brings me closer to my release.

"Mmm, you feel so amazing," I moan, slamming into her. My insides coil in anticipation, my breaths coming out choppy and labored. Letting go of the beads, I grip her hair instead and pull her back to me. She gasps, her shoulders making contact with my chest, and I don't stop. "So fucking wet, little girl," I groan in her ear.

"Please come," she weeps, panting. "I want you to come in me, Daddy."

I moan and speed up.

The familiar burn starts to spread in my body and, knowing that I'm about to come, I slowly pull out the toy from her ass. It's another action that makes her clamp down on me, and the feeling is sensational.

I explode.

My head lolls back as I pump my cock into her a few more times, streams of cum soaking us both.

"Fuck." I start panting like crazy, my chest heaving with each breath. With another curse, I slip out her and place the toys in the bag. I will clean them off later. Right now, as much as I just want to collapse on the bed and fall asleep, I need to go through Isabella's aftercare. "Are you okay, sweetheart?" I ask, pulling on my pants again. Then I gather her in my arms.

"Yeah, but..." She clings to me and whimpers. Her cute pout is also very much present. "I want to come, too, Daddy. Pretty please?"

I chuckle and carry her into the bathroom. "Not today."

"Okay." She sulks a little as I sit her down on the closed lid of the toilet. Next, I walk over to the tub to fill it with water again, though I will keep it lukewarm this time. Hot water will only create further discomfort for her sore flesh. "Can we still kiss and snuggle?"

"Always, my sweet girl," I assure her. I need her closeness as much as she needs mine. "Come on; another bath is in order. I'll give you a massage, too."

Her next "okay" is slightly happier.

But she's the happiest the next morning when she wakes up with her Daddy's lips sucking on her little clit.

Chapter 17

EPOV

"Okay, that was awful," Isabella whispers as we exit the theatre.

I chuckle and place my hand on her back, eager to get some food. "I couldn't agree more," I say, shaking my head. I've learned that Isabella and I share a love for foreign films, but the one we just saw was *really* bad. "The French one we saw yesterday was good, though."

"Definitely. Speaking of French, I want French fries now." She giggles and snuggles close to me. It's crowded on the sidewalk, people going in every direction. "If we eat now, we could make it to—what was it called? *The Invisible War?*"

I nod. "Sounds like a plan to me. Do you want to go to that bistro we went to yesterday?"

"Ooh, yeah. Their salmon wrap was delicious."

I can't help but grin as I drape an arm around her shoulders. "Even with all those vegetables in it?"

"Yes, even then." She throws me a playful glare, at which I hug her closer to me and kiss her on the forehead.

After just a month...hell, not even that yet...I'm falling head over heels for this girl.

That can only mean I was emotionally stunted before. Because I can't see myself first being in love with someone else, falling out of love, and then in love again with another person. In just a month. So...it's pretty obvious to me that I haven't loved Rosalie in quite some time. In a way, that's sad. To be in a relationship for so long and not be happy...

Though, it makes me more appreciative of what I have with Isabella now.

"Edward, we can't forget the dinner tonight," she reminds me.

And it is a good thing, because I had forgotten it. "Perhaps we could check-in to a hotel in Salt Lake—that's closer," I suggest. Because driving back and forth tomorrow, as well, doesn't appeal to me. We're in Park City now, of course, and it means we have more than an hour long drive home. And if we're going to the Grey Goose event tonight, I don't really feel like driving.

If I call my assistant—Jasper—I'm sure he can find a room for us. Money, not to mention my name, talks.

"That sounds wonderful," she says, smiling up at me. Unable to help myself, I dip down and give her a chaste kiss on the lips right before we reach the bistro we dined at yesterday. "I love this," she whispers.

I tilt my head, holding the door open for her. "What do you mean?"

She blushes, though it's also from the cold. "Us," she responds softly. "I love being Edward and Isabella, too."

My heart feels as if it grows in reaction to her admission.

While I love the Daddy/Little Girl relationship we've established, I've come to realize that I need the "normal" aspects of a relationship, too.

"It's very mutual, Bella," I murmur.

"I love that, too." She nods and enters the bistro. "You've called me Bella several times over the past few days. Without the 'Miss' in front of it."

I know. I just think it fits her. *My little Bella.*

"You're the only one who calls me that," she chuckles.

Which is even more perfect. "It will be my name for you," I decide with a wink.

Approximately twenty minutes later, we've finally been seated at a table by a window; the Sundance Festival makes Utah fill up to the brim, it seems. Wherever you go, there are people.

A waitress soon arrives and takes our orders, and I settle on a pasta dish with truffle sauce for myself and Isabella gets her salmon wrap with a side of French fries. Since the establishment is so crowded, I order starters for

us, too. If the food takes a long time to get here, at least we will have *something* to sink our teeth into.

In fact, it barely takes two minutes for our wine, side salads, and mozzarella toast to arrive.

"It's not often you drink white wine," Isabella comments as the waitress disappears again. "I think I've only seen you drinking red."

I shrug a little. "I like white, too." I smile and pick up a piece of toast, holding it up for Bella to taste.

I don't miss the lust-filled glance she gives me before she lets me feed her a bite.

"Mmm," she moans softly. "So good."

Fuck.

"Little vixen," I whisper with a shake of my head.

I only have myself to blame, though.

In an attempt to make it easier on my cock, I change the topic and we talk about the festival for a while. Isabella is without a doubt the happiest about all the gift bags she has received. This is the third day of Sundance, and we have been to quite a few events. Yesterday, for instance, she dragged me along to the L'Oreal event, as well as the one Timberland hosted. "What can I say? I love goodie bags," she'd said afterward with a satisfied smile.

"Damn," I say, suddenly remembering something. "I didn't bring the invites for tonight." The exclusive dinner Grey Goose is hosting is by invitation only, and I didn't actually plan to go. I got the tickets through work, of course—that's how I get most of my invitations to such events—

but I rarely go. I guess going alone just doesn't do it for me. But it's different now that I have someone to share it with.

"Oh, I have them." She grins. "I saw them on the kitchen counter this morning and put them in my bag before we left."

I shake my head, amused and simply happy.

"I guess we'll have to be extra careful tonight, though," she says pensively.

True. I can only imagine that it will be packed with celebrities, and if I'm not noticed there, Isabella certainly will be at least.

"Only a few more weeks," I say quietly, squeezing her hand on top of the table. "Then it's no more hiding."

I can't really say that we're hiding now, either, but it's not like I can kiss her whenever I want.

"I can't wait," she says giddily, taking a sip of her wine. "I also can't wait for us to go to Hawaii. It's been years since I was there."

"I'm looking forward to it, as well," I chuckle. "Though, I suppose you will have a bit more fun. I have meetings most days."

She pouts. "You can take *some* time off, can't you?"

"Of course, sweetheart." I pick up her hand and kiss the top of it. "I plan to wine and dine you properly."

She leans closer a little, a seductive smile playing on her lips. "Sixty-nine me, too?"

I bark out a laugh in surprise, and then try to cover it up with a few fake coughs when a few guests around us turn to look at us.

“Jesus fucking Christ,” I mutter, clearing my throat. “You, Ms. Hale, are dangerous.”

But yes. Yes, I want to sixty-nine her, too. Oh, yes.

I groan quietly and try to get rid of that thought for now.

Fuck, how I love that just being around Bella makes the outside world disappear. We always enter this private bubble, and I have no desire to ever leave it.

Unfortunately, we get careless and forgetful in said bubble, which is why we don’t notice the paparazzi across the street.

Chapter 18

EPOV

As soon as Jasper has managed to secure a hotel room for us in Salt Lake City, Bella tells me she wants to go shopping for tonight. I’m spared from this, thankfully, so I drop her off before I drive over to the hotel.

And approximately two hours later, she enters our suite with four massive shopping bags in hand.

“Daddy, you might wanna check this out while I shower,” she says, handing me two...uh, gossip rags. I arch a brow at her, and she nods at the magazines. “The Grey Goose event attracts more celebs than we thought. There’s bound to be someone there we know.” With that said, she kisses me softly on the lips and then heads for the bathroom.

Taking a seat on the edge of the bed, I flip through the first magazine, and when I reach the middle, I see a big spread on Grey Goose’s first event—which was two days ago. There’s one every night during the festival, and tonight will be the third party they host.

Isabella is right. Countless celebrities smiled for the cameras at Monday's premiere, and if we show up there tonight, it's only a matter of days before Rosalie finds out.

So, it's with a heavy sigh I bring out my phone and start typing an email to Rosalie.

If I call her, whatever I say will lead to follow-up questions I'm not ready to answer, so an email is definitely better.

Rosalie,

Isabella is here for the festival; I ran into her in Park City. Since I have those invites to Grey Goose, I asked her to join me so we can catch up. I will talk to you later.

Edward.

There. If Isabella and I end up in a magazine, it won't be a disaster. After all, everyone knows we're family through Rosalie. Spending time with my "to-be" sister-in-law isn't a crime.

