



# Dance With Me

## A goodWITCH

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# Summary

Edward, a well know author, starts working at Bella's bar as research for his next project. But as circumstance pushes them together, and feelings grow into something serious, Bella's afraid her past will change the way Edward feels.

AU/AH/Canon COMPLETE!

# Research

Okay, first I want to thank everyone who has supported me through all the months of craziness. This story was taken down and edited from this site after fear that some of my BNA friends pimpage of my stories would bring it to the eyes of those who set out to remove these types of stories from this site. But as it has calmed down, I felt the need to stop hiding...if a day comes when they are removed, or I receive an email telling me to edit them, I will, but I do not believe I'm going to see that happen in the near future and I am tired of punishing myself and you, my faithful readers. If you ever have the need or desire to check out the other site i post to, the link is below.

My profile on the site is:

[http://www\(dot\)twcslibrary\(dot\)com/viewuser\(dot\)php?uid=8336](http://www(dot)twcslibrary(dot)com/viewuser(dot)php?uid=8336)

This story is rated M due to language and lemons. SM owns.

Without further ado, the first chapter of *Dance with Me* .

## EPOV

I've never been nervous walking into a pitch meeting before, but this one had me wary. I was Edward Cullen, author of several gritty thriller novels, the type where femme fatales with fast cars led foolish men into the seedy Seattle underground to be swallowed alive. Like I said, I'm a writer; even the descriptions of my novels are stylized. But this time I was pitching a novel with a female heroine. I had never tried to wrap my head around the female psyche and make a believable three-dimensional character before, but this story idea was just too good not to run with. Hopefully, my publisher would see it that way; Victoria was always a hard woman to figure out.

"Edward, what are you talking about? I love this idea. And hell, maybe now the feminists will stop sending you hate mail." Victoria laughed as she walked me out of her office.

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"I doubt it, and besides if they stop writing then I can open my own mail without a screener having to check it first, where's the fun in that?"

"I guess so. Have you found the bar you're going to use for research yet? Because if so let me know and we'll make out the check for your advance directly to them to cover your tab." As we reached the reception area I noticed Jessica, the perky little receptionist perched on the edge of her desk trying way too hard to look sexy.

"Nope, but you know me, I'm nothing if not thorough, there has to be a bar in Seattle that will put up with my annoying ass constantly hanging out there."

"Work that famous 'Cullen charm' that kept me from throwing you out of my office 6 years ago, and I doubt there's a woman bartender in the city that would kick your cute little ass to the curb." Victoria winked at me and then followed my eyes to Jessica. "Stanley, you can't file for workman's comp if you fall trying to flirt!"

Jessica quickly got up and handed Victoria her messages before going back to her desk. I don't know what I was thinking in that moment, but I decided that this college cheerleader may hold the key to my dilemma. "Jessica, right?"

She quickly looked up completely dumbfounded. "Yes Mr. Cullen?"

"Please call me Edward. I was wondering, I'm writing a story that takes place in a bar and I need to find a place that's not a sausage-fest, where do you go out with your friends?"

"Well, umm...there is this one place, Ballet Studio. It's great! It serves bar type food during the day and at night it turns into this really fun hangout with dancing, live music once a week, and karaoke once a month. Hold on, I'll give you the address." Jessica grabbed a post-it and wrote down the information in her insanely bubbly handwriting. "Here, I wrote down the owner's name, they're really cool."

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"Thanks Jessica, if this works out, you'll get a mention in the special thanks." I smiled at her as I got into the elevator, feeling generous, after all a place named Ballet Studio could definitely be a place where my heroine would work.

When I got to my car I looked at the post-it and decided to check it out and see just how cool Bill actually was. The bar wasn't far from my apartment, which surprised me, but I probably would never have dreamed of going in on my own. As it was, my brother Emmett would ride me about this until the end of time if he found out.

I pulled up still trying to decide if I would dare to go in and then I saw 15 cent wings from 2 to 7 on Wednesdays and thanked God that I didn't have a 9 to 5 job.

As soon as I walked in I realized why Jessica loved Bill so much, he was obviously gay. The place was nice enough. The bar area was a decent size and there was a small stage in the back and an area that could be cleared to create a dance floor. The long wall on the opposite side of the bar was all mirrors with a ballet bar running along it. There were posters and photos and paintings of dancers on the walls and the shapes these women were contorting their bodies into were enough to put any guy into the dog house if his girlfriend brought him here.

There were a few people at a table in the back and two barflies at the end near the front door. At the moment I was about to turn to go, a young girl in jeans and a cut up Ballet Studio t-shirt came up behind me. "Hi. My name is Emily; would you like to sit at a table or the bar?"

Shit. There went my easy exit. "I'm actually looking for the owner, is he here?"

"Sure I'll go get 'em for you, why don't you take a seat at the bar."

Emily went into the back and a few minutes later the kitchen doors swung open and a Goddess came dancing in to the late 90's pop music coming out of the jukebox, carrying a case of beer. She moved so gracefully I had to catch my gawking before she noticed. She was obviously a dancer of some sort and had

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the body to prove it! As she came up behind the bar she stopped dancing and took all of two steps before tripping and almost dropping the case of beer, sitting it on the floor and turning to look at me.

"You should stick to dancing sweetheart." I smiled, but she didn't seem too amused.

"Can I help you with something?" Her voice was smooth and she had a little bit of an attitude, which made her even hotter.

"Yeah, I'm looking for Bill."

She looked at me like I had just spoken Japanese. "Who?"

I reached into my pocket to double check the post-it. "Bill, the owner."

"Oh, you mean Bell, well you got her."

I looked at the post-it and sure as shit it said "Bell." Damn Jessica and her bubbly fucking handwriting. "Sorry, the person who told me about this place didn't tell me the owner was a girl."

"Well honey, I stopped being a girl when I turned 18. What can I do for you?"

She blushed and all I could think was there were plenty of things I wanted her to do *to* me, but I'm pretty sure that's not what she meant. And God it was sexy when she called me honey. "I'm a writer and I'm doing research for a novel that takes place in a bar similar to this and I was looking for a place to hang out, maybe talk to you and some of your staff."

She looked at me with that same confused look on her face and then there was a spark in her deep chocolate eyes and she reached back to put her hair, which went half way down to her cute little ass, into a ponytail. "Do you know how to bartend?"

"Yeah." Not quite sure what that has to do with anything.



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"All right, you start tomorrow; I'll go get you a few shirts." She was halfway back to the kitchen before I realized what she had said.

"Wait? What? I'm not looking for a job."

She walked back over, biting down on her lower lip. God she was a flirt.

"Look, if you want to experience this place, I mean really get a feel for it you have to be behind the bar. And one of my bartenders just quit so I'm short staffed. You want to hang around and ask questions, fine, do it before your shift. So you interested?"

I had to admit that hanging out here and getting the chance to banter with someone who wasn't a moron was really appealing, didn't hurt that I couldn't stop thinking of all the dirty things we could do after we closed up at night. "Absolutely."

### **BPOV**

The beer delivery was two days late and I was not pleased. Quil, my bartender, had just quit on me because his girlfriend didn't like that he was working all night with girls hanging all over him. Which, I would totally understand if it was anyone other than Quil, but he's a nice guy and he loves Claire. When you work in a bar like this you have to flirt, it's how you make tips, but my big rule is you don't shit where you eat, don't date the patrons and don't date your co-workers because when all hell breaks loose, I'm the one replacing part of the mirror wall because someone's beer muscles had to be flexed.

When the delivery finally came in and I had finished tearing into the driver, Emily barreled through the kitchen door. "Bella, Edward Cullen is asking for you."

O-kay? "Who?"

"Edward Cullen, he writes those thrillers that you always yell at me for reading when we're slow. And let me tell you the picture on the inside cover does not do that boy justice."

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Jake Black, our cook came up from the basement just then with a case of Corona and shot Emily a look. "Oh my God! Really, Edward Cullen is here! I heard he's gay."

"Shut up, Jake!"

"All right. Emily, take over the beer delivery and make sure he goes over it with you so we know he isn't shorting us. I'll go see what Mr. Cullen wants." Those two bicker like an old married couple sometimes and I have no patience today.

As I pushed the kitchen doors open with the case of Corona Jake had brought up for me swaying and swinging my hips to *Genie in a Bottle*, I saw him...HO-LY SHIT! He was leaning his long and lean body up against the bar, running his hand through his messy bronze hair and I could have sworn I thought I saw his green eyes bug when he saw me...nice. I continued dancing, mainly for his benefit and then just as I got behind the bar I stopped only to trip and almost drop the case of beer. Great job ass! I set it down quickly and looked up.

"You should stick to dancing sweetheart." Damn it, well at least he's flirting.

"Can I help you with something?" Like taking off those pants.

"Yeah, I'm looking for Bill." What? Who the fuck is Bill?

"Who?"

He started digging through his pocket. "Bill, the owner."

"Oh, you mean Bell, well you got her."

He looked at the post-it and shook his head. "Sorry, the person who told me about this place didn't tell me the owner was a girl."

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"Well honey, I stopped being a girl when I turned 18. What can I do for you?" Oh crap, stupid blushing...I can't even flirt with him without it being written all over my face.

"I'm a writer and I'm doing research for a novel that takes place in a bar similar to this and I was looking for a place to hang out, maybe talk to you and some of your staff."

Ugh, he wants to use us for his research. He's flirting with me so I'll let him hang around here...wait this could be the answer to my problem. I pulled my hair back into a ponytail to get it out of my face. "Do you know how to bartend?"

"Yeah." His perfect lips hung open and it was finally his turn to be baffled.

"All right, you start tomorrow; I'll go get you a few shirts." I turned to run and get a few of our shirts out of the kitchen before he could refuse.

"Wait? What? I'm not looking for a job." Damn, well if he wants to be here then he better believe I'm going to make him work for it, if only to watch him bend over when he carries up the booze. Jeez Bella, what has gotten into you? It's got to be those gorgeous green eyes of his. I better keep it under control.

"Look, if you want to experience this place, I mean really get a feel for it you have to be behind the bar. And one of my bartenders just quit so I'm short staffed. You want to hang around and ask questions, fine, do it before your shift. So you interested?" Please say yes...

"Absolutely."

YES! "Great I'll go get you a couple of shirts and then we can go over your schedule."

**Thanks once again for all the support!**

**Blessed Be**

Dance With Me

**AgoodWITCH~**

# Flirting with Disaster

**So as I mentioned in the previous chapter, this is a re-post...nothing has changed in it, but over the next week or so you'll see all of my stories returning. Thanks for the love and I apologize for the email explosion that will follow. SM owns Twilight, I just play with her characters!**

## **EPOV**

I'd been working with Bella at Ballet Studio for a week now and it was a sexy sight let me tell you. She was sassy and empowered and could handle the drunks better than most male bouncers I've seen, and still there was something more to her. I saw brief glimpses of the woman behind the badass exterior and that inspired me and scared the crap out of me at the same time. But today was a big step, because today I told my family about my new "activity."

I got to work early and Bella was there, of course, doing paperwork in her office in the basement. Jake had just made some lunch for Bella and I offered to take it down to her so he could focus on the lunch rush.

"Here's your burger." I pushed open the door to her office and sat the plate on the edge of her desk.

"Thanks. What are you doing here so early? You're working the late shift tonight."

"Just soaking up the atmosphere." And enjoying the current view.

"Right, well if you want to ask me questions, you know, for your novel...shoot."

Ugh, too bad my family was already on their way. "I can't right now, my siblings are on their way over for lunch." I ran my fingers through my hair and looked back at her to catch a look in her eyes I couldn't exactly place.

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"You look like you're about to confess to a murder, what are you afraid your family won't approve?"

"No, no. Nothing like that, it's just...my brother Emmett will laugh at me for tending bar at a place like this. Especially if he sees how tight the damn t-shirts are."

Bella chuckled and then bit on her lower lip and I started to lose focus. "Well then, it's a good thing you're not wearing one."

"What?"

She laughed again and the sound was so free and easy. "A Ballet Studio t-shirt. If you were wearing one then he'd know how vain you are."

That caught me off guard. "You think I'm vain?" I don't know why but I didn't like that she thought bad of me.

"Maybe vain was the wrong word, you have a great body and you dress to show it off. If you've got it flaunt it, right?"

She thinks I have a great body. "Enjoying the view, are we?"

"I used to be a dancer, and I grew up watching my mom dance onstage, I've come to appreciate the body as a thing of beauty." Bella smiled but it didn't seem right, there was sadness in her eyes and I didn't like it, so I struggled to think of something to make her happy again.

"Well then why don't you come up and check out my brother and his wife, this type of beauty runs in the family and it seems to attract similar beauty to it." She laughed but it still didn't seem right. I was about to try again when I heard Jake call down.

"Edward, a bunch of people came in and asked for you."

"Okay, I'd better go, enjoy your lunch."

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I ran up the stairs and came out of the kitchen door to a look of shock on my siblings faces. I walked over to them and sat at their table before they could start the inquisition.

"So Edward, this place is cute, how come you asked us to meet you here?" Alice, my petite little sister asked with a gleam in her eye.

"Well...okay. So I started writing a new story, and it has a young woman as the protagonist, and it takes place in a bar so I've been hanging out here doing research." I knew right away that the four pairs of eyes that were trained on me didn't believe that that was the whole truth.

"So now you're a barfly. I'm not sure mom will like that." Emmett grin was a little too menacing to make me feel better.

"Honey leave him be, plenty of great writers hung out in bars all day, Edward is just living up to the standard set by his predecessors." Thanks Rosalie, nice.

"Awe, come on guys, ease up on him. He's obviously working on his story, this doesn't seem like the kind of bar Edward would hang out in if he had his pick of any place in the city." I knew that in that moment Jasper was trying to help but I didn't like him talking about this place like that.

"Guys, this place is really nice, and it's a lot of fun at night. There's live music and dancing and I like it here."

"Edward, you're selling this place like you work here." Emmett didn't realize it at the moment but he was dead on.

"I do, I bartend here six days a week." And with that the table went silent.

"Can I get you guy's anything." Emily lopped over and smiled unaware of the mountain of awkward she had just walked over to.

"Em, can you give us a minute?"

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"Sure Edward, call me over whenever you're ready." As Emily walked back over to her station I saw a beautiful Native American woman walk in and dart into the kitchen without even a thought to ask if she was allowed back there, so I assumed she was one of Bella's friends.

### **BPOV**

I heard her flying down the stairs and automatically felt better. By the time Leah was opening the door to my office I was nearly done with my freak out. "I'm fine; really, you didn't have to run over here."

"Bullshit!" Leah hugged me close and then sat in the chair in front of my desk.

Better get it out quickly before we get interrupted. "It's just that he flirts with me like crazy and I feel like an idiot. You don't see the way he looks at me."

"Do I have to go upstairs and kick Shakespeare's ass?"

"No, Leah. He doesn't look at me like that; it's like he sees through all my crap and really sees me. It scares the shit out of me."

"Oh, so what's the problem?"

"Well he's a famous writer; he's gorgeous and look at me. Besides you know my rule."

"First, you're beautiful, so shut up. And secondly, fuck your rule! This isn't shitting where you eat and you know it. He's not an employee, not really, he's just playing at it to figure out some things for his novel, so if you fool around with him and it doesn't work out then he goes back to writing and you go back to whatever the hell it is you're doing these days."

"Ugh! I told him he had a great body and he teased me about checking him out. Oh and that's after I called him vain."



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"Well that's good, not the vain part, but at least he's flirting with you." Leah smiled. "Honestly, how much longer do you think he's going to be here? You told Seth to take the bartending classes so you're obviously aware on some level that this is temporary, why not make a play for something a little more permanent."

"And if I get something more permanent?"

"Fire his fine ass!"

### **EPOV**

When I walked into the bar tonight, I was not prepared for anything that was about to happen. First off, Alice, Jasper and Emmett were coming to the bar to check it out in full swing, and I had been in such a rush to get out after lunch, that I was now anxious to see Bella. I got in at 9, just as they were closing and started stacking the tables and chairs and putting them into the back storage room behind the kitchen. When Bella came up around 9:30 she nearly knocked me breathless.

"Hey, Edward. Sorry I didn't get to meet your family today, but my friend Leah needed some girl time."

Was she just trying to be nice or was she really disappointed, I was about to find out. "Well don't feel too bad they'll be here around 10:30."

"That's great! I guess that means they didn't plan an intervention when they found out their brother had become a bartender."

"Emmett is still reserving judgment until after he sees how the place is tonight."

"Ha! Well then it's a good thing they're coming on a Saturday night. So Emmett is your older brother?"

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"Yeah, his wife Rose is at home with the triples tonight, but my younger sister Alice and her fiancé Jasper are coming too, so it'll be interesting."

"I guess I better put my best face forward, then."

"You already have. You look beautiful tonight." Please don't think I'm being fake.

"Thank you." Just then Bella blushed and bit down on her lower lip.

"You're gonna bite a hole in that lip if you keep that up." I reached out and touched her chin to pull her lip out from between her teeth and she blushed even deeper. "So, did you do ballet?"

"Huh? Oh yeah I danced for years, but then I injured my foot so I had to stop. I haven't taken a class in years but I still do it from time to time. I practically grew up in my mom's dance studio, so when I decided to open a bar, it felt like a fun and unique theme."

"That's for sure." When she talked about her past I noticed that same sadness I had seen this afternoon, so I decided I'd let Bella tell me in her own time.

It was 10:45 when I heard a booming laugh come from behind me and I knew automatically that I was in deep shit. "Nice shirt, Eddie!"

"Don't call me Eddie!" I called out over the crowd as I got three draft Stella's and four shots of Jack, bringing them over to where I knew my audience was waiting.

Alice lifted her shot and winked at me. "To Edward, who's finally earning an honest day's pay in a bar that is really cool." We all took our shots and I went back to keeping the drunken masses happy.

"Edward!" I looked up and Bella was carrying a case filled with Budweiser. "Just throw this under the bar until you get a chance to put them in the ice."

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Bella ran back into the crowd as I stowed the beer and went to check on my family. "So seriously, what do you think?"

"This place is cool; I'd love to check it out on a day there's live music." Jasper was easy to please but Emmett still wasn't letting me know what he was thinking.

At that moment the sound of broken glass and the grumble of a fight started and I heard Bella clear as day yelling out, "Hey, take that shit outside." Just as Bella got to the drunks one took a swing at her and I was over the end of the bar in a second. It didn't matter that he missed her and she had his arm twisted behind his back, I ran over and opened the door so she could throw him out. "Sam, how about you do your fucking job, instead of flirting with some girl." Sam, our bouncer was 6'7" and a beast, but even he shrunk at Bella's angry words. I walked her back behind the bar.

"Are you alright?" I stared at her face trying to see if she was really okay.

"I'm fine, really."

"Damn, Mighty Mouse, that was impressive!" We both turned to Emmett who was laughing and shaking his head at the show Bella had just put on. I walked Bella over and made the introductions.

"Bella, this is my sister Alice, her fiancé Jasper, and the drunk is my brother Emmett. Guys this is Bella Swan, she's the owner."

"Seriously Bella, that was choice how you handled that guy."

"Thanks Emmett, I'm sure you've been in your fair share of fights."

"Nope, not since I met Rosie, that's my wife. She'd kill me quicker than my Captain."

"Captain?" Bella looked at me curiously.

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"Emmett's a firefighter, and Alice is a fashion designer, and Jasper's a therapist."

"So, Bella, how's our little Eddie been taking care of business here?" I really hate Emmett sometimes.

"He's been great; it's nice having someone who can do all the heavy lifting." Bella looked up at me with a smile in her eyes and I was lost in those deep eyes momentarily.

"What? You're going to have to tell me how you get him to do that, because he never does that for us." Alice winked at Bella and she laughed.

"Next time you need him to do something, give me a call and I'll take care of it." Bella squeezed my bicep and walked back down to the other end of the bar.

The bar was closed and I had just finished mopping the floor upstairs, that's right I mopped the floor, and headed down to see if Bella needed anything.

"Bella?" I called out from outside the office.

"Come in." When I walked in Bella was putting away the last of her papers and her desk was the cleanest I had ever seen it.

"You need anything?"

"Yeah, I just wanted to thank you for earlier, with that drunk."

"Bells, you handled it, I just got the door."

"I know but the way you cleared the bar to come to my aid when you saw that guy take a swing at me, it was hot." Did she just say that it was hot...holy hell!

"Not nearly as hot as watching you throw that guy out on his ass. I love that you can take care of yourself, it's so sexy." Bella looked up at me in that moment and then she grabbed my face and pulled it down to her lips and she

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kissed me forcefully.

I grabbed her by the waist and pulled her close, deepening the kiss as Bella moaned into my mouth. She pulled us both over to her desk and I lifted her onto it kicking her chair out of the way. Bella started grabbing at my shirt and I broke the kiss so she could pull it off of me before she reached down to her own and whipped it off and into the corner.

My lips found hers and I ran my hands up and down her back and sides as she caressed my chest. My hands found their way to her bra clasp and I looked down into her eyes for a moment. "Are you sure?"

"Definitely!" She almost growled as she reached down to my belt and undid it before moving to the zipper of my jeans. I unhooked her bra and helped her off with it as she slid off the desk and undid her own pants and slid them down, kicking off her shoes with them before jumping back on her desk. I laid her down on the desk, continuing to caress her breasts, kissing down her neck and making my way to her left nipple, before sucking it into my mouth and flicking it with my tongue, feeling it harden in reaction to the stimulation.

"Oh God!" Bella moaned and I almost lost control. I went to my jeans and found the condom I had in my pocket and sat in on the desk as I reached over and slid my hands up Bella's thigh's and under the fabric of her panties. I slowly lifted her off the desk enough to pull her panties off and pulled her closer so that her ass was right at the end of the desk. She sat up and pulled off my boxers, letting them fall to my ankles as she picked up the condom and slid it onto me. I put both of my hands on Bella's hips and slid the length of me inside her, filling her up as she arched her back and let out another breathy moan.

I pulled myself out almost to the tip and then thrust into her again, and this time she rolled up into my hips, so I could fill her even more. We quickly found our rhythm and let the moment overwhelm us without the need to talk until finally, Bella arched her back and called out to me. "Faster...Edward, I'm almost there!"

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Hearing that, I couldn't help but tighten up and thrust into her faster and harder than I had been, stopping when Bella wrapped her legs around my waist and rose off the desk in a cry of pure pleasure. Hearing her pleasure I quickly reached my climax and held her to me as I wiped a piece of hair matted down by sweat out of her eyes.

Bella kissed me sweetly and then took my hands in hers. "That was amazing."

"Yes it was." I reached down and took off the condom and then threw it in the trash before pulling up my underwear.

We quickly went around the room getting dressed and then I tied up the garbage bag and carried it up. I ran out to the dumpster and locked up the back door before waiting for Bella to come upstairs.

"Bella?"

She turned to me and smiled leaning her head against my chest. "Yes?"

"Can I walk you home?" Bella looked up at me in amazement and then took my hand.

"I'd love that."

# An Officer and a Gentleman

## BPOV

I don't know why I was so surprised, but when I came upstairs after having sex with Edward, I didn't expect him to still be there. But as I came out of the kitchen, I heard his voice, quiet and velvety, behind me. "Bella?"

I turned and he was leaning against the wall next to the door, and I couldn't help but smile as I laid my head on his chest. "Yes?"

He took in a nervous breath and then asked, "Can I walk you home?"

I couldn't help but look at him with nothing short of awe. He wanted to walk me home. That was so sweet. It wasn't dripping with innuendo, and there was no false pretense behind his request, he just wanted this moment to last a little while longer, and so did I. "I'd love that."

So Edward walked me home. I only live three blocks away, so it wasn't that bad, but it took every ounce of strength within me not to ask him in. When I opened my door and turned back to him, he reached up and cupped my face, running his thumb along my cheek, before leaning down to kiss my forehead. "Sleep well, Bella."

"Goodnight, Edward." With that, Edward turned and walked to the elevator as I closed the door and locked up for the night. That wasn't the first night I dreamed of Edward Cullen, but it was the first dream I would have been able to tell my mom about. We weren't doing anything specific, we were just together, laughing, and talking, and enjoying each other's company.

The next morning I woke up and couldn't shake the amazing calm I was enveloped in and I knew right away who was responsible for it. The day seemed to drag though, like 9pm would never come, and I knew who was responsible for that as well. When it did roll around I was greeted by a smiling God with a bouquet of flowers. "I thought your office could use a little color."

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"Thank you," I blushed and then took the flowers into the kitchen to put them in some water. As I brought the flowers down to my office and sat them on my desk my mind was filled with flashes from last night and I was startled when I heard Edward's voice.

"Bells...hey, boss, Sam's about to open up for the night."

I looked up, confused by where the hour and a half had gone. "Okay."

"Is everything alright?" He looked at me with real concern and I felt a little twinge in my stomach.

"Everything's fine, it's just been a long day is all."

Edward stepped forward and rubbed his hand along my upper arm. "Why don't you go home and get some rest, we can handle it."

I looked up at him and smiled. "After Sam almost let those drunks destroy my bar last night, I don't think so. That boy's already on thin ice with me."

"Okay then, I'll see you behind the bar."

I came up about twenty minutes later and the bar was really starting to rock. Edward was in his element and Sam was being extra vigilant after last night, so I really could have gone home, but still the idea of losing that time with Edward made me uneasy.

Emily and the other's loved that Edward worked here, because boy could he rake in the tips. He'd smile and flirt and the girls would just hand over the money, which Edward refused to touch. He said it was his way of paying back everyone for putting up with all of his questions. So tonight Emily brought her cousin Seth, our bartender in training, to watch him work.

"Dude I can't do that! He looks like a statue from a museum, he could call these women the 'c word' and they'd still tip him." Seth lamented after fifteen minutes of the Edward Cullen master class.



## Dance With Me

"Seth, it's all in the eyes. You just make direct eye contact, smile and lean in when they order their drink. Then move on to the next customer, and never flirt more with one woman than you do with the rest, because they get jealous and start leaving smaller tips. If they see that you're nice to everyone, they won't feel bad when you have to tell them you can't take their number."

I was serving a couple of beers to some frat guys as Seth asked, "Why don't you take their numbers?"

"I don't like to leave a woman waiting for a phone call that isn't going to come. If I take a woman's number, I intend on using it." WOW! Oh my God, I think I love this boy even more.

"Edward?" We all spun around to see a short blond standing at the other end of the bar waving him down.

"Excuse me." Edward walked over and I settled back in behind the bar next to him.

"Hey, Jess. How come I haven't seen you here earlier?"

"Finals. I'm just out celebrating with friends before I go back to New York for Christmas. By the way, this is my friend Lauren. Lauren, this is Edward Cullen." Jessica beamed as she spoke, obviously proud of the acquaintance.

"I'm a big fan of your books." Lauren shouted over the sound of the crowd.

"Thanks, now what can I get you ladies tonight, the first rounds on me."

Edward smiled and leaned in to hear Jessica call out. "Two Cosmopolitans."

Edward went over to make their drinks and I came up next to him. "Hand me the Southern Comfort." Edward reached over and grabbed the bottle for me and then waited for me to pour it so I could hand it back to him. "That was nice of you, buying those girls' drinks."

## Dance With Me

Edward smiled and leaned in so he could say into my ear. "Well I owe Jessica a lot; she's the one who told me about this place."

As far as I'm concerned, Jessica can drink here for free every night. "Remind me to thank her." He looked over at me and I winked before going to deliver the shots I had just poured.

The night quickly came to an end and I was ready to get home, so I was surprised when Edward came down into my office as I locked up the safe. "Bella, can I talk to you for a minute?"

Oh crap...I'm not sure I want to hear this. "Sure Edward, what do you want to talk about?"

Edward walked over to me and took my face in his hands. "I would have brought this up sooner, but I know how you are about dating co-workers, but I like you. And I don't want last night to just be something that happened once and then that's it. I want to take you out to dinner, and if you're not ready, then I completely understand, if you need time, then I will give you that, but please, give me a chance."

Oh wow...not what I was expecting. I'm jumping around like a tween at a Jonas Brothers concert on the inside...but I have to play it cool. Oh who the hell am I kidding! With that I reached up on my tip toes so that I could reach his lips and kissed him. And boy was it good.

Kissing Edward was amazing, the emotions he evoked were so powerful, I was filled to the point of overflowing and yet there was still always room for more of it, more of him. He let go of my face as he reached down and wrapped his arms around my waist and I twisted my fingers through his hair and pulled his face closer still. In the moments we'd break to catch our breath, Edward would look at me like I was the only thing in his world, and that was a scary thing. Even though I could feel how deep my feelings were, I was always the one who fell too hard, too soon, and was left with a broken heart, so to have someone falling with me, was completely new.

## Dance With Me

After making out like a couple of teens trying to enjoy the last ten minutes before curfew, I pulled away and looked Edward in the eye. "You're fired." Edward looked at me, confused and then I smiled and continued, "Now, where are you taking me to dinner?"

I let out a small yawn and Edward laughed. "You're exhausted, how about I get you home and we worry about that tomorrow."

"Okay." Then I reached for his hand and we went upstairs.

Edward went to dump out the garbage and bolt the back door, and I took a moment to look at one of the photos of my mom on the wall. After a moment Edward came up behind me and wrapped his arms around my waist and rested his chin on my shoulder. "What are you thinking?"

"I'm thinking about how much I miss my mom."

Edward stepped around me and looked at the photo in front of me closer. "This is your mom?"

"All of the photos are, and the posters are of different ballets she was in."

"I never really looked that closely before, you look the same."

"Nope, I've got too much Charlie in me. At least I got the dancers body." I turned to show it to him from every angle.

"Thank God for that!" Edward laughed and then put his arm around my shoulder. "Come on; let's get you home before I have to carry you."

Edward walked me to my door again and gave me a quick kiss on the forehead before going to catch the elevator. I took out my key and went to grab the doorknob and my door creaked open before I had unlocked it. "Edward!" I whispered, frozen where I stood.

**EPOV**

## Dance With Me

I stepped into the elevator and waited for the doors to close, when I heard Bella call me. "Edward!" Even though it was only a whisper, I could hear the terror in her voice and I shot out as the doors began to close.

"Bella, what's wrong?" I asked as I walked to where she was.

"Shh. My door was open...and I locked it when I left."

From the little I could see the apartment had clearly been ransacked, so I grabbed her hand and pulled her from where she was rooted to the floor.

"We're getting out of here." I pulled her to the stairs and we ran down as I pulled my phone out of my pocket and dialed 911.

"911, what is your emergency?"

"Hello, I'd like to report a break in."

"What's the address?"

"526 5th Street, Apt. 913."

"Okay, now is the suspect still inside?"

"We don't know. When my girlfriend went to open her door it swung open and you could tell someone had been inside, so I grabbed her and headed outside."

"That's good, stay there and an officer will be there shortly."

"Thank you."

When we made it out the front door of her building, I pulled Bella around and held her close. Bella wrapped her arms around me and pulled me even closer to her. I just stood there with Bella in my arms, my face pressed into her hair, for the thirty minutes it took for the police to show up.

## Dance With Me

"Bella, please, say something." I said when the silence had finally started getting to me.

"I agree to go on one date with you, and you're already calling me your girlfriend?" She looked up and smiled at me.

"I'm sorry if that bothered you, but I didn't think the 911 operator needed to know the inner workings of our relationship." I looked down at her and she started laughing.

"Thanks, I needed that." Just then I saw the police car pull up. The two officers got out of the car and walked over to us.

"Did you report a break-in?"

"Yes, in apt. 913"

"Alright I'm going to ask you to wait in the lobby and we'll come get you after we're done checking the apartment."

We waited in the lobby for another twenty minutes before one of the officers came down. "Okay now, I'm going to let you go into the apartment and get some personal belongings, but it will remain a crime scene until we can get someone down here to dust for fingerprints."

"How long is that going to be?" Bella asked, furrowing her brow and starting to look anxious again.

"We should be able to clear the apartment in the next day or so, but there's been a rash of break-ins around here, so you might want to spend a few nights somewhere else, at least until you can get the locks changed."

"You're staying with me." I knew I wouldn't be able to sleep tonight if she wasn't with me and I wasn't going to take no for an answer on this one.

"Edward-"

## Dance With Me

"Bella, Leah left for LA this morning, and she's going to be gone all week. I live four blocks from the bar and I have plenty of room, you're staying with me."

"Okay, I'm too tired to argue as it is." Bella smiled sweetly and I kissed her hair.

"Come with me." The policeman escorted us up to the apartment and then followed us in. "Tomorrow you'll be able to go through and catalogue everything that was stolen, and give a list to us as well as your insurance company, if you have coverage for this."

"No, I don't." Bella walked into the bedroom and packed a bag with a few nights clothes and then went to the bathroom to pack her toiletries.

"I'm sorry about this, Miss; hopefully we'll catch this guy before he robs someone else."

I walked Bella the seven blocks to my apartment and when we got inside, she finally began to relax. "This is a beautiful apartment."

"Bells, do you want anything? Are you hungry?"

"No, but can I use your shower?" She looked so fragile that I wanted to scoop her up, but instead I just walked over to her and touched her cheek.

"Of course, it's at the end of the hall. And your bedroom is the door next to it."

"Thank you, Edward."

"Don't mention it."

Bella went to the bathroom and I went to put an extra blanket on the bed in the guest room so that Bella would be warm. After her room was finished, I sat on the bed and just let all of tonight's events play over in my head.

## Dance With Me

"Edward?" I turned to see Bella standing in the doorway, wearing a pair of cotton shorts and a tank top, her hair pulled into a messy bun, I had never seen her look more beautiful. "Edward, why are you crying?"

Crying? I reached my hand up to my cheek and sure enough, my face was wet with tears. "I'm just so glad that you're okay."

"Edward, I don't-"

"I told you to go home, Bella, you could have been there when that guy showed up, and I don't even want to think-"

"I guess we should both be grateful that I didn't want to miss working with you tonight." She smiled, but it was a forced smile.

Jesus what in the hell is wrong with me! "God, Bella, I should be comforting you, not the other way around."

I got up and she came over to me and grabbed my arms. "You are comforting me, believe me. If I was alone right now, I'd be losing my mind. You have no idea how it felt when I knew that all I had to do was call out your name tonight and you were there to take care of me." The sheer honesty and trust in her voice as she spoke made my heart swell, she trusted me, not just with her body, but with her safety and her heart. She trusted me enough to open up about her fears and to want to share that with me, and I loved her even more for it.

"I'm glad I was the one there for you."

"There's no one else I would have called, even if I had someone I could call."

Bella hadn't spoken much about her family, except to mention her mother in passing at work. "Not even your parents?"

"My mom died when I was 16, and I don't see my dad."

## Dance With Me

"I'm sorry." Thinking about how big and crazy my family was it hurt me to think of what it would be like to be alone, and I didn't like the thought of Bella being alone either. Suddenly I was even happier that I had come up with this story idea in the first place.

"Don't be, you couldn't have known. And besides, it's been long enough that I'm okay talking about it."

"Maybe another time, you really should get to bed."

Bella climbed into bed as I walked to the door and went to turn off the light. As I closed the door, I heard Bella call out to me. "Please, don't go."

I turned and came in, closing the door behind me. I got into bed with her and pulled her close against me and Bella reached up to pull my arm around her. That night as Bella slept in my arms, I knew that I was love with the most wonderful woman in the world.

**There's the end to Chapter 3! So does Edward in love make you feel all warm and fuzzy? More of their past coming up, along with all the good things that come along with living with someone, no matter how temporary. Also, we'll find out what Bella's going to do about her apartment and what exactly was stolen from her place.**



# Cleaning Up and Bearing All

Another reposted chapter...hope you enjoy it!

## EPOV

That morning I woke up to the smell of bacon and coffee brewing. I opened my eyes, and was temporarily confused by the fact that I was in the guest room, until I saw Bella's bag on the dresser. I slowly got out of bed and walked over to the archway that led to my kitchen and leaned against it silently. Watching Bella dance around my kitchen, feeling completely at home, made me smile. She looked like she belonged there, like this was something she had been doing every morning for years, and I didn't want to interrupt that. But at that moment, Bella turned and shrieked, dropping the spatula that was in her hand. "Crap! Jeez, Edward, how long have you been standing there?"

I walked over to her as she bent down to retrieve the spatula and took it from her, throwing it in the sink. "Not long. Sorry I scared you."

"Don't worry; I'm just a little jumpy this morning." She smiled at me and kissed my shoulder.

"You know you didn't have to cook, I'm supposed to be taking care of you, remember."

Bella pulled away and looked up into my eyes. "What do you say we take care of each other?" Then Bella went to the sink and washed the spatula, before going back to the stove and serving up the eggs. She threw a few slices of bacon onto each plate and then placed them on the small dining table. I went to the coffee pot and poured two cups and sat them on the table, as Bella got the cream out of the fridge and poured some into her cup.