Fucking her probably is, though.

I sigh.

And then my phone rings.

"Fuck." It's Rosalie. Wow, she read that fast.

Well, I don't exactly want to explain all the details to her right now.

After silencing the phone, I walk over to Bella's shopping bags, knowing that she bought something for me, too. While she was out, she texted me furiously, wanting to know my measurements. And yeah, there it is. I can

see...stuff in there. I just hope it's nothing too out there. Because kids these days...they wear the strangest things.

Luck is on my side; she just bought me a new pair of jeans and a black button-down. That's very acceptable. The event we're going to may be by invitation only, but it's still casual.

By the time I've changed into my new clothes, Isabella emerges from the bathroom in nothing but a towel. She's wearing light makeup and her hair is gathered in two low pigtails, which are incredibly sexy.

"Is this too much makeup?" she asks nervously, shifting from one foot to the other. "I know you said you don't want me to wear any..."

I shake my head and close the distance between us. "I also said that when we're out, you decide." I grasp her chin, brushing the pad of my thumb over her bottom lip. There's only a little lip balm on it, for which I'm glad. I don't like the idea of kissing her with sticky gloss or lipstick in the way. "You're so beautiful," I murmur. With a simple tug of my fingers, her towel ends up on the floor, revealing a deliciously naked Bella. I hum and trail a finger down her neck, her collarbone...I cup her tits.

"Daddy," she breathes out, giggling. "You're making me all wet."

I smirk down at her. "I like my little girl all wet."

Isabella doesn't spend the following thirty minutes getting dressed. Instead she spends that time bent over the couch while I pound into her from behind.

The half hour after *that*, though...



And then we're ready to go.

~oOo~

The crowded place is buzzing, and I see well-known faces everywhere. Despite the fact that Bella and I don't know these people, many still smile and greet us as if we're friends instead of sometimes sharing pages in gossip magazines.

"Can I get you a drink, sweetheart?" I ask in Isabella's ear.

It's quite difficult not to let my eyes linger on her cleavage, but in my defense, it wasn't until we arrived and she took off her jacket that I actually saw what she's wearing. And there's cleavage, all right. I'm not the only one who has noticed, either.

"Yeah, let's go to the bar," she agrees.

With my hand on her lower back, I usher us through the crowd of people.

Once we reach the bar, we're unfortunately recognized again and approached.

"Well, if it isn't Isabella Hale and Edward Cullen!" a woman exclaims.

I have no idea who she is. She's a blonde, my age, and has an evident love for Botox.

I bet she's from Los Angeles from that detail alone.

As if she could read my mind, Bella pulls me down and whispers in my ear. "She's a friend of Tanya's." Oh. Tanya—Rosalie and Isabella's cousin. Tanya is much like Rosalie, as are Irina and Kate—Tanya's sisters. I can't stand either of them. "She's an old model, I think."

"Name?" I whisper back as the woman closes the distance.

Isabella doesn't answer me, but my question still gets answered when she plasters a fake smile on her face and says, "Heidi. What a surprise."

"It certainly is," Heidi responds and gives Bella an air-kiss. "Nice to see you, too, Edward."

I offer a curt nod. "Likewise."

"So..." The corners of her mouth turn up a little. "What are you two doing here—together?"

Isabella, having grown up in the spotlight, is a terrific actress. "Well, we're family, Heidi," she says as if she's stating the obvious.

Heidi hums then turns to me. "And where's your lovely fiancée this evening?"

"Rosalie is getting ready to go to Brazil to shoot her new movie," I reply smoothly.

"I see." She smirks, and I'm not sure she believes us. "Well, it was nice to see you two. Isabella, we should get together when we return to LA. Lunch—The Ivy, hmm?"

"Of course," Bella lies. "Have a nice evening."

We watch as Heidi saunters off, and right after Bella has turned for the bar again, I see Heidi bringing up her phone.

I sigh, shaking my head.

"I don't get it!" Bella says, frustrated, and throws her hands up. "Why keep up with a charade? 'Oh, it's so nice to see you, Isabella.' Blah, blah, blah. Lunch—with her—at The Ivy?" She snorts and rolls her eyes.

"Please. She'd rather dye her hair grey than hang out with the black sheep of the Hale family." The bartender gives Bella's cleavage attention, much to my own frustration, and we order our drinks before another cute rant begins. "God, the LA cougars are the worst. They're—like, scared. I don't know. And those of us who won't need Botox for another twenty years have to suffer through their bullshit. Ugh. I'm willing to bet Heidi's gonna call Tanya within twenty minutes. Mark my words."

Amused, I grasp her chin and tilt it in Heidi's direction. "I'll take that bet and say she's on the phone with her right now."

Being the adorable girl that she is, Bella sticks out her tongue at the oblivious Heidi.

"Relax, my sweet girl," I chuckle as our drinks arrive. "Here—drink this." I slide the pink drink over to her and keep the drink that looks like a Coke. We didn't order anything specific, since this is a night where Grey Goose hands out their own concoctions for free. "We have nothing to worry about, remember?"

She blows out a breath and nods before taking a sip. "You're right—and this is delicious." She grins at the glass.

"So is this one," I admit, tasting Coke, vodka, and lime on my tongue. There's something else, too, but I can't put my finger on it. "Would you like to try?"

"Thank you." She accepts my glass, holding out her own in offering while she takes a sip from mine. I decline with a shake of my head. Her drink is a bit too pink for my liking. "Mmm, I think there's mint in this one."

"That's it!" Mint, yes, that's what I tasted. It was subtle, but now that Isabella pointed it out... "It was good, yes?"

"But mine was better," she giggles, and she's about to snuggle close to me but catches herself. My heart twists uncomfortably at the sight of her crestfallen expression. Even if only lasts for a second, I still saw it.

Dipping down to her level, I whisper in her ear. "Tell me if you want to leave, baby girl."

She forces a smile and shakes her head. "I'm okay."

"Don't lie to me, young lady," I tell her quietly and give one of her pigtails a little tug. Letting my lips brush her earlobe, I add, "You wouldn't want to end this night with Daddy spanking you, would you?"

"You don't play fair," she whimpers, fisting my shirt with one hand. I smile and drop a subtle kiss on her jaw before straightening. "Now I want to leave, but for a whole other reason." She pouts.

She's about to say something else, but then she shoves her hand down into her pocket. "My phone's ringing," she explains. "Huh, it's Alice."

"Go ahead—answer," I urge softly.

While she takes the call, I lean back against the bar to people-watch and sip my drink.

“Hey, Alice,” I hear her say happily. I smile for no reason and keep watching the crowd. “It’s all good, and you?” Despite being used to the Hollywood life, I still get a little excited when I see an actor I like. Mostly, all you see are the reality show “stars” and, well, the younger crowd. So, when I spot Sean Penn, I think it’s pretty cool. “Wait—what? What do you mean?” I tilt my head in Bella’s direction. “Oh, *fuck*.” I frown and watch how her face drains of color. “God—no, no, no.” Setting my drink aside, I face her fully and try to get her attention. She palms her forehead, panic in her eyes as she finally looks up at me. “Um, I gotta go. I’ll call you, all right?” She blows out a breath. “Yeah, okay. Bye.”

“What’s wrong?” I ask, worried.

She swallows and appears to be in a daze. “That was my friend—remember I told you about Alice?” I nod. Alice is the girl whose brother wanted Isabella to help out on his band’s album. “Right. Uh, she just told me that you and I are all over the internet.” My brows furrow. “And according to her,” her lip quivers, “the—the photos aren’t very innocent.”

Chapter 19

EPOV

One picture is of Isabella and me entering that French bistro together. It’s technically innocent, but it still looks intimate.

Another picture is of me kissing her on the forehead.

There’s one where we’re inside the bistro, holding hands over the table.

Lastly, there's a photo of Isabella burying her face against my chest—it was taken on our first day at the Sundance. We'd just gotten out of the theater, and you can see the wide smile on my face.

Not so innocent, no.

"I will take care of everything, sweetheart," I tell her and give her hand a squeeze. Then I reluctantly let go and step on the gas. "I need to call my assistant." Holding the wheel with one hand, I bring out my phone with the other. "Can you initiate the call for me so I can hear it on the car speakers?" I give her the phone and then hold the wheel with both hands. The snow is coming down heavily, and I don't exactly want to get us into an accident.

"It's Jasper, right?"

I nod. "Just push dial."

As soon as Bella had gotten off the phone with Alice and she had explained it all to me, we left the Grey Goose event quickly. And after a quick stop in Salt Lake to get our stuff from the hotel, we decided to go home instead.

I know our vacation is over.

"Edward—Jesus fucking Christ!" And that's Jasper's greeting over the phone. *"Maria's furious; she's been trying to reach you for hours!"*

I chuckle wryly, now regretting that I turned off my phone earlier. "Hello to you, too, Jasper."