I was about to sit down when I realized I needed ketchup. As I got it out of the fridge and made my way to my seat, Bella made a face. "You put ketchup on your eggs?"

## Dance With Me

"Sure. My mom eats her eggs like this; I guess I just picked it up there." I looked up at Bella and she was staring at her plate, and I quickly realized what I had just said and began to backpedal. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to mention, and I mean...shit."

"What? Edward, its okay. My mom died 10 years ago; I'm not going to begrudge you the fact that your mom didn't die way too young. I told you, I don't mind talking about it." Bella smiled and then took a sip of her coffee.

"How old was she?"

"36."

"Wow, how did she...?" I was having a hard time asking Bella these types of questions, even though she seemed willing to tell me.

"Cancer. She had it when I was like eight, but it wasn't that bad, they had caught it really early, and she was fine. But then when I was fifteen, it came back and she fought it for nearly a year, but it had spread too quickly and it wasn't responding to treatment and then she passed away."

"So, is that when you moved in with your dad?" I don't know why I chose that as my follow up question, but something about how little she mentioned him made me curious.

"God, no! I hadn't seen my father since I was twelve. I used to visit him in Forks every summer for two weeks, but he'd always leave me with his friend's daughters while he went fishing. I guess he assumed that because we were the same age we'd get along but I wasn't having it, so I told my mom I wasn't going back. When she got sick, she asked me if I was going to call Charlie, but I couldn't stand the idea of leaving Phoenix to live in Forks full-time. Plus, all of my friends were there, so I told her I wanted to become an emancipated minor."

Wow, that was a lot to process. "And your mom was okay with that?"

## Dance With Me

"Honestly, I think she wished I would live with Charlie, but she knew how I felt about it. She contacted her lawyer and he helped us out with all of the paperwork. With my mom working so hard to run the studio, you know, so that we had food on the table and a roof over our heads, I had taken over a lot of the chores around the house. She had life insurance, and she left me the house, so all I had to do was prove I could support myself. I had a part-time job at a bookstore, so I asked the manager to make me a full-time employee, and he did."

Thinking about Bella this way, having so many responsibilities already and then having to become an adult way too soon, being all alone, forced to take care of herself, made me want to hold her and never let her go. But at the moment I just wanted to know more about her, so I moved on to my next question. "But what about school?"

"I dropped out and studied for my GED. Then that fall, I started taking night classes at the community college. I was 17, so it wasn't all that strange. That's where I met Leah, registering for classes my first semester. Anyway, I worked really hard and got my Associates Degree. Then Leah and I transferred our credits and moved to Seattle to go to UW. We lived together for a while, but Leah moved in with her then-boyfriend and I eventually moved to the place I live now."

I continued eating completely floored by what she was telling me. It was unreal for me to sit across from someone I met ten days ago and have them tell me their entire life story, with all the gory details, and no real hesitation. I had to know how she was able to do this. "Bella, I don't want this to come off the wrong way or anything, but how were you able to tell me all that so easily?"

Bella smiled and looked deep into my eyes as she spoke. "That's the easy part, I've been telling people that story for the past ten years, because it's such a huge part of who I am. It doesn't take me long to figure out whether or not I can trust someone, and I'm usually right. After everything that's happened in the last two days, I should be able to tell you that. Besides, it would have come up when you asked me what I'm doing for Christmas."

## Dance With Me

Damn, Christmas was only six days away and I had no idea how she would be spending it. "What are you doing for Christmas?"

"Watching Rudolph visit the island of misfit toys." Bella chuckled and then sat her empty coffee mug on the table.

"Spend it with me."

Bella looked at me in shock and I couldn't help but laugh at her expression. "What?"

"I don't like the idea of you all alone in your apartment on Christmas. Please say that you'll spend Christmas with me and my family."

Bella looked around the room, avoiding eye contact with me. "Edward...I don't want you to think I was begging for an invitation, I'm fine spending Christmas alone."

I reached under her chin and made her look at me. "You may be okay with it, but I'm not. Please spend Christmas with us."

Bella's lips curled up into a smile and a delicate blush colored her cheeks. "Tell you what, I'll agree to come, but I want to know more about you first. I'm not walking into this looking like an idiot because I don't even know your middle name."

"Deal, oh, and it's Anthony, by the way." I smiled at her and she laughed again. At that moment Bella's phone rang and she got up to get it before it vibrated off the counter.

"Hi Emily." She paused for a moment while Emily talked. "Listen hun, I hate to ask you this, but can you pull a double today?" Another pause while Emily answered. "Thanks, no, something happened last night and I need to handle it. Okay, see you tomorrow." Bella hung up as I gathered the dishes and started washing them.

## Dance With Me

"You're not working today?" Bella stood next to me and began drying the dishes I had washed.

"No, I have to meet the cop at my apartment at 2pm." I looked at her confused and she quickly continued. "He called while you were asleep. I have to do the inventory of everything that's missing and then fill out the police reports so they can release the crime scene."

"You want some company?" I asked as I turned off the water and then leaned up against the counter.

"Sure, if you don't mind all the cleaning. I want to get the place picked up after it's officially mine again."

"Fine, we can continue the inquisition there, then." I smirked at her and Bella put her hands on either side of my face.

"Thank you."

"For what?"

"Proving me right." Bella pulled me to her and my lips crushed hers. I pulled her tight against me and she wrapped her arms around my neck before jumping up and wrapping her legs around my waist. I carried her to the guest room and lay down on the bed with her still wrapped around me. I broke the kiss to take off my Ballet Studio shirt, which I was still wearing from last night, as Bella pulled off her tank to reveal her perfect, perky breasts. I kissed down her neck to her collarbone, then down to her right breast, sucking it into my mouth as I massaged her left one with my hand.

Bella put her hands in my hair and massaged my scalp as she arched up into my mouth. I moaned against her skin and looked up to see her staring down at me. The fire in her eyes made me so hot, I started kissing down her stomach as she let out a breathy moan. When I reached the elastic band of her shorts, I slipped my fingers under the sides and pulled both them and her underwear off and dropped them at the foot of the bed. I ran my hand up the inside of her leg

## Dance With Me

and as I reached her center her legs snapped closed. I looked up to see her resting on her elbows looking at me. "Sorry, I've never been a big fan of that. Why waste time with the warm up, when we can move onto the main event, right?" Bella took her right foot and rubbed the top of it against my erection, distracting me. She had almost looked frightened when I had first looked up at her, but now her eyes were filled with nothing but lust. I pulled my wallet out of my jeans and took the condom I had out. Bella sat up and pulled down my boxers and slid the condom on.

I climbed on top of her and slowly slid myself inside her. She let out a moan as I began thrusting, with her rising to meet me like she had before. We found that same rhythm and Bella wrapped her arms around my chest holding me close. I kissed and sucked on her neck as she whispered into my ear, "Oh God, Edward...you have no idea how good that feels."

I growled into her neck, "Tell me, Bella. Tell me what I do to you."

Her breath caught and then she gasped, "You drive me crazy! Uuuhhhhh...right there, Edward."

I thrust harder into her as she used her legs to pull me in tighter. I could feel her body tense around me as she began to tremble. I quickened my pace knowing she was getting dangerously close and wanting to reach my climax at the same time. Bella threw her head back and let out a cry of ecstasy as we came together. I rested my forehead on hers and looked into her eyes as she smiled and kissed me sweetly.

I looked over at the clock on the nightstand and groaned.

"What's wrong?" Bella looked at me with concern, God I love this woman.

"It's 12:45. We better get up if we're going to make it to your apartment by 2:00. I'm going to get in the shower." I went to get up and Bella grabbed my wrist and smirked at me.

"That sounds like a good idea...mind if I join you?"

## Dance With Me

Holy hell! Ugh, calm down boy. "As much as I'd love that, if you get in the shower with me, we'll never leave this apartment again."

Bella laughed and walked over to her bag and started picking out some clothes. "Alright, I'll get in the shower after you then."

I walked up behind her and put my hands on her shoulders. "Use the shower in the guest bathroom; I'm using the master bath."

"Okay. I'll see you when we're both decent." Bella turned and kissed my chest before taking her clothes and leaving the room.

I sat on Bella's bed as she looked around her bedroom. "It looks like he trashed the place more than he stole anything." Bella opened her jewelry box and shook her head. "Well, he had taste at least; he took the real stuff and left the junk."

"I'm sorry babe."

"Holy shit!" Bella threw her hand over her mouth and ran from the room. She came back a minute later holding an empty box of waffles in one hand and a Ziploc with a wad of cash in it, in the other. "At least he never saw *Coyote Ugly*." We both laughed as Bella's eyes caught sight of her slightly open closet door. "No." Bella ran to it and flung it open, dropping to her knees and digging through a small collection of Steve Madden shoe boxes before grabbing one and opening it. She dug through the contents, mostly pictures and notes and a single pair of ballet slippers until she finally froze. "Oh no. No, no, no. Fuck!"

I ran over to her and put my hands on her shoulders and rubbed her arms, trying in vain, to calm her. "Bella, what did he get?"

"My mom's engagement ring. It was a family heirloom." Bella started to shake as the tears running down her cheeks turned to sobs. I wrapped my arms around her and she turned and buried her face into my chest. I'd never been a violent person, but in that moment, all I wanted was five minutes alone with this guy.

## Dance With Me

"Bella, do you have a picture of the ring? That way you can give it to the police with the list of things that were taken."

"What's the point, they're not going to find it. God, I'm sorry, I shouldn't be taking this out on you."

"Don't you dare worry about upsetting me. I'm tough, and this is a really horrible situation, you're allowed to be pissed."

Bella looked up and wiped the tears from her eyes. "Well, I guess that's everything. He got my TV, stereo, and my jewelry."

"Are you sure there isn't anything else?"

Bella looked around. "I don't own that much. I'm going to go talk to the cop and give him a list of everything. I guess you can hang out in here, sorry today's been so crappy."

"Bella, its fine, just take care of this so we can start getting this place back to normal."

"Okay." Bella walked into the living room and I took out my I-Pod and put it on shuffle and closed my eyes.

"Edward?"

I opened my eyes and saw Bella sitting next to me on the bed. "I must have fallen asleep."

"Well, it's officially time to break out the trash bags." Bella smiled, but it was too forced, so I sat up and kissed her forehead.

"Where do you want to start?"

"My clothes, I hate to think of someone's dirty hands on them, and he was very thorough with the job he did in my dresser and closet." Bella motioned towards



## Dance With Me

her dresser drawers which were all obviously gone through.

"So bring them to my place, you can do laundry there."

"You have a washer and dryer in your apartment?"

"Yeah, in the closet by my bedroom. When Alice and I moved in there, my mom insisted that we have our own laundry room."

Bella laughed, "You lived with Alice?"

"When I was a junior in college, I wanted to move off-campus and Alice was starting college so my parents bought us our apartment."

"You OWN that apartment!"

"Yup." I shook my head at her reaction.

"When did Alice move out?"

"Two years ago, that's when she moved in with Jasper."

Bella looked thoughtful as she got up and grabbed one of the black garbage bags off her bed and handed it to me. I stood up and opened it so she could start picking up her clothes and putting them in the bag. "So you have two siblings?"

"Three. My sister Irina lives in Alaska with her husband and four kids."

"Four kids! Wow...your family is huge. How old is Irina?"

"Irina is 35, Emmett's 29, and Alice is 25."

"Oh man, your parents must have gotten married right out of high school."

## Dance With Me

"No, my dad was 22 when he married my mom; she's three years older than him."

Bella thought for a minute. "So your mom's like 60, right?"

"No, 56." Bella looked at me, utterly confused and I decided to help her out. "Irina is technically my half-sister. My dad's high school girlfriend got pregnant right before they split up to go to college and never told him. 18 years later, Irina got his name from her birth certificate and found him. She went to college at Washington State so she could get to know us. Now, she's closer with us than she is with her mother." It felt good to have Bella know this, ever since she told me about her childhood, I wanted her to know about my crazy, loud, and hysterical family.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to pry." Bella looked down and I put down the bag of clothes to lift her head up in my hands.

"Never be afraid to talk to me. If you want to know something, all you have to do is ask." Bella kissed me on the lips and then sighed and leaned back.

"Grab another bag; after we're done with this, I want to finish straightening up." I grabbed another bag and by the time we finished emptying her dresser and her closet we had three bags full of clothes.

We continued asking each other things as we moved around her small apartment picking up things that had been knocked down, and making a list of things that had to be replaced, like broken picture frames and a lamp. When her apartment was finally put back together it was a little after 9pm.

"You want to go back and order Chinese food, I'm starving."

Bella looked over at me and smiled. "That's sounds good, but how are we getting back to your apartment with my clothes?"

"Alice is on her way. I called her and asked her stop by around 9:30." Just then there was a knock at the door.

## Dance With Me

"Edward? Bella?" Alice called through the door.

I went over to the door and opened it for Alice and Jasper.

"Bella, I'm so glad you're okay." Alice ran to Bella and threw her arms around her in a tight hug.

Bella put her arms around Alice and smiled. "Thanks Alice. Hi Jasper."

"Bella." Jasper walked in and smiled at her.

"So let's get your stuff down to the car and then we're going to treat you to dinner...that is if you don't have plans already."

I was about to tell Alice that we did when Bella said, "We were just going to order in, why don't you join us?"

"Let me guess, Chinese from The Flaming Dragon." Alice laughed, and I had to join in.

"You know me well, sis."

"Scary like that, isn't she?" Jasper added.

Bella locked her deadbolt, which was the only way to lock her door now and we headed down to Alice's car. "Bella, our mom is so happy that you're joining us for Christmas."

I looked at Alice with complete disbelief. "Alice, I mentioned that to you an hour ago, how did you already tell mom?"

"It's called a cell phone, brother dear." Alice smiled and then dodged as I went to mess up her hair. Bella just laughed at the two of us and I looked at her, happy that her mood was lifted a little.

# Drinking Games Sober & Shopping Sprees

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This chapter was originally written after spending two days waiting to see Shakespeare in the Park. That experience inspired, not only the obvious in this chapter (bits of Bella's story actually happened to me), but a lot of the development for future chapters. A lot of questions got answered while lying on the grass trying to remember when I'd slept last, as it took two attempts to get to the park early enough to wait 8 hours for free tickets to see Anne Hathaway tear it up in *Twelfth Night*. Already working on the next chapter and I will post it soon! Thanks to my new readers and reviewers, to AbbiiCakes, my cyber lil sis, for all the support. And finally to Kate, my brick and mortar bff, for letting me talk out my story with you in the park without actually telling you anything, because for the first time ever, you don't know what's happening in something I'm writing until you read it! Some lemon zest, but that's all I'm telling you!

I'm hoping to have this story completely up by the end of the day...then I'll move on to the others starting with the completed ones and then moving to the WIP's.

## BPOV

After we finished dinner, I expected Alice and Jasper to head out, but Alice hooked my arm and walked me over to the laundry closet. "Okay Bella, let's look at this wardrobe of yours." I laughed at the serious tone she took with me. We started sorting my clothes into loads and she shook her head. "It's not a bad start, but you need more eveningwear, you are seriously lacking some dresses."

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Jasper called out from the kitchen. "Alice, not everyone wants to be a fashionista, leave Bella be."

Edward came out carrying three beers, handing one to each of us before grabbing Alice's neck and saying, "Bella isn't your life-size Barbie, she's beautiful just the way she is." Then Edward kissed me on the forehead and went to sit back at the table with Jasper.

"Hush, that's exactly why I want to do this for her. Bella's got an amazing body; she's a size 2, for crying out loud. Besides, this is between us." Alice turned to me and tapped my arm. "Don't worry; I'm going to make you my pet."

I started the washer and sat on Edward's lap. "Hello."

Edward smiled up at me, "Hi."

Just then, Alice bounded over to Jasper and winked at me before exclaiming, "I have an idea, let's play quarters!"

"Alice you have a horrible alcohol tolerance." Edward said, shaking his head.

"We won't drink, but if you land a quarter then you get to ask someone a question."

"I'm not sure-" Edward started before I interrupted.

"That sounds fun; I'm going to go get a glass." Edward looked at me with pleading eyes, but I just smiled as I went into the kitchen. I may have to answer a few of Alice's queries, but I would get a lot more answers.

Twenty minutes later, I knew about Edward's childhood hijinks with Emmett, how Alice cried when her parents dropped her off at summer camp, and why Jasper decided to become a therapist, among other things. Meanwhile, I had only told them about my parents, my career as a dancer, and why I opened the bar. As I bounced another quarter into the glass Edward huffed, "Hustler,"

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which immediately set the table to laughing.

"Okay, Edward, how did you become a writer?"

Edward smiled and took a swig of his beer. "I read constantly as a kid and was always writing in journals, so I knew I wanted to study creative writing. And then, during my junior year, Alice convinced me to take this random film class with her. When we got to the section on film noir, I became so fascinated with it. These characters make all the wrong choices and trust all the wrong people, put themselves in impossible situations and doom themselves to these fates. It was so gritty and dark and stylized, and I couldn't stop writing. I worked for a while on my first novel and finished it a year later. I sent it out to a bunch of places and got a lot of rejection letters. So finally, I sent it to Tracker Publishing and they liked it and wanted to meet me. I had lied and told them I was 28, because a lot of the adversity I had met was because of my age. So when I got in the room with my publisher, Victoria, I charmed her out of throwing my 21 year old ass out, and fifteen minutes later, my book was being published and I was told to start working on my next pitch. The rest is history."

Edward took another sip of his beer, but I could hardly see him. Listening to him talk about his work, the passion and the drive, was so amazing. I felt myself wishing that someday he would have that kind of enthusiasm when talking about me. Edward picked up a quarter and landed it in the cup. "Ha, about time!" I smiled and I felt his hand on my knee under the table. "Bella, why'd you transfer to UW, I mean, if you hated the idea when you were 17, what changed your mind two years later?"

Ugh, I hated talking about this, but Edward had been so good with everything else, so I should be able to tell him the next chapter of my craptastic story.

"When I decided not to move in with my dad, I was angry. My mom was dying and leaving me all alone, Charlie had always been like some distant relative you saw at weddings and funerals, he had never wrapped his head around being a dad, and when I stopped visiting him, he took it bad. But I did want to know him, I thought that being nearby, I could start it off slow. Build a relationship with him and let it progress without all the drama that living in that tiny house

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would have brought with it. So we moved here and I took a drive over to his house one day. His police cruiser was parked out front, so I knew he was home. I walked up to the door and knocked. Charlie answered and he was shocked. I told him that I wanted to get dinner with him sometime and work on us. I wanted to know him; I wanted him to know who his daughter was. But he told me he didn't have a daughter, and that I shouldn't come by anymore. That was seven and a half years ago and I haven't seen or heard from him since." I downed the rest of my beer and then looked up at the three pairs of eyes that were on me.

Edward had stopped moving the hand he had been using to rub my leg during my story and took my hand, pulling me onto his lap and tucking me against his chest, resting his cheek on my hair, and gently rubbing my back. I looked at Alice and realized she had tears in her eyes, she reached across the table and I took her hand without leaving Edward's arms. "Bella, I'm sorry." Alice smiled sweetly, and then from right above my head I heard Edward growl.

"He doesn't deserve you." The fierceness in Edward's voice took me by surprise. I looked up into his eyes and kissed him, hard, not caring that we had an audience. When I broke the kiss, I turned on his lap so that I was resting my back against his chest and his arms were wrapped around my waist.

Alice emptied the quarters out of the cup and then took one of them and bounced it in. She looked at me and smiled. "What's your favorite city?"

I knew that Alice chose this question to give me a break from heavier topics and I was grateful, plus I think this story would surprise the hell out of them. "That's easy, New York."

"When did you go to New York?" Alice asked, and I wasn't even going to bring up that she should have to land another quarter before she could ask that.

"Leah and I went there as a graduation present to ourselves. Leah studied English and now she's a high school English teacher, and she's always been a huge Shakespeare buff, so she wanted to go and see Shakespeare in the Park. She'd done all the research, and the show that year was *Much Ado About*

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*Nothing.* The production had a few big names in it and had gotten amazing reviews so we got to Central Park at 4:45am and totally thought we were set, but even then there were close to 100 people on line. Tickets weren't handed out until 1pm so we settled in with our quilt, and our bag of food, books and games. There were these two musicians, Jared and Paul, in front of us and we started talking with them. They bought us lunch from a deli that delivered to the line and we found out they were getting tickets for a bunch of friends who had day jobs, so we told them we'd ask for two each and give them our extra two. They took out their instruments, which they had because they had come straight from a gig the night before, and started singing for us. We joined in singing and laughing and people started giving them money. It was crazy. So when 1pm rolled around, Jared asked if we minded if we got our tickets separately from their friends, saying that they saw those losers all the time, but they wanted to spend some time with us. So we agreed, and then told them we would meet them at the theater around 5pm. We went to our hotel, and when we met up with them, they took us to this area of the park called Cedar Hill, and we sat there and ate hotdogs, and kebabs, and pretzels from a vender and then they brought us to this place where there was a little gazebo hidden by a pond and we watched the ducks and turtles swim around. Then we went to the show, and it was phenomenal. It's my favorite Shakespearean play and it was so well done. Anyway afterwards, we went for a carriage ride back through the park and then they dropped us off at our hotel. We hung out with them a lot during the week we were there and we still keep in touch. It was amazing to see New York from a New Yorkers perspective, hearing what they loved and hated, seeing landmarks with people who saw them every day, it was one of my favorite experiences and I can't wait to go back," at that moment I turned to look at Edward, "because the next time I want to show "my" New York to someone. Bring them to all the places that I love and discover new places with them." I kissed his neck and nuzzled back into his chest.

Jasper and Alice smiled at us and then got up. "Okay kids, we're going to leave you to get some rest. Bella, it was great to see you again." Jasper walked over as he spoke and gave me a hug before shaking Edward's hand.

Alice hugged us both and then turned to me. "I have your number, and I'll call you in a few days so we can plan your education. Because someone as



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gorgeous as you should have the best wardrobe a woman can get, and with me around, that's exactly what you'll have." I laughed and Edward and I walked them to the door. Alice was a trip and I loved her already.

Edward held me against the door and leaned the full length of his body against me. "Think I might get to see 'your' New York?"

I smiled and kissed him. "I think that could be arranged." Edward laughed and walked towards his bedroom. I stayed by the door, just mesmerized by him, when he turned and smiled at me.

"You coming?"

I laughed and then walked towards the guest room. "I'll be in as soon as I'm changed." I danced my way in and changed quickly into one of my tank and shorts outfits, cursing my lack of sexy nightgowns. When I returned to Edward's room, he lifted the covers for me and I climbed in next to him. He was laying on his back, so I snuggled up to him and rested my head on his heart, and wrapped my arms around his chest, quickly falling asleep with his hand tracing up and down my spine.

It was four days until Christmas and it was everything I could do to stop from freaking out. Edward and I were inseparable, and I'm not complaining that this angel seemed to feel the same twinge of pain when he was forced to be apart from me, but I had some serious Christmas shopping to do and he was making that impossible. I was relying on my staff a lot more now, with Jake or Emily bartending with Seth while he gets used to the place and I knew I needed a new waitress, like yesterday. Edward was sitting opposite me, like he does every day now, with his laptop in his lap; his fingers were flying across the keys. Every once in a while he would look at me and smile and then return to his feverish pace. I was preoccupied by the little game of footsie that was taking place under my desk and my schedule was sitting in shambles in front of me. "Fuck, I'm never going to get this figured out...I need someone else on the schedule." Edward looked up at me and smiled that heartbreaking crooked smile and my breath caught. "Oh no, you're staying fired, I think I'd kill any female who came in here and looked at you."

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"Jealous, much?" Edward laughed, but my face stayed serious.

"I don't want to see you flirting with other girls, even if it's only for the good of the team."

Edward sat his laptop down on the other chair and reached over and lifted my face, breaking my staring contest with my desk. "No one could break me free of the hold you have on me. Which is just fine by me, because I love you." I felt my eyes bug out of my head, not because I didn't want to hear it, it's just I never expected to hear it this soon. Just then my phone rang. I answered it quickly, grateful to have a moment to think.

"Ballet Studio, this is Bella, how can I help you?"

"Bella, it's Quil, can I talk to you for a moment?"

Uh oh. "Sure Quil, what's up?" Edward looked at me and I held up a finger, signaling that I would respond to him when I was done.

"Well, first I wanted to apologize for how I left, it was unfair and I know I left you in the lurch, but Claire was losing her mind and she was going to break up with me. She kept saying she would leave me before I got the chance to leave her and I had to do it. But, Bella, Claire and I talked and she told me what was really bothering her and she's fine with me working there, in fact she almost killed me when she found out I quit. And I know this is shitty, but I wanted to know if I could have my old job back?"

FUCK! "I'm sorry, Quil, I love you like a brother, but I already have a new bartender."

"Is there anything open? I'll mop the floors, anything; the thing is I really need the job."

"Quil, is something wrong?"

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"No, I mean, except unemployment, everything's amazing, and that's the thing...Bella, Claire's pregnant. She freaked out more cause she was afraid I'd run for the hills when she told me, but now I've got a kid on the way and no job."

Breathe deep Bella. "Wow Quil, that's wonderful news." Crap, I sounded so phony; I better do a better job. "Look Quil, I'll tell you what, I'm still looking for a waiter, so if you're interested, then the jobs yours. And I'll let you pick up a few night shifts behind the bar a month, if you want, so you can make the extra tip money."

"Oh my God! Bella you're amazing, do you want me to come down there or-"

"No, just tell me what days are bad for you and I'll add you to the schedule starting the day after Christmas."

"Monday's are bad for me right now, but that may change, you know, depending on Claire and the baby. I'll let you know."

"Sure. I totally understand that, by the way, congratulations. I'll see you Monday." I hung up the phone and looked up to see Edward staring at me.

"Is everything all right?"

"Yeah, Quil, my ex-bartender, is my new waiter."

"Are you sure, how do you know that he won't just up and quit on you again?"

"Quil's a great guy, it's just his girlfriend freaked on him. She's pregnant, and she hadn't told him yet and her freak out was hormonal, but he needs the job and she understands that he loves her and isn't going anywhere."

"Okay, then why'd you react that way when he was talking to you?"

You better lie convincingly, Bella. "It's just hearing how excited he is to be a dad, it made me think about Charlie, I always get this way a little this time of

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the year." Okay, half-truths work too.

Edward got up and pulled me out of my chair. He took my wrists and wrapped them around his waist, and then let go and put his arms around my shoulders and put his lips on my forehead, speaking against my skin. "I wish there was something I could do. Some way I could make this go away."

I held him tighter to me, feeling the tears well up in my eyes. "You're doing it right now. I love you, Edward. You make me feel like I'm worthy of the love of someone like you. I've never felt that before."

Edward lifted my face in both of his hands and stared at me with his deep green eyes, piercing my soul and turning my legs to jelly. "You are worthy of everything good this world has to offer you. You've dealt with more in 26 years than most people do in a lifetime, and you're thrived, where others would have settled for just scraping by. You are beautiful, and sweet, and compassionate, and loving, and good. And if one of us is unworthy here, it's me, Bella; I don't understand how you cannot see that."

That did it, some mix of awe and love and guilt, combined with his speech, caught me and I started crying. Edward looked at me with frightened eyes as the hysterics came flowing out of me and I pulled him close and kissed him hard and deep, tasting his sweet smell in my mouth and letting that calm my nerves. When I pulled away and looked into his eyes, he looked confused, but the joy was unmistakable. I kissed him once more quickly and then wiped the tears off my face and grabbed my coat and purse. "Be good. I'll see you at home tonight." As I walked past Edward, he spun me around and kissed me forcefully, and then quickly let me go and looked down at me again with that crippling gaze. "What was that for?"

Edward smiled and then leaned down to whisper in my ear. "You called my apartment 'home,' you have no idea how wonderful that sounds."

I pulled my head back and smiled, blushing a deep crimson. "Keep your pants on, Cullen. I'm only staying with you until New Years."

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"Where are you going anyway?"

"Alice has a 'presentation' for me, she told me to clear my afternoon." Edward just laughed and shook his head; apparently he knew exactly what that meant for me.

It was two hours later and I was staring at the three racks of clothes Alice had pulled from me, most of it was hanging loose, but there were enough garment bags of 'surprises' to make me feel a little uneasy. Alice came back into her office and started pulling jeans off the rack. "Okay. So, I think we should keep you far away from boot cut and flare jeans, with your legs skinny jeans are the way to go." Once she had nearly a dozen jeans in her tiny arms she started dropping them off the hangers and folding them, being sure to take off the security tags.

"Alice, thank you, really, but I'm not sure I can afford all of this."

Alice spun around and smiled that devious little smile I was beginning to learn all too well. "Bella, relax. I own the store; you'll never pay retail for clothes again. Besides you aren't paying for any of these. Once I get past all of the gift allowances, then I'll let you know and then, and only then, can you even think about worrying."

"Gift allowances?" I knew I wasn't going to like the answer to this.

"Yes. Jasper and I are giving you clothes, plus one surprise, for Christmas. Em and Rose found out I was doing this and told me how much I should set aside for them, and Edward, the stubborn brat that he is told me to do the same, although I have no idea what his other Christmas gift for you is, so don't try to get it out of me."

They're buying me a new wardrobe, I'd never even met Rose before and she was getting me a third of a wardrobe for Christmas. I'd been dating their brother for five days, this was ridiculous.

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"Alice! That's too much! I can't." I said as I took off the pair of jeans that had inspired her skinny jean epiphany and started to put them back on the hanger. Alice grabbed my hands and looked at me with a serious look etched on her face.

"Bella, first off, we come from money. I mean A TON of money, so this," she motioned behind her at the clothes, "is really nothing." She saw me beginning to object again so she quickly continued. "I know you haven't had it as easy as we have. Our grandfather set up these huge trust funds for us and that gave us a freedom that most people never know. We were able to chase pipe dreams, because we had the money behind us. That's why our mom is an interior designer, and I'm a fashion designer, and Edward is a writer. We could be. But that doesn't mean we waste money, we could live off what we were given, but we chose to make our way in the world, and now that we have someone new to share this with, we want to, plus it's Christmas. Seriously though Bella, I'm not sure if you've seen it, but you've changed Edward. I've never seen my brother so happy, so full of life and love; he's been looking for someone to love him the right way since he discovered girls. You know him, and you love him. Not the notoriety, or the money, you love 'the ward' and that's why we're doing this. I know your first reaction is to run away from all of this, but please let us do this for you."

I was completely floored and for the second time this afternoon, I was crying. Alice threw the jeans on top of the pile and hugged me, it was nice to have her care this deeply about me so quickly, so I hated that I ruined the moment by laughing.

"What's so funny, Bella?"

"You're hugging me while I'm standing here in my underwear." Alice let go and started laughing with me.

"Okay, so are we good with the clothes?"

I smiled at her. "Yes."

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"Great now let's move onto something a little more fun."

Alice took all of the jeans and pulled the tags off of them and placed them in large shopping bags. As she started doing the same things to the shirts and skirts I had tried on earlier, I decided to ask. "Alice, how much is a gift allowance?"

"Nothing obscene, even by your standards. Remember, I create and sell clothes so that every woman can be fashionable, I don't sell \$450 jeans and \$180 tops. Now grab the first garment bag and open it."

I did as she said and gasped at the beautiful dress I was holding in my hands. "Alice?"

"Hush, now trust me, this deep shade of blue will look amazing with your skin tone. Now let's try it on."

Alive helped me slip into the dress and I was astounded by how truly amazing I did look, and I've never thought that about myself. We quickly moved on through an elegant black dress and a fun pink dress before Alice took a deep breath. "Alright, these next two go together, and these are especially from me to you." Alice opened the first bag to reveal a calf length, fitted, black wool coat. "You need a proper winter coat, and this will show you off while still covering you up. Plus, it will make the reveal so much better, because he won't be able to see a stitch of this dress until you take the coat off." I tried it on and it fit like a glove. I laughed a little at the fact that I only had my underwear on after taking off the last dress and now I looked like a vampire flasher with the collar on this coat. "Silly." Alice chided me and I took off the coat, refusing to argue anymore about money as she hung it up and then opened the next garment bag on that rack. "This you have to wear to our parents' house on Christmas, and please promise that Edward won't see you in this until I'm there, I want to be there for the grand reveal."

"I promise." Just then Alice pulled the dress out of the bag and I nearly cried for the third time. The dress was the single most beautiful thing I had ever seen. It was strapless, which I never wore, and green, with a large red bow

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across the waist and red swirl design on it. It stopped just above the knee and there was red toile sticking out of the bottom in a slightly jagged, but somehow symmetrical shape.

"What do you think?" I looked at Alice and I struggled to find my words. She helped me put it on and as she stood behind me, she beamed. "I knew the toile would come down to your knee, that way you wouldn't have to worry about it being too short."

"Alice, did you design this?"

She smiled, nodding her head at the obvious shock in my voice. "I started sketching it when we got home from Edward's the night we all hung out, and I locked myself in here like a Project Runway contestant trying to get it finished for you."

"Alice I love it. It's so beautiful, there aren't even words."

"I'm glad you like it. We'll pack these bags right, cause I only want you bringing certain things to Edward's. Now that you got the locks fixed at your apartment, you can bring the rest home. This dress definitely goes to your place. And get ready there; make him pick you up, like a gentleman."

I took off the dress and Alice put it back in the garment bag. I let my eyes wander and noticed there were still plenty of garment bags on that last rack. "Alice, what's all of this?"

Alice's devilish grin returned and I instantly regretted the question. "This is as much a present for Edward, as it is for you. You mentioned that you didn't have any sexy nightgowns, so I pulled a bunch of unmentionables and sleepwear."

The next 45 minutes were filled with giggling and gasping and innuendos, and even though my boyfriend, and the only other person to see me dressed like this, was her older brother, Alice never flinched.



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After we finally finished shopping for my clothes, Alice and I went shopping for Christmas presents. She helped me pick out a beautiful Murano glass figure for her parents, a porcelain doll for Rose, some digital sports tracker thing, which got the score to every baseball game and updated in real time, for Emmett, and helped me search for some obscure film noir movies that I knew Edward didn't own. Alice got slightly miffed when she found out I had already ordered the other part of his gift, as well as her and Jasper's gifts, and refused to tell her anything. Finally, I picked up some cute toys for the seven nieces and nephews I would be meeting and a painting of the new New York City skyline, for Irina and her husband, because that's where Irina was from originally.

After saying our good-byes, I drove my overflowing Kia Rondo to my apartment and unloaded everything but the two bags that I was allowed to bring to Edward's.

After work, I was ready to see Edward. I got back to his apartment and parked in his spot, as Edward had taken to parking in the garage down the street so I wouldn't have to walk at night if he didn't meet me. I carried my two bags up to the apartment and let myself in. I went straight to the guest room and grabbed one of my new nightgowns out of my bag along with a pair of underwear and then ran off to get my towel and toiletries. I snuck into Edward's room and went straight into the bathroom. I got myself situated and jumped in the shower with the door slightly cracked.

I stood under the hot water, letting it wash over me and relax my aching muscles. I was rinsing the shampoo out of my hair when I heard the door creak open and immediately blushed and smiled to myself. "Bella?" Edward was still half-asleep; he had taken so long to wake up that this was going to take drastic action if I was going to get his attention before the hot water ran out.

I took a deep breath and pulled the shower curtain back so that he got an unobstructed view of me. I was pleased to see his eyes bug out of his head as I smiled and told him. "I was wondering when you were going to come join me."

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*I took a deep breath and pulled the shower curtain back so that he got an unobstructed view of me. I was pleased to see his eyes bug out of his head as I smiled and told him. "I was wondering when you were going to come join me."*

## EPOV

If I could choose how to be woken up, then without a doubt, I would choose this. Bella was standing in front of me in the shower, naked and dripping, with a smirk on her face, which was flushed by the blush that her little exhibition had caused. She laughed and gripped the curtain again, "If you're not coming in, then I'm gonna finish up and I'll see you in the morning."

Bella turned and I quickly pulled off my shirt and pajama pants. I jumped in the shower behind her and almost fell, which made Bella laugh at me again. "Trust me; there is nowhere else I'd rather be in this moment." Bella pulled me close and I practically attacked her, I kissed her so forcefully. I pressed her up against the shower wall and was quickly flicking and licking her nipples. She giggled and grabbed two handfuls of my hair and then moaned. I became hard so quickly, it was almost shameful, but Bella just called out my name, so I stopped caring. Bella pulled my head up to hers and I began kissing her neck. She gasped as she felt my erection press against her and then it hit me. "Fuck!"

"What's wrong?" Bella looked at me concerned and I looked down at the shower floor.

"I forgot to get condoms."

Bella smiled at me and said, "That's fine."

That's fine? I mean, I assumed she was on birth control, but still we've never...  
"Are you sure?"

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Bella stared at me, confusion clear in her eyes. "Do *you* have a reason why we shouldn't?"

"No, I just...I'm going to shut up now."

Bella smiled and kissed me again. I reached down and as I was getting into position so we both didn't wind up on the shower floor with a broken hip, when Bella grabbed my waist. "Wait." Then, Bella kicked her leg up and rested it against my shoulder. I looked at her leg, in shock that she could lift it that high, when she laughed. "Dancer, remember."

I laughed with her and then put my hands on either side of her head and thrust into her. Bella immediately gasped and arched her back, which pushed me further into her than I had ever been before. I was both surprised and thrilled by Bella's boldness tonight, and although I didn't know its cause, at this moment I didn't care. I continued to thrust into her as she moaned and clutched onto my shoulders. Within a few moments I was nearing my climax and from her panting and lack of coherent phrases, I assumed she was as well. I continued faster as she let out a cry. "Edward!"

I don't know what it was, but something about the combination of her body trembling around me, and the way she called out my name, and I was done for. I rested my head on the tile next to hers as I helped her lower her leg. In that moment, the water suddenly changed and she shrieked at the frigid temperature. We quickly rinsed off and got out of the shower to towel off. I picked up my pajamas and put them on, going into the bedroom to give Bella a moment to do whatever she may need to, before joining me in bed.

When she came out, she was a vision of beauty; with the bathroom light illuminating her, she almost appeared to have a halo, my angel. She was wearing a nightgown I had never seen before and her hair was pulled back into a messy bun. She climbed in next to me and snuggled up against me as I wrapped my arm around her and fell asleep.

I woke up later that morning with Bella in my arms, and thought about how I could do this for the rest of my life. I had never wanted someone so badly, it

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hurt to think about being separated from her, and the only thing that could ease that pain is the thought that nothing could make me leave her. As these thoughts played in my head, Bella sighed and then slowly opened her eyes to find me looking down at her. "Morning, Love."

"Good morning, Edward," she said with a yawn. As she nuzzled into my side I began to feel the nagging of the questions I had put off last night in the shower, I hated that they were ruining my reverie, so I thought I better ask them quickly, I'm sure that I'm making a bigger deal about this than was necessary.

"Bella, can I ask you something?"

Bella looked up at me and then moved back a little so she could prop her head on her hand to see me better. "Of course Edward, what is it?"

Be tactful, Cullen. "I don't want you to think that I didn't enjoy last night, because I absolutely did, but you seemed different...bolder, and I wanted to know what brought it on. Did something happen?"

Bella smiled sweetly and stroked my cheek with her left hand. "Yes, silly man, you happened. You told me you loved me, and you've put up with my crying, and the issues and the insecurity. Plus, when I was with Alice she told me some things and it made me realize just how special this is. By the time I got home, I wanted you so bad that it hurt and I trust you enough to know that you would have stopped it if there was a reason to. Because I can't stop this Edward, I'm in too deep."

I pulled Bella to me and kissed her, slowly at first, and then I opened my mouth, deepening the kiss, as she grabbed my hair and pulled me closer still.

### **BPOV**

Only two more days to Christmas, and as I walked into the bar around 11am, I felt a little sick, my stomach was doing little flips, and I was glad I had my doctor's appointment as a reason to cut out early. Quil was sitting at the bar talking to Seth, who was loading beer into the ice. "Hey boss, can I talk to

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you." Fuck me, Quil, you're doing this already?

"Sure Quil, what's up?"

"Well, on Wednesday, you told me that you'd see me Monday-

Oh, thank God! "Sorry Quil, it was a brain fart. I just said it because it's the beginning of the new week, you're off Monday. Is that seriously why you came down, you could have called?"

"No, Claire wanted one of Jake's Grilled Cheese, bacon and tomato sandwiches. I just thought I'd mention it while you were here."

"Okay, I'd hate to think of you coming out in this weather for something like that. Seth, if you need me I'm going to my office quick before I leave for the day."

Quil looked at me in shock. "Leave for the day, since when do you take time off?"

"Since she started dating Edward Cullen." Seth said as he headed back to the kitchen.

"Wow, good, you should have a life outside of this place." Quil smiled and gave me a quick hug as Seth came back with his order. "Merry Christmas, Bella."

"Merry Christmas, Quil."

I went into my office to get through some of the end of the year paperwork before my appointment. About an hour later, there was a knock on my office door. "Come in." Edward walked through the door looking sad, and I immediately stood up and went to his side. "Edward, what's wrong?"

"Did I do something to upset you?" Edward's eyes were glued to his shoes, so I ducked my head down to force him to look at me.

## Dance With Me

"No, why would you think that?"

"You never came home this morning." He looked up at me and I could see the pain in his eyes.

"Edward I did come home, I just slept in the guest room."

"Why-"

I interrupted him before he could go any further. "I have a doctor's appointment in an hour and I needed to sleep, and I knew if I went to bed with you, I would *go to bed* with you, and I couldn't." He looked at me confused again. "It's a gynecologist's appointment."

Recognition spread across his face. "Do you want me to take you?"

I laughed at his bravery, "No, and don't worry, it's just a check-up. It's his last appointment of the year so I had to get it in today."

"It's a he?" Edward sounded shocked at the revelation.

"Yes, he's been my doctor since I moved here. Why does that bother you?"

"No. Okay, well then I'll see you when you get home."

"See you then."

## EPOV

I don't know why, but something about Bella had been nagging at me all day. Little things that I hadn't given a second thought to began creeping up, and I felt like something was missing, like I didn't know some vital piece of information. I didn't want to push her, but by the time she got home, I was losing my mind.

## Dance With Me

Bella walked into the apartment and she looked so tired. I wonder how well she slept last night, wishing she hadn't felt the need to sleep in the other room.  
"Hey, love."

Bella looked over at me and smiled. She walked over and snuggled up next to me on the couch. I put my arm around her and she let out a sigh. "Hi."

"How was your appointment?" I was trying to ease into the topic, but I wasn't quite sure how to.

"Fine, everything's normal." Bella's hand fell to her stomach as she lightly rubbed it. Oh. My. GOD!

"Bella, you haven't seemed like yourself the last few days, and I know you said that Christmas makes you a little sad, but I wanted to know if there was anything else." Please say no.

Bella sat up to see my eyes still frozen on her hand, which had come to rest over her belly button. "Edward, I'm not pregnant. Look, I've just been stressed and nervous and I don't feel very well. This has been moving fast, and I'm not saying that I'm regretting this, because I'm not, but it's different and I'm trying to readjust. I'm so used to waiting for the bottom to drop out on me, so I've been looking for it everywhere."

"Bella, I would-" I started before she interrupted me.

"Please, let me finish. I'm not expecting you to hurt me. It's just with this doctor's appointment...my mom died of breast cancer, and because of that I get anxious before my appointments because I'm waiting for the day that they find something."

I felt like such an ass at that moment. I had taken something that had nothing to do with me and spun it into a conspiracy. I've been working on this book too much. "I didn't mean to push."

"It's okay; you were just worried about me, that's why I love you."

## Dance With Me

### BPOV

Fuck me. I've been avoiding Edward for the past day and a half and I didn't know how I would face him when I did see him. He senses that there is something wrong, but I have no idea how to tell him. Everything about us is taking place at light speed which means this conversation is coming up so much sooner than it normally would. I should be taking comfort in how he has handled everything so far, but this is different.

Edward was sleeping when I got home around 3:30. I slipped into bed with him and watched him sleep. I would tell him after Christmas; it was the only way to be fair to both of us. I couldn't keep trying to act like everything was fine, I had to make it fine.

I woke up around 9am and Edward was still asleep. I got dressed before getting a piece of paper and leaving him a note on my pillow. When I pulled out of the parking garage I was glad I only had to drive seven blocks. I was happy that the kids would be able to enjoy the white Christmas, but I hated the snow. I made it to my apartment and quickly began getting things together. I organized the presents into one of my large fabric Steve Madden bags, God I love how much shit you can fit in them! And then set Irina's and Edward's secret gift next to it. Then I got into the shower, because I was way too nervous to eat breakfast.

The shower did nothing to dispel my nerves, because as soon as I got relaxed, I would start to think about what Edward's family would say. I was beginning to feel like I was intruding on a private event, even though both Edward and Alice told me I was crazy. I shaved my thoroughly because Alice's masterpiece left a lot more bare skin than I was used to wearing out. I finally got out of the shower and began to scrub and polish and paint. It was nearly 11 when I began my hair and I knew that soon Edward would be knocking on my door. I curled my hair more than its natural wave while I did my makeup. Watching the ringlets fall down to my shoulders and along my back, as I took out the rollers, I thought about Edward's reaction to seeing me and then remembered to get my new coat.



## Dance With Me

I applied some hairspray, knowing my hair's tendency to get bored with the hairstyle I chose and try to get creative, and then got my dress. I slipped it on and then looked at my bare neck. I had no nice jewelry, thanks to my expert jewelry thief, and the dress just didn't look complete. I put back on the three rings I always wore, my claddagh, which I now wore with the heart facing inward, my grandmother's emerald ring, and my mother's turquoise band. Then I clasped my charm bracelet and looked at myself in the mirror. Alice was a miracle worker; I had to give her that. I knew I had a nice body, but I never knew how to show it off properly, and this dress was perfect. I put on a pair of kitten heels that would appease Alice, while still allowing me to walk, and I heard the knock at the door. "Coming!" I yelled as I threw my scarf around my neck and then put on my coat, fixing my hair before walking to get the door.

### EPOV

I woke up to the buzzing of my alarm at 10am, which was weird because I hadn't set my alarm. After hitting the button, I rolled over and was surprised to see that Bella wasn't there. On her pillow was a folded piece of paper, I sat up and opened it.

*Edward,*

*Don't worry, I just went home to get ready and pick up my gifts. I would have much rather stayed in bed with you this morning, but I've discovered it's better to listen to Alice, instead of fighting her. Pick me up at 11:30 and we'll head over to your parents in your car. I love you.*

*Bella*

Damn Alice, I should have known she was behind this. Well, Bella was right, it's really not worth it fighting Alice on things, especially when it came to clothes, so I got out of bed and began to get ready myself.

It was 11 and I was ready to get over to see Bella, so I threw my coat on over my blazer and grabbed my bags of gifts from under my little tree. I walked down the block to the parking garage I now parked my car in and gave my pass

## Dance With Me

to the attendant so he could get my car. I put the bags of gifts in the back seat and tipped the guy who brought my Volvo around and drove over to Bella's apartment. I parked in the last visitor spot and got in the elevator up to her apartment.

The ride was taking an eternity and I wanted to be at her door already. When the doors slid open, I walked down the hall and knocked on her door. I heard her call out from inside and my heart sped up. A moment later, the door flew open and Bella was standing there in a long wool coat, her hair curled and falling off of her shoulders and down her back. She smiled as soon as she saw me and blushed, I loved that I had that effect on her.

"Merry Christmas, love." She spoke, breaking me from my daydream and stealing my line.

"Merry Christmas, sweetheart." I took a step into her apartment and kissed her, she reached up, clutching on to my hair and pulling me closer. I decided to use her distraction to try to see exactly what Alice was hiding from me, but as my hands found her coat's top button she grabbed my wrists.

"Sorry Cullen, you have to wait a little longer before opening this present."

We both laughed and then she turned and handed me two large, wrapped frames. Before putting on her gloves and grabbing her purse and a large bag of presents.

"What's all this?" I asked as she locked up her apartment.

"Christmas presents for your family." We walked over to the elevator and she pushed the button for the garage.

"Bella, you didn't have to do this."

Bella looked up at me and laughed. "I wanted to do this. Alice and Rose got me all those clothes for Christmas, plus I know Alice has something else for me. And do you honestly think I was going to show up empty handed, when your

## Dance With Me

parents are inviting me into their home. Plus, I had to get the kids and Irina and her husband something, so Alice helped me find the perfect gifts."

"You are too much." I smiled and kissed her forehead.

"Nope, I'm just enough." Bella smirked up at me as the doors opened and we walked to my car. We put her gifts in the back and then I held the door open for her, closing it behind her, before walking around the car and getting in.

I pulled out of the garage and turned onto the snowy streets. I had been driving for about five minutes, when I saw Bella close her eyes.

"Bella, is everything okay?"

"Can you slow down?" She opened her eyes and looked at me, pleading.

I inched my foot off the gas. "I hate driving slow."

"Well, there's snow on the ground."

I laughed and reached out to rub her hand which was sitting in her lap. "Bella, I'm a good driver, I've never been in an accident."

Bella took a deep breath and I moved my hand back to the wheel. "You may be a good driver, but that doesn't mean anything when some asshole plows into the side of your car." I looked at Bella again and she was still nervous, so I slowed the car even more and kept my eyes on the road. She was right, all it takes is someone else not paying attention to catch you off guard and cause an accident.

Twenty five minutes later, we pulled up to the house and Bella gasped. "You like it?"

"Edward, it's beautiful."

## Dance With Me

I got out of the car and walked around to open her door, and the whole time Bella was fidgeting with her purse. I opened her door and helped her out, closing the door and wrapping my arms around her waist. I leaned in and kissed her tenderly, before pulling back and looking into her eyes. "They're going to love you, they'd be crazy not to."

Bella took a deep breath and smiled, blushing again, adding to the pink her cheeks were already due to the biting cold. "Okay, let's do this." She giggled and then we got our packages out of the car. Bella insisted on carrying all of her gifts so that we only had to make one trip.

We got to the door and Bella rang the bell. I looked at her, but then I heard Alice yell, "They're here," and I realized that Bella was still following orders.

### **BPOV**

As soon as I heard Alice's voice from inside the house, I felt a tightness in my chest. I don't do this, I don't meet the parents. Normally, I would have been dumped by the time this would have come up. But that was Edward, jumping the gun, in the best possible way...I hope. God would this door ever open. I looked up to see Edward looking down at me, smiling, he mouthed "breathe" and I did. Just then the door opened and I was looking at the only man who could have fathered my personal Greek God.

"Merry Christmas, son. You must be Bella, welcome." He looked at me and ducked his head, moving out of the way to let us in, but all I could do was focus on his beautiful green eyes, Edward's eyes, and his perfectly coifed blonde hair. We stepped into the entryway and we were lead into the living room, which looked like it was out of a design magazine spread on holiday decorating. We sat down our bags and Alice was practically bouncing up and down. I took off my gloves and scarf without unbuttoning my coat and tucked them in my pockets. Edward took off his coat to reveal a deep red shirt under a black blazer and a pair of dress slacks, I had always loved Edward in jeans, but he cleaned up amazingly. I took a deep breath, well aware of the audience, and slipped my coat off my shoulders and handed it to Edward's father who was waiting to take it. I heard Edward gasp beside me and then I felt his arms wrap

## Dance With Me

around me as his lips brushed against my ear.

"You look striking, my love." He led me forward, working his way around the room. "These are my parents, Carlisle and Esme."

Esme came forward and hugged Edward as Carlisle hugged me and then we switched. "I'm so pleased you were able to join us, my dear, Merry Christmas." Esme was beaming as she looked at us and I saw her eyes glance down to our joined hands.

"Merry Christmas Esme, Carlisle."

Just at that moment, Alice bounded over and threw her arms around me as Jasper followed her, shaking Edward's hand. "Merry Christmas Bella! You look stunning, if I do say so myself." Everyone laughed as we continued to make our way around the room, saying hello to everyone. Irina was gorgeous and her husband, Laurent, was tall and handsome, with dreadlocks as long as my hair. Their children, Kate, Garrett, and the twins Jane and Alec, were all very well behaved.

Finally, Emmett came over and hugged me before introducing his "Rose." As soon as I saw her, I froze. It was only for a second, but the recognition was mutual, Rosalie and I had met before. I felt my stomach knot up and I was instantly glad that I hadn't eaten anything yet. Edward noticed my reaction and came up behind me.

"Bella, are you feeling well?"

"I'm fine." I managed to say without betraying my shock.

"We've met before, and I'm sure Bella's as surprised to see me, as I am to see her." Rosalie smiled, but in her eyes I could tell that this was far from over.

FUCK ME! Of all the people to have married Edward's brother, it had to be one of the few people who knew my secret. I smiled and then Rosalie introduced her triplets, Carmen, Angela and Ben. These three were obviously

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Emmett's children, they were loud and rambunctious.

It felt nice to be with such a large family at Christmas and I found myself hoping I would be invited back next year. We sat on the couch, surrounded by his family, and began to open presents.

"Kids, why don't you look and see what Santa left at my house." The kids dug through the bag of Edward's presents and tore open the paper as everyone watched. Next, I handed the kids my presents and they smiled and thanked me before running off to play with their newest toys.

Next, I handed Irina and Laurent the painting and watching her face light up when she saw it was all the thanks I needed. "Alice told me you were from New York City and I love it there, so when I saw that, I thought it was perfect."

Rosalie opened her porcelain doll as I thanked her for the clothing and when Emmett saw my present he freaked out. "Mighty Mouse! This is awesome, now I don't have to wait for the crawl on ESPN!"

"I'm glad you like it."

"Seriously, Edward, don't let this one get away. She's a keeper."

Rosalie smacked his arm and turned to me. "Thank you, this is a perfect addition to my collection."

Alice had lost her patience so I gave her the small box that held her present. She smiled and opened it, revealing the two-tone green glass pendant with the bronze printing of two intertwined hearts and a crown, hanging from a copper chain. I looked at her and smiled. "It's a Luckenbooth. It's a Scottish symbol that is given to friends and loved ones. You've been so amazing to me; I thought it would be a nice way of saying 'thank you.'"

"Oh my God, Bella, I love it." Tears welled up in her eyes and she reached for my gift. I opened the package to see an ornately designed box. I opened it to see a card with a poem and a picture of the dress I was wearing, while Alice

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was still making it. "It's a hope and cope box. You put little notes and photos and things that remind you of all the happy times, and when something makes you sad, you look in the box so that way you know that whatever is bothering you, it will pass."

Well, I guess it was my turn to cry now. "Alice, thank you. It's beautiful."

After that, Jasper opened his leather bound copy of *The Art of War* and Esme opened the Murano glass ballerina. "Bella dear, thank you, this is lovely. But you shouldn't have."

"I wanted to. It was so nice of you to welcome me into your home like this." Edward leaned in and kissed my hair and I placed my hand on his knee.

"Bella, it is truly our pleasure." Carlisle smiled and I knew that Edward had given them a cliff-notes version of my story, and that's why no one was asking why I wasn't with my own family. I was grateful to have him sitting beside me.

"Okay, my turn!" Edward announced. I reached into the bag to get his movies and then grabbed the other large frame. Edward opened the movies and his eyes lit up like the kids had earlier. "Bella, these movies are great, how'd you know?"

"I went through your DVD collection and then looked online for film noir suggestions based off of them." He smiled as I handed him the other half of his present. He ripped off the paper and laughed immediately. "It's a shadow box. I put in one of your Ballet Studio shirts and one of your tips from your first night, as well as some bottle caps. I also dried a few of the flowers you got me, and I put in a copy of the police report. I thought that we could add to it as more things happen. "

Edward smiled and looked down at me through teary eyes. "I love you." He kissed me and it was only Emmett clearing his throat that stopped it from moving further. "Here, this is your present." Edward held out a small jewelry box. I opened it and gasped, the pendant was an old-fashioned key with a four leaf clover shape on the top with the chain running through it, and a diamond

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heart set in the part of the key that you would stick into the lock. "It's the key to my Irish heart."

The tears started again, and my hands were trembling. "I know you lost most of your nice jewelry, so I wanted to help replace some of what was lost." Edward took the box out of my hands and fastened it around my neck. I was so touched, but I couldn't help feel Rosalie's eyes on me. She was probably thinking about the same thing I was. I smiled and looked up at him through my tear filled eyes.

"It's beautiful, thank you." I rested my head against his shoulder and he wrapped his arms around me.

We sat there for a few minutes, before Rosalie stood up. "I'm going to go see how much trouble the kids have gotten into. Bella, why don't you join me, it'll give us a chance to catch up." I didn't want to have this conversation, especially with Edward around, but I knew it was unavoidable.

"Sure, I'd love to." I squeezed Edward's hand and then got up and followed Rosalie into the other room.



# Buried Under the Guilt

Okay this Author's Note is a little long so bear with me. I'm back! I told you I would be updating as quick as I could, and here it is...I didn't want to make you crazy trying to figure out what the secret is.

This Chapter took a lot out of me. I was crying when I was writing the "discovery" scene, and I had jumped ahead to get that done right and then went back to the night before. But it killed me to write it. I'll go in a little more detail in my closing note, because then you'll know what I'm talking about. And if you cry easily, like I do, you may want tissues handy, because I cried.

And also to Christopher Morley, the author of *The Tree That Didn't Get Trimmed*, because not only is the story cute, but it is oddly appropriate. (BTW if it's the same CM that CM Park is named after than that's just freaky...right Patti?)

Okay, well, the mystery is revealed...NOW!

## **BPOV**

I followed Rosalie down the hall to where the children were playing, fully aware of the fact that I was in deep shit. Rosalie checked on the kids, mainly to make sure the cousins were playing nice, before turning back to me.

"He doesn't know." It wasn't a question.

"No Rosalie, he doesn't."

"Are you planning on telling him?"

"Yes. Look, I know I have to tell him, but it's so hard. We've been dating for nine days, and I've only known him for fifteen. Trust me, I've dealt with this long enough, and it isn't easy. When you dealt with it, Emmett was there, when I tell Edward-"

## Dance With Me

"He'll be devastated."

"Or angry." I looked down, not wanting to think about Edward's reaction.

"Bella, Edward has been looking for you since high school. Trust me, Emmett's told me everything about how he was back then and everything he's ever wanted in a woman, and you're it. He's not going to like what you're telling him, but he isn't going to dump you for it. This isn't something you could have helped, he'll realize that. But if you wait, knowing how he feels about you, he'll get upset that you didn't trust him."

"I know. He's already told me he loves me, and I'm pretty sure that he's gonna make the hard sell for me to move in with him." I sighed, wondering if he'd feel that way tomorrow.

"Edward's like a debutant at her coming out party. He's watched Irina, and Emmett, and Alice find the people they were meant to be with, and he's had a string of girls who want to 'date Edward Cullen.' He's so excited to have someone who cares about who he really is, that he's pushing for forever and you haven't even known each other a month. You have to be honest with him, not just about this, but the speed he's moving at...everything. I can tell you love him, so just tell him." Rosalie moved closer and put her hand on my shoulder.

"I'm going to tell him tomorrow. I just didn't want to ruin Christmas."

"If you need to talk, I'm here."

Angela walked over then with one of her books. "Bella, will you read me this?"

"Sure honey." Rosalie left as I sat down on one of the floor pillows and Angela curled up into my side and Ben and Carmen sat down in front of me. As I began reading, Irina's children stopped playing and came to sit by me, as I continued with the story.

**EPOV**

## Dance With Me

Rosalie and Bella had been gone for about fifteen minutes when Rosalie came back alone. "Where's Bella?"

"She's reading *The Tree That Didn't Get Trimmed* to the kids." Rosalie answered, sitting next to Emmett.

"Angela loves that story; I think I've read it to her fifty times." Emmett commented as I left the room.

I walked down the hall and saw Bella surrounded by my nieces and nephews. I stayed in the doorway, watching her for a moment. As she read, the kids hung on her every word, and Angela, who is the shyest of Em's kids, was cuddled up to her, completely comfortable.

I listened closely as Bella finished the story. "Something nice, the old firs believe, always happens to the trees that don't get trimmed. They even believe that some day one of the Christmas tree poles will be the starting point for another Magic Beanstalk, as in the fairy tale of the boy who climbed up the beanstalk and killed the giant. When that happens, fairy tales will begin all over again." Watching her with them, I imagined an image that I wanted so badly it hurt. I saw Bella surrounded by our children, reading them stories, teaching them how to dance; Bella would be an excellent mother.

Just at that moment, Angela ran over and pulled on my hand, yanking me out of my daydream. "Uncle Edward, Bella just read us a story. Did you see?"

I picked up my niece and rested her on my hip. "Yes I did, did you like the story?"

"Uh huh! She reads better than daddy." Just then Bella laughed and stood up from the pillow she had been sitting on.

"Well, I'm glad you liked it, sweetheart." Bella walked over and kissed Angela on the top of her head and Angela threw out her arms and practically jumped out of my arms and into Bella's. From the other room, my mom called out that dinner was ready and I placed my hand on the small of Bella's back and led her

## Dance With Me

into the dining room as the rest of the kids ran out of the room.

### **BPOV**

Edward led me to the dining room and Emmett came and took Angela from me. We sat down, while the children's table buzzed with excitement. The conversation kept up steadily through dinner, Rosalie talked about what the triplets were doing in kindergarten, and it was still hard to believe it's been almost six years since I met her. Emmett told stories about different fires he'd been called to, and Irina beamed about the quiet beauty that living in Alaska offered her and her family. When Esme asked Edward about how we met, I felt his hand rub my leg under the table.

"Well, I had come up with this idea for a story with a female heroine, and I needed to do some research on a girlie bar, to come up with a setting, but I also needed to find someone to loosely model the main character after. I asked this girl who works at my publisher's, and she told me about Bella's bar. I went in there and asked for 'Bill,' who turned out to be 'Bell' and was pleasantly surprised. She told me that if I wanted to get to know the place, I had to work there, so I started there the next day. A week later, I knew I was in trouble, because I was already falling for Bella. So over that weekend, when her place was robbed and she needed somewhere to stay, I offered her my guest room, and that was it. She's had my heart since she first danced out of the kitchen carrying that case of beer, and by some miracle, she loves me too."

Everyone smiled and said "awe" as Edward grabbed my hand and kissed it. Alice was squirming in her seat across from me, and I saw Jasper place his hand on her back and lean in to whisper in her ear. She quickly straightened up and began bouncing again.

"Okay, Edward, I don't want to steal your thunder, with the whole 'wonder of new love' thing you have going here, but Jasper and I have an announcement." She paused for a brief moment to build up a little anticipation before squealing out. "Jasper and I have set a date! We're getting married March 25th." Cheers and gasps came from all around the room.

## Dance With Me

Esme was the first to say something. "Oh, congratulations honey. But why so soon, that doesn't give us much time."

"Mom, we've been engaged for almost two years, running all over, trying to find the perfect venue, and never getting the date we wanted. So Jasper and I finally decided to do it on our own. We found a great space, it's an old theater, and they rent the space, but you have to organize everything else. But I'm such a perfectionist, I would have driven everyone crazy anyway, so I already know everything that has to get done, I just have to do it. And that leads me to my next announcement. Rosalie and Irina, you've already told me that you'll be in my Matron of Honor and my bridesmaid, but I need another one so...Bella, will you be a bridesmaid?"

FUCK! ME! My eye's bugged out of my head, which luckily, was an acceptable response. "Alice, I'm honored, truly, but don't you have any friends you'd rather ask?"

Alice smiled and looked at me. "Bella, I don't know if you've noticed, but I'm kind of kooky, and I don't really have girlfriends, and I feel closer to you than I do to most other people. It's almost like we were destined to find each other. And I guess the fact that you found Edward worked out too!" Everyone laughed and I took a deep breath, trying to steady my voice.

"Alice, I'd love to." What else could I say?

Conversation quickly turned to dresses and flowers and centerpieces, and I smiled and nodded when need be, but I was thinking ahead to the conversation I would be having tomorrow. When everyone had finished eating, I offered to help Esme with the dishes so that everyone could continue talking about the wedding.

Edward looked at me as I got up from the table. "You want me to come in and help?"

I laughed and smiled up at him. "Thanks. But I'm fairly certain I'll survive it."

## Dance With Me

I followed Esme into the kitchen with a handful of dishes. I had never owned a dishwasher, so I took my place by the sink, scraping the plates into the garbage and then rinsing them and handing them to Esme, who was loading the dishwasher.

"Thank you again for having me, Esme. I've never had a big, family Christmas before."

Esme smiled at me and continued taking the dishes I was passing to her.

"Edward told us a little about you, I hope you don't mind."

"I'm actually glad he did. I played it down a little with him, but I still deal with it every day. And especially this time of year, everyone goes home to see family, and I have nowhere to go." I wiped a tear that had begun to fall and went back to rinsing.

"It must have been hard growing up without a mother, I can't imagine missing out on my children's lives, and they're grown up now."

"I have moments, something will happen and I'll think, 'God, I wish my mom was here right now.' But it helps that I have all of the things from the studio in the bar, and these." I shook my left hand, which had my mother and grandmother's rings, as well as my bracelet.

Esme took my hand and looked at it. "They're beautiful, what are the charms?"

"They're different types of Celtic knots, they each mean different things." I began pointing them out as I spoke. "This one means 'artistic,' this means 'luck,' then there's 'inspiration and 'new life.' This is a bird, which is the messenger between worlds, bringing messages from the heavens and this is my Celtic astrological sign, its muin, the animal associated with it is the swan. My mom was Irish and she was really into it, so she'd buy me charms for different things." I shook my wrist a few times, watching the charms rattle and jingle. I hadn't thought about this bracelet in a while, and it made me a little sad. I went back to rinsing dishes and Esme waited a little while before asking her next question.

## Dance With Me

"What happened to your mother's studio?"

"She sold it to one of the other dance instructors. She knew that if it were up to me, I'd never sell it, so she did and then left me the money." Esme and I began wrapping up the leftovers and putting them in the fridge.

"Bella, I'm glad Edward found you. He's been alone for so long, and I'm glad to see him so happy. You're a lovely girl, and I can see how much you love him." Oh God! I did not need to hear this right now...I'm flattered she feels this way, but it's not making the anxiety about tomorrow any easier.

I almost ghosted through the rest of the day, spending most of the time playing with Angela, mainly because everyone left me alone while I was with her. Dessert came and I told stories about my former dance career, ignoring most of the other conversations.

After dessert, we packed up our gifts and went to go, before it got too dark. As we walked to the car, I felt a heavy weight settle on my shoulders. Edward put our bags in the car and opened my door for me. I got in and stared at my hands. Edward got in the car and reached up to stroke my face. "Thinking about your mom?"

The tears slowly started to streak down my face. "It's not a bad thing. It's just, I've never had a Christmas like this, and I want it so bad!" I started to cry even harder and I couldn't hold it in any more. Edward pushed his seat back and pulled me onto his lap. I threw my arms around his neck and he pulled me even closer.

"Bella, you will have it. You're going to have everything you've ever wanted."

I turned to face him and kissed him hard. When he broke the kiss, he wiped the tears from my face and held me on his lap. "My family loved you, you know that right? Especially my parents. And watching you with my nieces and nephews, I know it's ridiculously early to say this, but that seems to be the theme for our relationship, so, I want to make babies with you. I want a huge brood with my smile and your beautiful eyes. I want us, forever." Why did he

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have to mention kids? I can't believe he's already seeing this go that far. You could round up 100 guys at random, and if you asked them if two weeks after meeting a girl if they would bring up kids, 99 would say no, I had to find the one who was already picking out baby names.

I kissed him quickly and then climbed back to my seat, straightening my dress. Edward fixed his chair and drove away from his parents' house. It was a quiet drive home, and all I could focus on was the eyes that would flash over to me, checking to see how I was holding up, before returning to the road. We got back to his apartment and I went to shower.

I tried to calm down, but that wasn't happening, so then I just gave in and cried as the water ran over me. When I did get out, I put on one of my nice nightgowns and made my way to Edward's room, anxious to feel his arms around me. I walked in and closed the door, before climbing into bed with him. Before I could get comfortable, Edward pulled me on top of him and kissed me passionately. I rolled onto my back, without breaking the kiss. I had spent the past few days avoiding Edward, which meant I hadn't been with him since that night in the shower, and I needed him tonight.

Edward kissed down my neck to my collarbone, massaging my breasts and making my heart race. I reached down to his bare shoulders and then found his hands, bringing them to the hem of my nightgown and guiding his hands upward, pushing it up and off of me. He growled against my neck when he realized I wasn't wearing any underwear, and continued until I was naked under him. I grabbed his shoulders again and used my feet to push his pajama bottoms down to his knees and he kicked them off into the covers. Edward hovered over me, and removed a wet piece of hair from my eyes, just like he had that first night, and then entered me. I rose off the bed, meeting him, and he moaned against my skin. We found our familiar rhythm and felt the passion swell around us. Every time one of us would get close, we would slow, drawing it out as long as we could, until finally we were both ready to climax. We moved together as one, as he filled me, taking away all the pain and doubt I had been feeling. When we came, I trembled in his arms and I felt content, but that feeling wasn't meant to last.



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As the ecstasy began to ebb, I felt an overwhelming feeling of futility, like no matter how hard I tried, this moment would end, and what was coming next could be the beginning of the end. I began to cry, and Edward cupped my face, kissing my forehead and wiping my tears off my left cheek with his thumb. I grabbed my nightgown and slipped it on and Edward ducked under the sheets to find his pants, slipping them on when he had. Edward rolled onto his back and pulled me to his chest, one arm around my body, the other reaching across him to stroke my hair, holding my face to his chest. I cried silently against his chest until I fell asleep, and he never asked me why I was crying, just letting me cry, trusting I would tell him when I was ready.

### EPOV

I woke up and went down to the water. Bella was still asleep, but after last night, I didn't want to disturb her. There was something about sitting out here and watching the ferries, it soothed me. I didn't like seeing Bella in pain, but I also knew that I should wait before I pushed more, because the last thing I wanted to do was push her away. I went back to the apartment around 11:30, knowing she would have left to open the bar. I gathered my stuff, but decided to take my notebook today, instead of my laptop, because sometimes I just needed to physically write out what I was working on.

I got to the bar around 1pm and went to her office. Bella smiled up at me from her desk and I kissed her softly, before sitting down across from her. I put on my I-Pod and started writing. We sat there for hours, working on our own things, and not talking much. I was afraid to say too much, and I had no idea what was causing Bella's silence.

Bella went upstairs to handle a delivery, and about twenty minutes later, she was holding a burger under my nose. "You should eat something; I don't want you wasting away on me." She smiled, but it was a little forced, so I decided to push a little.

"Bella?"

## Dance With Me

"I know, Edward. We'll talk about it at home, okay." She sat back down and went back to her paperwork. I stopped to eat and then around 5:00, Bella picked up my plate and went back upstairs. I kept writing, using Bella's secrecy to weave the character of my female heroine. What could have made her this way, what would someone have to suffer to throw up such an intricate series of walls, that not even love could knock down. I was still writing when I accidentally wrote Bella's name on the page, I was using her for inspiration, but so far she was just "the woman," she had no name. I didn't have any white-out on me, so I went over to Bella's desk. There was none in the center drawer so I checked the small drawer on the right side. While digging through it, I found a box next to the package of post-its and thought maybe she had random supplies in there.

I was wrong. There were tons of these pill packages. They were samples of some medicine called Premarin. I was staring down at the maroon and white package when I heard Bella's voice. "What are you doing?"

"What is this?"

"I told you, we'd talk when we got home. Now, what are you doing going through my desk?" She walked into the office and reached across the desk to snatch the packet from me. This was what we were going to talk about tonight. What was going on?

"I was looking for white-out, I didn't mean to snoop."

"Well, mission accomplished." Her voice was angry, she was glaring at me, tears glazing over her eyes, making them glassy.

"Bella, what were those pills? What does it have to do with-" Oh my God! I couldn't even think the word. "You're sick?"

"No."

"Damn it, Bella, don't you dare lie to me!" I wanted to know everything. I needed to know everything. And I couldn't take her keeping this from me

## Dance With Me

anymore.

"What the hell, Edward. If I was sick, I'd tell you!" She yelled back at me and her tears started falling.

"Then what? What are these pills, and what do they have to do with what you're hiding from me?"

"They're hormone replacement therapy pills." She stared at me waiting for my next reaction, but I had nothing. I knew a little about birth control, and I remember back when Rosalie was having trouble getting pregnant, they had her on extra hormones, but those were injections, and if Bella was trying to get pregnant, she'd tell me, right. Especially after what I told her yesterday.

When she saw I wasn't going to interrupt her, she continued. "I'm not sick. But when I was 20, I had cancer."

"Bella-

She held up her hands, silencing me again. "Please, let me finish this. When my mom had cancer the first time, it was cervical cancer. She got it at 29, I got it at 20."

"What are you...?" I couldn't come up with a coherent question, so I let her continue.

"After my mom got it, I became hyper vigilant. I went for every check-up with my ob/gyn, I took care of myself, but it was in my genes. It's actually one of the easiest types of cancer to treat; it's just one of the hardest ones to deal with."

"Because of the chemo?" I knew from hearing my father talk about patients he'd had, how bad cancer treatment could get.