"I'm not on the clock," he replies flatly. *"Right now you're just the bastard who's preventing me from going to sleep."*

"I like him," Bella giggles quietly.

I shoot her a playful glare before returning my attention to the road.

"Just fill me in," I tell Jasper. "You said Maria's been calling?" She's my publicist, and I can't wait to talk to her. That was sarcasm.

"You can say that. She wants you to go to LA right away. While she doesn't really give a flying fuck about your personal life, it looks pretty bad with the launching of 'the perfect family getaway' in Hawaii. Especially when the owner of the hotel is out doing God knows what with his own sister-in-law." He coughs. *"Who is hot as hell but almost twenty years younger than you. By the way, is it true?"*

I blow out a breath and give Bella a sideways glance.

"She's right here, Jasper," I sigh. "She can hear you."

"Um, hi," Bella says, smiling awkwardly.

"Oh, shit! So, it's true?! How the fuck did you manage to land Isabella fucking Hale?! I'd give a million bucks to get on tha-"

"I think that's enough," I grit out through clenched teeth.

For the first time in my life, I have jealousy surging through me.

"Right." He clears his throat. *"Sorry about that. Uh—hello, Ms. Hale. Please excuse my language."*

"It's okay," Bella chuckles.

"Jasper," I say, eager to get back on track, "Isabella and I will fly out tomorrow." Unfortunately. "Tell Maria to come to my office around two."

"Got it. Will you both be there—Ms. Hale, too?"

"Yes."

Isabella gives me a nervous smile.

"And, uh, the other Ms. Hale?"

I grimace. "That would be a no." I'm pretty sure Rosalie wants to meet me without publicists first. I'm also sure she wants to meet me without Isabella there.

"All right. I'll book the flight and a car for you. Can I go to sleep now?"

"By all means," I say dryly.

After disconnecting the call, we grow silent for a while.

Though we knew our bubble was going to burst one day, we sure didn't expect for it to burst so...publicly.

I take the blame for that.

I'm the one who has betrayed Rosalie, so I will make sure to handle this swiftly. It doesn't matter if Rosalie tries to drag me down in the tabloids—let her—but I won't have her dragging down Isabella. Rosalie has done enough of that.

"Daddy?" she asks in a small voice.

"What is it, sweet girl?" I reach for her hand again, wanting her close.

"Um, we're...I mean..."

I bring her hand to my lips and kiss the top of it softly. "You can ask me anything." Tilting my head in her direction, I see that aside from her nervousness, she's now also scared. At least she *looks* scared. "Tell me, Bella."

She exhales shakily. "We're—we're really in this t-together now, right?"

“What do you mean?” I frown. “Of course we are.”

“Okay.” She gulps. “I’m sorry—I just needed to hear it again.”

“Oh, baby,” I sigh. I’m disappointed in myself for making her worried or doubtful. I need her to know that she’s my world now. “Don’t apologize for something like that. It’s you and me now. I promise. I’ll take care of everything.”

“Okay,” she says again, breathing out in relief. The smile she gives me is so damn beautiful. “Thank you.”

I shake my head. “Don’t thank me, sweetheart. Just tell me you want the same.”

“I do,” she replies quickly. Scooting a bit closer, she rests her head on my shoulder. I kiss her hair. “You’re all I want, Edward.”

I feel warm, relieved, and happy. “You’re all I want, too, Isabella,” I whisper. “I’m not letting you go.”

She hugs my bicep.

The rest of the ride home is silent.

My phone flickers to life every now and then with a new voicemail from Rosalie, but I don’t care right now.

I’ll deal with it when I get back to the house.

~oOo~

And when we finally do get back to the house, I know it’s time to take the bull by the horns.

"I think I'm gonna call Aunt Lily," Isabella says as we remove our jackets and shoes. "It's probably best she hears about this from us rather than..."

"Reading about it in the papers," I finish, agreeing with her. "All right—you go call Lily, and I'll..." I sigh, definitely not looking forward to what I need to do. "I'll call Rosalie." With the truth pretty much out in the open, there's no way I can avoid this conversation—even if I have to have it over the phone. "I'll be in my office." I touch her cheek, hating the pinch of nervousness and fear in her eyes. "You're more than welcome to listen in, you know. I'm not keeping anything from you."

She gives me a small smile. "I trust you. I'm just afraid something's gonna get in the way. Like, in our way." She ducks her head. "I'm sorry—I'm being stupid."

"Hey," I gently grab her chin, "you're anything but stupid. Don't say something like that about yourself ever again. Are we clear on that?"

"Okay," she whispers.

"Good girl." I kiss her on the forehead. "I happen to think the world of you. And I'm always right." I give her a wink to lighten the tension, and I'm happy to see it work.

In the end, Isabella tells me to go ahead. She goes to her bedroom to inform Lily, and I find myself sitting behind my desk staring at my phone.

Just get it over with.

Sighing, I locate Rosalie's number and press dial.

It doesn't take too long before she picks up.

"*Is it true?*" she grits out.

I close my eyes and pinch the bridge of my nose. There's no reason to play stupid. However, I don't know how far Rosalie is willing to go to...I don't know, destroy me? Regardless, I don't want her to be sitting on the other side of line recording this or something.

"We'll talk when I get back to LA," I say calmly. "And I will tell you everything then."

She laughs bitterly. *"My own sister, Edward! You've betrayed me with my little sister!"*

I narrow my eyes, suspicious. Throughout my fifteen years with Rosalie Hale, she has never once called Isabella her sister.

"I'm sorry," I say slowly, "I'm not sure I know who you're talking about. Surely, it can't be Isabella, seeing as you've spent her entire life bullying her. That's not something you do to your own 'little sister'."

"What're you talking about?" She pretends to be offended. *"She's my family!"*

I blanch at her words, and I can't *fucking* believe the audacity...

"I don't understand what I've done, Edward," she cries. *"My own sister; my own fucking fiancé! Tell me—what have I done to deserve this?!"*

I shake my head at her, fearing she'd take things too far and now having it confirmed. She can't be alone wherever she is; otherwise, she wouldn't have to lie now.

"You know what, Rosalie?" I've made up my mind. "You can come to my office tomorrow at two PM. My publicist and my lawyer will be there, too. I suggest you bring yours. Oh, and your *beloved* sister is joining us, too."

I hang up the phone just as Bella enters the room with a sheepish smile on her face.

"Aunt Lily wants to talk to you." She holds up her phone.

I chuckle tiredly and wave her forward. "No problem, baby. I'll talk to her."

Walking over, she asks, "Did you already talk to Rosalie?"

"Yeah." I blow out a breath. "She's up to something. We'll find out more tomorrow. But I don't want you to worry, all right?" She hands me the phone. "I'll protect you, I promise."

"I believe you." She sits down in the chair across from me and points at the phone. "Talk to her. She's, um...angry?" She chews on her lip. "I think she's worried about me."

That makes sense. Before this month, we were all worried about Isabella. Well, at least a few of us, and I'm sure Lily's concerned now, too, even though she likes me.

Keeping my eyes locked with Isabella's, I raise the phone to my ear and greet Lily. "Hello, Lily. How are you this fine evening?" *Or late night.*

Bella giggles behind her hand, looking so adorable.

"Save the crap," she huffs. "Edward Cullen. Please tell me Isabella was lying or trying to be funny. You know, I asked you to get close to her, get her to understand that she's not alone, that she has a family who loves her—not get into her pants! And don't get me started on my nieces. They're all calling me, wondering if I knew from the beginning! Tanya and Rosalie are on the warpath!"

Knowing that behind Lily's anger she's a very sweet and genuine woman, I go with the truth. "Isabella is everything to me, Lily. This isn't some random fling, and I'm not out to hurt anyone." Bella's gaze softens, and dare I say it becomes tender? "I certainly didn't expect this to happen. I didn't seek her out thinking I could, as you so eloquently put it, get into her pants. I care for her—more than I'm willing to admit to you over the phone."

"Oh." I think I've stumped Lily. *"Wait. Are you yanking my chain, Edward?"*

I chuckle incredulously. "I assure you, I'm not yanking *anything*."

She harrumphs. *"Well."* Huff, huff. *"Shit. You're really serious about her? She deserves the best, you know."*

I can only smile. She's being protective of her youngest niece, and that's something I'm glad for.

"I'm very serious," I vow honestly. Meeting Bella's gaze again, three words almost slip out. *"I know we're facing hell when we get back home tomorrow, but we will deal with it all—together."*

Lily's significantly calmer now, and she promises us we have her support. She does scold me, as if I'm a child, that cheating is wrong—like I didn't already know that—but admits that it's nice to see that I've traded up. Yeah, Lily is all fire.

After that conversation, I fill Bella in on the call with Rosalie, and she agrees with me. It seems my soon-to-be ex has something up her sleeve. But no matter what, it can't be big enough to pull Bella and me apart, and that's what's important.

With all that out of the way for now, we spend an hour packing up whatever we'll need for our trip, and I wake up Jasper once more to make

sure everything is set for tomorrow. He emails me the flight information, and then, with a "fuck you" in his voice, he wishes me a good night.

I have the *best* assistant. Perhaps I should remind him of who pays him, lets him stay in fancy suites around the globe, lets him travel first class, and...you get my point.

Lastly, Bella and I go to bed together.

I set the alarm for seven AM, much to my little girl's devastation.

"So early," she whines and snuggles into my embrace. I snicker and tighten my hold on her. "I wish we could go later." I'm a little shocked and more than a little turned on when she pouts and actually starts to suck on her thumb.

"My adorable little girl," I whisper, slowly sliding my leg over hers. I settle so that her pussy is nestled against my thigh. "You can sleep on the plane. I will wake you up when it's time to go." I kiss her cheek. "Can Daddy get a kiss?"

She beams at me, releases her thumb, and plants a good one on my lips. Groaning quietly, I part my lips to taste her. Our tongues tease and rile us up. Unfortunately, we really do need to sleep. We have a long day ahead of us tomorrow.

"Sleep, baby girl," I murmur against her lips as I give her left breast a squeeze. She whimpers and arches into me. "If you're a good girl and promise to eat all your veggies tomorrow, you can taste my cock in the morning before we go. But you have to promise me to behave first."

"*Uuungh*, you're teasing me, Daddy," she complains, pouting again.

I nip at her jaw. "That didn't sound like a promise to me." To tease her further, my hand trails lower, under her pink cotton panties, and palms her pussy. "Are you going to be Daddy's good girl?"

"Yes!" She tries to kick off the covers, but I stop her. Then I resume fingering her slowly, softly, making sure not to neglect her little clit. "Oh, God. Please—I want you *now*." She claws at me, trying to get closer. "I promise, Daddy—I promise to be your good girl, but...but, but..."

I tsk her. "Not now. I said tomorrow morning."

Realizing that I'm not budging, she stops struggling and sticks her thumb in her mouth again.

I keep two fingers buried inside of her and lazily, absentmindedly, circle her clit with the pad of my thumb.

"That's it, sweetheart," I say softly and kiss her temple. "Sleep now."

Chapter 20

EPOV

The next morning, I wake up with my little girl's mouth on my cock.

I groan and rub my eyes from sleep.

One glance at the clock tells me we have about forty minutes before the alarm goes off.

"Do you like it, Daddy?"

I chuckle drowsily, though the sound morphs into a moan when she sucks me in again. "Understatement, little sweet." I thread my fingers through her hair and push her down gently. "Fuck." She starts playing with my balls, which I fucking love. But then she continues down, all while sucking

greedily on my cock. "Shit, Bella!" My eyes fly open, and I prop myself up on my elbows. In all honesty, what she's doing right now leaves me a little conflicted, but...Christ, it feels fucking *amazing*. "Oh, God." I moan, feeling the pad of her thumb tease my ass. Just lightly, just softly. I had no idea it would feel so good.

"Do you want me to stop?" she asks nervously.

I shake my head quickly, staring down at her sexy, deliciously naked body. Lying between my parted legs, I can just make out her tits pressing down against the mattress.

"Keep going," I pant. "Play with Daddy's ass."

She lets out a whimper at that.

I keep watching hungrily as she sucks on my cock and rubs a finger against my ass. I even push a few pillows behind me, making it easier for me to see. Plus, it leaves my hands free.

This is why we're perfect for each other—we love exploring new things, and we're both open to a lot. The only thing we're strictly against is sharing each other.

"Fuck, that's amazing," I groan. Bending my knees, I pull up my legs a little and spread them wider. And when she asks if she can push one finger inside, I'm quick to reach for the lube on the nightstand. While there's not a chance dildos are making their way up there, the thought of my little girl fingering me is incredibly sexy. "Sit up," I instruct her. "I want to see all of you when I come."

She obeys and kneels between my legs, even putting some distance between her knees so that I can see her wet pussy properly.

But it's not enough. Now that I'm almost going crazy with lust, I need more. So, I tell her, "I want you to squat down over me, baby—your back to me, your ass aligned with my cock—that way, I can keep my legs spread and pulled up." Her eyes flash with excitement and desire. She does as told immediately, scrambling into position. Then, after coating her finger in lube, she returns to teasing my ass. She also focuses on my balls a lot, so I grip my cock and stroke it roughly, while staring at Isabella's displayed pussy and ass. "Fuck, yeah," I moan. In this half-sitting position, my free hand is close enough to rub her wet flesh. Her perfect little clit is soft yet swollen, and I circle it firmly. At the same time, I slide my cock between her ass cheeks.

When she slowly slips a finger inside my ass, my head lolls back as both pleasure and pain shoot through me. My back still elevated by the pillows, I force myself to lift my head again, because I can't miss this. This has got to be one of the hottest things I've ever done. Not to mention the pleasure. I just can't get over it.

My hips even meet her movements.

After a few particularly hard strokes, my cock leaves a small string of pre-cum that connects the tip of me with her soft ass.

A part of me wants to push her pussy down on my cock, but at the sight of my cum on her body, I've already made up my mind.

"Daddy, I need to come," she whines as I gently pinch her clit.

"You will, honey girl," I promise, grunting when she applies more pressure with her finger. "Oh, fuck." Tiny bursts of fire cause my abs to tense, and whenever she rolls my balls in her hand, my thighs clench, too. By now, she's so fucking horny that she's rubbing against me. Whenever I push my cock between her ass cheeks, she mewls and begs for more. And my erection keeps leaving a small trail of my arousal. I need to mark her, I

realize. I need to fucking soak her in Daddy's cum. With her back to me, I can only think of one place that is perfect. "Jesus Christ!" She has obviously found a spot inside me that makes me wanna explode. "Oh, keep going, baby. Faster—harder." I moan loudly and jerk my cock roughly, seconds away from coming. "Daddy's gonna come all over you," I grit out.

Only a second later, I watch as the first stream pulsates out of me. A second and a third follow, and I can't fucking breathe. My back arches, and it feels like my body's on fire, the sensational feelings coming at me in different directions. The liquid trickles down from her ass and onto my balls and still-hard cock, and Isabella uses it to soak me, too. Rubbing a specific spot a little firmer inside my ass, a fourth stream of cum seeps out of my cock.

"Fuck!" I gasp, collapsing against the pillows. Head thrown back and without a single muscle in me functioning, I try to regain my breath. But it's not easy to take "calm breaths" when Isabella starts lapping at me like she's some little kitten. Between hums and giggles of delight, she licks me clean. "What're you doing, baby?" I chuckle breathlessly. She's petting my soft cock, that's what she's doing. I guess I just don't know *why*.

"I like your cock, Daddy," she says simply. "Can I kiss it?"

I wave a hand, too drained to do much else. "Be my guest."

Though, I have to stop her a few moments later when she replaces her mouth with her pussy. At the age of almost thirty-nine, I need a little bit more recovery time than that.

"Come here, sweetheart," I murmur. She needs to have her orgasm, and I'm more than happy to give it to her. As she kisses her way up my body, I remove the pillows behind me, and then say, "Sit on my face."

She squeals.

Fuck, she's too cute for words.

Our morning in bed continues with my feasting on my little girl's pussy, and it's not until we're showered and ready to eat breakfast that today's reality comes crashing down on me.

We're leaving Utah in just an hour.

~oOo~

As soon as we get off the plane, I see that I have five texts from Jasper.

I've sent a car for you to be picked up. It should be Alistair. -J.W

Heads up: there are probably paps all over. -J.W

You're in all the tabloids today. -J.W

I've ordered a late lunch to Conference Room 1. -J.W

I figured you wouldn't want to stay at home, so I booked your regular suite at Cullen Hills. -J.W

And *that* is why he's my assistant.

Tucking Isabella close, I usher her through LAX, and warn her quietly about the possibility of paparazzi being here already. News travel fast in LA, and there's really no avoiding this.

"We're staying in Beverly Hills tonight, by the way," I tell her. "After the meeting, I'm just going to drive over to the house and get my most important belongings, and then I'll meet you at my hotel, okay?"

"Okay," she replies nervously. "Will Rosalie be at the house when you're there, too?"

"I don't know," I sigh, hoping she won't. "But I'm not going over there alone. If she's planning to play games, I won't go near her without witnesses."

Our conversation comes to an abrupt stop when we go through the exit and photographers swarm us.

"Cullen!" one of them shouts, while another shouts, *"Isabella—over here! Is it true that you're involved with your sister's fiancé?!"*

Not giving a flying fuck about these pictures, I pull Isabella impossibly closer and try to shield her as we make our way through the crowd. Somewhere behind all these vultures, I can hear Alistair yelling my name.

"Edward! Did you and Isabella get married at the Sundance Festival?!"

"Isabella! Is it true that you're pregnant?!"

"Hurry, baby," I whisper in her ear, finally spotting Alistair and my Town Car. "Don't listen to them."