"No, I didn't go through chemo; they were able to handle it with surgery. Edward, I can't have children. I had a hysterectomy."

## Dance With Me

I heard the words that were coming out of her mouth, but I wasn't getting it, none of this made sense.

"The hormones kept me from going into instant menopause. But I had everything removed. I had some of my eggs frozen, in case I wanted kids someday, but it's iffy because they have a better chance of being viable if they are fertilized before they're frozen, but I didn't have anyone in my life that I would want to have children with, plus I didn't want to take away the chance of having a kid with someone else someday."

Once again, the words were all coming in to my head, but I was filing them away to think about later. The picture in my head from yesterday, Bella and our children was being torn apart at the moment. The children were gone. I had found what I wanted, and it was being taken away from me. I didn't even bother trying to wipe away the tears I was crying.

"Edward, please say something." Bella was crying again, and I couldn't stand to hear the pain in her voice.

"Why didn't you tell me? Why did you let me think about us that way, if you knew we didn't have that potential?"

"Edward, please. I hate that we may never have that potential, but we've known each other for two weeks, I don't normally have this conversation until months into a relationship."

"But we were different."

"Were?" Her voice broke.

"Bella, I wanted to live with you, I was already planning our future..."

"Edward, this has been happening so fast, I've been struggling just to keep up with the pace you've been setting, I wasn't purposely keeping this from you to hurt you. I was trying to figure out how in the hell to tell you. You don't know how hard this is for me."

## Dance With Me

"You're saying this is my fault?" I knew that wasn't the sentence I should be picking out of all that, but I didn't want to think about the rest.

"There is no fault with something like this, Edward, it just happens."

I couldn't hear anymore. I had to get out of here. I felt like I was going crazy, like I was going to fall apart. I couldn't look at her right now, I couldn't hear her voice, see her tears, and I needed to be alone. I walked around the desk and grabbed my notebook and coat, running upstairs as she called after me with her broken voice. I put on my coat and walked out the door.

I walked back to the waterfront, floored by everything Bella had told me and slowly realizing just how much had changed in the last eight hours. I sat there for over an hour crying, and when I had finally cried myself out, I headed home.

When I came through the door to my apartment and closed it, I saw a piece of paper taped to my door.

*Edward,*

*I wasn't trying to hide anything from you. I know you're in pain, but I can't be your punching bag, and if I stay, that's exactly what I will be. If we're going to survive this, you have to come to terms with it, just like I did. When you've had some time to deal with this, come by and we'll talk. If you want to. If not, then just let me know that that was your decision. I love you.*

*Bella*

I didn't even have to go to the guest room to see if she had packed up her stuff. The apartment felt empty, that was all the confirmation I needed. Bella was gone.

**Alright, so Bella's secret is that she had cancer and is now unable to have children. I got some partial correct guesses, but most of you seemed stumped. This was the first thing I came up with. When I first came up**

## Dance With Me

with the idea for this story, it was, "What if Bella had survived cervical cancer before meeting Edward, and now she had to deal with wanting a family she'll never be able to have." That was never up for grabs. Now they have to deal with hurt feelings and crushed expectations. Plus, I have a curveball in the works for them as well. Sides are chosen and there's a lot of yelling coming up. I wanted to thank my sis for not only telling me about this site, but for her support while I'm writing this story, including the novel that was her list of theories. I promise it does get better, but they fell in ass backwards, now they have to spin themselves back around and facing forward. THANK YOU! Especially after the labor of love that this chapter was, your support has meant so much.

# Another Country Heard From

**It gets dramatic and New Moon-ish here for a little bit, but they were flying down the tracks at full speed from the beginning, this train wreck was inevitable, but now they can see what's important and come up with where they go from here, if they go anywhere...**

**This chapter is another hard one to write, but as with the last one, I didn't consciously write one stitch of dialogue in the big scenes, I just listened to the characters, because they were having this fight in my head...gotta love when the voices in your head write your story!**

## **BPOV**

Packing up my things was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do, but I had to get out of this apartment before Edward came back, because I would lose my nerve. I threw my things in the shopping bags, grateful that all the laundry I had done when I first came here had already made its way back to my apartment. I grabbed my toiletries and packed my overnight bag. I took my gifts and threw everything out into the hallway. I locked his door and made my way to the elevator with my four bags and my purse in hand. The elevator ride was short and I threw everything into my trunk. I stopped for a minute and then went back up to his apartment. I grabbed a sheet of paper and stared at it, trying to decide what to say. In the end I decided on generosity, because I did want him still, and if he could want me, I would try to work this out. But I couldn't stay; we couldn't survive hateful words and tense suspicion. I finished the note, taped it to the inside of his door, where he would see it, and locked up.

When I got to my car, I drove off quickly, not sure how much longer he would be gone for. When I pulled into my parking space in the garage, I grabbed my phone. I found the number that I had put into my phone only yesterday, and hit 'send.'

"Hello?" I started crying as soon as I heard her voice.

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"Rosalie, its Bella."

"He took it bad?"

"Rosalie, I didn't even get to tell him. He found my medication and confronted me. When I finally told him, we were both angry and as soon as he knew I couldn't have kids he shut down. What makes it worse is that, three days ago he thought I was pregnant. He said I shouldn't have lied to him and made him think we could have had a future. Then when I tried to explain that I was trying to find a way to tell him...Rose he started talking about us as if we're already over. Then he just left. I don't know what he's thinking, but I'm worried about him. He needs time and I understand that, so I moved back to my place and told him to take time to come to terms with everything and then come talk to me if he wants to."

"Wait, you talked to him after he left?" Rosalie sounded confused, like she was trying to wrap her head around what had happened.

"No, I left him a note."

"Alright, Bella go home and try to calm down. It won't help you any to tie yourself up in knots. I have to take care of a few things, but I'll be by in about an hour or so."

"Okay, I'll see you then."

I hung up the phone and dialed Alice's number. "Alice, I need you, now."

"Bella?" The worry in her voice was evident.

"Now Alice, I'm at my apartment." I hung up. I couldn't have this conversation again on the phone. I needed someone here with me, and I knew she would come.

I grabbed my bags and went up to my apartment. I unlocked the door and looked around; thinking about how much had changed since the last time I had



## Dance With Me

slept here. I went to my bedroom and quickly put all my clothes away, hanging up my dress, and then putting my dirty clothes in my hamper. I threw my toiletry bag on my dresser and then took out my gift from Alice and Jasper. It seemed strangely ironic now. I went to my closet and dug out the shoebox which had all my old photos and cards and keepsakes in it and went back to my bed. I was about to start putting things in, when there was a knock on my door.

I grabbed the two boxes and put them on my coffee table on the way to the door. I opened it and Alice threw her arms around my neck and pulled me close. "Bella, what happened?" She looked at me with such concern.

"Oh, Alice." I started crying even harder. I closed the door and locked it, and Alice pulled me to the couch. I told her everything, what happened to me when I was 20, how I knew Rosalie, everything that I'd been feeling the past few days, and the fight with Edward. Alice sat there the whole time and just held me, stroking my hair. "Alice, I'm sorry, I lied to you all. I won't be upset if you don't want me to be a bridesmaid. And I completely understand if you never want to see me again."

Alice pulled back and looked at me. "Isabella Swan, if you think you can get rid of me that easily, well then, we both have a lot to learn about each other." I stared at her completely lost.

"Bella, there's no full disclosure clause on friendships. What happened to you was terrible, and I certainly wouldn't introduce myself to people, 'Hi, my name is Alice and I had cancer.' Let alone go into what the cancer took from you. Edward is my brother, and I love him, but-" Alice stood up and grabbed her coat.

"Alice, where are you going?"

"Don't worry Bella, I'm coming back, I just have to kill my brother."

I jumped off the couch. "Alice, please don't. He's suffering."

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"And you're not? I don't care how upset he is, he shouldn't have treated you like this." Alice kissed me quickly and then went out my door and into the hallway.

I locked up after her and I sat there stunned. After a minute, I grabbed my phone and dialed another number I never had before. "Get over to Edward's now, Alice wants to kick his ass." The line disconnected, evidently Jasper knew his fiancée well enough to not question me.

### EPOV

I was sitting on my couch, still holding Bella's note when there was a knock at my door. I flew to unlock it, hoping it was Bella. But as I got there, I knew it wasn't her, she wasn't coming here, and I had to find her, if I wanted to. I opened the door and Rosalie and Emmett were standing in front of me.

"Edward, we have to talk." Rosalie looked serious, but I didn't care.

"Rosalie, I-" It was Emmett who interrupted me.

"You should listen to her." It was then that I remembered yesterday, Bella's shock at seeing Rosalie, and how Rosalie had asked Bella to go "catch up" with her.

"You knew?"

"Edward, I had no idea she was the same person, I met her six years ago."

"How?"

"Bella and I both go to doctors at the same women's health group. Her ob/gyn and oncologist shared their waiting room with my fertility specialist. We started talking one day, and we shared our stories. I remember thinking, 'she's two years younger than I am. She's too young to be dealing with this.' We only ever spoke in the waiting room, and as our appointments became less frequent, we stopped seeing each other."

## Dance With Me

"How long have you known Emmett?"

Emmett looked at me. "Rose told me about her friend when she first met her, but I didn't know it was Bella until we dropped the kids off at mom and dad's just now."

Rosalie sat down on the coffee table across from me. "Edward, what are you going to do now?"

"I don't know."

"What do you mean you don't know? You love her, don't you?" Rosalie was a little harsh, and I glared at her.

"I mean, I don't know. I loved her, I mean...I still do, it's just, why does this always happen to me! I find someone who's perfect for me in every way and then just when I think I'm finally happy, it gets taken away."

Emmett stood over me. "Wait a minute, what do you mean, 'why does this always happen to me?' Nothing happened to *you*. It happened to Bella, a long time ago! It's not like she's dying. She's still the same person you fell in love with, even if she can't have kids, and there still is a chance. It may not be the 'natural' way, or the way you wanted it, but trust me, you aren't out of options. Rose and I tried for fourteen months to get pregnant, trying different treatments, undergoing different tests. And in all that time, I never thought once about leaving and finding someone who could have my children, because what would be the point if it wasn't with the woman I loved." I had never heard Emmett give such an impassioned speech. He looked down at Rose and took her hand. I wanted to believe Bella and I could have that, but I couldn't think about the future.

Then there was a knock at the door. Rosalie stood up and answered it, and Alice flew in screaming. "You ass!" She smacked me right across the face and was winding up to hit me again as Emmett wrapped his arms around her and picked her up, moving her across the room. Damn, I forgot how hard she hit.

## Dance With Me

"Alice, we had this under control, you didn't need to leave Bella." Wait, Alice had seen Bella.

"Alice, how is she? What did she say?"

Alice glared at me. "Not that you deserve to know, but she's devastated. She's blaming herself, hoping *we'll* forgive *her*. Like she's done anything that needs to be forgiven!" Alice spit the last comment and it hit home. Bella was taking it all on herself, like she always did.

There was another knock on my door. "Oh for fuck's sake, who's this, Irina? Mom? Who else did you call in?" I got the door and saw Jasper. "Of course, call in the therapist."

"Jasper, what in the hell are you doing here?" So Alice hadn't called Jasper, that's odd.

"Bella called, and told me to stop you from kicking Edward's ass. So, why are you kicking his ass, besides the fact that Bella's crying." Bella called Jasper. She didn't want Alice attacking me. I felt another wave of pain as I realized just how much she loved me, and just how much that love was killing me right now.

"Bella told Edward that she had cancer a few years ago and now she can't have kids." Rosalie repeated for Jasper, but I didn't want to hear it anymore.

"Alright, Alice, you and Rosalie take your car over to Bella's. Rosalie, if Alice stays over at Bella's, then you can take her car and we'll pick it up tomorrow. Emmett, you should go home, you have a shift in a few hours, right?"

"Yeah, I'm working 8 to 8 this week." Emmett clapped me on the back, having let go of Alice, before kissing Rosalie and heading for the door. "You need anything, call me bro."

"What about you?" Alice was glaring at Jasper now.

## Dance With Me

"I'm going to stay and talk to Edward for a while. If you're staying at Bella's, call me."

Rosalie rested her hand on my shoulder before leaving with Alice, who turned to get in one last parting shot. "You make this right Edward, because I love you, but I will never forgive you if you hurt Bella like this." Rosalie tugged on Alice, who left without saying good-bye to Jasper. Jasper closed the door and sat next to me.

"Okay Edward, I'm putting on my therapist hat for like five minutes, and then we can just watch some TV. What's going on with you?"

I don't know why, but I felt this would be my only chance to talk it out with someone who wouldn't hit me afterward, so I just let it go. "I knew she was hiding something, but I never believed it was this. I know I haven't known her long, but I was picturing a family, a whole future and I lost that. I don't know how to move on. I don't want to just keep acting like nothing's wrong, and she left, she told me it was my decision if I wanted to work it out."

Jasper nodded. "That's good."

What the fuck! "How in the hell is that good, shouldn't we work this out together?"

Jasper laughed at my exasperated tone. "You have things you need to figure out. You know you love Bella, and you know you want children, what you have to decide which is more important. Would you rather be the biological father to children with someone else, or be with Bella, even if that means that you might be forced to adopt?"

I felt the pain overtake me as Jasper set up that either/or situation. But I knew the answer. "Bella."

"Okay, now Bella's right to give you space. I'm sure when she went through this; she dealt with what her diagnosis meant for her. She mourned the loss, now you have to."

## Dance With Me

"What are you talking about?" I really was way too emotional to follow him right now.

"Edward, you lost an entire future, a whole life that you wanted, and you have to deal with it. Find out where you are, and then go talk to Bella, if you move too quickly then you'll take it out on her when it catches you off guard, and she doesn't deserve it. She's been nothing but honest with you." I shot him a look and he let out one hard laugh. "Edward, you met her on the 9th, today's the 26th. She's been telling you pieces of her history from the beginning, easing you into everything, so she could tell you what you found out today. The fact that she was planning on telling you today at all, just proves how much she loves you."

Fuck, I hate how I acted. But I was just so angry at the situation. I put my head in my hands. "She thinks I hate her."

"I'm sure she doesn't, she's just hurting too. But you can't do anything to help her until you help yourself." Jasper squeezed my shoulder and I sat back on the couch, looking up at the ceiling.

"Thanks Jazz, I needed someone on my side after that." I pointed towards the door.

"Edward, there aren't sides to something like this. They're upset because they love you and they don't want you to mess this up, but they shouldn't have ambushed you like that. Just take some time for you, and give Bella some space until then. Okay?"

I shook my head. "Sure, doc."

We both laughed, and then Jasper reached for the remote. "Alright, what's on your DVR, cause if Alice makes me watch one more episode of *TLC's What Not To Wear*, I'm going to scream."

"Have you seen Nurse Jackie?" Jasper shook his head. "Oh that's it, you'll like it, it's a comedy about a pill popping nurse, but that's not even why it's so

## Dance With Me

great...you know the guy married to the chick from 90210, the one who was in that vampire movie last year?"

"Yeah."

"He plays a doctor and he has the best character quirk ever written...he has Sexual Turrets, when he gets nervous, or worked up, he grabs Edie Falco's boob; it's hilarious."

Jasper laughed with me and handed me the remote. "Works for me."

### **BPOV**

After Rosalie and Alice got back, I got my report on Edward, he was miserable. I don't know if that was supposed to make me feel better, but it just made me feel worse. Rosalie was a big help, telling me all the options we had, if we tried to get back together and wanted kids. Meanwhile, Alice started defending her big brother, saying "he's thick, but he's not stupid." Whatever that means. So I was left with cautious optimism when the girls went home, because I really just wanted to be alone. I poured myself a glass of merlot and went to my room to read, since I still had no TV.

I woke up at 8:45, to the sound of someone pounding on my door. When I got to the door and looked through the peep-hole I was shocked. I unlocked the door and threw it open. "Leah! I thought you were coming back tonight?"

Leah dropped her bag and threw her arms around me. It felt so good to have her back, that I started crying.

"What's wrong?" She pulled back and looked at me. "Nice necklace, by the way, did Tolkien give you that?" I laughed and lifted my hand to the chain.

"It was a Christmas present."

Leah came in and sat down. "Seriously, though, why the tears lady?"

## Dance With Me

"Uh, Leah, you've missed a lot in the last nine days." I looked at my hands and she let out a sigh.

"Oh, boy. Okay, tell me what happened, so mama can fix it."

I let out a quick laugh, because Leah was like a mama bear, and I was her little cub. I started from the beginning, telling her every detail, from the desktop sex, to the break-in, to Christmas and the whole fight yesterday, and the whole time she just listened. Then when I was done, she stared at me in shock.

"I don't even know where to start...no wait, that's a lie, please tell me you used some Clorox wipes or something on that desk, because I eat on that thing." We both laughed, and it felt good, laughing with Leah made me feel normal, and I hadn't felt that way in days. "Okay, serious question, you've never had a guy go...?" Leah trailed off suggestively, using her hand to make sure I knew what she was talking about.

"No. The only man whose head has been in-between my legs, is my ob/gyn. I know it's stupid and you can't see anything, but it freaks me out. Plus, if he was done there, my scar is practically at eye level."

"So he's never noticed it." I shook my head and she left it alone. "Okay, but the sex is good?" She smirked at me and I winked back. "Alright, so Beckett's good in bed, nice to know."

I laughed again. "Will you pick an author and stick with it; I'm getting lost in all of your English Teacher name dropping."

"Whatever. So you guys moved too fast, and it turned into a train wreck on ice, did you ever try to slow it down?"

Ugh. I knew she was going to get to this sooner or later, I had just wished it would have been later. "No, I didn't mind how fast it was, I loved him, and it wasn't a problem until it exploded."



## Dance With Me

"Loved? There is nothing past tense about this, if you didn't care anymore, you wouldn't be hurting this bad. But honestly, you need to move slowly. You trust quick and then you get Charlie'd, and then you go into hiding, and I'm not going to let you do that this time." I looked at her and then she reached into her bag and pulled out a CD and threw it at me. "Moving on to randomness and awesomedom...look at who I ran into."

I picked up the CD and looked at the cover. "Mistaken for Bears...you ran into Paul?"

She nodded all excited. "And Jared, and the rest of their band. This is the demo that got them their new record deal. They're playing clubs and bars and stuff on the West Coast, trying to create buzz. Jared's gonna call you in a day or so, they're coming to Seattle sometime in the next few weeks and they want to play at Ballet Studio."

My eyes bugged out of my head. "Seriously, that's amazing! Holy crow...it'll be so good to see Jared and Paul. How's the band sound."

"Amazing, the new members are younger, but they blend so well. That's your copy. Okay, now that I've got you smiling again...where's my present, bitch!" I laughed with Leah as she took my gift out of her bag and I went to get it out of my room.

### EPOV

I was feeling a little better this afternoon. Like the Mack truck had hit me, but decided against backing back over me. I couldn't write though, so I decided that watching Bruce Willis blow shit up in the *Die Hard* series was the way to go. I was watching Alan Rickman kicking ass and taking names, when there was a knock at my door. I paused it, hoping Alice was planning on playing nice today, when I was surprised by the same stunning, Native American girl I had seen once at Ballet Studio. "Leah, right?"

"Oh good, you know who I am, and I guess you know why I'm here." Leah pushed past me, and sat on the couch.

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"Make yourself at home." I sighed and closed the door.

"Hey, don't get snarky with me Mister; you don't want me as an enemy." Wait, was she saying she wasn't my enemy now? I looked at her confused and she smiled. "Breathe Faulkner, I come in peace." I almost asked about the name thing, but I decided against irritating her.

"Okay, why are you here?"

"I'm here to chew you out a little." She saw me roll my eyes and stopped me. "Hold on, I don't yell, and I don't hit, which is more that I can say for your kin. I'm doing this out of love, boy."

She had lost me again. "Love?"

"Yeah, love. You're on my good side, despite recent events, so I'm gonna give you a piece of my mind, but it's gonna help you out."

I definitely wasn't expecting this, but I figured that considering that she was Bella's best friend, it couldn't hurt to listen to her. "Alright, let me get my helmet." Leah laughed and I felt a little better. "You want anything, a drink, or a snack maybe?" I picked up my soda and went to take a sip.

"Nope, I'm good. So, first off, I guess you gave up on taking her on a date once you got her into your apartment."

I choked on the soda so hard it almost came out my nose. "You don't pull punches, do you?"

"Why dance around it."

She was right though, I had told Bella I wanted to take her out, but after the break-in, that hadn't even entered my mind. "Holy shit, I told her I loved her, and I've never taken her out on a proper date! Did she tell you that?"

## Dance With Me

"Well she told me you asked to take her out, but never told me about the date, and if there had been a date, she would have told me."

"Fuck!" I shook my head at how ass backward I had gone about everything.

"Don't beat yourself up, you've been good to her, you just skipped a few steps. Oh which is the next point, and it's a big one. Move slower with Bella, she won't tell you if it's moving too fast, but it scares her. She'll fall with you, and then she gets screwed and she closes herself off."

"She's been hurt a lot, huh."

Leah took a deep breath. "Oh yeah. Her mom dying was hard, because she had to watch her suffer, and then she was so scared of leaving everything she knew and instead of understanding that, Charlie fucked her over. Don't pull a Charlie, 'kay, because I don't want to have to hurt you."

"Charlie fucked her up that bad? What's the story there?"

"How much do you know?"

"I know that she stopped visiting him when she was twelve, and then when her mom died she didn't move here, but when you guys did move here for school, she tried and he told her he didn't have a daughter anymore." I got angry just thinking about that, and then realized I wasn't much better right now, even though I was working towards being with her again, I turned my back on her when she needed me to be there with her.

"Charlie's a drunk. Forks is the only town he could be Sheriff in, cause nothing ever happens there. He works and when he's off he drinks Vitamin R like its water. I know he took the divorce from Renee tough, he's like Bella; he doesn't adapt to change well. So when Bella stopped going to visit him he got annoyed, but when she chose living on her own over moving with him, he didn't care about her reasons, he saw it as a betrayal. He took Bella divorcing him, harder than he took Renee doing it. So when she came to see him, he was so bitter, he told her that she had cut him out of her life, and she couldn't undo that now on

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a whim. She cried for a long time over him, and he wasn't worth one tear. After that, she'd love someone and they go the way of the dodo, so she doesn't let new people in, and they hate being shut out, so they don't bother." I was getting a much clearer picture of Bella, and I hated myself even more now.

"I walked out on her. I shouldn't have done that." Leah looked at me.

"If you had stayed, would you have said something worse than you already had?"

"Probably."

"Then its good you left, she still thinks you're coming back, so it's okay. Which is something she never does, she's stopped waiting for them to come back, so I know you did something right. If you're not though, let her know, sooner rather than later."

"I'm coming back; I just have to 'mourn the loss of the future I had seen for us.'" I felt like an ass saying it out loud.

"Jasper, right?" We both laughed and it felt good to do it. I don't know why but now that Leah had dropped the hard exterior...I felt better.

"Yup."

"Okay, well here's another thing. Don't make promises. If you can't guarantee 150% that it's gonna happen, don't say it is, she gets disappointed easily, and I hate seeing her sad."

I had to ask. "Leah, how is she?"

"She's putting on a brave face, which I'm sure you are too. She's struggling, but you're good for her, and she's keeping the faith that you still love her."

"What's she struggling with, exactly, so that way when I go to her I know that I've worked out her biggest issue with me."

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"She's worried you won't come back, no one ever has before, they say they will but, they never do." Leah looked around the apartment.

"Leah, you keep saying I'm good for her, how can you know that?"

"Bell's been shutting down over the last few months; she only really went to the bar. Here's the thing, her mom's two bouts with cancer were seven years apart, and it was the hormones that caused the breast cancer. Bella just reached her six year anniversary of her surgery, so it's almost like she's waiting for them to find the cancer. She wasn't planning too far into the future, because she doesn't know how long she'll be able to live it. But from the way she talks about you...you got her out of that. So, be the guy I know you can be, and keep her planning."

It felt good to know that I had helped her...but it didn't help how shitty I felt now that I knew how deep the hurt I caused was going. I'm sure I'll never truly understand how bad I fucked up, but I'll do whatever it takes to try and make it right. "Hey Leah, how'd you know where I lived, I'm guessing Bella doesn't know you're here?"

"Seth and Emily looked up your personnel file." I looked at her shocked and she laughed. "Helps to have family in the right places, Seth's my younger brother."

I laughed with her and then she got up. "Okay, Edward, I've got to go and come up with an elaborate lie, explaining where I ran off to, and why lunch took two hours to get. I'll talk to you later." I walked her to the door.

Almost immediately after she left, I felt the sadness and numbness that I'd felt since I last saw Bella come back and I quickly gave up on the movie. I had more information, I was better equipped to see Bella again, when I was ready, and I was far from that. It was almost 6:30, so I decided to sleep the rest of the day away.

My dreams were bad. I saw Bella's broken expression, her angry tears. I heard her words and saw the family that would never be. I saw the night turn into

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day, and back to night, as I was jolted awake over and over again. 12:15am. 4:50am. 10:20am. 2:47pm. 6:32pm. I had no desire to eat, I couldn't even get myself out of bed. It was around 9:30pm when my cell rang, I looked at it and saw Alice's name pop up, and I didn't want to talk to anyone right now. I was in mourning, and after my conversation with Leah, I finally started to really understand just what that meant. It was 11:30pm when I was woken up by a loud pounding on my door, I heard it, but I just rolled over. I didn't care. Then I heard keys in the door and the door slam shut. Damn Alice, this was not the reason she still had a key to this place. My bedroom door flew open and the light came on. I squinted and heard Jasper's voice.

"What the hell, Edward. Why weren't you answering our calls?"

"I was sleeping. I haven't felt good today."

Jasper went to my dresser and pulled out some clothes and threw them at me. "Get up!"

"Dude, what the fuck is your problem, you're the one who told me to get in touch with my emotions and 'mourn,' what could be so important that I have to get up and dressed at 11:34 at night."

Jasper looked at me as if his face was carved from stone. "Edward. It's your mom."

**This is the longest chapter in page length yet, if not words, and it took a long time. I struggled with the end and whether to do it this way or reveal more and make the end a completely different cliffhanger. But in the end, I felt this was the best, because in the next chapter, you get everything at once and the flow feels a little more manic, which is the mood of the chapter. Don't get angry with me. More coming soon! If you want to guess about Esme go for it...otherwise your readership is always appreciated, but reviews make me giddy. I had fun with Leah in this one, she's more of the Leah Jake knows during, and possibly after BD, when she's not trying to make everyone miserable. Bella needed her to be that, and Edward needed a glimpse into the Bella before he knew her.**

# Limbo, Lunacy & SelfLoathing

## EPOV

*Jasper went to my dresser and pulled out some clothes and threw them at me. "Get up!"*

*"Dude, what the fuck is your problem, you're the one who told me to get in touch with my emotions and 'mourn,' what could be so important that I have to get up and dressed at 11:34 at night."*

*Jasper looked at me as if his face was carved from stone. "Edward. It's your mom."*

What's my mom? I was way too disoriented to follow him unless he was obvious. "Jazz, what are you talking about?"

Jasper stood at the foot of my bed and took a steadying breath. He was always so calm, what could have him so worried. "Your mom was in a car accident."

"What!" My mind was spiraling, I jumped up and threw off my pajamas, quickly trying to get dressed, but my limbs were failing me, as I struggled to get my pants on. "What was she doing out? She's always a careful driver, how did she get into an accident?"

Jasper handed me my shirt as I finally got my jeans zippered. "She was coming back from a meeting with a new client, it's been snowing all day, and some kid crashed into her. They think he was drunk, but they don't know yet." I looked at him and I couldn't feel my face. I knew I was crying because of the jagged breaths I was taking in. Jasper put his hands on either side of my face and held it tight, trying to get me to calm down. "Breathe."

I took in a deep breath. "How bad is she?"

"She's not good." Jasper stopped short, as if he was debating whether or not to

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tell me something.

"Jazz, tell me."

Jasper sat on my bed and I grabbed my socks and shoes, pulling them on as he talked. "Emmett was on duty when they got the call about the accident. The car was so twisted, he didn't even recognize it. They were trying to get the drivers out of both cars when Emmett got there. He went to help with your mom's car, without even knowing it was her. When the Jaws of Life got the door open enough for them to get to her, the EMT moved your mom to get her on the gurney and that's when he saw her face. He told his captain and they let him ride in the ambulance. Your dad was at the hospital, and when the nurse came to tell him he ran down to the ER, and they had to kick him out with Emmett. Laurent is watching the kids at your parents, but everyone else is at the hospital."

"That's why Alice was calling earlier."

He looked at me. "I thought you said you were sleeping?"

"I woke up and heard the phone, but I thought she was calling to give me hell again, so I ignored it and went back to sleep." I put my head in my hands. If I wasn't such an ass, I would have been there two hours ago with the rest of my family.

"Come on, Edward. Let's get you over there."

I grabbed my notebook and threw it in my messenger bag, slinging it over my coat as I locked the door.

The car ride was quiet. Jasper was being extra careful, what with the foot of snow that had fallen during my haze. When we got to the hospital, we went up to a small waiting room down the hall from where she will be moved after surgery. My dad arranged for a private room as soon as he could, trying to keep himself busy. I rounded the corner and Alice flew out of her chair and into my arms, sobbing.



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"Edward, I'm so sorry!" I wrapped my arms around her as Irina and Rosalie made their way over to us.

"There's nothing to apologize for Thumbelina, you were just looking out for your friend." I held Alice close to me with my left arm and then opened my right arm to hug Rosalie and then Irina. Emmett and my dad were sitting next to each other staring at the floor. My dad finally looked up and walked over; Jasper took Alice from me as my father hugged me tight.

"My son, you had us so worried when we couldn't get in touch with you." My father was crying. I think I can count the times I've seen him cry on one hand. My mom was in the hospital and they had been worrying about me.

"Sorry, I went to sleep and I didn't hear my phone. Do we know anything yet?"

"Your mother's in surgery. They won't know anything for a little while yet." My dad went back to sit down and I sat next to Emmett, tucking Alice under my arm on the little loveseat. Jasper stood against the wall staring at his feet.

"Do they have any idea what happened?" I was asking Emmett, and he took a deep breath.

"Some nineteen year old was heading to a party and he decided to pre-game before going to pick up his friends. He was doing about 90 or 100mph on the stretch of road leading away from the water. Mom was on her way home and..." Emmett trailed off for a minute before starting again. "He crossed the middle line and plowed into the front end of her car and sent her off the road into a tree."

"Where is he now?" Jasper asked, which was good because I desperately wanted to know, but didn't have the strength to ask.

"He died on his way to the hospital." My dad whispered.

Everyone became silent again and we began to wait. It felt like it was killing me, slowly but surely, with each tick of the clock and I couldn't take it. Then

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finally the surgeon came out. "Mrs. Cullen has suffered some major injuries. We were able to control the internal bleeding, and it looks like we won't have to go in again, but as you know, Carlisle, there are no guarantees. What has me more concerned is her head injury. We won't know how bad it is until she wakes up."

"When should that be?" I'm sure my father knew the answer, but he wanted the doctor to tell us.

"I can't say that right now, Carlisle. She was unconscious when she came in, and hasn't shown any sign that she is close to regaining consciousness."

"So she's in a coma?" Emmett asked looking up at our father.

"For the time being, but with head injuries, this isn't uncommon. Your mother's body is trying to heal itself."

"Do you know when she may wake up?" Alice spoke so low it was barely audible.

"No. It may take a few days for the swelling to go down, and then it's a waiting game after that. I'm truly sorry that I can't tell you anything more positive, or concrete." The surgeon shook my father's hand before walking back down the hall.

"Okay everyone. I know you all want to stay. But she won't be allowed visitors for another few hours, and I really think that it would be better if you went home and got a little rest, and came back later this morning."

"Dad, we-" Alice started before he interrupted her.

"Alice, I'll call you if anything changes, but if you're going to stay with your mother, you need to take your breaks where you can get them. There's nothing more we can do for her now." My dad walked over and hugged Alice.

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"Dad, do you want me to bring you a change of clothes from the house." Irina asked as she walked over to hug dad next.

"Thank you, dear."

We all hugged each other and then made our ways to our different cars. Alice and Jasper drove me home, but as I got to the elevator, I realized the last thing I wanted was to try to sleep. I needed something to take the pain away, I looked at my watch; it was 3:35am. That made the decision for me.

I ran the seven blocks that separated us and was knocking on her door in a matter of minutes. She'd still be awake; she only got home about twenty minutes ago now. The lock turned and the door opened. I looked up at that moment and my lips were on hers. I pulled her close and I was home, all the pain melted away. But after one blissful moment, I felt her hands on my chest, pushing me away. What the hell was I doing? I was potentially screwing up the one thing that had a chance of bringing me happiness. I let go of Bella and looked at those deep brown eyes that stared at me in confusion.

"I'm sorry." I ran to the stairs and flew down them, not wanting to wait for the elevator.

I walked back to my apartment and locked the door. I went straight to my bed and fell asleep, not even bothering to take off my jeans. All I wanted to do was sleep, and pray that I'd wake up and discover that this was all some horrible, booze soaked dream.

It wasn't a dream. It was a nightmare, but it was real. I looked at the clock and it was 9:30. I got up and jumped in the shower. When I got out, I threw on some clothes and called Alice.

"Hey, Edward." There was none of the normal cheer in her voice, and that made all of this so much more real.

"Alice. When are you heading over to the hospital?"

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There was a heavy sigh on the other end before she answered. "Jasper had a patient, so I'm waiting for him."

"You want to ride with me; Jazz can meet us when he's done."

"I'd like that. Give me 15 minutes and I should be ready."

I snickered at the idea of her being ready so quick. "My 15 minutes, or yours?" We both laughed.

"Just get over here. Love you, Edward."

"I love you too, sis."

I hung up the phone and grabbed my bag. I drove over to Alice's apartment and she was waiting outside for me. She climbed in and grabbed my hand. "Did you get any sleep?" Alice asked.

"I didn't go right to sleep, but once I did, I was out."

"You've been through a lot in the past few days. I'm sorry for making it worse."

"Alice, that doesn't matter now. How are you?"

"I can't think about it. Edward, I'm so afraid to walk into that room and see her in that bed." Alice started to cry and I ran my hand along her shoulders, trying at some pathetically vain attempt to console her.

"If it gets to be too much for you in there, we'll go sit somewhere together. Have you spoken to dad?"

Alice looked up at me with tears still in her eyes. She wasn't wearing any makeup, which for someone like Alice, who got grounded for wearing makeup to school in the seventh grade, was significant. "Just after you called, there's been no change."

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I slid my hand down her shoulder, to her forearm and squeezed it once before pulling away from the curb. We got to the hospital soon enough and made our way to the fourth floor. When we got to the room, Irina was waiting outside.

"Hey guys." Irina cooed as she hugged us both. "Before you go in there, I wanted to talk to you for a second. When you go in, it's going to be a shock, and if it's too much for you, then step out and take a breath. I know you're going to feel like you can't leave her, but..." Irina started to tear up. "It's okay to let this get to you," Irina's tears began to fall as she took in a sharp breath, "just do what you feel you have to. Don't feel like going for a walk or to get something to eat is a bad thing, because it's going to wear on you."

I hugged Irina one more time and then took Alice's hand and opened the door.

To say what I saw in that next moment was surreal would be a complete understatement. My eyes went straight to my mom as I heard Alice gasp next to me. She looked so tiny and fragile, covered in bruises, her forehead bandaged up, and a cast on her left wrist. I had seen my mom asleep before, but this was so different, like she was a sleeping beauty no kiss could awaken. I banished that thought as soon as it entered my mind. She would wake up, she had to.

Our dad was sitting on her right side, holding her hand in his; he leaned in to get close to her ear. "Darling, Alice and Edward are here to see you." He kissed her hand and moved, ushering us close to her side. "Talk to her, she can hear you."

Alice perched herself on the bed, while I took the chair. "Hi, mommy. It's good to see you. I need you to wake up for us though, can you do that, just open your eyes." Alice continued crying as she pled with our mother.

"Mom, its Edward. You have to get better for us. Nothing makes sense without you." I looked up for a moment and saw a bag of groceries on the dresser across from the bed; I turned to face my dad. "What's all that?" I motioned with my head towards the bag.

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"It's little snacks and drinks and things. Bella brought them by earlier. She's something special, your girl."

I looked at him and felt Alice shrink next to me. "Bella was here?"

"A little while ago. Why wouldn't she come, she loves you Edward." My father looked at me as confused as I had to look.

"We're not together at the moment, how did she...?" Now I understood Alice's reaction to Bella's name.

"I'm sorry Edward, she called to talk to me this morning, and when she heard my voice she asked what was wrong and I told her." Alice looked at me with such pain in her eyes.