"How long have you been hiding your relationship?!"

"Does this mean there won't be a wedding in June, Cullen?!"

At last we reach the car, and Alistair is quick to close the door behind us as soon as we're in.

"Jesus Christ!" I groan.

"Welcome to LA," Bella deadpans.

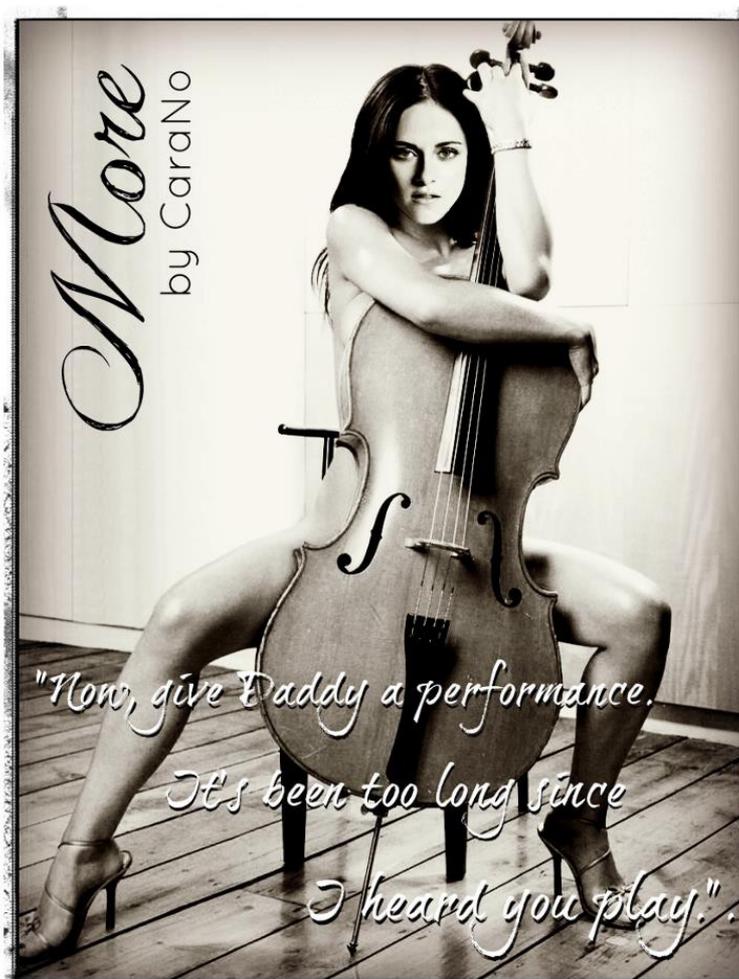
I chuckle wryly and wrap an arm around her shoulders. "You said it." I kiss her temple. "But we're in this together, yeah?"

"Definitely," she says and scoots closer. "I'd go to hell and back for you, Edward." Her eyes show an intensity I've never seen before. "I just want you to know that."

I smile, happy beyond words, and murmur my agreement. Whatever happens, we'll deal with it. Simple as that. And when Alistair starts the car, I feel at ease when I tell him to drive us straight to my office at Cullen headquarters.

Chapter 21—A glimpse into Isabella's mind

BPOV



Manip by Mina

The elevator ride up to Edward's office is long and silent, but he has reassured me enough to be comfortable. Granted, I'm fucking nervous; however, I'm still confident and relaxed. I believe in Edward—I believe in *us*.

He's the one I love, need, crave, and adore. *My Daddy*.

He's a man I used to view as an uncle or even older brother, one that was pretty much as anatomically nondescript as a Ken doll, but as soon as I saw him in his house in Utah...I was sold. Four years of distance created a barrier between our past and our future. We're both changed people. But unlike Edward, I didn't really have anything to lose when I realized how crazy attracted to him I was. So, instead of being careful, I threw caution to the wind and fell in love. In him, I've found everything I never knew I craved.

Whether it's Edward or Daddy...

"You ready, sweetheart?" he asks softly as his private elevator nears the top floor.

"Are you ready, baby girl?" he whispers in my ear. I try not to gulp when I look into his library. A piano bench is placed in the middle of the room, and my cello is leaning against it, still in its case.

I nod and clench my thighs together. "I'm ready, Daddy."

I nod. "I'm ready, Edward."

When the doors slide open, he ushers me out with his hand firmly placed on my lower back. It's a reminder that he's there, not leaving my side. The office space is huge, private offices surrounding a cubicle area, and it's all but empty. I guess since it's the weekend...

Soon, a man in his late twenties approaches us. He's dressed impeccably in a black suit, sans jacket, and a light blue tie. Which reminds me that Edward and I are hardly dressed for a business meeting. I mean, shit, I'm wearing jeans and Edward's Dartmouth hoodie, and Edward's also in jeans. And a fitted black pullover.

"Mr. Cullen," the man greets politely, but I definitely recognize his voice. And he was anything but polite and formal yesterday. In fact, he was funny.

"Jasper." Edward nods. "I'd like you to meet Isabella Hale—*officially*." He smirks a little smirky smirk. "Sweetheart, this is Jasper Whitlock, my assistant."

"Mr. Whitlock." I shake his hand and smile. "Nice to meet you."

"It's Jasper, Ms. Hale." He grins, blue eyes kind and a little amused. "And it's nice to meet you, too."

"Isabella," I correct in a chuckle.

"Is everyone here already?" Edward inquires.

Jasper nods and waves a hand in the direction of a door that says *Conference Room 1*. "Yes—we're just waiting for you."

In an automatic response, I stiffen, knowing that my *sister* is just inside that room—a woman who's always hated me, a woman I once looked up to, a woman who's brought me to tears too many times to count.

"I've got you, Bella," Edward whispers in my ear; he can read me so well now. "Just let me lead, okay?"

"Just let me lead, baby girl." He guides me over to the piano bench, and I sit down, straddling the end of it. A shiver runs through me as Daddy sits

down right behind me, his inner thighs touching my outer ones. Since we're both completely naked, I can feel his body heat. "Have you decided on a song yet?" His words are soft, warm, and rich, as he gathers my hair in his hands.

"Yes, Daddy," I whisper and lean down to pull up my cello from its case. The ebony endpin digs into the thick carpet, and the cool, glossy wood of the neck rests against my shoulder. "Nothing Else Matters'." Several times, I've been offered schooling at prestigious music academies, mostly in Europe, but it was never for me. I want metal, a heavy beat, and thunder. Not Haydn or Bach.

"Excellent choice." Daddy drops soft kisses along my neck. When I look down slightly, I can see that he's holding my bow. But he told me to let him lead, so I don't ask for it.

Blowing out a breath, I move my hands up to the pegbox instead. My fingers tremble slightly as I tune the strings, and even more so when Daddy scoots closer and I feel his hard cock resting between us.

"Here you go." He gives me the bow, and I grasp it to make sure my tuning is enough. Daddy hums when I slide the bow across the strings, mouth still attached to my neck. Then his hands join, too, slowly sliding up my sides until they cup my tits. "Now, give Daddy a performance. It's been too long since I heard you play."

"Okay, let's get this show on the road," Edward mutters wryly.

With his hand still on my back, he ushers me into the conference room, and I force myself to remain calm when I see Rosalie and Tanya on one side of the long table. Avoiding their cold glares, I give the two other women curt but polite nods. I recognize one of them as Rosalie's publicist, and I assume the other one is her lawyer. Then, at the head of the table, sits Michael Newton, the Hale family's own publicist. His mother is actually

Edward and Rosalie's housekeeper, and his father used to be my dad's lawyer.

"Ms. Hale," he greets kindly.

"Hello, Michael," I respond quietly and sit down.

Edward follows and takes his seat next to me.

There's a woman sitting next to Edward now, too, and a man takes his seat next to her. Lastly, Jasper sits down in a chair near the door.

My knee bounces slightly, but Edward reaches his hand under the table and stills me. Though, his hand doesn't leave.

I'm grateful.

While I assiduously ignore the two icy stares that I can literally feel, I also notice that a light buffet has been set up in the center of the table.

Salads, sandwiches, fruit cups, bread, cheese, soft drinks, and water. The sight actually makes my stomach rumble a little, though I doubt I can keep anything down. I'm too nervous for that.

"We haven't eaten since breakfast," Edward mentions, only for me to hear. He's the picture of calm, cool, and collected, and he seems to have no difficulty picking out a turkey salad, a sandwich, and a soda. "You should eat something, too, sweetheart."

"Do you know what I want to do, baby girl?" Daddy murmurs huskily as I play the beginning of "Nothing Else Matters". It takes all my willpower not to throw the cello to the side, turn around, and devour him. I can't help but whimper when he pinches my nipples. "Christ, I just want to eat that pretty little pussy of yours."

My cheeks redden, my chest flushes, my insides ignite.

Knowing the song by heart, I tilt back my head and rest it on Daddy's shoulder. Meanwhile, the carbon fiber bow slides over the strings, my grip tightening to maintain the little ounce of control I have left.