"It's okay Alice. She's your friend." I began rubbing Alice's back when one of the monitors began beeping and blinking. Alice and I jumped up and my dad had his hands on us in a second.

"It's just her IV, its empty." He grabbed the remote that was wired to the bed and pressed the red "Nurse" button.

A voice came out of the speaker on the control. "Yes?"

"Mrs. Cullen's IV is finished."

"Okay, Dr. Cullen, I'll send someone in there in a moment." The speaker cut off and my father placed the control back on the bed.

"I'm going to go down stairs and check my phone. I'll be back up in a little bit, do either of you need anything?"

Alice shook her head as my dad hugged her to him. "No son, take your time."

I couldn't get out of that room quickly enough. I ran to the elevator and took it to the main floor. I walked out one of the side entrances and turned on my

## Dance With Me

phone. I had voicemails. I held down the "1" key and soon was being prompted to enter my password. The automated voice came on, "You have eight new voice messages, first message." Fuck me, eight messages.

"Edward its Rosalie, I just got a call from Emmett, I need to talk to you as soon as you get this." I deleted it as soon as the message ended.

"Edward...its Alice...mom..." Alice couldn't get out any more as she sobbed into the phone and quickly disconnected. I deleted it and got to the message Jasper had been forced to leave after Alice couldn't.

"It's Jasper; I don't know how much of Alice's message you'll understand. But your mom was in an accident. Call us as soon as you get this." Delete.

"Edward, it's your father. Call me as soon as you get this." My father's voice broke and the line disconnected. Delete.

"Edward, its Irina. We've been trying to get in touch with you for over an hour. Please call us." Delete.

"Edward, where are you? Bro, you have to get down here now. Just come to dad's hospital and ask at the front desk, we're all here waiting for you." Emmett's voice sounded so strange, like Alice's this morning, he wasn't my brother Emmett, or Lieutenant Cullen; he was some third person I had never heard before. I quickly deleted his message, never wanting to hear that voice again.

"Edward, son, where are you? I'm starting to get worried about you. Please call someone to let us know that you're okay." I hated that they had had to spend time worried about me, while my mother was in surgery; I cursed my selfishness as I deleted his second message.

"Edward, it's Jasper again. I'm coming over to your apartment, and if you're not there, I'm going to search every single one of your haunts until I find you. We're losing our minds over here, and we need to know that you're safe." Jasper was another person whose voice I didn't recognize, he was always cool,

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calm, and collected from the first moment I met him. He was Emmett's freshman roommate and an army reservist. He worked with soldiers coming back from war, and he was another person I rarely saw rattled. I deleted his message and shut off my phone. I knew it was a stupid thing to hope for, but I wished one of those messages had been from Bella. But she had come to the hospital and left without seeing me, and I couldn't help but wonder if my moronic move last night was why she hadn't waited for Alice.

I went in and walked to the stairs at the end of the hall. I climbed up to the fourth floor and stopped, unable to go back yet. I sat on the top step, against the wall and hung my head in my hands. I sat there for a few minutes, and then the tears started. I cried silently, too exhausted to sob or shake, just letting them fall. I was sucked into my own little world, so the sound of her voice startled me. "Cream, no sugar." Bella stood next to me, holding a coffee cup for me. I took it from her and held onto it for dear life, staring at the lid.

"How'd you know where to find me?" I still couldn't look at her.

"When my mom was in the hospital, I couldn't sit in the waiting room, so I found different places around the hospital that felt safe. The stairwells were always my first choice too." Bella placed her hand on my wrist and the touch was electric. I looked over at her and her eyes held nothing but compassion.

"Why are you here?" She recoiled and I quickly went to make myself clear. "I'm not saying I'm upset you're here, because I'm not, but I mean. Why did you choose to come here?"

Bella smiled weakly and then took my hand as I lifted my coffee to my mouth. "I, unfortunately, am uniquely qualified to empathize with what you're going through. I know what it's like to watch your mother in the hospital and not know when she'll get out."

"If." I corrected, barely speaking in a whisper.

"If. So I came to be here for you all. If you want me to leave, I will. But if you want me to, then I'll be here for you. No strings attached." I looked up at Bella



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and then leaned my head against her shoulder and began to cry harder. She took my coffee cup from me, sitting it next to her on the ground as she turned to face my side. She pulled my head onto her chest and cradled it to her body, tucking it under her chin and then pressing her cheek into my hair. She put one hand on the side of my face and the other around my back, as I wrapped both arms around her and just let her rock me and "shh" me until I was cried out.

Having Bella hold me in her arms felt so amazing. That she was able to be there for me, even with the way things were between us. I wanted to say something, but I wasn't sure what. But I started anyway. "Bella?"

She sensed my tone and quickly quieted me. "That isn't important now, focus on your mom, we can discuss us later."

"What was with the snack food you brought?" It felt like a safe question, and I needed to hear her voice.

"Sitting in the hospital, all nervous and stressed, you tend to lose your appetite, and you definitely won't leave for long periods to grab a proper meal. When I was with my mom, I lived off the vending machines. So I thought I'd bring you guys a healthy alternative to that. I don't think Esme would ever forgive me, if she woke up and you had all wasted away with worry." The concern in her voice ripped at me. She seemed so sure that everything would be okay, and I needed her optimism.

"Thanks for the coffee." I said into her collarbone.

"You're welcome."

# Someone to Watch Over Me

## BPOV

Holding Edward in my arms was amazing. Ever since I called Alice this morning, I was trying to figure out what to do. Should I come here and look for him, or avoid him and let him find me, if I was what he wanted. In the end I knew the answer, Edward would hold it in until he exploded, and when that happened, it would be that much worse for him. I hadn't asked for help when my mom was sick, and it did me far more harm than good. So I went looking for him, with a coffee as a pretense, just in case he didn't want me.

Talking with him and knowing that I was able to help him; that all of my suffering would finally serve a purpose, made me feel good. I was scared of what would happen if I couldn't take away his pain, the hurt look in his eyes last night when I pushed him away, before I knew why he was doing it, was still in my mind. I can honestly say I have no idea if I would have stopped him, if I knew then, what I know now.

"Thanks for the coffee." Edward said quietly.

"You're welcome." I knew he wasn't just thanking me for the coffee. "Are you ready to go see her again?"

"Will you come with me?" He sounded so fragile, like he would barely make it through the hour.

"I'll do whatever you need me to." Edward lifted his head from my chest and we stood up. Edward took another sip from his coffee and we went through the doors and back into the hall. I took his hand as we walked the thirty feet to Esme's room. He paused outside the door and I squeezed his hand. "I'm not going anywhere." He took one last deep breath and we walked in the door.

Emmett and Alice were in there with Jasper and Carlisle. Alice saw me and came over hugging me tight. "It's so good to see you." I hugged her one armed

## Dance With Me

as I was still holding Edward's hand. Edward let go and went to sit in the chair that Emmett had just gotten out of.

"Hey, Mighty Mouse, I'm glad you came." He hugged me fiercely, and I almost lost it for a moment, before reining it in.

Next I hugged Carlisle. "I'm glad you came back."

I pulled back and went over to stand by Edward, putting my hands on his shoulder. "I never left; I went to the hospital chapel. Then I got Edward a coffee and went to find him."

Edward reached up and laid his hand on top of mine, before picking up Esme's right hand in both of his.

I reached into my back pocket and pulled out a Ballet Studio to-go menu and handed it to Carlisle. "If any of you get hungry, call the bar and they'll make you whatever you want and Leah or I will bring it here."

"Thank you, Bella." Carlisle smiled at me and I had a feeling someone had let him know that Edward and I were having problems, something he was unaware of when I saw him an hour ago.

After about twenty minutes, Alice and Jasper went to get some air. Emmett wanted to go for a walk and finally Edward got up. "Bella, where's the chapel?"

"It's on the second floor, across from the elevator." Edward walked over to me and brushed the back of his hand against my cheek.

"I'll be back in a little bit."

"Want some company?"

He turned back and smiled. "No, I want to do this on my own."

## Dance With Me

So now it was just Carlisle and I. He ran his fingers through his hair and looked as if he aged ten years in ten seconds. "Carlisle, how are you holding up?"

He smiled weakly. "I feel so helpless. I'm a doctor, this is what I do, but I can't do anything to make her better, or make this better for them." He motioned towards the door.

"Is there anything I can do?"

"I could use a shower. Would you mind staying with Esme while I run upstairs and use the doctor's shower?"

"Sure, take your time; I'll stay with her until one of you gets back." Carlisle walked past me and rested his hand on my shoulder, before getting a bag off the dresser top and walking to the door.

I walked over to the bed and sat down in the chair.

### **EPOV**

I walked into the chapel and knelt down to light a small candle. Closing my eyes, I folded my hands and took a deep breath. "God, I don't even know what to say. My mom always said that you wouldn't ever send us more than we could handle, well I can't handle this. Between my mom and everything with Bella, I don't know how to do this. I'm trying to work through this, because I want to be with her, but I wanted kids with her so bad. And my mom, you can't take my mom. I wouldn't survive it. My family wouldn't survive it. And Alice, her and my mom, they are like two pieces of the same thing. You have to give her back to us. Please, God, my mom needs to wake up." I fought against the tears and got up to head back to my mom.

As I got back to the room, I looked in the window and Bella was alone in the room with my mom. I went to go in and I heard Bella talking so I stopped, backing out, but leaving the door cracked so I could hear her. I felt bad eavesdropping, but hearing her uncensored thoughts was just too tempting a proposition.

## Dance With Me

"...Esme, please wake up. Carlisle loves you so much, and your grandchildren should know you. I know what it's like to lose your mother, and your children will never be the same. Emmett's blaming himself for not getting you out of there sooner, Alice is about to get married, and she needs to have her mother there. And Edward, you mean the world to Edward, and the way he talks about you, he'd never be the same. I've already put Edward through so much in the last week, he needs his mom. On Christmas, you told me you couldn't imagine missing out on your children's lives, well then you need to wake up. Open your eyes and rejoin your family." Bella started to cry and I decided to make my entrance now. I knocked and Bella turned towards the door. "Hey Edward, did you find the chapel okay?"

"Yeah, where's my dad?"

"He went upstairs to take a shower, I told him I'd stay with your mom until someone got back."

I wanted to talk to her, but I didn't want to leave my mom, so I sat on the cot on the other side of the room and tapped the spot next to me. Bella came over and sat down. I stared at my hands for a moment and then looked up at her with tears in my eyes. "Bells, I'm so scared. I don't know what to do. I'm trying to be positive for everyone, and for her, but that's not me. I always go straight to the worst case scenario, so that way I can never be disappointed."

"So talk it out with me. What are you afraid of?" She looked up at me.

I spoke barely louder than a whisper. "I'm scared that she won't wake up. That she won't get to see me make something of myself. Or that she will wake up, but that she won't be my mom anymore. That there will be some brain damage and she won't be all there. I'm afraid that she wasn't proud of me. And I'm terrified of what's going on with us. I know you don't want to talk about it now, but I want you. Being with you is more important than having kids with someone else. I know that, but I'm still dealing with what that means. But I don't want to lose you because I'm taking too long. I don't know...I feel like everything is falling apart."

## Dance With Me

"Okay, first, don't think about what could happen to your mom until you have to, I know your mind wants to go there, but making yourself sick, won't change anything. You have to believe she'll wake up. And as far as you being a disappointment, that's not possible. Your mother was so proud of you; I could tell by the way she beamed when she talked about you, or how she hung on every word when you would tell a story. Her children are her greatest joy, and there's nothing you could do to change that." She stopped short. She was holding something back and I wanted to know what it was. I reached for her hand and held it in mine.

"And what about my fears about us?"

"Edward, I'm terrified too. I'm glad you've made that choice, and you don't have to work through everything on your own, just get to a place where you can let me in again. You don't have to worry about losing me, I can't end this, remember; I'm in too deep." A tear rolled down her cheek, I quickly used our joined hands to wipe it away. Just then, my dad came through the door and looked at my mother, and Bella called out to him. "She's the same."

My dad turned to see us on the cot. "Oh, I thought you might have stepped out for a minute, sorry I took so long."

"It's fine, feel any better?"

"Yes, thank you. And I think I might take you up on your offer and order some dinner when everyone gets back."

Bella smiled. "Well, Leah should be at the bar bugging her brother, so she'll drop it by."

### **BPOV**

After we ordered food, Edward wanted to grab a nap, saying he wasn't hungry, so we went out into the waiting room, while everyone else spent some time with Esme. Edward fell asleep with his head on my lap, curled up on one of the stretches of armless chairs. I was petting his bronze hair when I heard a throat

## Dance With Me

softly being cleared.

"I guess the train has left the station again." Leah was smirking, holding a box of food. "Where's the room?"

"421, its half way down on the left side. But before you go, I ordered a burger and well done fries."

Leah pulled out my burger and another container and then three bottles of water. She was about to head down the hall, when Emmett came out to us. "Hey Mighty Mouse, how's he doing?"

"He's doing better. By the way, this is my best friend Leah, Leah, this is Edward's brother, Emmett."

"Hey, it's nice to meet you, and thanks for bringing the food over."

Leah shook Emmett's hand and then smiled. "Nice to meet you, too. And don't worry about the food; I needed to take a break from my lesson plan."

"You teach?"

"High School English, I'm struggling to give the facebook generation some culture wherever I can." Emmett laughed.

"Well if they're anything like me in high school, good luck." Emmett picked up the box. "Anything else in here yours before I make off with it?"

"Nope you're good." Emmett took the box off to Esme's room.

"Thanks Leah." I smiled up at her.

Leah sat down next to me. "You gonna wake Rip Van Winkle?"

"No, he needs a break from this for a little while."

## Dance With Me

Leah looked at me and shook her head. "And when do you get a break?"

"Leah, I love him, and we're on our way to working it out, but this takes precedence."

"He told you that?"

"Yes."

"Okay, fine. How are you feeling?"

I looked at her as she handed me my food and slid over so I could use the seat next to me as a table. "What do you mean?"

"I mean you're in a hospital where his mom is fighting for her life, and you guys are in limbo, and you're acting like the last week never happened. You can't be this fine with it."

I let out a sigh as I started picking at my fries. "I'm not." I whispered. "I don't know what the hell I'm doing. I feel like if I'm not here for him, if I don't make this better for him, then he won't come back. And I know that's crazy, he's told me he wants me, but I feel like I have to do this, because if I can't be there for him during this, he may realize I'm not worth it. And before you freak, I know I'm worth it, Edward told me that more than once. And we are taking it slow, it's just I know what it's like to love him and have him love me, and I want it, bad."

"Alright. But how come I tell you you're worth it for nine years and you roll your eyes at me, but he tells you in a month and you believe him."

"It's the way he looks at me. You can't doubt it when he looks at you like that."

Just then, Edward started to wake up. After a minute he opened his eyes. "Hey Bella, Leah."

"Hey Edward, sorry to hear about your mom." Leah patted his head.



## Dance With Me

"Thanks. You bring the food?"

"Yes she did, have some of my burger." I held out my burger and her sat up and took a bite, then he grabbed his bottle of water, while I had a bite of the burger myself.

"So, what did I miss?"

Leah and I looked at each other and laughed.

**Another chapter is done. This one was a little short because what's happening next chapter all has to happen in one chapter. Thank you all for your support! It's such an amazing feeling to know that so many people are reading and enjoying something I've written. You guys are awesome and I love you all!**

# Way Beyond Empty

Every time that I think I'm used to the response to my story...you guys have to go and do something like the last 2 days! There's a line from one of my favorite songs, *Arianne*, by Johnny Mathis in which he is describing all of these ideal things in comparison to this woman, and one of the lines is, "And what writers have to feel like, when they've suddenly discovered they've been read." As I don't have kids yet, and I have no man in my life at the moment, I have to tell you, that is one of the greatest feelings in the world, so thanks for the natural high! Much is revealed so now that I've paid my daily dues, I'm just going to move on to the story.

I do not own the song *Way Beyond Empty*. I did however write the other song in this chapter, so that one belongs to me. (About time something did!)

## BPOV

I'm not going to lie, it's been two days since Esme's accident, and the tension in the hospital is reaching critical mass. Emmett stormed out of the room around 3pm, after everything finally got to be too much for him. Rosalie called and told me that he was home with the kids. He wouldn't stop reading them stories, and he wouldn't talk about the hospital. Irina and Rosalie still agreed that the kids shouldn't come to the hospital until Esme woke up, which is when Emmett lost it. Jasper tried to tai chi the situation, but Emmett just yelled and left.

Alice took it hard and cried in Jasper's arms for over an hour. Edward grabbed me and dragged me to our stairwell. Where he just sat, resting his head on my shoulder, before he fell asleep. And he was still sleeping, over two hours later, and even though I was getting stiff from sitting still for so long, I couldn't bear to wake him. Finally, I sat back and lowered his head into my lap, gently rubbing his back. He let out a deep sigh and spoke in a murmur. "Bella." He was dreaming about me. He sounded so peaceful, and I was so happy to be there at that moment. I had gone by the bar earlier, and we were covered for tonight, but tomorrow was New Years Eve, and I knew I would have to work.

## Dance With Me

It was around 5:45 when Edward finally woke up. "Hey handsome, how was your nap?"

Edward smiled and ran his hand through his hair. "I'm sure I'm anything but handsome. The nap was good. Have you heard anything about Emmett?"

"Rose called, he's home with the kids."

Edward dug into his pocket and grabbed his phone. "Em, why don't you come back?" There was a soft murmur of Emmett's response. He was calmer, that's a good sign, I guess. "Emmett, come on will you-" Emmet cut him off and he got louder. I held out my hand for the phone and Edward reluctantly gave it to me.

"Em, its Mighty Mouse. I don't want to put any pressure on you, but if something happens, good or bad, you'll regret not being here, trust me. If you want, you can hang out in the stairwell with us, but just come back." The line disconnected. "I tried."

Edward pulled me to him and held me tight. "Let's go back to the room." We walked down the hall and sat with Alice and Jasper on the cot. Irina had left to give her husband a break from watching the kids alone, so Carlisle sat on the chair next to Esme.

Around 6:30, the door opened and Emmett and Rosalie walked in. He closed the door and stood there, not making eye contact with anyone, while Rosalie walked over to stand in the corner by the cot. Alice got off the cot and walked over and hugged Emmett around the waist. "Welcome back, Em."

Emmett wrapped his arms around her and Carlisle got up and clapped his hand on his back. Alice let go of Emmett and he walked over to stand in front of Edward and I. "Sorry, that wasn't cool of me bro."

"Don't worry; I've made my share of asshole moves this week, so I can't say anything."

## Dance With Me

Everyone was busy welcoming Emmett when we heard it, although it was barely louder than a whisper. "Where am I?"

Seven pairs of eyes, mine included, shot across the room to Esme, who was struggling to focus on the group of people standing by the cot. Everyone raced to her side, besides Jasper and I, who hung back a little to give them a moment. But as I heard everyone's relief, I took a steadying breath and snuck quietly out the door.

### EPOV

I don't think I've ever heard a better sound than my mother's voice the moment she woke up and said, "Where am I?"

Everyone shifted and went to her side, talking over each other until finally my father held up his hand. "Esme, we've been so worried about you."

"I'm sorry you were worried." Then my mom looked past us, scanning the room. "Where's Bella? I thought I saw her a minute ago."

"She's right..." I started to say as I turned and saw that she wasn't there anymore.

Just then the doctor came in. "Well, Mrs. Cullen, it's good to see you awake. How do you feel?"

"Dizzy, and my head and back hurts."

"That's understandable considering what you've been through. Do you mind stepping out while I examine your mother?" My dad nodded and we made our way to the door.

When we got outside and Bella wasn't in the hall I looked around, agitated. Jasper answered my unasked question. "Bella stepped out a minute after Esme woke up."

## Dance With Me

Rosalie squeezed my arm. "She was probably the one who got the doctor."

"I hope she didn't think I didn't want her there, I was just so excited that mom woke up." I thought of how I pulled my hand from hers and leapt away as soon as I heard my mother's voice.

"We all are. I'm sure she just wanted to give us all a private family moment." Alice added.

A few minutes later the doctor came out and spoke to us. "Your mother is doing remarkably well. She's dealing with some of the effects of her head injury, so she'll be disoriented for a while, but other than that she is doing much better than expected. We're going to be running some more tests shortly, to rule out any permanent brain damage, but right now, she seems to be recovering well. Now that she's awake, I think it's best if you go in a few people at a time, so as not to tire her out." The doctor went off to order the tests.

My dad walked over to me and put his hand on my shoulder. "Edward, why don't you go find Bella and give her the good news. Your mother wanted to see her."

"Okay, I'll be in there in a few minutes." I walked quickly towards our stairwell and saw her sitting on the top step crying. I went down a few steps and then knelt down in front of her, looking up and trying to find her eyes, which were blocked by her hair and her hands. "Bella, love, what's wrong?"

She looked up at me and tried to talk through the sobs. "I'm sorry...this is...so...stupid..."

I went to sit next to her and pulled her to me, cradling her head against my chest. "Bella, what is it? You can tell me."

"No...it's not...right...just...forget it." I stared at her and she took a deep breath. "I'm so happy for you, I am, and I prayed Esme would wake up, and she has, but I just wished my mom could have gotten her miracle." I held Bella closer and let her cry it out. When her breathing finally started to get normal, she

## Dance With Me

looked up at me.

"My mom wanted to see you. Are you ready, or do you need a few minutes?"

Bella stood up and wiped her face with her shirt sleeves. "I'm good. Let's go see how she is."

We walked down the hall just as Emmett and Rosalie came out of the room. "You guys are up." Emmett told us before grabbing Bella's wrist. "Bella thank you, if you hadn't gotten on the phone, I probably wouldn't have been here when my mom woke up, and I would have felt like crap afterward."

"You're welcome." She started walking and then stopped. "Was that the first time you called me 'Bella'?"

We all laughed. "I think so, Mighty Mouse."

Bella and I walked in the room and she sat in the chair, while I sat on the side of her bed.

"Hello Bella. Carlisle told me about how you took care of everyone, especially my Edward, and I just wanted to thank you."

Bella started to tear up again. "It was my pleasure; you have a wonderful family Esme." My mom took her hand and then the doctor knocked.

"It's time for your MRI." Bella and I got out of the way as they wheeled her bed out of the room.

A few hours later, the doctor came around and sat with us in the waiting room. "I have some very good news. Most of the swelling from your mother's head injury is gone, and there appears to be no permanent damage. Her ability to talk coherently is a very good sign, considering she was out of it for a while, and after a few days, she should be able to go home. She'll have some recovery, but within a month or two, she should be back to normal. Her wrist will probably be the last thing to heal."

## Dance With Me

"Thank you. That is excellent news." My father shook the doctor's hand and then we went in to see my mom again.

### BPOV

New Years Eve. It was the bane of my fucking existence. Professionally, it was the busiest night of the year, and personally, I was always too busy to get a kiss on midnight, when I had a man to kiss me. Edward and his family were watching TV in Esme's hospital room, something only the chief of surgery could arrange for, but for his star surgeon, little was impossible. Somehow, they had found a few babysitters and the kids were safely at home. I contented myself with the fact that I would see Edward tomorrow, before I went in to do the books.

The bar was crazy, and considering the fact that we had officially begun advertising Mistaken for Bears upcoming gig on the 4th, we were even worse. Before I knew it, it was 11:55 and people started getting in position to see the TV's above the bar, which were tuned to different New Years programs. Then the countdown started. 10. 9. 8. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. 1. Just as everyone started cheering and making out, my phone vibrated in my pocket.

*\*kiss\* Wish I could kiss you for real! Happy New Years Love. -Edward*

I laughed and texted back.

### EPOV

As the countdown began, I looked around and was once again the only one alone. I pulled out my phone and sent Bella a text, figuring she wouldn't hear it over the noise. So when my phone vibrated a minute later, I was pleasantly surprised.

*Wish you could too! MWAH! Happy New Year, tell your family too. -Bella*

"Bella says Happy New Year."

## Dance With Me

My family looked over at me, smirking like an idiot at my phone and laughed.

I hadn't seen Bella much in the last four days. She would stop by for a little bit, but with it being the beginning of the year, she had a lot of paperwork, and she really had been leaning on her staff too much, spending all her time with me at the hospital, while my mom was bad.

We were all sitting around my mom's hospital room around 6pm when she finally spoke up. "Alright, this is getting ridiculous. You guys have been sitting here, watching me for a week now. I'm being released in the morning. I want you to go."

We looked at her like she was crazy. "You're kicking us out?" Emmett asked, completely shocked.

"Yes. Irina and Laurent are leaving tomorrow, why don't you all go somewhere together?"

Alice spoke up. "There is that band playing at Ballet Studio, you know, the guys Bella and Leah met in New York."

Dad sat on the foot of the bed. "That sounds like a lot of fun, call Irina, I'll watch the kids. By the time you leave, they'll all be in bed anyway; they can have a slumber party in the living room."

My mom readjusted herself so that she could look at all of us. "That settles it. Go and enjoy the band. And tell Bella I said 'hello.'"

Alice called Irina, and she and Laurent were in, so we went home to get ready. I was a little nervous as I picked out something to wear. Tonight would be the first time I had seen her outside the hospital since I went to her apartment and kissed her, and I wanted it to be perfect, I wanted to remind her of why I deserved her love.

I got in the shower and was instantly bombarded by memories of Bella and me making love that night. Damn, get a grip man, this isn't helping things any. I



## Dance With Me

finished my shower and looked at the clock. It was 8:25, everyone would be here soon. We had decided that take-out at my place was best, because then we could just walk to the bar. Alice had said the band was going on at 11pm so we still had plenty of time to kill.

At 8:45, there was a knock on my door, and I screamed out, "Alice, just use your key!"

I heard everyone come in and then heard my fridge open as Emmett played bartender for everyone. Alice rapped her knuckles against my door and came in with her eyes closed. "Is it safe to open my eyes?"

"What do you think I'm doing in here?" I asked in amused disbelief.

"I assumed trying to pick out the perfect outfit, but I wasn't taking any chances. Now here." Alice went to my dresser and pulled out a pair of dressy jeans and then went to my closet and picked out a deep blue button down shirt and my brown blazer.

"A blazer, Alice?"

"Hey, don't question the master. You want to look good for her, don't you?" I stopped arguing with her because she was right. "I'll order your favorite, now use some product in your hair and give it that just rolled out of bed look."

"Alice." I growled.

"Oh, shut up, you love me. And you'll love me even more in a few hours." Alice winked and I shuddered to think what plan she was hatching at the moment, glad that she was on my side.

We sat around the table and joked around; it felt so good to laugh after everything that had happened. When the doorbell rang, Jasper got up and paid the delivery guy, bringing the food over to the table. We ate slowly, aware that it would only take about eight minutes to get there. "Do we have to wait in line to get in, I mean if this band is as big as you say, Alice, shouldn't we head

## Dance With Me

out?" Irina was used to the bars in New York and knew all too well how long you could have to wait to get in.

"Don't worry, I called and Leah had Sam put us on the list."

"Why didn't you just call Bella?" I was starting to see the first glimpses of her plan and I was getting a little worried.

"Leah was answering the phone in Bella's office because Bella was running around like mad, trying to get the band set up, and making sure the bar was stocked, tonight's a big night for her. Don't worry, I'm sure Bella knows we're coming by now."

That thought was not comforting, and the idea of Leah possibly being in on the plot was not helping.

Around 10:15 Emmett clapped his hands together and stood up. "Alright, shitlins, let's get this show on the road, I want to get a drink before the band hits the stage."

We left and as we walked the few blocks to the bar, I began to get nervous again. "Breathe, Edward, she loves you, everything will be fine." Alice cooed at me and I did feel a little better. As we walked up, Sam fist bumped me, letting us in ahead of the angry line.

Once inside, I made a beeline to the bar with Emmett. We got our drinks and made our way to our group who had dug themselves into an opening near the ballet bar about twenty-or-so feet from the stage. The lights on the stage came up and the crowd went wild. Bella walked up onto the stage in a pair of skinny jeans and thin blouse in the same shade of blue as mine. I nudged Alice, who ignored me as she continued to hoot and holler with the rest of the crowd. Bella was stunning. She was wearing more makeup than usual, but it brought out her eyes and made her full lips stand out against her creamy skin. Her hair was curled and piled up on her head, cascading down around her face. Like I said, stunning. Bella stood in front of the mic and bit her lip quickly before looking out over the crowd and yelling out the band's intro. "Are you guys ready for the

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band?" The crowd yelled their answer and she smiled. "I've known these guys for years, and I've watched them work their asses off to get to this point. It's my pleasure to welcome to Ballet Studio, Imprint Records newest recording artist, Mistaken for Bears!" The bar was buzzing with excitement as the crowd screamed, welcoming the band onto the stage.

These guys looked fierce, I'm not going to lie...even the two younger guys on bass and drums were muscular and tall, they looked like they could have been brothers, they all had similar russet skin and dark eyes, and the same short crop of black hair. The guitarist, Jared, stepped up to the mic and I was suddenly grateful to know that Bella and he had never dated. As I looked closer I noticed that Jared and Paul had matching wolf tattoos on their chest that their v-neck shirts hid, except for the tops of their heads. It cut so the wolves almost looked as though they were peaking out of their shirts at you; it was kind of cool, although I wasn't ballsy enough to get a tattoo myself.

The music started and I have to admit it was amazing, I was a little surprised that they were so good, not really looking like the indie rock type. After about half of their set, I saw Jared look over at Bella, who was behind the bar, and she ran into the kitchen with Leah. What in the hell was that about?

"Is everyone enjoying themselves?" The crowd "wooded" and "yeahed" and Jared laughed. "Okay, I want to thank you all for coming out tonight to Ballet Studio, and I'm gonna take this time to introduce you to the band. Back on drums we have Brady, on bass we have Collin. On keyboards we have Paul, and I'm Jared. This next song is very special to me, and it's off our first album, which is on sale tonight after our set, along with our other album and some M4B merchandise. This song is called *Bella*."

I nearly shit myself, he wrote a song for Bella. Is that why she ran out, because she knew I would be watching to see her reaction, or because she was afraid to see mine? Fuck me! As the music played I focused on the song, wanting to see what he was saying about her. Jared leaned into the mic and began singing.

*We met by chance that day*

## Dance With Me

*She took my breath away*

*You could light up Times Square with her smile*

*I got a week with her*

*It went by in a blur*

*But my life will never be the same*

*One day when I'm old and grey*

*I will still be proud to say*

*I walked down Broadway with an angel*

*We took a carriage through the park*

*I saw my city through her eyes*

*With newfound wonder and surprise*

*And then sweet Bella said good-bye*

*The two of us stayed friends*

*I see her now and then*

*And she'll still sing along with me*

*Sometimes I wish her guys*

*Would open their damn eyes*

*Because then they'd finally drop the games*

## Dance With Me

*And now when I remember her*

*I think about the way we were when*

*I walked down Broadway with an angel*

*We took a carriage through the park*

*I saw my city through her eyes*

*With newfound wonder and surprise*

*And then sweet Bella said good-bye*

*It doesn't matter that she was never mine*

*I'll take her any way I can*

*As long as I can tell people that*

*I walked down Broadway with an angel*

*We took a carriage through the park*

*I saw my city through her eyes*

*With newfound wonder and surprise*

*And then sweet Bella said good-bye*

*And then sweet Bella said good-bye*

HOLY FUCK! I had been worried about the song, but he got Bella to a tee. She was this wonderful person that should be respected and appreciated. I started screaming and clapping as the song ended and I automatically felt six bodies around me relax for the first time since the song title had been announced. Just

## Dance With Me

then, Jared dropped a bombshell I would have never expected.

"I'm sure many of you out here can guess who the woman is that inspired that last song. I know she gets embarrassed by it so we decided to play it in that slot to kill two birds, because now, Mistaken for Bears and Ballet Studio are proud to welcome to the stage a special treat. The first time I met Bella, she sang this song with Paul and I in the park, and it's now a tradition. So to sing Zakk Wylde's *Way Beyond Empty*, is Bella!" The crowd went crazy and all I could do was gape as she made her way to the stage and took Paul's mic and stood next to Jared.

I heard every word she sang as well, I didn't know the song, but she sang it with such passion and anguish that I was quickly undone. By the time she got to the second verse I was lost.

*If I couldn't be the shoulder*

*Which your head would rest upon*

*Would you still be waiting, baby*

*Or would you be gone?*

*If I couldn't keep the smile*

*Forever on your face*

*Would I still be around*

*Or would I be replaced?*

*Yeah, Way beyond empty inside*

*Awaiting my last day to arrive*

*Way beyond empty inside*

## Dance With Me

### *Awaiting my end to arrive*

Hearing those words, I thought about all I knew about Bella and the people who had let her down. I vowed to not fall into that category again. As she finished the song, I started screaming and I knew I was crying, but I didn't care. Bella looked over and saw me. Jared laughed at the crowd and informed them, "Calm down guys, she's taken!" As soon as he said that Bella hugged Jared and Paul and jumped off the stage and weaved her way through the crowd on her way to me. When she reached me, she threw her arms around my neck and planted a big kiss right on my lips, and for once, Emmett wasn't the only one making a ruckus at our PDA.

Bella stayed glued to my side for the rest of the set. When it was over the jukebox kicked back in, with its preprogrammed playlist, care of Leah, and the band packed up. After they were done, they sat on the stage and sold their merchandise, signing their CD's and chatting with their fans. We made our way up to buy both of their CD's and as soon as Paul saw Bella's arm around my waist, and my arm over her shoulder he yelled out, "Shakespeare!" I knew immediately that Paul was tight with Leah.

I walked up and shook both his and Jared's hands. "Your music is fucking awesome." I told them smiling.

"Really, any song you like in particular?" Jared's sarcasm sealed exactly how these two had gotten along with Bella and Leah so well for eight hours straight sitting in Central Park.

"There was one, Emmett, what was that name of the one I liked?" I turned to Emmett, who was laughing behind me, as Bella jabbed my ribs.

"Very fucking funny, Cullen." Hearing her call me Cullen felt good, she called me that when she was in a rare mood, and boy was she in one tonight.

We hung out for another hour, and by that time, Irina and Laurent were starting to get tired, and considering that they had to get four children on an airplane tomorrow night, I didn't blame them for wanting to head out. I found Bella,

## Dance With Me

where she was hanging out with the band. "Hey, Irina and Laurent are leaving tomorrow, so we're going home so they can get some sleep before their flight to tomorrow night."

"Okay, where are they? I want to say good-bye."

"They're outside, but you could always stop by tomorrow and say bye to the kids too. And my mom really wants to see you."

Bella's face was shocked. "She's going home?"

"First thing in the morning."

Bella hugged me and told me to tell everyone that I'd see them tomorrow. I walked everyone to the garage where their cars were parked. When I got home I put my copy of the band's first album in my CD-ROM, so I could import it into I-Tunes and play it before syncing my I-Pod in the morning. As I opened the book, I saw Jared's note above the band's signature.

*Edward,*

*She loves you, so keep her as happy as she was tonight, and you and I will never have a problem.*

Normally, a semi-threatening note might piss me off, but he was absolutely right, Bella was so happy tonight and I would do everything in my power to keep her that way.

**Another one bites the dust! Okay, so we're about at the halfway point for this story. But don't worry, there's plenty more in store in this story and I have the sequel to play with too. Lots more from Cullen and Mighty Mouse on the way. I fell in love with the details in this chapter, hope you found something to enjoy!**



# Finding Inspiration

Not much to say today...

**The name of the theatre company is a reference to *Sunday in the Park with George* "A blank page or canvas, his favorite...so many possibilities." Just in case you were wondering.**

## BPOV

I was sitting on my couch, holding onto my coffee for dear life. I was desperately trying to wake up, but my mind was wandering back to last night. The way Edward looked, the way he smelled, the look on his face after my song, he had cried while I sang, and then the way it felt to kiss him again. I was jolted out of my reverie by Alice's knock. "Bella, I hope you're awake, because we have a lot of work to do." I got up and went to open the door. "You're not dressed yet? Oh God, did I just-" Alice backpedaled and eyed my bedroom door.

"Alice relax, Edward's not here, he didn't come over after you guys left him. It's just early for me, not everyone is up at the butt crack of dawn. Some of us own a bar that closed at four in the morning." I finished my little fake rant, smiling at her.

"Well, miss 'diva rock Goddess, who has songs written for her,' I need my bridesmaid to get dressed, we're going to the theater."

"What should I wear? Are we just looking around, or are we running around and getting dirty?"

"You can wear your sneakers, so relax. We're taking pictures and getting measurements and such, so jeans and a top you won't fall out of will work." Alice smirked at me and I swatted her before I went to get dressed, with her in tow. As I put on a pair of jeans. Alice finally asked the question she had been holding in for days. "Bella, I know this may be none of my business, but what's

## Dance With Me

up with you and Edward?"

I grabbed a shirt and answered her. "Alice, I honestly don't know. We're taking it slow. In the hospital we spent a lot of time talking, and I think it helped him deal with some of the things between us. Trust me, if anything happens, I'll let you know."

"Just make sure you cliff-notes it." We both laughed and I grabbed my purse as we headed to the door.

About forty minutes later, we pulled into the parking lot of the theater, which was off a small paved road, a little ways out of the city. I looked at the grey, rectangular building. "Alice, this almost looks like an old army building."

Alice laughed. "It was a mess tent, the base closed down ages ago, and most of it was demolished. This small theater company bought it and turned it into their theater. They also bought some of the smaller building nearby to use for their offices. Anyway, I thought it was perfect, because Jasper was in the Army Reserves and its completely bare inside, so I can turn it into anything I want for the day. Plus I figured I could hire some of their actors to work the wedding, if I need waiters. So you ready to look inside."

I nodded and stepped forward. "You do think of everything, Alice."

When we entered the lobby of the theater, we were greeted by a voluptuous young woman wielding a binder and a large tape measure. She looked a little done up for 9am, but she was gorgeous, there was no denying it. "Hi, you must be Alice, I'm Deryn, and I'm the Head of Stage Management and the Events Coordinator for The Blank Canvas Theatre Company. My assistant told me all about you, and I'm here to show you around and answer any questions you may have."

Alice stepped forward and shook her hand. "Hi Deryn, this is one of my bridesmaids, Bella." I waved and Alice glared at me. "You'll have to forgive her; she's not a morning person."

## Dance With Me

Deryn smiled. "That's okay, the only reason I'm this awake is because I haven't gone to sleep yet. We were moving out the set from the show that closed last night. That's why I had you come down, so you can see the space when it's empty. Okay, let's go." We laughed to each other as she threw open the double doors into the theater. Deryn talked as she gestured around the room. "You said you'll probably have between 60 and 85 people, so I measured it out, and you could fit the chairs on the stage. I'd do four to a row on each side of the aisle. And have the ceremony stage right because then you can enter from the dressing room, and not have to worry about anyone seeing you. Plus the guests can enter through the stage door, so after the ceremony, when you want to have everyone make their way to the reception, you pull the curtains back and reveal the dining area and the dance floor."

Alice beamed. "That sounds perfect. What do you think Bella?"

"I love it Alice, this is so you!" I started posturing a little, rocking from foot to foot in releve, not even conscious of it until Deryn noticed.

"You're a dancer?" Her eyes lit up like she had just discovered a treasure.

"Used to be." I smiled and she turned back to Alice.

"Now I want to talk to you about the reception. The walls are a nice golden color," Deryn pulled back the large black curtain hanging around the three walls of the room, "now if you like that color, then we can take down the curtains. But if you don't, then we have these curtains in six other colors, so you have a choice, and we'll hang them the night before."

"No, I like the wall color, and it's easier anyway. Okay now, should we put the dance floor by the stage, or in the back?"

Deryn was already ahead of her, having started to pull back the curtains around the room so that we could see how the room would look. "I would say by the stage, because if you do it up their then your caterers can set up along the wall by the lobby and make easier trips from the kitchen, which is that building just off to the left. Now are you going to do a buffet, or a sit down dinner?"

## Dance With Me

"I'm waiting until I choose a caterer; I want to see what they can do."

"That's fine, just let them know that there is a full kitchen on-site if they need to do anything the day of."

Alice reached into her bag and handed me the camera. "Bella, would you mind taking some photos so we can show everyone when we get home?"

I took the camera and went off to take shots of the room, the stage and the dressing room. When I came back, Deryn was writing furiously in her binder, while rolling up the tape measure. "Okay, so that seems to be it for now. Here is a full list of the dimensions of the space, plus everything we discussed this morning. After you've chosen a caterer and have a better idea of what kind of decorations, or embellishments you may want to add to the space, let me know and we'll see what is available here and what you would have to bring in. It was a pleasure meeting you both."

Deryn hugged Alice. "Thank you so much, Deryn."

Then making her way to me, she hugged me quickly and I smiled. "Thank you for all your help."

Alice and I walked out to the car. "Thanks, I know you had to wake up ridiculously early to come with me. Do you want to go back to your place to change before we go to my parents?"

I looked at my outfit and laughed. "Yes. Plus, I didn't shower this morning, so I'd really like clean up."

We got into the car and Alice patted my knee. "Okay, let's get you fixed up for Eddie, and then we can head over. She's being released around 11am, so we'll get there after she's had a chance to settle in."

**EPOV**

## Dance With Me

Last night was incredible. So many things fell into place, and I knew now exactly what I had to do. I woke up around 7, and I heard a voice in my head that I didn't recognize. I'm not going crazy...it's a writer thing. Quickly, I knew who he was, Gerard, the man who falls in love with Kalliope, the heroine of my story. He started describing his first encounter with her in detail and I wrote it down as fast as I could. It was similar to how I had seen Bella during my brief time working with her and then again last night. She was a vision of beauty, sexy and strong, and able to handle herself, but still sad, troubled. I continued listening to him, fully aware that Bella had become far more than a vague basis, and if she would let me, she would be my muse for the troubled girl named for the Muse of poetry and eloquence. It seemed appropriate that the woman I saw as my own personal Goddess would become the model for Kalliope.

When I had finally finished, I looked at the description, and saw another purpose in it, and quickly got to work on that. As I finished my project, I got ready and went to help out getting my parents house set for my mom's homecoming.

We were just settling the kids in front of the TV, when the doorbell rang. Emmett went to get it and came back a few minutes later on one side of my mom, as my father was on her other side, helping her down the few steps leading into our living room. They walked her to the couch and sat her on the lounge section, so she was sitting up with her whole body on the couch. Everyone was sitting on the couch around her watching *Finding Nemo*, when Alice and Bella walked in. My heart leapt into my throat, I was suddenly nervous about what I had prepared for Bella. She came in and smiled, walking over to hug Esme after Alice, before sitting next to me.

My mom held Alice's hand, "So, what happened at the theater?"

Alice beamed, "We took pictures and decided on how to set up the room. We have to pick the vendors before we can do anything else there, but it's a good start. And we can start figuring out the exact room design using the photos for reference."

## Dance With Me

"Can I see them?" My mom was so happy to be able to do anything, no matter how trivial.

"Sure." Alice pulled out the camera and started scrolling through them.

After a little while, I saw Bella discreetly look at her watch, and I knew she had to go to work soon.

"Mom, Bella has to get going." Bella looked at me and smiled, pleased that I knew her well enough to notice it.

My mom frowned. "Oh dear, I'm so sorry, we've been so caught up in the wedding talk that-

"Esme, don't worry about it. I'm excited for the wedding too. I'll stop by soon. It's good to see you home again." Bella got up and hugged my mom, before making her rounds.

"I'll call you about when we're doing the dress fitting." Alice hugged Bella and they smiled at each other, I was glad that they got along so well, it made it so easy that my family loved her too.

Next the kids ran up and hugged her before Irina and Laurent said their good-byes. "I guess I'll see you at the Bachelorette Party!" All the girls laughed and I took Bella's hand.

I led Bella into the kitchen. "I know you have to leave for work in a minute, but I wanted to give you this first."

Bella took the card that I held in my trembling hand. She squeezed my hand in hers as she looked into my eyes, before looking down and opening the card.

### **BPOV**

I looked down at the card, slightly confused, but I opened it and began to read.

## Dance With Me

*" The moment she walked in, I was undone. She had a grace about her that was almost otherworldly. Her chestnut hair came down to her waist in soft waves, and bounced with each movement. I immediately wanted to know her. She looked up and her eyes were a piercing blue, the depths of them something I may never fully understand. Some drunk was starting trouble at the other end of the bar and she jumped up on the bar and snapped her fingers, motioning to the enforcers who were already making their way over. She owned the place with her presence, as well as her being the actual proprietor. You could see a hint of sadness in her eyes and it made me want to know her even more. She made her way over to my end of the bar and stopped in front of me and spoke with a voice that sounded like music. 'Hey handsome, I'm Kallie, what can I get you?' Kallie, my Goddess has a name."*

*Bella,*

*When you came into my life, you awakened something deep inside me. I will be forever changed and for that, I am eternally in your debt. I went about this all wrong the first time, but now I want to do it right. Bella, will you go out with me on Monday night?*

*Edward*

That was one of the most beautiful things I've ever read. It wasn't hard to notice who the inspiration for Kallie was, and I suddenly felt self-conscious because I saw myself through his eyes, and the sheer force of his love was overwhelming. I looked at him through tear filled eyes and walked over slowly taking his face in my hands and reaching on my tip toes to kiss him softly, before whispering against his lips. "Edward, I'd love to go out with you."

**So next is the big date...the moment you've all been waiting for!**

# Indescribable

**There was a moment in this that got a lot of comments in the original post as it confused people. So as I was re-editing I cut out the use of a condom because it was more of a mental flub than a plot point, so if you're re-reading this and wondering where it went, there's the answer.**

## **BPOV**

I thought I was nervous on the three days leading up to Monday, but I was wrong, that was nothing compared to the pit in my stomach I got on Monday morning. Alice was at work, and classes started up today, so I couldn't even take solace in Leah's company. I had no idea what I was going to do with the day, so when there was a knock on my door at 11:45, I was pleasantly surprised. "Jared, Paul? What are you doing here?" I opened the door, ushering them in.

"We have a red-eye tonight, so we wanted to take you and Leah out to say good-bye. But it seems that you tricky bitches are bent on foiling our plan." I shook my head, Jared was laughing; he always waited until the last moment for these types of things.

"Well, I guess you're shit out of luck, because I have a mystery date tonight."

Paul laughed now, amused by my annoyed tone. "Shakespeare has no clue how much you hate surprises, does he?"

"No, he's never tried it before."

"I'm glad he's doing it...it means he wants to impress you. And maybe he'll finally get you out of this stupid thing where you pitch a fit whenever someone wants to do something nice for you." Jared sneered. "Now grab your purse, were taking you to lunch and Leah to dinner, since you can't coordinate your schedules."



## Dance With Me

I did as he said, pleased that I would have something to distract me. We went to a Japanese place that I loved. The guys got sushi, but I've never been that brave, so I got Chicken Tempura. We sat around, with our shoes outside the booth, laughing and joking about old times, and how everything was falling into place for all of us.

"I got an offer on the bar." I told the boys, quickly downing my Sake, while they stared at me.

"You can't sell the bar!" Jared looked offended.

"I know. I didn't consider it, really. But it got me to thinking, I've always thought about opening a second location, and I don't know, the offer made me really think about it. Somewhere like Portland, I don't know."

"What does Edward think; I mean I'm sure he'd help you out with the investment." Paul was trying to encourage it, but I was not going to do that.

"No. I'm not asking Edward for money. That's a relationship killer. Besides, I haven't even told him. I'm not thinking seriously yet."

"Okay, but seriously, talk to him about it, even if it's a far off dream. Let him know that you'd like to do it someday." Jared looked down at his California Roll.

"You like him. Alert the media, Jared and Paul actually approve of the man in my life." I said sarcastically, so when Jared's head shot up as he talked, I was taken a little off guard.

"He's good to you, B, and we're not blind. I know I've never seen you like this with anyone, so I want you to get this right."

"Me too." Paul added, nodding in agreement.

I smiled at them. I wasn't used to the decision being unanimous amongst my friends; usually someone had something to say. It made me even more anxious

## Dance With Me

about tonight, like I'd better not screw this up. We finished up and the guys dropped me off with hugs and the promise of an invite to the album release party. My boys, big time musicians, it was good to see them finally get everything they wanted. Now it was my turn.

I was sitting on my bed, clueless about what to wear; I had no idea what I was doing tonight, when I got a text.

*Bella, Shower now! I'll be at your apartment at 3:30 and I'll be on a tight schedule so no messing around. -Alice*

I should have known that he would involve Alice so that it stayed a secret. I obediently got in the shower and washed and shaved and exfoliated. When I got out, I wrapped my towel around me applied some lotion when there was a knock at my door. I threw my towel back on and went to the door. I looked through the peep-hole and saw Alice with a dress bag, so I opened it.

"Do you answer your door like that for anyone, or are we special?" Leah was standing next to Alice, grinning widely.

"Leah, what are you doing here?" They came in and I followed them into my bathroom, as Alice was already starting to set up.

"Helping you get even more beautiful before I go to dinner with the boys." Leah reached into the bag and pulled out a lacy bra and panties set. "Put this on. And then throw on a robe so I can start doing your hair."

I did as I was told; a little excited by the fact that Alice had brought me lacy underwear, maybe tonight would go fine after all. I quickly nipped those thoughts in the butt, before they could lead to some things I didn't want to imagine with Alice in the next room. I sat down and Alice and Leah stood over me with two hair dryers, combing and parting before Leah put some product in my hair. "This will make the curls hold, even with your hair." Then they applied the hot curlers and Alice started doing my makeup.

"Alice, where am I going tonight?" I asked as Alice curled my eyelashes.

## Dance With Me

"Don't talk Bella, if you move I'll wind up pulling out half of your eyelashes and I don't have time to get you to a salon to have them glue on individual lashes on to fill in the gaps."

"People do that?" Leah asked.

"You'd be surprised by what people do look beautiful. Models are the worst." Alice laughed as she put on some mascara. "Alright, let's get you in this dress. Because Lord knows, I'll have to teach you how to sit in it."

I stood up and grabbed my phone. "Fine, but I'm calling him."

Alice shrugged. "Go for it, he won't answer."

I didn't care, I dialed his number and hit the \* button so it would skip to the beep. "You got Leah in on this little plan of yours. Not cool Cullen, just remember payback's a bitch." I hung up and heard Alice snicker.

"She really hates surprises that much."

Leah joined in. "Wait until she knows that he's ready to propose, she'll be intolerable." They both laughed and I went back in, taking off my robe so Alice and Leah could lift the dress over my head.

I opened my eyes and was stunned by the person standing in front of me. The dress started off a light pink, becoming darker until it changed to a deep purple around my waist and continued that color until returning to the deep pink on the straps that crisscrossed across my chest. There was a jeweled embellishment under the empire waistline, and it had a front slit that made me blush. It came up nearly up to my...well you get the point. Alice showed me the shoes and I cringed.

"Bella, think of it this way, if you're nervous about tripping, then you have an excuse to hold onto his arm all night." Alice was sinister, but that's why I loved her. "Oh, and Leah, you're borrowing Bella's wool coat." I looked at her confused. "That way, when you get cold later, he has to give you his coat."

## Dance With Me

"You're sneaky." I laughed as I slid my feet into the heels Alice was holding for me.

"I did it with Jasper, and now you're my bridesmaid."

Alice taught me how to sit and move in my outfit so I wouldn't embarrass myself, and then Leah and she took out my curlers and pinned a few pieces in place, but otherwise leaving it cascading down around my shoulders and landing softly down my back. Alice filled the clutch purse with my essentials and what she deemed to be important, and then did my lipstick before throwing that in the purse and closing it. Leah grabbed my coat and handed me a shawl that would keep me warm until the sun went down, when I could turn it into a scarf after putting Edward's coat on. I had to laugh at that, because I would have tried to scheme a way to do it, but leave it to Alice to be three steps ahead of me, and probably at least one ahead of Edward. The only ring I was wearing tonight was my claddagh, and I slipped on a pair of stud earrings and the key to Edward's heart. It sat perfectly on the crisscross and stood out against the dark fabric.

It was 4:50, and Alice and Leah were packed and heading to the door. "He'll be here in ten minutes...so try not to freak out and ruin the masterpiece." Leah hugged me and then Alice followed.

"Have a great time. Call me tomorrow." Then they left me to sit there and wait for the next knock on my door.

I don't know why I was surprised, considering what I was wearing, but when I opened the door and saw Edward in that tux, my heart stopped.

### **EPOV**

I was a wreck. I knew the date would be perfect. I had learned enough about her in these few short weeks, to know what to plan, but I was more nervous about "us" on the date. We worked in silent moments, and passionate kisses, but could we work out on the town, or would the pressure of everything that has passed and everything we meant to each other, make us awkward and

## Dance With Me

skittish. Alice had called, so I knew Bella was getting ready. I wonder how she was feeling right now. Just then my phone rang, but I waited for the beep to indicate a new message. I entered my password and listened.

"You got Leah in on this little plan of yours. Not cool Cullen, just remember payback's a bitch."

I had to laugh at her threat, because I knew it was nerves. Leah had warned me that the secrecy would make her crazy and that she might lash out, but I knew that as soon as we saw each other, nothing would matter but that. I started getting dressed, fiddling with the endless buttons and fasteners of the tux. I was ready and getting a little antsy when my phone rang. "Mr. Cullen, my name is Tyler and I'll be your driver tonight. I'm parked out front, whenever you're ready."

"Thank you, Tyler; I'll be down in a moment." I hung up the phone and took a deep breath gathering up everything I needed and heading out.

I stepped out of the building and Tyler pushed off the side of the limo and came to greet me. "Would you like to put those items in the trunk, or will you be taking them into the back with you?"

I handed him the one bag. "This can go in the trunk; everything else will be fine in the back."

"Very well, sir." Tyler opened the door and closed it behind me, before putting the bag in the trunk and getting in to pull away. "Alright Mr. Cullen, we're off to your first destination, if you need anything the intercom button is above you, next to the radio controls."

"Thank you." Tyler waved and the partition began to rise.

A few moments later we arrived at Bella's apartment and the door quickly opened. I grabbed the bouquet and climbed out, clapping Tyler on the back as I made my way into Bella's building. The elevator ride was torture; it took so much longer than the elevator in my building. When I finally got to her

## Dance With Me

apartment, I hid my arm behind my back so she wouldn't see the flowers and then knocked.

Bella opened the door and I was bewitched. I thought that I would get used to her beauty, not take it for granted, because you could never forget how lucky you were when she stood in front of you, but to still have her completely short circuit me...I never wanted this to go away, I wanted to be just as mesmerized by her when we were 80 as I was in this moment. I took a steadying breath and pulled the flowers from behind my back. "For my lily among the roses." I lifted her hand and kissed it and she still stood there, as mesmerized as I was.

"What did you call me?" She asked in a slightly shaky voice.

I laughed as she welcomed me into her apartment, taking the flowers from me. "A lily among roses. Everyone notices a rose, they know they're beautiful, it's a given. But a lily, its beauty is more personal, they come in different colors and shapes and each one is unique, their beauty is something you constantly discover, and it doesn't fade, or wilt, it keeps growing with time."

A single tear escaped Bella's eye, and I caught it quickly. "Cheater. I'm going to put these in water before we go."

"There's a vase already set up in the kitchen." She turned to look at me and I laughed, "Leah knows where you keep your vases." She smiled and blushed bringing out the shade of pink in her dress. And it hadn't escaped my gaze that she was wearing the key to my heart. At that thought my heart swelled, like it had just received a shot of a much needed drug.

She put the bouquet in the vase and then grabbed her wrap and purse and headed for the door. I stopped her in the doorway. "You look stunning, Bella." Then we walked out and she locked her door. I offered her my arm and she took it as we went to the elevator. I pushed the button for the lobby and she looked at me. "I'm not telling you anything, you'll see soon enough."

We rode in silence as she looked down at the floor. I lifted her face with my right hand and looked into her eyes. "What is it?"

## Dance With Me

"I'm trying to focus on how to walk in these damn shoes." I laughed as Bella lifted her foot and the slit up the front of her dress revealed her leg all the way to her lower thigh.

"Remind me to thank Alice." She slapped me lightly and then the doors open and we walked through the lobby and out the front door.

When we came out Tyler went to the door, opening it. Bella stopped. "You got us a limo?"

"Tonight's a special occasion." I whispered into her ear before we got into the limo and it pulled away. Bella sat next to my coat, looking around the limo. "Bella, breathe, we're almost there." As if he was trying to prove me right, Tyler pulled the limo over. He opened our door.

We got out of the car and Tyler closed the door. "I'll be parked down the block, call me when you get the check, and I'll pull the car around."

I nodded at him and Bella and I walked up to the doors of La Tua Cantante. "Edward this place is too expensive!" Bella said when she realized where we were.

I leaned into her as we approached the door and I held it open for her. "I wanted tonight to be perfect, I promise next time it'll be Chinese food and movies."

Bella laughed and the sound was like magic. "Leah and I always joked in college, that by the time we'd finally be able to afford this restaurant, it would have closed down."

I laughed with her, because I could see the two of them sitting in their old, tiny apartment, laughing about the chance that they would ever eat here. "Well then, I guess meeting me means you'll be able to check a few things off your 'never thought I'd do that' list."

## Dance With Me

Bella gasped as I walked up to the hostess. "Reservation for two, the name is Cullen."

The hostess looked down and then picked up two menus, "Right this way, Mr. Cullen."

Bella squeezed my hand. "When I see Leah..."

"Don't blame Leah; everything tonight was my idea, I just checked with her to make sure I hadn't miss-stepped with anything."

We were shown to our table and a minute later our waiter came up to the table. He was one of those typical Italian, flirt with everyone including your grandma types. "Hello, my name is Michele, and I will be your server tonight, can I start you out with anything to drink?" Michele was looking directly at Bella, not acknowledging me at all. I could understand the fascination, but this was clearly a date, and he wasn't helping his tip any.

"Bella, why don't you choose a bottle?" Bella looked up at me and then glanced at the wine menu and looked up at Michele.

"We'll have a bottle of the '84 Grange Shiraz." She handed off the wine menu and smiled at me.

"Excellent choice, I'll give you a few minutes and then I'll be back to take your order." Not a single thing he said was in a plural, I'm an author, I tend to notice that shit.

"Well, that was awkward." Bella looked at me and smiled.

"He seems to think he has a shot." I joked and her face tightened as she got serious.

"Who would order a hamburger, when they already had filet mignon in front of them?" Bella blushed.



## Dance With Me

"So all I am is just some piece of meat?" I laughed again; I loved watching the fire in her eyes when we'd have a battle of wits.

"You, Mr. Cullen, are of the finest quality in every aspect of your life." Bella blushed again and looked down. I reached over and rested my hand on hers.

"You bring it out of me; you make me want to be the best in everything." It was my turn to blush.

Bella looked at the menu while she asked her next question. "How's the book coming?"

"It's coming along well, I'm still trying to map out the end, but the character development is coming along much faster than usual."

Bella looked up and folded her menu. "I noticed how far along your character development is."

I closed my menu as well. "You aren't upset, are you?"

"Upset, Edward I'm flattered. I don't know if Alice and Leah will ever let me live it down, between *Bella* and your novel, they'll tease that every man I meet is inspired to immortalize me in their chosen art form. Personally, I love the way you see me, and I don't care about anyone else, they can do whatever they want, at the end of the night, I'm going home with you."

I smiled at the confidence in her voice, when almost on cue, Michele came back with our wine. He poured some for Bella, so she could taste it, and then filled her glass, and reluctantly turned to me to pour me a glass. Ass-hat, with his stupid Italian version of the name Michael! God it felt good to vent, even if it wasn't out loud, because this guy was bugging me. "Are you ready to order?"

I motioned to Bella to order and she giggled. "I'll have the Shrimp and Lobster Scampi."

"Would you like a house or Caesar salad?"

## Dance With Me

"Caesar." Mikey took Bella's menu and then she continued. "What are you having dear?" Bella turned her hand under mine, and gripped it, which was not a gesture that Mikey missed. He turned to face me.

"I'll have the Filet Mignon, with a Caesar salad." Bella laughed and I smiled at her.

Mikey took my menu away, seeming to get the message. "If he keeps it up, I'll sit on your lap when he comes to take our dessert order."

"We're not eating dessert here. This isn't the last stop." I smiled and Bella scowled.

"Okay, meanie," Bella said moving her hand from under mine, "what happens with the book?"

"I write it, and when it's done, I go through the editing process. I have until the end of April to get in a draft and then we go from there, Victoria will try to get it on the fast track, what with everything else happening with me now."

"What else?" Bella looked confused, and I realized that I hadn't told her about the phone call I had received this morning.

"Summit Entertainment bought the rights to my first novel. They're talking about doing a few of the others, but they want to see how the first one goes." I smiled, because I was floored and I was so thrilled that I got to tell Bella before anyone else.

Bella's mouth fell open, and her hand quickly flew up to cover it. "Edward that's wonderful, so you'd get to consult on it, right."

Her enthusiasm was so amazing. "Yeah, visit them a few times during pre-production and then a few more during shooting, but nothing too long really."

## Dance With Me

"Oh Edward, that's amazing, you absolutely deserve this." She was beaming; her pride in me was overwhelming. "Can I tell you something?"

I looked at her and smiled. "Of course, tell me."

"I'm not planning on doing it right away, but I'm thinking of opening a second bar, down in Portland." She looked down, trying not to look at my reaction.

"Would you move to Portland?" I didn't like the idea of it.

"No. I'd go down there to set it up, but I wouldn't run that one, I'd find someone local that I could trust." She smiled and I echoed her smile, as long as she wasn't leaving me, I'd support anything she wanted to do.

"So, why are you waiting?"

"I don't know, I mean, I know could get a loan, my business plan is airtight, plus I already have one successful bar, why wouldn't the sister bar be just as successful."

"You should do it Bella."

"I will. Thank you for believing in me."

I took her hand and she looked at me with an unreadable look in her eye, and before I could ask what she was thinking, Mikey was back with our salads. He placed them down and spoke quietly. "Enjoy."

We ate our salads in peaceful silence, until Bella put down her fork. "So, are we okay on time, or are we running late?"

"I'm not telling you anything, but we're fine for time." I smirked and she laughed as our salads were cleared away. Bella told me more about her plans for a second Ballet Studio, and from the sound of it, this had been something she wanted for a while, and I wanted to see her finally get it.

## Dance With Me

Our dinner came and once again, we let the silence envelop us. It wasn't ever awkward, it wasn't because we had nothing to say, it was because we simply enjoyed the others company. As dinner was being cleared I looked at my watch and motioned to Michele to bring the check. When he did I opened it and smiled mischievously. "Be nice, he eased up. And besides, once you've worked for tips, it's supposed to make you a better tipper."

I laughed and set the money, plus a nice tip in the folder and Michele took it from me. "No change."

"Thank you sir, have a pleasant evening." I took Bella's arm in mine and called Tyler.

"Tyler, bring the car around." He quickly agreed and I hung up. We got in and drove off, and Bella was still trying to figure out where we were going based on where we were. I decided to break her out of her attempt to discover my plan. "Did you enjoy dinner?"

She turned and scooted closer to me, resting her head on my shoulder and looking up at me. "Dinner was incredible, thank you."

When we finally pulled up to McCaw Hall, Bella sat up and gasped. "You're taking me to the ballet?"

"Yes, ma'am, Swan Lake." Bella's face lit up and my heart began to beat faster. A tear rolled down her cheek.

"Did Leah tell you that it's my favorite?" I smiled, Leah got me too.

"No, I told her which ballet was running now and she said you'd like it, I was just lucky, I guess."

The car stopped and Tyler opened the door. I got out and offered my hand to Bella, who got out of the limo and faltered, falling into my waiting arms. It was a minor stumble, but it set her face on fire with a deep blush.

## Dance With Me

"Damn you, Alice." She grumbled as I laughed and walked her in. We got our programs and went to our seats, and Bella was astounded by how close we were. "How did you get these so close to the date?"

"I didn't, I got them for us back before Christmas; I thought it would be a nice way to spend our anniversary." Bella turned in her seat.

"Anniversary?" She was puzzled.

"Today is January 9th; I met you one month ago today."

Bella stared at me with that same unreadable look and then leaned in to kiss me. "I love you, Edward Cullen."

"As I love you."

Just then the lights went down and the orchestra began. I was paying attention to the ballet, but I found myself looking over at Bella often, watching her reactions, she smiled and beamed, and cried more than once. At one point, I rested my hand on her knee and she pulled a tissue out of her purse. Then reached down and took my hand in hers. When it ended, Bella was one of the first on her feet to applaud the dancers, and as we walked out of the theater she took my arm and leaned in. "Thank you, that was perfect."

I smiled and looked down. "I didn't know they died at the end, that's so sad."

Bella laughed. "They found their true love and fought for it, and in the end, not even death could keep them apart, their love is eternal. That's why I love it; it depends on there being something more than this."

We got back into the limo and drove to the water by my apartment. Tyler pulled over and opened the door, then went to the trunk to get my small gift bag. He handed it to me as we got up onto the cobblestone walkway near the water. Bella shivered, and I took my coat off of my arm and slid it over her shoulders. I took her purse so she could use her shawl as a scarf and then buttoned up my coat, sniffing the collar before fixing her hair. As she took her

## Dance With Me

purse back, I tipped Tyler. "Goodnight, hope the rest of your evening is everything you want it to be." Tyler got in the limo and took off.

I smiled down at Bella and fixed the collar of my coat and I couldn't resist. "Did you sniff my coat?"

Bella blushed and looked up at me. "It smells like you, and I like your scent. Now what are we doing out here?"

"One minute." I walked Bella to one of the benches and sat down next to her. I reached in the bag and pulled out a container with chocolate covered strawberries. We sat there laughing and feeding each other, and then I sighed, because I knew I had come to the real reason I had brought her here. "I wanted to talk to you, really talk about what's happened between us, so I thought this was the best place to do it."

Bella looked at me confused. "Why here?"

"Because, that morning, when I was gone before you woke up, and after our fight, I came here, I like watching the ferries and the water, it's calming. I wanted to ask you some things, and I thought I should show you where I come when I need to breathe. If any of this gets too tough, let me know and I'll move on, I won't push."

Bella sat there for a long moment and then looked up at me. "What do you want to know first?"

I took a deep breath and whispered. "Tell me about when you found out you had cancer."

Bella shivered, and then looked down at the water. "I went in for a normal check-up, and the test came back abnormal, so I went for a second one, and that came back abnormal too. So, my doctor performed a biopsy and it showed that I had cancer. So he scheduled the surgery, I had it, and four days later I was out of the hospital and on the HRT." I looked confused when she met my eyes. "Hormone Replacement Therapy."

## Dance With Me

"When did it happen?"

"I went to the doctor in the beginning of December, and I had the hysterectomy on December 22nd. I was released on the 26th and went back home to Leah to recover before school started up again in the end of January. I didn't miss a single day of classes." She smiled weakly and I took her hand.

Holy Hell! The day we fought, the day she had planned to tell me, was the six year anniversary of being released from the hospital after being treated for cancer. I spoke softly again as I asked the next question. "How did you take it, going through all of that?"

She looked down again; it seemed to be easier to tell me if she didn't have to see my face. "I lost everything that day. I lost my entire future. I wanted to be a mom so bad, and that was stolen from me. I know there are surrogates and adoption, but I wanted to be pregnant, I wanted to feel that connection, that bond of sharing my body with my child. And I will never have that. Being with you brought all of that back and it freaked me out so much, because I saw it too. I saw our kids, and I felt like I suffered that loss all over again. I hated that I had taken that from you." Bella started crying hard and I held her to me. I let her cry, crying some myself as we both mourned the future that was no longer an option for us, finally ready to move on together. Bella wiped her tears with one of the tissues from her purse and looked up at me. "Next?"

I remembered something Leah had said the first time she came to my apartment. "This is the last tough one, I promise. When Leah came to see me, she said that you'd been shutting people out over the past few months, and that you stopped planning for the future...I guess I want to know why, and what changed?"

Bella smiled and placed her hand on my cheek. "You're what changed. For the first time, I felt alive again, I wanted to plan my life with you, and I wanted to make it happen. That's why that day in my office, when you started talking in the past tense, I was devastated; I thought I had lost the one person who made me want to dream. I lived in fear of history repeating itself. That I would get breast cancer, and I'd catch it too late, but the truth is, my doctor is more

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aggressive, I see him more often, and I know what to look for, but still, I didn't want to plan for a future I wasn't going to live to see. Now I want to be with you, for as long as I have."

I leaned and rested my forehead on hers. "Bella, you're not going anywhere, and neither am I." I moved forward and kissed her. It was sweet at first, and then she ran her tongue along my lower lip so I parted my lips and deepened the kiss. Her hand slid from my face to my neck and my hands tangled in her long curls.

She broke the kiss, but stayed there, our lips still touching. "So, what else is in the bag?"

I reached down to pull out the Ziploc. "A few more things for our shadow box. I thought you could come over and we could put them in together."

Bella smiled against my lips. "That's sweet, but do you think it could wait until tomorrow, I kind of want to get back to my apartment."

I pulled back and kissed her forehead. "Okay, let's get you home."

### **BPOV**

We walked to my apartment building and rode up to my door. When I put the key in the lock and opened it Edward leaned in to kiss me but I turned my head slightly. "Will you come in for a minute? I want to show you something."

He looked at me and smiled, God he had smiled more tonight than I have ever seen. "Sure."

I opened the door and locked up before leading him to my bedroom. He looked at me and I tugged on his hand. "It's in here."

I put down my purse and took off his coat and my makeshift scarf, sitting them on the chair in the corner of my room. I took off my shoes and pulled a few pins out of my hair and then stood in front of him. I turned my back to him and



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moved my hair off of my back. "Could you unzip me?"

He did it and I let her hair fall, and turned to face him again. I started to pull the straps off of my shoulders and he reached up to stop me. "Bella."

I caressed my face, I knew he was trying to move slowly, but my need for him was too great. "I have to take my dress off to show it to you. I promise, I'll try to be good, no guarantees though."

He laughed and let me take off my dress. I hung it up and then came to stand in front of him with the bright overhead light on. He looked at my face, and my eyes motioned down, so he looked straight out in front of him. And then he saw it, the seven inch pink line across my pooch. He looked at it for a minute, and then raised his hand to run over it and then kissed it. I looked down at him, mesmerized by how amazing he was, and how much I loved him, and I knew I was going to break my promise. I grabbed his coat and pulled him to his feet. He looked at me, and I kissed him softly. "Please, let me do this, I know what I want, and I know what I can't live without tonight."

I pushed his coat off of his shoulders and threw it on the ottoman a few feet away. I undid his bowtie and started unbuttoning his shirt. I pushed his shirt off and threw it on top of the coat. I bent down and took off his socks and shoes. Then I stood up and undid his pants. I picked them up after he stepped out of them and added them to the pile. Then I took off his wife beater and threw it too. I walked to turn off the ceiling light, so the room was lit by the lamp on my nightstand.

I stood back in front of him and pushed him on the bed, climbing on top of him. I kissed him hard and he rolled over, our hands were tangled in each other's hair, pulling the other closer. I kissed him passionately, desperately, like my life depended on it. He began kissing down my cheek to my neck. He kissed to the place where my neck meets my shoulder and he bit me, I gasped, but I loved it, I could never get enough of Edward. He kissed down my collarbone and found his way to my breasts. He reached under me and undid my bra, flinging it across the room. He used his tongue to flick and massage as he sucked my right breast into his mouth, massaging the left one with his hand.

## Dance With Me

I let out a moan, rising into his mouth and he growled. He switched sides, lavishing my left nipple as he just had the right. He continued moving south, stopping at my scar, kissing it once more before rising to slip his fingers under the lace of my panties and slipping them off and throwing them just as he had my bra. I scooted up my bed as he crawled towards me and I was ready for him. I guided his tip to my core and he slid it in and I arched my back letting out another moan.

"Bella, you feel so good." We'd never talked much during sex, but I was all for a healthy dialogue.

"You too honey, I've missed you." I giggled using my leg to pull him deeper into me to make it clear exactly what I meant. He thrust harder and faster, and the friction was amazing. With each stroke he filled me more and more and I was in heaven. I rolled with him and climbed on top of him. He placed his hands on my hips as I rose off of him, only to come crashing down in the next second. He would roll his hips to meet me, and I was almost there. "Oh, God baby...right there...just...like...that!" Edward kept moving with me and I tensed around him, yelling his name in the same second that he called mine. I just let myself lay there for a moment before rolling along side of him. Edward kissed my forehead and got up to clean himself up. I got out a nightshirt and some slightly more comfortable underwear and climbed into bed. A few minutes later, Edward came back into my room with his boxers on and climbed into bed. He wrapped his arms around me, so that I lay in his arms, facing him as we both drifted off to sleep.

**There you go...lemony goodness after a bit of a dry spell. Don't freak, this does not mess up the relationship; they're sailing smooth for a while, so breathe and enjoy the next few chapters. You guys are awesome. More to come soon.**

# Positively Negative

## EPOV

I woke up, my arm completely asleep, but I didn't care, because Bella was lying with her head resting on my bicep. I lay there for a few minutes and then she rolled onto her back and stretched her arms over her head. "Good morning, Love."

Bella smiled and leaned up to give me a quick peck on the lips and asked, "Are you hungry?"