"I can smell you, you know." He nuzzles my neck and lets his left hand skim down my side again. "You're wet for Daddy." A whispered statement. He's so sure of himself, yet anything but arrogant.

"Touch me, please," I breathe out.

I feel his lips curving into a smile before he kisses the spot below my ear.

Then he cups my pussy firmly in his hand.

It causes my playing to falter, at which Daddy tsks me and mutters, "Uh, uh, uh. You messed up there, didn't you?"

"I'm sorry." God, I'm so needy and achy for him. "I'm so sorry, Daddy."

"Perhaps I shouldn't let you come..."

I grimace, disappointed in myself for already messing up—so early in the song, so early into the scene. Daddy asked me to play, and I can't deliver.

Grimacing a little, I lean forward and grab a fruit cup, a Coke Zero, and a small fork. That's all I can muster, despite the hunger I feel. Then I lean back in my seat again, honestly reveling in the comfort Edward's large hoodie brings me. It feels like a shield.

"Well, now that we're all here..." Michael stands up and takes care of introductions; I learn that the woman sitting next to Tanya is Jane Volturi, Rosalie's lawyer, and I'm already familiar with Leah Clearwater, Rosalie's publicist, who's seated directly across from me. After that, Michael introduces Maria Mendez, the Cullen Hotels publicist, and James Hill, Edward's own lawyer.

With that out of the way, Michael goes on. "Speaking for the Hales, I'd like to make sure this doesn't get ugly." He glances from me to Rosalie and then to Tanya.

"And," Ms. Mendez interrupts, "speaking for Cullen Hotels, I want this settled *quickly*."

Hell, for *all* our sakes, I want this settled quickly.

"But I refuse to let this get swept under the rug," Rosalie snaps. "Edward—" she turns her glare in his direction—"I deserve to know the fucking truth. Be a man and tell me." She stabs the table with a perfectly manicured fingernail.

I almost feel the need to hold my breath.

Edward, calm as ever, faces Rosalie. He doesn't look impassive or cold or upset or even arrogant. Just...calm. "The only thing I will give you is the right to blame *me*," he states. "I won't tolerate any more bullshit about Isabella. This is on me—nobody else." He waves a hand. "I'm willing to issue a statement taking the blame—I betrayed you—"

"Edward," Ms. Mendez cautions through clenched teeth, and Mr. Hill looks like he wants to duct tape Edward's mouth.

Edward ignores them and continues. "I want this over with, too," he implores, still facing Rosalie. "Quickly. But I'd still like to make it right. Well, as much as I have the power to." He releases a breath, eyes softening. "I apologize for betraying you, Rosalie—but we both know that the only thing hurt here is your ego."

"You broke my heart!" Rosalie spits out, and Tanya pats her arm. God, they're both so fake. How my sister is an A-list actress is beyond me. "I'm in shreds!"

Edward gives her an impatient look. "I won't air out our past here, but Christ..." He shakes his head. "You know what? Never mind. Just tell me what you're after."

"I don't want to look like a fool—is that so wrong?" she grits out. "Because as it stands now, I will be the old hag you left for a young plaything!"

Looking down at my lap, I set the goddamn fruit cup on the table.

I should be used by Rosalie's words by now.

She's always hated me, after all.

"I told myself I wouldn't do this, but..." Edward pushes out his chair, looking pissed off. "Rosalie, can I have a moment alone with you, please?"

My eyes widen.

Chapter 22

EPOV

Against my better judgment, I end up in my office with Rosalie—alone.

I didn't want this, but at least here I don't have to worry about her pathetic excuses and lies. With me, she's always been open about her hatred for my Bella. In a room full of publicists and lawyers? Not so much.

While Rosalie begins to pace the floor of my office, I lean back to half-sit on my desk. Arms folded over my chest. No real feelings surging through me. I'm kind of numb at the moment. Resigned, perhaps. But so ready to get this over with.

"You cheated on me," she spits out, still pacing. "You cheated on *me*." And that's the thing; she's not heartbroken. It's just her ego. "Do you even

know who I am?!" she shouts, spinning to face me. "And what about my reputation?!"

I stare at her blankly. "Are you done?"

"Ugh! You're just impossible!" she cries out in fury. In the past, this was how she riled me up. She *wants* to fight. She loves drama. But I won't get sucked into her petty bullshit this time. "Answer me this, Edward. Why *her*? What does Isabella have that I don't have?" She cocks a brow.

Compassion, a fucking heart, her humanity, brains, beauty...the list could go on forever.

"Everything," I eventually say, and I ignore Rosalie's gasp and expression of disgust and shock. "Now—" I check my watch "—tell me what you want."

"Oh my God, you *love* her, don't you?" she accuses.

I don't respond, even though it's true. But I don't owe her an explanation; I don't have to tell her exactly what my feelings are toward Isabella. That's between my Bella and me.

"You know she's only fucking you to get at me, right?" Rosalie says arrogantly. I sigh internally, sick of her games. "She's jealous—"

"She has *nothing* to be jealous of," I state flatly. "Move on, Rosalie. Tell me what the fuck it is you're after so we can get this over with."

Realizing that I'm not buying her crap, she lets out a noise of frustration and glares at the floor for a moment. Hand on her hips, foot tapping.

"I want the house—"

"Forget it," I chuckle, not missing a beat. We're not married, and *I* paid for that five-million dollar monstrosity in the Hills. If she wants a public

statement from me, that's fine. Regardless of how much I've come to loathe Rosalie, I still cheated on her; that fact is in black and white. But she's not getting a cent from me. "You can have exactly what you paid for," I tell her. "What I want to know is which route you want us to take when it comes to the media."

She looks as if she's a second away from blowing a fuse, but I won't cave on this one.

"Fine," she grits out. "I want you and that little tramp to disappear. Get out of LA—away from the cameras." Well, that's the plan anyway. "And I want the rumors of cheating to die." Her expression shows how livid she is. "I won't be fucking cheated on, Edward. I'm *Rosalie Hale*, for God's sake." She scoffs while I sigh. "So...I want the statements to say that I'd already broken up with you. *I* ended our engagement before you took off to Utah."

I rub my chin, eyes downcast, and ponder what she's said. What Bella and I want is to move on—as quickly as humanly possible—and this might be the way. Rosalie gets her chance to save face, although I know Hollywood well enough to know that the rumors of cheating still won't die. At least not right away. Plus, the pictures of Isabella and me are already out there—before any rumors of Rosalie and my separation. But if this is what she wants...

Maria will definitely agree, I muse internally.

"All right." I nod firmly and wave a hand to the door. "Let's go hammer out the details."

"Before that—" she holds up a finger—"there's one thing I want to know."

I nod for her to continue.

She releases a breath. "Are you at least sorry?"

A bit taken aback by her question, I lean against the desk again and choose my words carefully. Because the truth is that I *am* sorry. I'm guilt-ridden and disappointed in myself for ever taking things this far. It doesn't matter how Rosalie is as a person; I should've still remained a gentleman. I should've waited, despite knowing that I'm not—nor have I ever been—strong enough. I caved for Isabella so quickly. I fell hard and fast, and she became not only an escape but also my future. Still, I should have respected Rosalie enough to wait. But then there's a nagging voice in the back of my mind that says Rosalie's had this coming—karma. Perhaps that's very unfair of me, and if anyone should "avenge" the hurt Rosalie has caused, it's Isabella. But the fact remains: Rosalie made Isabella's childhood difficult. She bullied her younger sister relentlessly while she looked like a kind-hearted woman in front of the cameras. In the end, Isabella fled.

For obvious reasons, this eases my guilt, because I'm still furious at Rosalie for destroying a big part of Bella's life.

Whereas Rosalie is proud, arrogant, vindictive, and all about appearance, Isabella is kind, peaceful, and just as beautiful on the inside as she is on the outside. Make no mistake, Isabella Hale has fire in her, too. But you have to push *all* her buttons before she snaps. With Rosalie, all you have to do say the wrong thing or accidentally bump into her, and she will go off on you.

"Not as sorry as you wish I was," I finally say, looking into her eyes. "I'm sorry for betraying you, but I wouldn't change it if it meant I could be with Bella."

The fury is back in Rosalie's eyes, but she doesn't say anything. Instead, she nods curtly and leaves the office.

I follow, eager for this day to be over.

~oOo~

A couple of hours later, we're all ready to leave. As predicted, my publicist for Cullen Hotels is very pleased, and so is the publicist for the Hale family.

Since we're all leaving at once, I usher Bella into my private elevator, and Jasper tells me Alistair is waiting for us in the garage.

"I'll see you in Hawaii in two days," I tell him.

He gives me a two-finger salute. "See ya there, boss."

Once the doors have slid closed, I pull Isabella close to me and sigh in relief.

It's over.

"Are you okay, sweetheart?" I murmur.