"Not for food." Bella's face lit up and she rolled on top of me, kissing me passionately. It was nice to see Bella so free, she wasn't afraid or waiting for the other shoe to drop. It already had, and we had survived it. Bella and I held each other, making out unlike anything I can ever remember, when my stomach growled. Bella chuckled and I looked up at her. "Guess I'm hungrier than I thought."

Bella got up and started to make breakfast. "You just sit there and look cute." I did what she said, as she scrambled the eggs and added cinnamon and French vanilla creamer.

"You realize that's flavored creamer, right?"

Bella laughed and put it on the table. "Yes, it saves me from having to add vanilla extract." Bella reached up and grabbed the bread from the bread box on her fridge and took out a handful. She fixed the coffee pot and took out a frying pan and a griddle pan that took up two burners. She threw some bacon in the pan and then soaked the bread in the egg mix and then put it on the griddle. She flipped the bacon and French toast then took out the plates and silverware and set the table.

"Your kitchen is really organized; I don't think I could ever keep mine this straight. And you have this all down to a science, the way you get everything

## Dance With Me

ready without missing anything."

Bella took out the butter and maple syrup and sat it on the table. "If I had a kitchen like yours, I would have it so much easier, this damn thing is a shoebox." Bella went back to the stove and took the bacon out of the pan and placed them on the paper towels that were folded next to the stove. Then she turned off all three burners and flipped the French toast onto our plates and then patted the bacon and put them on the plates as well. Just then the coffee pot beeped and Bella poured two cups and sat them on the table. We ate quietly and then Bella looked at me. "What are you doing Thursday?"

"Nothing, why?"

"Well, I have to close the bar for its inspection. So I wanted to know if you would let me plan a date for you this time."

"I'd love to. But why do you have to close it all day?"

"I don't really, but I have the inspector come in and after he leaves I do inventory, and then relax. I always get nervous around inspection time, and now that I'm thinking about opening the new bar, this has to be perfect, so that way I'll look even better to the bank."

I took a deep breath, knowing I would probably get some opposition to this.

"Bella, what if you didn't have to go to the bank for the money, what if I invested money in your bar?"

"Edward?"

"Look, I'm not talking about giving you the money; I'm talking about a business investment."

Bella's brow furrowed. "And what if the bar went under? Wouldn't you be upset that you wasted all that money?"

## Dance With Me

"First, Bella, I wouldn't offer to invest if I didn't think it would be successful. I've seen you run your place, and I think it would be a great investment, and if you were that worried about me being involved, you could buy me out eventually."

"It's not that I'm not grateful, but I would really like to do it myself, you understand, right?"

I reached across the table and cupped her face. "Of course." I looked over to the side and saw a stack of paperwork. Bella followed my eyes.

"I've been so busy; I haven't gotten a chance to file that." Bella smirked and picked up the file.

"What is it, if you don't mind me asking?" I tacked the last part on because I realized I was being a little nosy.

"Medical papers from my doctor's appointment last month." She pulled out one envelope and threw it down on the table in front of me. "You can read that if you want." I looked at her and she smiled. "It's okay, it's good news."

I opened it and it was results of a blood test. I read the page and it listed several negative test results for various STD's. I looked up at her, raising one eyebrow.

"My doctor is very thorough, I get one every year, just to be safe." I looked at her and gave the envelope back to her.

"Do you want me to get tested?" I hadn't thought about it, but maybe I should.

"No, I do it for me. I just figured I'd share it with you." She smiled genuinely and blushed a little.

"I'll make an appointment."

Bella grabbed my hand this time. "Edward, you don't have to, really."

## Dance With Me

I squeezed her hand. "I know, but you're right, I should do it for me." I went to the bedroom and came back a moment later with my cell phone. I looked at the envelope to get the number of the clinic and called to make an appointment for later that morning.

### **BPOV**

Edward left after breakfast and I went to get ready to go dress shopping. Alice was moving at warp speed because there were only 74 days until her wedding and she had a lot to do. I was putting my hair up in a ponytail when my phone vibrated.

*Be there in 10! Meet you out front! -Alice*

I laughed and went downstairs to wait for Alice. When I got in the car, she looked at me. "Where's your coat?"

I laughed as I put on my seatbelt. "Leah has it."

"Oh, right. Well, cute sweater." Alice pulled away and tapped her finger against the steering wheel in time with the radio, until finally I turned it off.

"Just ask me."

Alice turned to me and laughed. "I'm that obvious, huh."

I shook my head at her. "Just a tad."

"Alright, how was last night?"

I held my breath for a minute, letting her squirm. "Well, there was crying involved."

Alice gasped and looked at me for a trace of sadness, which I was trying, probably unsuccessfully, to display. "Oh, no! What happened?"

## Dance With Me

Her expression was too funny, so I burst out laughing. "Alice! The date was perfect, and the crying, well, I cried at the ballet and afterward he took me to the water by our apartments and we sat and talked about a lot of stuff. It was really good."

Alice glared at me. "Not funny, Bella! I seriously thought something else happened, and I want you guys to work out, because I've been pretty lucky as far as sister-in-laws and half sisters, and you would complete the set."

I shook my head and laughed as Alice pulled over. "Alice, where are we? This isn't your boutique."

"There was no way I was designing the dresses for my own wedding, I would have lost my mind. Senna is a genius, I went to school with her, and she's the only person I trust with this."

We got out of the car and Rosalie was there with Esme. "Alice, Bella, it's so good to see you." Esme stood up slowly and we both went to hug her. At that moment, a tall, raven haired woman came out of the back room.

"Alice! Oh honey, I'm so glad you're all here. Okay, so I've pulled all of your dresses. I have Irina and Angela's set aside and we can do their fittings closer to the date, but right now let's start with your mom."

Esme went into one of the dressing rooms, and a few moments later, she came out in a beautiful gold dress and coat. "Mommy!" Alice almost started crying, and we all walked forward.

"Esme, you look amazing," Rosalie cooed.

"Absolutely beautiful," I added.

"Thank you girls." Esme beamed as Senna helped her onto a small stool and began pinning the dress and marking where the alterations would need to be made. When she was finished she took her back to the dressing room and helped her take the dress off.

## Dance With Me

"Alright, bridesmaid, matron of honor, come on back." We were shown into separate dressing rooms and put the dresses on, with Senna coming in to zip us up. Rosalie and I walked out and Esme and Alice were beaming at us.

"Oh, that's perfect. Senna I absolutely love the layers," Alice cooed through teary eyes. Rosalie and I both stood in front of the mirror as the gentle layers of navy silk fell, hugging our frames. Rosalie stepped up and Senna went to work, finishing quickly, and then helping me up as she worked on my dress. After we were done with our fittings, we took the dresses off, and then Alice went back to try on her wedding dress for the first time. When Alice came around the corner we all gasped. Alice's wedding gown was a lace, strapless, mermaid style dress. It had an intricate pattern on the top half of the dress, as the bottom was soft layers falling until they reached the ground, where they pooled to create a beautiful train. Tears flowed around the room as Alice stood there and Senna quickly got to work.

"Darling you look so beautiful." Esme cried as she watched her only daughter try on veils and tiaras.

"Jasper's a lucky man." Rosalie added, taking out a tissue for Esme as well as herself.

I had come well prepared and was already dabbing my eyes. "Alice, you look like an old time movie starlet, it's perfect."

Alice tried not to cry on her dress and we were soon hugging and saying our good-byes to Senna. When Alice and I got back to her car, she turned to face me. "So, you really like your dress?"

I looked at her a little dumbfounded. "Alice, you make me look phenomenal no matter what you dress me in, but that dress...there aren't words."

Alice beamed again as we started driving back to my apartment. "YAY! I'm glad you liked it. So I talked about this with my mom and Rosalie, but I wanted to know your opinion. I met with a few caterers, and Jasper and I think we found the one we're going to use, but he suggested a buffet because it would give the



## Dance With Me

most choices to the guests. Do you think that's tacky?"

I shook my head. "No. Besides it will be less stressful on the day, and with the kitchen on-site they can have plenty of time between courses."

Alice giggled. "I'm glad you agree, oh Bella, everything is coming together like a dream. I'm so excited."

The inspector had just left and I was about to start the inventory when Alice knocked on the front door. I ran over with my keys and laughed as I opened the door. "Okay, so I know that he has an appointment, so he should be gone for another hour, so that should give you plenty of time to get everything set up."

Alice smiled, but then tried to make her eyes look grave. "You know Bella, he doesn't like when I use my old key for these types of things."

"After what he orchestrated Monday, he can't say 'boo' about you being a double agent." Alice let out a high pitched squeal.

"I like the sound of that. Makes me sound like a Bond girl." Alice kissed me on the cheek and took the bag from me. "I have no idea what you're doing, but I'm glad we're on the same side." Alice went back out the door and I locked it behind her and went to get inventory done, so I could start setting up for the date.

### EPOV

I got back from my appointment and was about to text Bella to find out what I should wear tonight when my phone vibrated in my pocket.

*I'm turning off my phone as soon as I send this, go home and all will be revealed ;) -B*

Well, she had learned from my date, and was evidently determined to keep this a secret. I did as she told, and when I walked into my bedroom there was an outfit laid out for me. Sitting on my shoes was a note.

## Dance With Me

*Edward,*

*I had Alice pick this outfit for you, because obviously, we can't dress ourselves. Don't laugh because you started this! Get dressed and come to Ballet Studio at 6:30. I love you Edward Anthony Cullen. See you tonight!*

*Bella*

I smiled at her note and looked at the clock, it was 1:50. I decided to look over the schedule Victoria had given me. After a few minutes, I put it down and went to sit in front of my computer and start writing. Now that I had figured out a lot of the preliminary things, I could do what I loved most about my job. I could listen to those voices in my head as they told me their story. I let my fingers fly across the keys and got lost in a different Seattle than the one in which I lived and was only knocked out of it when my phone rang.

I looked at the number and answered it. "Victoria, hey what's going on?"

"I was talking to your manager, and we think we can piggyback these projects if we handle it right."

"What does that mean for me?" I had a feeling my deadline was about to smack me in the face.

"We want you to try to get in a draft by mid-April. That way you can go consult during pre-production while we do a rough edit. The studio is pushing for an April release date, so they can get it in before the big summer blockbusters, and we want to release your book in March, that way you can do the book signing tour and the press tour for the movie at the same time. What do you think? Can you give us something by April 16th?"

"Sure, I think I can manage. I actually started writing the first chapter this afternoon."

"Wow, that's impressive, you're usually still obsessing about your characters at this point."

## Dance With Me

"What can I say; this project is speaking to me."

"Well then, let me stop interrupting, we'll talk soon." The line went dead before I got to say good-bye, but then again, that was Victoria.

I looked at my clock and it was quarter to five, so I saved what I had been typing and got in the shower. I put on the jeans and button up and shook my head at the blazer that Alice loved to dress me in, if I wasn't so terrified of Thumbelina's reaction to my ignoring her fashion sense, I would have never let her talk me into buying it. But it looked good on, so I wasn't going to argue it. I fixed my hair and smiled into the mirror and went to grab my wallet and phone, finally throwing in my pocket moleskin journal, just in case inspiration struck, and went to meet Bella.

I felt like I would never make it the few blocks to the bar, but finally I got to the door and saw the sign in the window.

### *Closed for Private Party*

I knocked on the door and Bella came and opened it a minute later. She was wearing a turquoise halter top that flared out at the sides, hanging over her hips and stopping mid-thigh over skinny jeans and a pair of boots. Her hair was pulled into a high ponytail, and she had few pieces that were too short to reach the rubber band, falling across the side of her face.

She blushed when she saw me studying her and she stepped aside, letting me in, before locking the door back up. "Hi."

I turned to face her and wrapped my arms around her waist, pulling her close and kissing her softly on the lips. "Hi."

Bella took my hand from behind her back and pulled me towards the dance floor, which was cleared, with the exception of one table, that had a white tablecloth on it and a candle lit in the center. The lights were dimmed and there was a bottle of wine and two glasses on the table as well. She walked over to the table and pulled out my chair. I laughed, "Taking this a little far, are we?"

## Dance With Me

Bella laughed and eyed the chair and then looked back at me, so I decided to play nice and let her do this her way. I took my silverware out of my napkin and placed it in my lap as Bella went into the kitchen and came back a small tray balancing on her hand. She came to the table and sat a small salad and a plate of food in front of me, and then did the same for herself, before placing the tray on the bar.

The food looked amazing, and it smelled even better. There was fried chicken, mashed potatoes, corn, and baked mac and cheese that was baked into a roll. "Bella this is wonderful, if Jake can cook like this, why do you serve burgers in this place?"

Bella laughed and smirked at me. "Jake didn't cook this, I did."

I looked at her in complete awe. "You cooked for me?"

She nodded. "I wanted to do something special for you after Monday night."

"Bella, this is so much better than anything I did."

Bella chuckled and motioned towards my plate. "You better try it before you give it that much praise." I cut into the chicken and took a bite and let out a moan that set Bella giggling. "Like it?" She looked at me mischievously, knowing that I did a lot more than merely *like* it.

"Bella, this is delicious, where'd you learn to cook like this?"

"I cooked dinner a lot when I was little, and fried chicken was always my favorite, it's homey."

"It's perfect." I went back to my plate and then remembered what I had tucked in my back pocket. "Oh, before anything else, I have something to show you." I pulled the envelope out of my pocket and handed it to her and she laughed again.

"I told you, you didn't have to do this."

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"I know, but I wanted everything out it the open."

Bella laughed again and replaced the results in the envelope. "I guess this means we don't have to worry about condoms anymore."

"Want to throw them out, or burn them in some grand ceremony?" I laughed but Bella looked serious.

"Don't you dare! I want all the condoms you have at your place."

I looked at her confused, "Why, what are you going to do with them?"

"I'm gonna stack them in Leah's medicine cabinet, so when she goes to open it she gets an avalanche of prophylactics." Bella laughed and I couldn't help but join in.

"Remind me not to get on your bad side. You're dangerous lady!"

Bella laughed louder and touched my hand. "Don't you forget it!" We went back to eating for a while and then Bella looked at me. "How was your meeting?"

I smiled at her. "It went really well. They're moving up my deadline by two weeks, but that doesn't bother me, because I'm already ahead of the game. And I got the preliminary schedule for the movies pre-production, so I'll be going there in the end of April, beginning of May to meet with them a few times and give them my ideas for the project."

Bella smiled. "That's actually really good timing."

"Oh yeah, why is that?"

"Because I was going to start looking for locations for the new bar around that time, so now it'll keep me busy while you're gone." Bella blushed and looked down at her plate.

## Dance With Me

I reached across the table and lifted her chin up so that I could see her face. "How in the hell did I get so lucky?"

"I don't know, but I'm glad you've got some good luck, because mine is shit!" We both laughed again and then her eyes grew serious. "When did you realize it...you know, that you loved me?"

I kept my hand on her face, rubbing her cheek with my thumb as I looked deep into the pools of chocolate that I had come to love. "That night that the fight broke out, if it had been Emily or someone out there, I would have gone to help, but when I heard your voice...and I saw that guy swing at you, I couldn't get to you quick enough. That's why I jumped the bar; I had this need to get to you, to make sure you were okay. What about you, when did you know?"

She blushed even deeper and her eyes darted down to the table. "Later that night...in my office..."

I snorted and she looked up into my eyes. "Isabella Marie Swan, you fell in love with me during-"

She interrupted me. "No! Not during...after, I know it's going to sound stupid, but after we made love that first time, you wiped away a sweaty piece of hair that had fallen into my eyes. It was just so sweet, and then you looked at me the way you always have, with such intensity...I felt so safe, like you'd never let anything happen to me." As she moved her head slightly, one of the pieces of loose hair fell into her eyes and I released her face to put the hair back behind her ear.

"That's not stupid at all. It's one of the most sincere things I think I've ever heard."

Bella smiled and motioned to my plate. "You finished?"

"Yes, it was great." Bella stacked the dishes and brought them into the kitchen, while I refilled our wine glasses. When she came out she hit a few buttons on the jukebox and walked over to the table and held out her hand as the music

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started.

"Dance with me." I looked at her face and she was absolutely glowing. I took her hand and spun her around before pulling her into my arms as the words started.

*Say goodnight not good-bye  
You will never leave my heart behind  
Like the path of a star  
I'll be anywhere you are*

*In the spark that lies beneath the coals  
In the secret place inside your soul  
Keep my light in your eyes  
Say goodnight not good-bye*

Holding her in my arms, swaying, and stepping, and spinning her, it all felt so natural. And the lyrics were so beautiful that I broke the silence. "What's this song?"

"*Say Goodnight* by Beth Nielsen Chapman. I always loved this song, I guess for the same reason I love *Swan Lake*, it's all about love without bounds, no matter where they are, they're never apart because they carry the other person with them, so it's never good-bye, just goodnight."

I pulled her closer and kissed her hair. "I like that. No good-byes." I continued dancing as the words continued to sink in.

*Don't you fear when you dream  
Waking up is never what it seems  
Like a jewel buried deep  
Like a promise meant to keep*

*You are everything you want to be  
So just let your heart reach out to me  
I'll be right by your side*

## Dance With Me

*Say goodnight not good-bye*

*You are everything you want to be  
So just let your heart reach out to me  
Keep my light in your eyes  
Say goodnight not good-bye*

Bella lifted her head and smiled as the song ended. "No good-byes." Then she nestled her head into my chest and we continued dancing.

We swayed there, alone on the dance floor for the five songs that Bella had chosen, and then we sat down and ate dessert. After we were done, we went into the kitchen and cleaned up, after I finally convinced her to let me help, and then we reset the bar for lunch tomorrow, and I walked her home.

As I walked her to her door, she opened it and turned to face me. I bent my head down to hers and kissed her passionately in her doorway. "Goodnight, Bella."

She smiled and blushed before giving me a quick peck, "Goodnight, Edward."

We continued our little date nights, watching movies, or going out to dinner, some nights just sitting around one of our apartments talking. It was comfortable, easy, and I loved that we had moved past that hard first month into a new, simpler time, one that allowed us to grow closer. One such night, near the end of January we were snuggled on my couch, watching one of the noir films she had bought me for Christmas when she sighed against my chest.

"What is it, love?" I looked down, running my finger across her face.

She smiled and kissed my chest. "I wish I didn't have to go home."

"So, stay." I pulled her closer, willing her to do so.

She looked up at me. "I don't have any clothes or anything here."



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"And?" I wasn't getting her reluctance.

"I'm not doing the walk of shame past your security guard tomorrow morning wearing the same clothes he saw me in tonight. It's embarrassing." Bella blushed again and I laughed.

"I've done the same thing at your apartment, and one of those times I was in a tuxedo!"

She giggled, "Yes, well, that was a special occasion."

I looked down at her. "So why don't you bring some things here?" Bella looked up at me, slightly terrified. "I'm not saying move in, just bring over a few outfits, some pajamas, a few toiletries, so that way if you want to stay you can, without fear of the walk of shame that will come the next morning."

Bella smiled. "Okay, next time. But I really have to get home, I do work tonight."

I got up and went to my bedroom door. "Wait a sec." I ran in and grabbed an overnight bag, throwing in a few outfits and then adding some toiletries and pajama bottoms, before returning to the living room. "Take this with you."

She smiled her devilish smile at me. "Why?"

"Because I don't want to do a walk of shame tomorrow morning after I walk you home from the bar tonight." I winked and she giggled again.

Grabbing the bag from me, she kissed me hard and then pulled away. "I'll see you at 10:30."

I kissed her again. "See you then, my love."

# When A Stranger Calls

**Hey everyone, I'm back! Thanks to all of you who put me on alert, favorited me, or reviewed. This chapter is going to be shorter than usual because it is sandwiched between two longer chapters. That and I couldn't really make it longer without dragging it out and ruining the suspense I was trying to build...more about that in my closing author's note.**

**Twilight is not mine, it's SM's, and the only Edward I have is a figurine that the guy at Border's sold me for 40% off because he wanted the doll out of his store. Hehehe...men just don't get it!**

## **BPOV**

Alice and I were sitting at my kitchen table, knee deep in wedding plans, while Rosalie and Irina were conferenced in on speaker. "So I know that this is getting a little crazy, but I'm going to need someone to oversee the set-up of all the wedding stuff the day of. I would do it, but I can't see Jasper, and the boys have to do the heavy lifting."

I smiled at Alice, who was glowing, as she did anytime the wedding was the topic of discussion. "I'll do it Alice; I'm used to ordering people around." Laughter came peeling out of the speaker on the handset as Rosalie and Irina both acknowledged my inner perfectionist.

"But Bella, you're already taking care of the rehearsal dinner?" Alice had decided to do a very simple rehearsal dinner, as everything else was so crazy, and Edward had been bragging about my cooking since our date, so I volunteered to cook.

"Alice, its fine. Irina and Rosalie will be busy trying to get seven kids ready and your mom will be overseeing the caterer. It won't take long."

Most of the plans had fallen into place rather easily. Rosalie had called in a few favors to get the florist, photographer and the DJ for the wedding on such short

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notice, and the caterer was one of Esme's old clients. It had taken Alice a few tries to find the place she was renting the tables and chairs from, and the three of us had a blast running around the design warehouse with Esme finding tall pedestals for the flowers and the gauzy fabric and ribbon to hang from the ceiling and decorate the space. The wedding was just over a month away and all that was left to do now was finalize some details and wait for the day to arrive. I had done most of the running around with Alice, because Rosalie had the kids, and Irina would be down for the bachelorette party. Ugh! I'm glad that isn't my baby! Alice had been adamant, that with the wedding so close, she didn't want a bridal shower, but all that did was make Rosalie even more determined to go overboard for Alice's last night of freedom...I was shuddering at the thought already.

We were still laughing when my phone rang, so I ducked out to answer it. "Hello?" The line disconnected. Huh, wrong number.

"Bella, who was that?" Alice looked up at me.

"No idea, they hung up as soon as I said 'hello.'"

"I hate when people do that, it's so rude! If you dialed the wrong number, just apologize and then hang up." Rosalie huffed into the phone. We all laughed and went back to discussing the decorations.

Edward and I were cuddled up on his couch watching *Goodfellas*. "I can't believe this is one of your favorite movies." Edward whispered into my ear and I shivered as his breath tickled my neck.

"Why, it's a great movie." I didn't understand why it was so hard to understand.

"I know it is, but I'd always thought you'd be more of a *Godfather* girl."

I chuckled, not really knowing what that meant. "The first one is amazing, but I don't like the second as much, and I can't stand Part 3. Plus Joe Pesci says 'fuck' 134 times in this movie!"

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Edward laughed and pulled me closer to him. "You would count something like that."

Just then my phone rang; I flipped it open and saw a number that was now all too familiar. I hit "ignore" and closed my phone.

"Who was that?" I craned my neck to see Edward staring down at me.

"Wrong number, but whoever it is, they keeps dialing." My phone rang again and this time I answered it, as Edward paused the movie. "Hello? Hello!" The line went dead.

"What'd they say?" I could feel Edward's eyes on me, but I was still staring at my phone.

"Nothing. I answer and they hang up as soon as they hear my voice, but they keep calling." I couldn't disguise the anxiety in my voice, this had been happening for almost two weeks now, so there had to be more to it than a wrong number.

Edward used his finger to lift my chin up until I had to look at him. "Bella, how long has this been going on?"

I tried to hide my eyes from him as I answered. "Two weeks."

Edward went rigid at my side, suddenly tense and angry. "Bella, why didn't say anything to me?"

"Because at first I thought they were a wrong number and the number wasn't always the same, well it was almost the same. The last two digits would change. Like someone was calling from different rooms in the same building. They use the same number for a few days and then it would change, but it would never go back to one of the old numbers."

Edward pulled me closer to him, rubbing my back as he spoke into my hair. "How often do you get the calls?"

## Dance With Me

"Once or twice a day. Sometimes if I ignore it, they won't call back, but other times they do until I answer." I shivered again and Edward kissed my temple.

"Have you tried calling the number back?"

"They never pick up."

Edward shifted under me, reaching into his pocket. He held his phone in his hand. "Give me the number."

"Edward, I-" I tried to stop him but he cut me off.

"Bella, I'm going to end this tonight, if I can." Edward dialed the number as it appeared on my phone; visibly tensing again as he saw how often the number was in my call log. He put the phone to his ear and waited. He was sitting there for a minute, when he hung up angry. "It rang off the hook."

"It always does." I didn't like talking about this, seeing how upset Edward was getting, that this bothered him this much too, made me feel the fears I had been trying to quiet were actually well founded.

"Bella I want you to stay here tonight. I don't like the idea of you alone in your apartment." He hit play and went back to rubbing my back. I loved how protective he was of me, but it made me more anxious remembering the last time he had the need to feel that way. I snuggled into his chest, using his scent to calm me as I watched Joe Pesci curse.

### EPOV

Jasper, Emmett, my dad and I were trying on tuxedos. Alice had given the store owner very specific instructions, and we were trying on different pieces to get the perfect fit. All we were able to gather was that the girls were wearing navy dresses, because our vests were navy, and that was enough for me. Bella looked spectacular in blue, and imagining her in a blue dress, I smiled wide, only to be knocked out of my daydream by Emmett. "Edward, you toothy-grinned bastard, will you choose a jacket already."

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I shook my head and tried on one of the coats. Soon we were done and changing into our street clothes. I patted my pocket and realized I had left my phone charging this morning. Just then I heard Jasper answer his phone. "Alice, what's wrong?" I came out of the dressing room and met Emmett and my dad as they stood in front of him trying to get some information from him, but he just waved them off. "Do you want to talk to him?" Jasper listened to Alice and then answered. "Okay, I'll tell him right now. Bye." Jasper looked up at me with worried eyes and I knew immediately that Alice wasn't calling about herself. "Edward, you better get over to Ballet Studio, Bella called Alice crying."

I stepped forward and came face to face with him. "Did Alice know what happened?"

Jasper looked exasperated, "Something about a phone call-"

I cut him off instantly, something had changed about these phone calls and I wouldn't be calm until I knew what it was. "I've got to go; can you take care of everything here?"

Jasper nodded. But it was Emmett who jumped in. "Edward, what's going on?"

"Bella's been getting these calls, they've been calling and hanging up, but it had her spooked and now..." I didn't know how to answer that, but I had to get to her.

"Edward, want me to call one of my friends on the force." I hadn't thought of that.

"I'll let you know after I've seen her. I'll call you later."

I ran out the front door and to my car. Fifteen minutes later, I was parking around the corner from the bar and I was in the front door in a flash. I took the stairs two at a time and bounded into Bella's office, where she was sitting with Jake standing over her. "Edward!" Bella started crying. My heart ached as I heard the pure panic in her voice. I pulled her into my arms as Jake walked

## Dance With Me

around the desk and left us alone.

"Bella, what happened? Alice said you got another call?"

Bella pulled back and looked into my eyes. "He called me here, Edward! He called the bar! This isn't something random, it's about me. I heard him breathing; he didn't hang up right away this time." Bella cried harder and I pulled her closer to me.

"Was Alice here when it happened?" I didn't think Alice would leave her in this state.

"No. I was alone. I tried calling you and it went straight to voicemail, so I called Alice to see if she knew where you were and she told me she'd call Jasper and tell you to come here. Jake came and sat with me while I was waiting, because I was jumping at every noise."

"It's alright, love. You're safe now, I'm here." I was grateful to Jake in that moment, because she trusted him enough to sit with her, Jake was a good guy.

"Edward?" Bella's tears had calmed some, but her voice still shook.

"Yes?" I kissed her hair and buried my face in her soft curls, taking in her fragrance, glad that in that moment, she was in my arms.

"Forget it." Bella whispered.

"What is it Bella, whatever it is, please tell me?" I hated that she was withholding something, I didn't think she was doing it maliciously, just trying to brave.

"I know its Valentine's Day, and you probably had something planned, but I don't want to go out. Can we go somewhere, stay somewhere? We don't have to leave Seattle; I just want to be somewhere safe; somewhere he can find me."

## Dance With Me

I held in the angry tears. "Come on, we'll go to my place and I'll get us a room somewhere, we'll go to Vancouver if we have to. I can't think of a more romantic way to spend Valentine's Day, then spending the night with you in my arms."

Bella blushed and then smiled up at me. "The way you see me is a little ridiculous."

I kissed her forehead. "I could say the same of you." We both laughed a hard laugh and then I led her out of the office.

Two hours later, Bella and I were checked into a suite at the Four Seasons overlooking the bay. Bella got in the bath to soak and I called Emmett. "Em, hey."

"Edward, what's going on, how's Bella?"

"She's spooked, until now all the calls had come to her cell, but she got one at the bar, and she lost it, Emmett she was terrified."

"Okay, I'm going to text you Marcus' number. If Bella wants to report it, or have it checked out, call him and tell him you're my brother. He'll take care of you." I could hear the worry in Emmett's voice, and I was happy that my big brother knew so many cops.

"I will." I heard the water start to drain in the tub. "Listen, Bella's coming back; I'll talk to you tomorrow." I hung up a minute before Bella came out; she was in one of the hotel robes and walked over to the bed, resting her head on my shoulder. "You feel better?"

"A little." Her voice was so small; I wrapped my arms around her and could feel the tension in her posture.

"You want me to give you a massage?"

Bella looked up at me with nothing but love in her eyes. "I'd like that."



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I helped her off with her robe and let her lay across the foot of the bed. I took off my jeans so they wouldn't rub against her skin, and straddled her, resting my weight on my knees, I hovered over her tight little ass. Softly rubbing my hands across her back, I made my way up to her shoulders and started kneading at the muscle underneath. I moved my hands as I worked my way closer to her neck and the down her spine. As I continued rubbing her down, Bella let out a soft moan and I felt my pulse quicken. As I massaged her shoulder she breathlessly murmured from under her hair. "Oh, God Edward, that feels so good."

In the second she spoke I was instantly hard and I was also reminded that before Bella had come out of the bathroom, that I had been waiting to pee. I decided I'd better go now before this went any further and I was chancing our romantic evening on what little I remembered from my college biology class. I leaned forward, earning another moan as my erection pushed against her and whispered to her. "I'll be out in a minute, and then we'll pick up right here." She muttered incoherently and I made my way to the bathroom quickly. After struggling not to hit everything but the toilet, I rinsed myself off and went back to the bed. As I walked over, Bella's even breathing was the only movement she was making. I knelt down by her head and brushed her hair away from her face. "Bella, love, are you awake?" Her face was a peaceful mask and there was no response to my question. I went to the head of the bed and pulled down the covers and then swept Bella up into my arms and laid her under the covers, before returning to the bathroom. I let dreams of what might have happened fill my head as I took matters into my own hands. When I was done, I cleaned off again and went back to the bedroom, turning off the lights and pulling myself up behind Bella, I wrapped my arm around her, content to have her in my arms.

**Okay, like I said a shorter chapter. Thanks to Patti, for laughing with me at my research! Now I haven't given any hints as to what the calls could mean, but if you want to speculate, then go for it! All will be revealed next chapter, so fear not! Who is behind the creepy calls, I'm not telling, and no one else knows this secret. But I promise it doesn't mess up Edward and Bella's relationship and it does serve a purpose, so trust me and you'll understand why this poor girl can't catch a break soon. And for anyone wondering, the comment about Joe Pesci and his use of the word "fuck" is**

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**accurate; my father actually spent one viewing of that movie counting!  
Now you know where my slightly anal, OCD side comes from! Bye until  
next time.**

# Spooning in Forks

**This was a hard chapter to write. It is also the most researched chapter in this story. The mystery is revealed, but I have to warn you, grab the tissues, because I needed them writing and I know some of you will need them reading this.) I'll talk more in the closing note. So enjoy the lemon, because it's all downhill from there.**

## EPOV

I was lying in bed, sound asleep, when it started. Bella's soft lips kissed my neck, down my chest and my stomach, stopping as she kissed my bellybutton. I felt the light pressure that was her weight as she straddled me, rubbing her hands over my chest and returning her lips to my neck, kissing up to my ear. "Edward, wake up." I could feel my consciousness slowly becoming clearer, but it was evidently too slow for her, because she ground her hips into mine and I moaned as I opened my eyes. Bella was staring down at me in all her naked glory, lust evident in her eyes. I reached up and pulled her down to me, our bodies pressed together at every point, and kissed her. I rolled us over and positioned myself between her legs. I ran my hand up and down her right thigh and she moaned into my mouth. I was instantly hard and ready to pick up where her exhaustion had held us off last night. Bella gasped as she felt my erection press against her center, and then brushed the hair out of my eyes. I knew what she was trying to say, when I did that to her, she saw it as a true sign of my love and the safety that provided her.

I lifted myself off of her and slid inside. Bella shivered and the sensation was amazing. I moved slowly, feeling how each stroke excited her as her body responded to mine. I was in heaven in her arm, as she arched her back and threw her head back. "Faster Edward, the suspense is killing me." I chuckled at her hesitation to reveal her annoyance, but did exactly as she said. I moved faster, in and out, feeling her fingers dig into my back in approval and her hips rise to meet mine. Bella pulled her lips from mine and I made my way to her shoulder as she whispered into my ear. "Harder baby...please." I growled into her shoulder, but once again did as my love asked. I thrust harder, slamming

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into her with more force as she whimpered in approval, when finally she called out, "EDWARD!" I felt her tremble around me, and I came as her tremors subsided.

I looked down into her eyes and smiled. "Bella, if I could choose how to be woken up, this is how I would want it. That was everything, Bella. There aren't even words."

Bella blushed a deep red and then giggled. "I rendered the writer speechless, I feel honored."

I took her face in my hands. "It's only you, love. Everything in my life has lead up to me being with you."

Bella smiled and stroked my face. "Why don't you get in the shower, while I order breakfast."

"I have a better idea, why don't you take a bath with me, and we can eat later." Bella smiled and grabbed her robe.

"I like your idea." Bella went off to run the tub and I looked over the menu. I called down and asked that the food be brought up in an hour, that way it would be here when we got out.

Holding Bella in the warm bath water was another memory I will keep with me till the end of my days. I used a washcloth and the hotel body wash to clean her creamy skin, and she did the same to me, lovingly rubbing the lilac-scented soap over my body. Bella sat back between my legs as I wet her hair and lathered it up with shampoo, before she turned to face me, so that she could shampoo my hair, massaging my scalp and kissing me with all the passion her body could hold. We both dunked our heads under the water, and then ran to the shower to rinse off. Bella was pulling on a cute pair of boy shorts when the room service arrived. We sat across from each other, eating in the peaceful silence that became our trademark. After breakfast, I got dresses as Bella went to dry her hair.

## Dance With Me

I was packing our bag when it happened. At first I didn't recognize the number that popped up on Bella's phone, but then I noticed that it was the same as the one I had called two days ago, except for the last two digits. I flipped the phone open and took a steadying breath before answering it. "Hello?"

"Yes, may I please speak to Isabella Swan?" The woman on the other end spoke without hesitation and knew Bella by name. The number must be a coincidence.

"Hold on one moment." I walked over to the bathroom and Bella turned off the hair dryer. "Bella, it's for you. Sorry I answered it, but I thought it was that guy again."

Bella took the phone and held it to her ear. "Hello." A brief pause. "Yes, this is she." Bella raked her hand through her nearly dry hair. "Yes, I am." She took in a sharp breath. "I'm sorry, I have no idea what you're talking about; I haven't spoken to him in over seven years." Seven years? This was about Charlie? "Where are you?" Bella began shifting her weight. "No, I can find it. I'll be there in a few hours. Thank you."

Bella hung up and turned to face me, tears in her eyes. "I don't have some crazy stalker. It was Charlie, he's sick."

I walked over to her and rested my hands on her shoulders. "How bad is he?"

Bella walked past me and put on her shirt, and then pulled her hair into a ponytail. "She wouldn't tell me over the phone, which means it isn't good. Fuck, I don't want to do this, not today." Bella's tears started to fall and I pulled her to me.

"Come on, I'll drive you."

"Edward-" Bella started to argue but I stopped her.

"Bella, I'm coming with you, we'll deal with whatever this is together." I grabbed the bag as Bella put on her shoes and then we left the hotel room.

## Dance With Me

### **BPOV**

I've had my fill of hospitals, and I wasn't too excited to be going back to Forks for the first time since I was 18, but I knew from the tone of the doctor's voice that this was bad. Edward drove, letting my GPS lead the way to Forks Community Hospital. The three and a half hour drive was quiet, I had called Jake and he said he would pull a double so I could take care of everything in Forks. I had been leaning on Jake a lot, and he never complained, he just picked up the slack and smiled about it. After that call, I just sat there, ignoring the radio as Edward drove down roads I remembered even through the haze of so many years. When we pulled into the parking lot of the small hospital, I let out a breath I hadn't realized I'd been holding in. "Bella, I'm here. I'll help you through this." I looked up at Edward, supremely grateful to have him in my life. I smiled and then got out of the car and walked into the hospital, hand-in-hand with him.