"Yeah," she sighs, and I hear the relief there, too. "It's finally over." She buries her face in my chest and hugs my midsection tightly.

I hum and kiss the top of her head, letting my lips linger.

All I have to do now is run over to my house, pack up my most important belongings, and then I don't have to set a foot on that property again. It will go on the market, and that's that.

"I can't wait for Hawaii," she mumbles.

I chuckle quietly and drop a few more kisses in her hair. "Me either," I admit. It's only two days, though, so I think we'll survive. And until then, we'll keep to ourselves. Well, aside from the dinner we have tonight with Lily and Henry.

I should probably give my parents a call, too. It's only a matter of time before they hear about all this, if they haven't already, but I know it's going to go well. My mother is fifteen years younger than my father, so there's no way they can complain about Isabella and my age difference. Plus, they already know Bella—adore Bella. Granted, they don't know her as the love of my life, and it's been a few years since they last saw her, but I still can't see any problems coming our way.

"Daddy?"

"Yeah?" I respond softly.

"Can I ask Alice to come visit us in Hawaii?"

I smile and kiss her on the forehead. "Of course, baby girl. Anything you want." While I'll definitely have time to pamper Isabella in Hawaii, I will still be in and out of meetings most days. But if she has a friend there, I hope she won't feel as lonely.

Perhaps I can ask my brother and his wife to visit us, too. Emmett and Claire could use a vacation, and our bungalow will certainly be big enough for a few guests every now and then. And it's been a while since I saw my nephew.

Thinking about this makes me feel good, I realize—like we're finally moving forward. Now that we don't have to worry about Rosalie, we can make plans together for the future. In a way, it makes all this feel more real.

Chapter 23

EPOV

As soon as Jasper and I get in the car, we're both quick to get rid of our suit jackets and loosen our ties.

"When I was little, I wanted to be a space cowboy," Jasper grumbles as my driver starts the car. "Now look where I'm at."

I huff a chuckle and pull out my phone to let Bella know we're on our way. I only managed to secure two hours for us, but at least it'll give us a long lunch and *some* reconnecting.

We've been in Hawaii a week now, and I'm in the middle of two weeks of pure hell. Two weeks of meetings, interviews, and managing. Sure, most of the staff has already been hired at the new resort, but there's still a lot to do. The marketing department is on my ass, the board members want numbers to look at, my employees at the resort are working hard to create their routine, the contractors are hurrying to finish in time for the opening, and some animal-rights organization is bitching a fit because we're opening right on the beach and supposedly it's going to harm some damn fish habitat here. It's nuts, basically, and I've tumbled into bed most nights hours after Bella has already gone to sleep.

Luckily, it'll all calm down next week.

And...luckily, Bella understands.

"Fuck, I'm hungry," I grunt when my stomach rumbles.

By the time we arrive at the restaurant where we're meeting Bella and her friend Alice, we're grumpy and starving.

A man's mood all depends on his blood sugar levels.

"How old is this Alice chick?" Jasper mutters as we enter Roy's, a restaurant I often visit when I'm here.

"Same age as Isabella," I answer. Bella picked up Alice at the airport this morning, and she's supposed to stay here for a week or two. Truth be told, I'm glad. Bella has certainly not expressed her dismay, but I know

when my girl is bored. Sightseeing alone isn't for her, and I remember Bella telling me that Alice shares her obsession for the TV show *Lost*. Now they can visit those sights together.

The hostess quickly shows us to our table, and I smile when I see a happy Bella seated in a corner booth with whom I presume is Alice Brandon.

"Let us know if you want a different table, Mr. Cullen," the hostess says quietly as we approach the corner. I frown. "There are a few photographers outside."

Oh. Looking over my shoulder, I see the three men outside the restaurant, and due to my mood, I can't say I'm surprised I didn't notice them earlier.

"I offered the same to Ms. Hale," the hostess adds.

I nod. "Thank you, really, but we're fine here." Since I've been so busy, I haven't been hounded by paparazzi, but Bella has had a few encounters while she's been out and about. However, we're firm; we won't hide. Soon, they will realize that we're not talking—other than what's been said in the public statement—and they will also see that our life is quiet and, to the media, boring. They will back off eventually.

Rosalie, who is busy shooting her next film in Brazil, is more than happy to pose for the cameras. As far as I know, from what my publicist has told me, Rosalie has been spotted all over Rio with a new man—some Brazilian model. She has also, with a supposed fake smile, said that she's very happy for Isabella and me, and we definitely have her "blessing". She's just, and I quote, "Glad that Edward was able to bounce back so quickly after I came to the conclusion that we'd grown apart. We remain close friends."

I had rolled my eyes a few times when Maria read this out loud from some gossip rag.

"Hey!" Bella smiles happily when we reach the table.

I smile back and slide into the booth, not stopping until I'm right next to her. "Hello, sweetheart." I tilt my head and kiss her hard but chastely. "Christ, I've missed you." Gripping her chin, I just look at her for a beat—her sun-kissed skin, a light smattering of freckles, her bright eyes, and those cute dimples that appear when she's happy. Dressed in a simple cotton dress in light yellow, she looks both gorgeous and adorable. With a soft sigh, I kiss her lips again and murmur, "It feels like forever since I saw you." Even though we managed to have breakfast together this morning.

"Ditto," she whispers with a wink. Then she reminds me that we're not actually alone. "Edward, I want you to meet Alice."

I smile politely at the short-haired brunette across the table. "Nice to meet you, Alice."

"You too, Edward." She shakes my hand firmly but briefly, a smile on her lips. "Isabella's told me a lot about you."

I chuckle lightly and flip open my menu. "That goes both ways." I have to admit I was surprised when Bella told me Alice is a political blogger and resides in DC. The photos of the two of them that Bella has shown me doesn't exactly divulge that. In those, you see two rock chicks. But evidently, Alice comes from a long line of politicians, and she shares her family's passion. Alice's brother doesn't—the guy whose band Bella helped.

"And since Edward has obviously forgotten about me, I'm Jasper," Jasper drawls.

"Shit," I mutter. "I'm too tired and hungry." Weak defense, I know.

Bella giggles and hugs my bicep. "Trust me, guys; Edward is *not* a man you wanna meet in a dark alley if he's hungry."

I shoot her a playful scowl and steal a kiss before I return to studying my menu.

Outside, the photographers get their shots, but we don't care.

Drama simply doesn't have a place in our life.

~oOo~

When I come home to our bungalow that night—well, our temporary home—I find Bella asleep in our bed.

Checking my watch, I see that it's a little past eleven.

Apparently, Jasper and Alice hit it off during lunch, so they're going out for late drinks, which means Bella and I have the place to ourselves. If I get really lucky, maybe Alice will even stay at Jasper's place.

Once I've stripped out of my clothes and taken a quick shower, I make my way into our bedroom and laugh silently to myself when I see my little baby girl. She's kicked off the covers while I showered, and now I'm both amused and turned on. Turned on because she's only wearing a pair of white ruffled panties. Amused because she's looking all ruffled and annoyed in her sleep, like she can't get comfortable.

Dropping the towel around my waist, I get on the bed, lightly stroking my semi-hard cock. *Christ, I've hit the jackpot with this one.* She's curled into a little ball, thumb in her mouth, and her long and luscious hair all over the place. I smile and push some hair away from her face, my cock getting harder and harder. Then I trace a finger over her soft cheek until I

reach her mouth, where I gently pull her hand away. At that, she lets out a small sound of protest—like a whimper or a little whine—but it's okay. She'll be happier with what I intend to replace that thumb with.

With my disrupting her, she flops onto her back, a frown creasing her brows.

"No, no...wanna see the...mmmpff..."

I chuckle through my nose at her adorable sleep-talk.

"Baby," I say softly and brush the head of my cock over her lips. "Can't you wake up for Daddy?" *Fuck*. I can't help but groan when the tip of her tongue peeks out to lick her lips. Kneeling by her chest, I lower myself over her again and swipe my cock over her pouty lips. And slowly but surely, she wakes from her sleep.

The exact moment her eyes flutter open and she notices what her Daddy's doing with his cock, she exhales sharply and mouths an, "Oh."

Threading my fingers through her hair, I mutter, "Suck me, beautiful little girl."

Her chest heaves, eyes flicking between my eyes and my erection. The flush of her cheeks comes next, and I also notice how she begins to squirm.

"Oh, Daddy," she breathes out right before she takes me in her mouth. She closes her eyes and hums around me, causing me to moan. But the position we're in isn't enough then, so I pull out and lie down on my back. Without a word, she kneels between my parted legs and sucks me in again.

"That's it, baby girl," I groan, bucking my hips upward.

She gets me so hard, so wet, so fucking ready.

When she takes me particularly deep, I throw my head back against the pillow and arch my back. I curse and moan, fucking her mouth roughly. But as she slides two fingers over my ass, all while she cups my balls with her other hand, I have a quick decision to make. Because if I don't stop her soon, I'm going to explode.

And I want to fuck her.

"Stop, baby," I grunt. Breathing heavily, I sit up and pat the spot next to me. "Get on all fours." As I scrub my hands over my face, Bella giggles and hums while she scrambles into place. I'm quick to follow. "You really want Daddy's cock, don't you?" I shake my head in amusement and push down her panties.

"Yes!" She wriggles her ass at me and giggles some more, but I cut that off by spanking her. Hard. "Oh!" she yelps. "Mmmm."

Gripping her left hip, I use my other hand to drag my erection through her sopping wet pussy. And if I have to guess, I'd say she's been touching herself today. She wouldn't be this wet otherwise. She's definitely allowed to masturbate, but she can't come. Not without me. Hard limit.

"Have you been a good girl today?" I ask, watching as the head of me disappears into her slick pussy. "You're awfully wet."

"I promise—I've been good, Daddy." She nods furiously and glances at me over her shoulder. "I touched myself in the shower, but I didn't come. Honest."

I believe her. Like I said, she wouldn't be *this* eager if she'd climaxed a couple hours earlier.

"Good." With that said, I slam my cock deep inside her pussy.

"Shit!" she screams and fists the sheets.

Fuck, fuck, fuck. I grit my teeth, tensing up as the pleasure assaults me.

Setting a fast pace, I slowly but surely fuck her into the state where we're both incoherent and only listening to our bodies. My hips slam against her ass, my cock drills into her, her moans turn into gasps, and her pussy constricts around me each time I bury myself to the hilt.

These past days have really taken their toll on me, I realize, because it feels like I'm physically aching for her.

"I need to see you, baby girl," I pant, sitting back on my heels. "Jesus Christ." I blink and try to catch my breath. "Turn around." I jerk my cock, slick and hot from her arousal, and watch as she lies down on her back.

"*More,*" she pleads. "Pretty please, more!"

Lowering my body over hers, I kiss her passionately and slide my erection into her again. I kiss her because I need it and because it's all I can do before I utter those three words to her. Three words I've certainly said to Isabella before, but that was when she was little. The meaning of those words has certainly changed.

She whimpers and claws at my back. "*Daddy...*"

"I'm here." I hitch her leg over my hip and push hard. "*Fuck.*" Forehead to forehead, nose to nose.

"I...oh, fuck!" she cries out and arches her back, pushing her tits into my chest. "Daddy, I..." She gulps, and her eyes flash open.

And I see it. I see it so fucking clearly—that she feels the same.

Still breathing harshly and, to be honest, cursing the fact that I'm no longer twenty, I can't help but smile and kiss her softly. That smile and

that kiss contradict my movements, which have been firm and hard, but then I slow down. I kiss her again, gently and tenderly.

"My little angel," I whisper and drop a kiss on her nose. "Isabella." Her cheeks. "My *Bella*." Her lips. "I love you."

She doesn't look shocked, just radiant, happy, and at peace. "I love you, too." I chuckle breathlessly as she kisses my cheeks. "My Daddy." My lips. "My Edward."

Indescribable.

Rolling us over, I sit up as she sinks down on me, her hands resting on my thighs. It gives me the freedom to touch her wherever I want. With my right hand, I stimulate her wet clit, and with my left I cup one of her perky tits. Fuck, she's a vision.

"Say it again," I groan when she swivels her hips. "Christ, so good."

"I love you, Edward," she whimpers. "Daddy—*my* Daddy."

"Yours." I squeeze my eyes shut, feeling my abs tense and thighs throb. That familiar tingling sensation starts to travel down my spine. I start panting again, and as I hear Bella's gasps returning, I know that she's close, too. "I need you to come, sweetheart." Redoubling my efforts, I circle her clit a little firmer and pay more attention to her nipples.

"Oh!" she gasps.

Next, I feel her body trembling.

"You're so close, baby girl," I whisper huskily as I pinch her nipple and suck on her neck. She shivers violently. "Come on Daddy's cock."

A few seconds later, she goes rigid, mouth open in a silent scream as she comes.

"*Fuck, Bella!*" I growl and grip her hips. Slamming her down on me, it feels like my whole fucking body ignites as my own orgasm takes over. Deep inside of her pussy, my cock pulses and releases, soaking us both even more with my cum.

"Oh, my God," she whines breathlessly and collapses in my arms. "You killed me, Daddy."

"You're," I pant, "one to talk. *Jesus.*"

Flopping down on my back, I pull Bella with me. I almost feel like another shower is in order, but I can't make my legs work.

"Hmmm," she hums and starts playing with my chest hair. "Can I sleep like this?"

I chuckle and blow some of her hair away from my face. "Dirty little girl, you. You wanna sleep with Daddy's cock inside of you?"

"Oh yeah," she giggles sleepily and sucks her thumb into her mouth. She also burrows into me, like she's a little puppy who can't get close enough. I doubt she realizes how happy she makes me. "Love you, Daddy," she mumbles around her thumb.

"God, I love you too, baby girl," I whisper and kiss the top of her head.

Epilogue

EPOV

Edward & Bella Cullen

Under the stars and surrounded by twinkle lights and family

On a rooftop in New York City

A year and a half later...

"You look happy, son," Dad says as he sits down in the seat next to me.

I grin and fiddle with the label on my Heineken. "Like you wouldn't believe." My eyes remain on Bella, who's on the dance floor with my brother—and several other guests, of course. She's so beautiful in her white baby-doll dress. And her laugh is like music to my ears as she and Emmett goof around to an '80s song—*Jessie's Girl*, to be precise. Claire, Emmett's wife, takes pictures from where she's sitting with their son, a few tables away, and I'm willing to bet there'll be a laugh or two at the expense of Bella and Emmett next Christmas.

"Where are you going on your honeymoon?" he asks, also smiling as he watches my wife. "Isabella told me you're keeping it from her."

I laugh and lean back in my seat. "Not without difficulty." Bella's a nosy little girl. Whether it's Christmas, her birthday, our anniversary, or Valentine's Day, she always tries to find the presents I buy. "Are you gonna spill the beans to Bella, old man?" I tilt my head in his direction.

"Never!" He looks way too innocent.

"Uh-huh." I chuckle dryly and shake my head. "Sorry, Dad. I'm not telling." I bet Bella asked him; she's dying to know.

At first, I thought I'd take her to New York for our honeymoon, but then we ended up here to get married. Then I thought I'd take her to Australia, but we're going there anyway in a few months since I'm opening a hotel there. So, my mind wandered to Thailand, but then I learned that Rosalie is there shooting her next movie, which was why she "regretfully" declined to attend our wedding. *Not that we minded—at all*. Next, I figured London could be a nice city to honeymoon in, but that thought flew out the window when Alec called Bella a few weeks ago and offered her a part in his next film. It's just a small part, but it's one where she plays the cello, and it takes place right outside London. This means we'll be there together for a couple weeks after the summer, and after that, Bella will also help Alec with the music for said movie, which will all go down in Los

Angeles. But come tomorrow, we'll have three weeks, just the two of us, in Greece. I've rented a luxurious yacht for us, and we will be travelling from island to island, just enjoying some alone time.

"I'm drunk!" Jasper announces and tries to sit down on the other side of me. Tries...because he fails and falls ass-first down on the floor.

"Christ," I chuckle, shaking my head in amusement. In his defense, it's been a rough couple of weeks for him. I know very well how nervous you get when you're about to pop the big question to the woman you love, which Jasper did this morning before Bella and I got married. Luckily, Alice said yes, and now Jasper's relaxing. Perhaps, though, after seeing him like this, Alice will reconsider.

A couple tables away, Lily and Henry laugh to themselves, having witnessed Jasper's graceful crash. Bella's mother and my own mother are sitting there, too, both looking just as amused.

"Oh, Jasper," Alice sighs, pretending to look annoyed. She isn't, though. Easy to tell by the smile she's failing to hide. "What're we gonna do with you?"

Bella, also having seen Jasper, walks over and plops herself down in my lap. "Whew!" After dancing, she's trying to catch her breath, all while she's giggling. "Jasper, I saw you fall. You okay?"

"I'm fine—I'm engaged," he slurs happily, still sitting on the floor.

"Are you sure about him?" I ask Alice as I slip my arms around Bella's midsection. "There's still time to run away."

She pretends to ponder, and Jasper looks put out. "Eh. I'll stick with him." She shrugs. Jasper turns his frown upside down. "Come on, baby," she laughs and extends her hand. "Let's go dance and drink some more."

"Because that's just what he needs," Bella giggles into my neck.

I grin and kiss her forehead. "Are you having a good time, sweetheart?"

"The best." She lifts her head and smiles at me. "I love being your wife."

"That's good." A laugh slips out, and I squeeze her to me. "Adorable you."

Whether it's being her husband, friend, Daddy, or confidant, she's stuck with me forever now. Thankfully, she whispers in my ear that that's exactly what she wants.

For the first time in my life, I have everything I could ever want.

I'm not asking for more.

The End