When we came to the front desk, an older woman with purple scrubs and a lab coat came out from the desk. "Ms. Swan?"

"Yes." I was confused by the fact that she knew me, and tried to think if I might have known her from when I used to come to visit Charlie.

"My name is Dr. Clearwater, but you can call me Sue, and I'm your father's doctor. Come with me." She led us down the corridor, as she told me about my father's condition. "I'm sorry that I assumed you knew earlier. It's just that your father first tried to call you a few weeks ago, I figured he had gotten a hold of you by now."

"No, he'd hang up whenever I'd answer. Can I ask you something, he called from four different numbers, how is that possible?"

Sue kept walking. "As your father's condition has gotten worse, we've had to move him a few times."

I couldn't beat around the bush any longer. "Sue, what's wrong with him?"

## Dance With Me

She turned to face us, I felt Edward's arms wrap around me, bracing for the news. "Your father has end-stage cirrhosis caused by Alcoholic Liver Disease."

I took in a deep breath and Edward's arms tightened around me. "What does that mean?"

"Your father's drinking has caused severe liver damage. In cases like this, there are three classes of the disease. Your father's is Class C, which means it has progressed beyond any of the possible treatment options."

I felt the tears well up in my eyes and I turned into Edward, who rubbed my back as he continued for me, almost as if he knew what I was going to ask. "What about a liver transplant?"

Sue shook her head. "For UNOS to give him a liver, he would need to have been sober for at least six months, which he hasn't been, and he told us that your blood type isn't a match for him."

I shook my head. "I'm B, he's O."

"Your father is still using dialysis to help clean his system, but he is out of treatment options, I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but it's only a matter of time now."

I cried harder and buried my head in Edward's chest as he tried to calm me. "Can she see him?"

"Yes, he's in that room." Sue pointed to the room across the hall from where we had stopped. "If there's anything else you need, let me know." Sue walked back down the hall before ducking into another room.

I walked across the hall and wiped the tears from my eyes, took a deep breath and opened the door, with Edward inches behind me. I walked into the room and saw him, almost losing it, before I was able to rein it in. I walked across the room and sat on the chair next to his bed. He was thin, and he looked so frail and weak, which were three things my father never was. His skin was

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yellow and it was marked by random bruises. I reached out and took his hand in mine and he opened his eyes, revealing that the whites of his eyes were yellow as well.

"You came."

Hearing his voice brought back a flood of memories. "Of course I came, you're my father. How come you kept calling and hanging up? I thought you were some crazy person."

Charlie let out a low chuckle. "Sorry, kiddo. I just didn't know what to say to you, I haven't seen you in so long, and the last time I did-"

I squeezed his hand. "That doesn't matter right now."

Charlie looked up at Edward, who was standing behind my chair and then looked back at me. "Is that your husband?"

I smiled. "No, it's my boyfriend, Edward." Charlie nodded at him and then looked back at me. "Is Mark still your deputy?"

"Mark's been the sheriff for a year now, I didn't run for re-election, that's when I first started getting sick, though I didn't know it at the time."

I looked down at our hands. "How do you feel dad?"

"I'm not too bad, they keep me medicated, but I'm really tired, and I feel bad, because I have breath that could kill an elephant." I couldn't help but laugh, but I knew that was most likely a symptom of his illness. "When are you going back to Seattle?"

My dad winced as he tried to shift his weight. "I'm not going anywhere dad."

He smiled and it crinkled up his eyes, the way I remembered it. "You've grown up, Bells." He looked around the room, stopping when his eyes landed on his nightstand. "Get my keys out of that drawer there." I reached in, noticing the



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high school photo on the nightstand; that was how Sue knew me. I took them out and held the keys out for him. "The silver one is for the doorknob, and the other one is for the dead-bolt. I want you to stay at the house, no point in spending a fortune to stay at the lodge; it's your house now."

I let out a sigh. "Dad-"

"No dancing around it, Bells, everything is yours. It's not much, but it's all I have to give you."

I looked at him and he was falling asleep. "Okay dad, we'll stay there tonight. I'm going to let you get some sleep. I'll come back in the morning, first thing."

"Sounds good, kiddo." Charlie closed his eyes and fell asleep quickly. I got up and walked to the door, with Edward close behind.

Once we were outside the hospital I turned to face him. "I'm gonna call Leah and ask her to bring me a few days clothes, you want her to bring the clothes you have at my place too?"

Edward grabbed my face. "Bella-"

"Not here." I couldn't break down yet.

"Sure, you want me to call Alice or-"

I looked up into his eyes. "No. Don't tell Alice, if she knows then she'll just come up here and I don't want an audience. I've got everything I need right here." I wrapped my arms around his waist and pulled him close.

I put the key into the lock and turned it, opening the door of the house I hadn't been inside for twelve years. I walked in and it was like a time warp, nothing had changed. Edward came in behind me with the groceries we had picked up. I went to the kitchen, throwing out all the food that was in there and cleaning the fridge. Then I put away the food, except the chicken for dinner. I threw three pieces of chicken in a baking pan and coated them with barbeque sauce

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and threw them in the oven. Then I cut up the potatoes and seasoned them before putting them in a smaller pan and throwing that in the oven as well. I sat in the kitchen, staring at the fridge. Edward came and sat next to me after he finished his phone call. "So, what did Carlisle have to say about Charlie's condition?"

Edward looked at me and squeezed my hand. "Same thing that Dr. Clearwater said, it's a waiting game now. I'm sorry, Bella."

"I don't want to talk about it right now. We're going to be cramped tonight; the bed in my room is a twin." I looked down at the table and Edward lifted my face again.

"That's okay, I like spooning with you." I let out a short laugh and he cocked an eyebrow at me.

"Spoonng in Forks." We both laughed harder and it felt weird. "Edward, I'm going to go up to my room, call me when the timer goes off."

"Okay, love." Edward let go of my face and I went upstairs.

The room, like the rest of the house, hadn't changed. I stripped the bed, and got a spare set of sheets out of the linen closet. I made the bed and left the dirty sheets out in the hallway. I looked over the few things that were in my room. I went back down to the kitchen and got the cleaning products and began cleaning my old room. I knew that I'd soon be doing this to the entire house, but it felt rude to start clearing the rest of the place before the house was legally mine. I threw out most of the old drawings that were around, but took some photos and knick knacks that I wanted and sat them on my desk. The closet and dresser were empty, and the desk only had a few pens and some paper. When I was finished straightening up the room I went outside and threw the sheets in the garbage bag and put it out for garbage. I went back to the kitchen and the timer was about to go off, so I got a drink out of the fridge for myself and Edward and then pulled the food out. I served it, and Edward and I ate it quietly.

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Leah arrived at around 7pm and hugged me tightly. "I'm sorry hon." Then I made Leah eat the leftovers from dinner, before she headed back to Seattle so she could go to work in the morning. After Leah left, Edward and I watched TV on my dad's broken down couch. Around 10pm I got up and set the coffee pot for the morning.

"You ready to go to bed?" Edward was standing in the doorway.

"Yeah." Edward and I took the bag Leah had packed upstairs and changed for bed. Edward lay down on his side and I got into bed facing him, pulling him close and crying into his chest. The whole time he was silent, just holding me and stroking my back.

The next morning brought me little comfort. I got up and Edward had made breakfast. We ate it and then headed to the hospital. My dad was worse. His coloring was darker and his breathing was more labored. We talked a lot about me, the bar, Leah, being in Alice's wedding, my plans for the new bar. When I told Charlie about that his face lit up.

"Bella, sell the house."

That caught me a little off guard. "What?"

"If you sell the house you'll probably get somewhere around \$325,000, that's how much they said it was worth when they readjusted the house tax. So sell the house and use the money for your new bar. Don't hold onto the house, this could be the one thing I get right."

I shook my head. "Dad."

"I'm serious Bella, I wasn't there for you when you were a kid, when I did get to see you; I didn't take advantage of it. No wonder you didn't want to live with me. Then you want a relationship and I spit in your face. Do you know, when I saw the write-up from when you opened the bar in the paper, I was so proud. I still have it back at the house. That's how I knew to call you there. I remembered the article and had one of the nurses to get me the number to the

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bar. You've done real good for yourself, and all alone. Let me help you with this."

I started to well up. "I love you dad. Always, no matter what." Charlie heaved a labored breath and closed his eyes. "When mom died, I was afraid of leaving what I knew, it wasn't you."

"I know," Charlie breathed. And with that, he fell asleep. Edward came and rested his hands on my shoulders.

"How you doing?"

I looked down at Charlie. "I'll survive."

Edward sat with me all morning, only leaving to get us lunch. He brought back sandwiches and drinks. We ate as Charlie slept, and Edward never pressed me, knowing I would talk when I was ready. Charlie woke up for a little while in the afternoon, and he told Edward and me stories about when I was little. Around 3:30 Charlie woke up again, and it was evident that he was taking a turn for the worse.

"Dad, you want me to get the doctor?" I asked as I squeezed his hand.

"No hon. They can't do much, the pain meds they have me on don't do much, but I can't take anything stronger." Charlie's legs started to twitch and he groaned. "Damn swollen legs." I started to cry and Charlie turned to me. "Bells don't worry about me. I've been fighting for a long time. I got my chance to make things right with you and that's all that matters. But I'm tired, I'm so worn out. Bella, I know it isn't fair, but I need you to let me go."

I cried even harder, "It's okay dad, you can go. I'm here, and I'll be here until you're asleep." Charlie closed his eyes, and turned his head all the way facing me. He never opened them again. I sat there with him for a few more hours, when around 7:15 the monitors suddenly started beeping. Edward had stepped out for a moment, and when I heard it, I took in a deep breath and started crying as the nurse came in. Edward came in just before Dr. Clearwater, and

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stood behind me, wrapping his arms around me. The doctor checked his heart and lungs, then walked over to the monitors and turned them off. She looked up at me and I turned into Edward and continued crying.

"Time of death, 19:18." Dr. Clearwater came over and placed her hand on my shoulder, "I'm sorry dear. Take your time, when you're done, let one of the nurses know." The nurse followed her out and Edward and I were alone in the room with my father.

I pulled away from Edward and walked over to my father, I bent down to kiss his forehead. "Bye dad, I love you." I couldn't take being in the room anymore. I walked out with Edward and found a nurse.

Edward drove me back to Charlie's house and I couldn't eat. I just went upstairs and curled up on my old bed. Edward gave me a few minutes and then came in and pulled me into his arms. "Why does everyone I love die?" I sobbed into his chest.

"Bella, your parents both fought long and hard to be with you as long as they could. I know it's not fair...you've suffered so much, but it's made you appreciate everything else, you love with your whole heart, even after all that pain."

I was touched by his words. "I appreciate you. I could never make it through this without you."

Edward kissed my hair. "I wouldn't be anywhere else." I was overcome again and cried myself to sleep.

The next morning was eerie. I woke up and Edward kissed my forehead and squeezed me inside his arms. "How do you feel, love."

I looked up at him. "It's surreal. I live in a world where my parents don't exist. It sounds like the stupidest, craziest thing but it's true. I don't have any family left."

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Edward pulled me even closer to his chest. "What can I do?"

I kissed his chest and then rested my forehead there. "After I meet with the lawyer, could you find a real estate agent? I want to get the ball rolling, otherwise I'll lose my nerve, and I promised my dad that I would sell the house."

Edward looked into my eyes. "Okay, I'll go into town after I drop you off at the lawyers."

My father's lawyer called soon after that and Edward and I headed out. I signed all the paperwork and waited for Edward. "I found a real estate agent in town that knows everything when it comes to selling a house that was inherited. She said if you wanted, she could come by today and go over everything and get things started, so that way she can take care of it while you're in Seattle." I looked down at my hands. "I'm sorry, I'm trying to get this moving for you, but is this too fast, you can wait you know."

I looked up and smiled at him through tear filled eyes. "No, it's fine. We'll call her after lunch."

Edward was amazing. He handled most of the stuff with the real estate agent, who did all the prep-work for when the house was legally mine, so that she could put it on the market without me having to make the trip. The next few days passed in a blur. I know that Edward and I went through the house, my father didn't own much, so we packed up a few boxes of things I wanted to keep, and put them in the back of my Rondo. Edward ordered pizza, and we watched TV until I fell asleep in his arms. There was the one constant through this whole ordeal, the security of Edward's arms. Saturday, Leah and the Cullen's arrived to attend the wake. All of Forks came out to say good-bye to my dad, but there wasn't one person I recognized or remembered. We buried him on Sunday, and then headed back to Seattle. I can't pick out a single moment in time from that weekend, but I know that once I got back to my apartment, I lost the last shred of strength I had and cried harder than I had since I got the phone call on Wednesday morning. I had wanted to hold it together until I got home, which is why I arranged everything so quickly. It

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helped that Charlie had made most of the arrangements in the weeks prior, and I was able survive it. But now I just wanted to cry. And Edward never left. He made me tea, and fixed me snacks, because I wasn't hungry enough to eat meals, and just held me.

Jake took care of everything at Ballet Studio, handling everything without having to call and ask a million questions, so I was able to just lie there. Edward would sit on my bed typing, as well as he could with me tucked into his chest, and he never asked those dumb questions that people do when someone dies. Sometime in the early morning of Wednesday, a week since this had all started, I whispered up to him. "Don't ever die, okay."

Edward gave me a tight squeeze and murmured into my hair, "I won't, if you won't." I smiled a little at the impossible promise we were making each other and then drifted off to sleep.

**Okay kiddies...sorry to be so depressing this chapter. I didn't want to do this at the top, because it would have given away what little mystery was left, since most of you were on to me before the note and the title, but this chapter has two special dedications. To my grandma Nan, for teaching me that strength may be mistaken for bitchiness, and blind faith may be assumed to be stupidity, but to live without both of these things is madness. You fought for a long time, and left us on your terms, and in your own time, knowing we would be okay. And to my Poppy, for coming back to life before my eyes and showing me that love and strength can overcome even the direst of circumstances. Next chapter will be happier, I promise. And Patti, I'm sorry if that made you cry, but I've been crying for the past two days writing this. Love and kisses...A Good Witch!**

# Some String & a Bag of Oats

## EPOV

Over the last week my heart has broken countless times. My Bella was getting beaten down by fate once again and all I could was watch and try in vain to comfort her. It killed me that she was going through this again. My mom had been in the hospital and now she was good as new again, but not Charlie. I had always wondered what I would say to him, if I ever met him. I fantasized about driving to Forks and cursing at him for abandoning his daughter, a woman who grew to be perfection incarnate, despite him, but in the end it wasn't necessary. He knew how bad he had screwed up, and he used his last days to make amends with Bella, as much as he could, before leaving her again. I wasn't typing anymore; I was staring at the screen while Bella lay across my chest. I had thought that she was asleep, but then I heard her whisper to me. "Don't ever die, okay."

I froze for a second before squeezing her and murmuring into her hair. "I won't, if you won't." A moment later she was asleep, and my laptop was on the floor. I was destroyed by her request worse than if someone had ripped me to pieces and set them on fire. Of all the losses she had suffered, of all the pain she had known, I could hurt her worse than all the rest, because unlike them, she chose to love me. I had never planned on leaving her, the thought caused me too much pain just thinking about how I would never be able to do it, but I realized that no matter how painful it would be for me, it would destroy her. I pulled her closer as the tears ran down my face. I felt so useless; I couldn't ease her pain, even if she said I was. This wasn't something I could kiss and make better for her, Bella had no family left, and that was something I was determined to change.

The light was creeping in the shades when my phone rang, and I reached to answer it before Bella woke up. "Hey dad."

I got up and went towards the kitchen, setting out to make breakfast while Bella was still asleep. "Son, everyone is here, do you mind if I put you on



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speaker?"

"No."

I heard the phone click and then there was a slight commotion before my mother's voice came over the line. "Darling, how is Bella?"

I took a deep breath and then answered. "She's hanging in there, she won't really talk about it, but she's been crying for days."

"Edward is she upset with me, because I would have been there in a heartbeat if I had known." Alice was suffering after not really seeing Bella in over a week.

"No, Alice she didn't want everyone around. You know Bella, if she had you all there she would have tried to be strong, and she just didn't have it in her to be strong so you wouldn't worry. She needed to do this her way, and I'm sure she'll call you when she's feeling better."

"How are you holding up?" Jasper was in full therapist mode, making sure I wasn't hiding my feelings away.

"I'm okay. I just feel so damn helpless. She says that my being here is all she needs from me, but I wish I could take this away, but I can't. If I can't make this better for her, what the hell good am I?"

"Edward you're being way too hard on yourself." Rosalie tried to point out, but I was already moving on to my next point.

"She asked me not to die last night."

"Edward?" I heard Bella's door open.

"Bella's awake; I'll try to see if she wants to come over for dinner or something soon. I'll call you later."

I hung up before she came into the kitchen. "How's your family?"

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Bella was standing with a slight smile on her face when I turned to see her.  
"Good, they miss you."

"I miss them too, can we see them?"

I walked over and wrapped my arms around her waist. "Of course, we'll call them later, okay. You want me to make you toast?"

Bella walked past me. "No, that's okay. I'm in the mood for a cheese omelet."

I smiled at her. "Your appetite is back?"

She nodded. "Yeah, I realized something last night as I was falling asleep, and I want to get it started." Bella walked around her kitchen, collecting everything necessary to make breakfast. "Don't even think about getting up. You've been doing everything for me this past week, I'm taking over now."

I laughed and held up my hands as a sign of surrender and sat down in the closest chair. "So, what did you figure out?"

"Lots of stuff." Bella had her back to me, so I couldn't see her expression.

"Like what?" I pushed.

"Like I know what I'm doing with the bar, originally I was just going to do a carbon copy of Ballet Studio, but now I've changed my mind, I like this idea much better."

"Really, what are you doing this time?"

Bella smiled at me as she poured the eggs into the frying pan. "Nope, it's a surprise. Only Jake and I are going to know what's going on."

"Jake, why Jake?"

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"Jake's been amazing these past few months. He's worked for me for almost four years, he was my first employee and he's done everything I could have asked for. So if he wants it, I'm going to make him the manager of the new bar." Bella closed the omelet and flipped it quickly. The timer on the coffee pot went off and she poured two mugs before grabbing the cream and sliding the oversized omelet onto a single plate and placing it between us with two forks.

"That's great; Jake's someone you can definitely trust with the bar, it'll make it easier to step back if you know you don't have to worry about what's happening in Portland." Bella nodded and dug into the omelet.

After we were done eating Bella cleaned up and as she put the frying pan in its cabinet it fell back out, landing on her foot. "God damn it! That's it; I cannot wait until April when my lease is up, because I am so out of this shithole!"

I froze, first because that was the first outburst I heard from Bella in over a week, and secondly because she had never brought up moving. "What? When did you decide to move?"

Bella was bright red as she placed the frying pan in the stove. "I've been thinking about it since the break-in, and I'm tired of being cramped."

"Why didn't you say anything?"

"We're still new, I know we've been through more than some couples who have been together for years, but I didn't want it to seem like I was trying to force your hand."

I got up and pulled her to me, kissing her nose. "Bella, nothing having to do with you would be forced, from the first night you stayed with me, I've never wanted you anywhere else. Move in with me?"

Bella laughed at the questioning tone I used. "Okay, but not until after the wedding. I'll stay here until my lease is up, and then by April 30th, I'll be all moved in." I smiled and kissed her in earnest, pulling her towards the bedroom. "Oh no! I'm actually making an appearance at work today, and if I'm doing

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that, then I better get dressed now." Bella kissed me again and then padded off to her bedroom, leaving me breathless.

### **BPOV**

The month after Charlie died was hard, but I made it through. Jake was ecstatic that I wanted him to run the new bar and was even psyched about the move. So I spent a lot of time training him how to do the books and talking to the real estate agent in Forks, pleased that everything was going well on her end. The date kind of snuck up on me, until Edward stopped by the bar one afternoon while I was going over payroll with Jake. "Sorry if I'm interrupting, but I wanted to grab a quick bite with you since I won't see you tonight."

I looked at him confused for a minute until it finally clicked. "Oh shit, the bachelorette party's tonight!"

Jake and Edward laughed at me. "How did you forget it?"

"I've been blocking it out because I'm scared of what Rosalie has planned. Crap, I have to be ready at 7:00."

"Okay, well, do you want me to go so you can finish up, or-"

"No, stay. Jake, why don't you go and take a break and we can finish up later."

"Sure, sure." Jake went upstairs and Edward took my hand as we went to grab a bite.

It was five minutes to seven and I was pleased by my reflection when my cell phone rang. I answered it and heard Rosalie cheering whatever was happening around her. "Swan, get your ass down here, the party wagon is waiting!"

I laughed and grabbed my little Coach wristlet, the only designer bag I owned, and headed for the door. "I'm on my way down now, Rosalie."

## Dance With Me

I stepped out of my apartment building to see a limo parked with its driver holding the door open. Rose called out from inside the limo, "Hurry up!" I shook my head and walked over, climbing in.

"Damn Bella, you look hot!" Alice giggled as she hugged me.

It was only the five of us, Alice, me, Rosalie, Irina and Leah, which made me both less and more nervous at the same time. And although Rosalie was keeping the secret between her and the limo driver, I knew it would be crazy.

Rosalie reached into a bag of tricks and handed each of us a pin to wear and then pinned a mini veil into Alice's hair, just then we pulled up to our first stop, dinner.

Dinner was fun, and completely uneventful. But we could tell that this was her way of easing us into a crazy night, so it was our next stop that we had to worry about. We climbed back into the limo and around 8:45 we pulled up outside a club and I instantly knew Rosalie's game. "Vision? Rosalie you brought us to Vision!"

Rosalie giggled. "Yup, I wanted to give you all an eyeful! I got us a VIP table right up front, let's go, the show starts at 9pm, we have to hurry."

Once inside and seated at our table Rosalie reached into her bag and pulled out four glow stick penis necklaces and threw one around her neck and then on everyone but Alice, who got a necklace with ten pink penises hanging from it. Then came the penis straws, penis lolly pops and the scavenger hunt list. Right before Alice went to look at it, the lights dimmed and the women screamed. The emcee came out welcoming us to Vision and then hoped we'd all be glad that we "came." When the first dancer stepped out we got quite an eyeful indeed. We laughed and gasped and enjoyed the show. During the second dancer, Rosalie disappeared and Alice quickly turned to me, pulling a condom out of my purse. "If Rosalie asks, I got it from the bartender." We all laughed as Irina checked it off the list.

## Dance With Me

A minute later Rosalie was back, squealing at Alice for her ballsy move when a shirtless man stepped in front of Alice and straddled her. Now I would have been laughing, but I let out a shriek as my chair was pulled partially out from under me, before another of the clubs dancers slid down behind me and started giving me a massage. I didn't know it was possible for a massage to make you tenser than you were before it started, but this one did. Alice was still giggling through her lap dance when the guy lifted the folding chair in his hands and started gyrating into Alice as she gasped and laughed, her head thrown back and her eyes closed. I was laughing when my masseuse leaned into my ear and whispered, "Cute wristlet." I gasped and relaxed a little, because Rosalie had managed to get one of the gay dancers to give me my massage. I giggled and he stood up from behind me, unbuttoning his pants so I could slip his tip into his g-string. I pulled him down to me and whispered into his ear, "I need your help with something, can we go somewhere a little more private." He laughed and led me away, much to the shock of my table.

A little later the emcee came out and announced Alice's name, calling her on the stage. We were told we had one minute to cover Alice with as much money as possible, because the more money she had on, the more the dancer did to her. Well, Rosalie knew what she was doing, because she had fans of singles paper clipped together, ready to stick in Alice's bra, pockets and waistband, along with loose singles to be stuck anywhere we could. When our minute was done Alice was covered with money, which was quickly pulled off of her before the dancer lifted, spun and dry humped Alice in several interesting and squeal-yielding positions, before finally letting her stumble off the stage. After that, Leah jumped on stage and won the "fake it, don't break it" contest with a moan that left us all slack-jawed and wide-eyed.

Soon the lights came up and the chair and tables were cleaned away and the people who were here for the dance club portion of the evening came in. We headed to the bar and Rosalie ordered more drinks. "Five blow jobs."

The bartender came back and lined the drinks up and we all bent down and drank them without our hands, and the group was impressed that I was able to swallow it and set it back on the bar without touching it once. We spent the night dancing and drinking, as Alice got the five men's business cards, a picture

## Dance With Me

with a guy whose nickname is Jazz, a pair of men's underwear, another thing that came out of her purse, and a photo of the men's room.

By 2am we were in various stages of inebriation, and on our way home. I was plotting and decided to put it into action. "Drop me off at Edward's."

"Bella, do you think that's a good idea?" Rosalie sounded a little worried that our activities would leak out while I was still a little drunk.

"I've spent all night with strange men rubbing up against me, I want to rub up against my-"

Alice screamed out. "For the love of all that's holy drop her at Edward's before I get left with a mental image that acid couldn't burn out of my brain!"

I giggled as we pulled up to Edward's building and Alice hugged me and promised to call me tomorrow afternoon.

I went up to the elevator and stepped in, steadying myself against the wall until I got to his floor. When I got in I knew he wasn't home, so I went to wait for him in his bedroom.

## EPOV

After a tame and sort of disappointing bachelor party, I walked into my building. When I opened my door, I saw Bella's shoes and purse on the floor by the table next to the door. I hadn't been expecting to see her, so I went into my bedroom and saw quite a sight. Bella was sprawled out on my bed in a short black, ruffled skirt, a ruffled black lacy top and around her neck was a glow penis. I stifled a laugh as I took off my shirt and pants. As I got closer I noticed a straw with a penis at the tip tucked behind her ear; Rosalie had definitely gotten creative, and Bella must have drunk enough to embrace it by the end of the night. I went to take the straw out of her hair and Bella stirred, opening her eyes and smiling. "Hey lover."

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I chuckled and sat down on the bed as she sat up, looking at the straw in my hand and then down to her jewelry, which she quickly took off. "Bella, how drunk are you, love?"

She yawned and smiled at me. "Not very, I let Rose think I was still drinking rum and coke, but I stopped around 12:30, and then I've been sleeping for almost two hours."

I stroked her hair. "Why don't you go back to sleep, I didn't mean to wake you."

"No, I didn't want to fall asleep; I was trying to wait up for you. How was your night?" Bella blushed and I laughed at her.

"It was tame, we had brought Jasper to a strip joint, but we didn't stay there long, so we just went to a bar and drank and joked around all night."

Bella frowned, "Why did you leave so quick, did something happen?"

I took a deep breath. "The mood was killed when our waitress came over in short shorts and a tiny shirt only to gasp and say, 'Dr. Whitlock?'"

Bella gasped and laughed. "One of Jasper's patients worked there, oh no!"

"Yeah, it was funny at 2am, but at the time it was kind of tragic."

Bella smirked and stood up, looking me right in the eye. "On the plus side, it makes my surprise that much more special."

I cocked an eyebrow at her. "Surprise?"

Bella giggled. "Rose got me a massage from one of the dancers at Vision," I tensed and Bella put a finger to my lips. "Breathe, it was funny, and I got off easy. Anyway, I found out he was gay, so I asked him for some help."

"Help?" I was a little too drunk to completely follow her.



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"Sit up straight." Bella stared at me and I complied. She turned her back to me and stepped backwards so that she was straddling my legs, and then she dropped down and began rubbing her ass against my groin and my boxer were suddenly a little tighter. Bella giggled and took off her top before grabbing my hands and guiding them up her skin from her hips and up to her breasts as she continued to grind into me. "And the best part is, you own this place, so there's no pesky 'no touching' rule." I moaned as I grabbed at her breasts, massaging them from behind. Bella reached around and undid her bra and I quickly pulled it off. Bella moaned and arched into my back as I kissed her shoulder. She stood back up and straddled me again so that we were face to face. I began kissing her breasts and she grabbed my face kissing me hungrily. She gave me one more peck on the lips before pushing me back onto the bed and kept grinding on me. Finally I couldn't help it.

"Bella, if I'm not inside you soon, I'm going to go crazy!"

She giggled and leaned down to whisper in my ear. "Silly, you should have said something; I can't read your mind." Bella stood up and took off her underwear before grabbing my waistband and pulling my boxers down, freeing my erection, eliciting a gasp as she climbed back on top of me and teased a little. "Is this what you want?" I growled and Bella slid down on top of me. I rolled over, unable to take it, thrusting into her and watching as she smiled and laughed at the sensations we were creating. "Oh God Edward...right there...oh...my...aaahhhh!" Bella clenched down on me and I came quickly, calling out her name.

Bella snuggled into my side and whispered, "When we get married, Alice is in charge of my bachelorette party, Rose is insane."

I froze and then smiled, I know part of it might be because she was drunk, but that was the first time either one of us had said anything about getting married, and if that was something she was already thinking about, even if only in the final minutes before a drunken slumber, it was a good place to start.

**Ooh...poor Jasper, that sucks! And Vision is a fake name for a real club that I go to in NYC, although I've only been to the pre-club "show" once,**

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**and it was quite an experience. Bella takes some big steps this chapter and Edward is more than happy to help her take them. Will that marriage comment backfire? I'm not telling! Keep enjoying the story, because I love writing it...until next chapter.**

# Sixpence for the Richer

**This is the lead up to the big wedding, and there are some cute moments ahead so have fun with this one. As always if you have ideas or comments, hit me with them and please check out my other stories!**

## **BPOV**

Alice was wound really tight. If I thought she was energetic before, I was mistaken, because the speed with which she was running around and talking was blinding. Everything had been delivered to the theater and they had prepped everything on their end so all that was left was to dress the room tomorrow. Alice was sitting on the counter of Esme's kitchen going over a last minute checklist. "I think we may actually have everything. Now we just have to get over to the salon in time for you to get back and throw in dinner. Thanks again Bella, I really appreciate all of this."

I smiled at her. "No problem, I've actually had fun with all this, but when I get married, I'm using a wedding planner because you're scaring me a little right now."

Alice froze, her eyes fixed on me. "What did you say?"

I looked at her, baffled by her tone. "What? Did I upset you Alice; I just meant that you're running around frantic trying to remember everything."

"You know that's not what this is about, you said married, oh my God, you guys aren't waiting to announce it because of my wedding are you, because if you are then don't. Tell everyone tonight! Tell everyone now! Mom! Rose! Irina!"

I ran over to her, dropping the tin foil in my hand. "Alice! We're not engaged. We haven't even talked about it, I just meant someday-"

At that moment Alice's reinforcements arrived and looked at the shock and

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terror on my face. "What's wrong?" Esme asked as she crossed the kitchen.

"Nothing, Bella decided to finally give in about her hair, she's going to let them cut it to the middle of her back." Alice shot me a look that made me realize losing my hair was the lesser of two evils, since she had been badgering me into getting it cut for over a month, I was willing to give in to avoid Alice's wrath.

I quickly wrapped up the pans of lasagna and threw them into the oven so I could just turn it on when we got back. We headed to the salon where we were met by a full staff who pulled us over to the nail tables to begin our mani/pedis. Alice called over Kim, the hairstylist who would be coming to the theater tomorrow morning to do our hair, and pointed to me, "She said you could cut it." I grumbled to myself and Kim came up behind me.

"Don't worry, we're still going to leave you with plenty of length, but this will make it easier for you." She smiled trying to encourage me, and I smiled back weakly. After our nails were done, I was pulled into the back to have my hair shampooed and then Kim stood behind me with a pair of scissors. I took a deep breath. Everyone was watching as she went to cut it.

"Wait. You said that you could donate it, to make wigs for cancer patients and stuff, right."

Kim nodded and then grabbed a few rubber bands and measured out a foot-long section and cut that first, placing it in a mailer envelope. Then she turned back and started cutting. I kept my eyes closed, willing myself not to cry. When it was over, I had to admit that it was beautiful.

We waved good-bye to Kim and headed back to house. I kicked everyone out of the kitchen to get to work, letting them have their fun while I had mine. The boys got back and soon Edward came in with a glass of wine for me. I had my back to him, cutting up the ingredients for the Caesar salad when I heard his gasp. "Bella, you chopped off your hair." Hearing the slight disappointment in his voice caused the tears to resurface. He came around to place the wine down next to me as I hadn't looked up and he saw the tears. "Love, I'm sorry, I was

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surprised is all. I like it, it suits you." He said as he pulled some of the hair from behind me and let it fall down my front.

"It's not that, it's..." my lower lip began trembling as I fought to control myself.

"What love?" He lifted my face so that I was looking into his eyes.

"Promise you won't say anything to Alice." Edward nodded and I took a deep breath, trying to steady myself. "The last time I cut my hair was when I chopped it all off for my mom when she had cancer. I get a few inches trimmed, but I haven't had an actual haircut in ten years."

Edward stroked my cheek and pulled me close to his chest. "Bella-"

"No, it's okay. It's time really. I've been holding onto it because of my mom, but it's just hair. And it'll take me a lot less time to get ready now." I smiled up at him and he laughed, kissing my forehead.

"You're silly. Now can I help you with anything?"

"Grab me the dressing." Edward went into the fridge and got it for me as I dumped the lettuce and cucumbers and shaved carrots into the large bowl and then added the dressing and placed a plate over the top of the bowl and shook it so the dressing would coat everything. I took the two loaves of Italian bread and cut them length ways and then put all four halves on a baking sheet and coated them with olive oil, garlic and oregano, before slipping it into the oven to toast up. A few minutes later I pulled out the two trays of lasagna and let them breathe. Esme came in to see if we needed anything and I handed her the salad to bring out, saying that everything was under control. I took out the bread and cut it and handed it to Esme as she came back, also taking my wine glass, as Edward and I came out, each carrying a pan.

We sat down to eat and everyone was smiling and laughing and sharing in the joy of the moment. The sounds of food being enjoyed made me smile as the conversation continued. "Bella, you better not cook like this for Edward when you guys move in together, because he'll be 300lbs." Emmett snickered in

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between bites.

"I'll join a gym." Edward remarked and eight sets of eyes were trained on us.

"What?" Alice was hovering off her chair ready to pounce.

Edward looked at me apologetically and I nodded, squeezing the hand that was sitting on the table. "Bella and I are moving in together when her lease is up at the end of April."

A squeal escaped Alice's lips and she flew around the table and latched onto me as the kids looked up from their food, finally noticing the commotion. Alice tried to find out when this had happened and I smiled and conceded, knowing that appeasing her would get me out of the interrogation quickly. "After Charlie died, I realized life is too short not to be happy, and Edward makes me happy."

I looked down and Edward tightened his grip on my hand, and when I looked up his eyes held nothing but pure love. With the love fest reaching maximum capacity, we started cleaning up. Esme beat me into the kitchen and when I joined her she pulled me into a tight hug. "Bella, I want you to know how much I love you, and how happy you've made our Edward. I'm so happy for you both, and if you ever need anything, don't hesitate to come to me."

Tears welled up in my eyes as Edward walked in. "Alice is kicking Jasper out, so I may only have a few minutes before I get thrown out." Esme hugged me again and then pushed me towards Edward.

"I'll take care of this, make a break for it."

Esme smiled at us, but Alice heard her from the other room. "Not a chance Bella, you're staying here tonight too."

"Alice, I'm already going to see him tomorrow before the ceremony, and he's seen my hair. Can't I *please* go home? I have to get up early to go to the theater before you guys get there and if Edward's setting up with me-"

## Dance With Me

Alice rounded the corner. "Fine, one of us might as well get some tonight." Alice smirked and then kissed us both good-bye. We left a few minutes later and Edward held my hand between us as he drove.

I had been holding my tongue, but my words from earlier had steeled my nerves. "Edward, I wanted to talk to you about moving in."

Edward looked over at me. "You're not getting cold feet, are you Bells?"

I shook my head. "No, I was just...okay, I have this whole little speech in my head, and it won't work if you interrupt me, because I'll lose my nerve."

"I promise to keep my mouth shut." Edward pulled into the garage and shut off the car, turning to face me.

I took one final deep breath and then started. "Okay, so I know we haven't talked about this at all, but I love you, and I see us getting married someday. Now that doesn't mean I'm asking for a proposal, because I honestly think it's still too early for that, but this," I gestured between us with my left hand, "this is the endgame. You're what I want, so I'm not going to hold back anymore. I want to move in with you, but I don't want to move into your place, I want us to find a place that's ours."

Edward looked at me with wide eyes before flying across the center console to take my face in his hands as his lips crushed mine. I reached up and let my hands weave their way into his hair as I ran my tongue across his bottom lip; he gasped and then deepened the kiss, refusing to let my face go. Finally, and only because we were in desperate need of oxygen, he pulled back and looked into my eyes. It was the look I loved, more than when he looked at me with his eyes hooded with lust, or when his eyes popped open when I surprised him, this look was the one that first made me nervous around him. His eyes seared into my soul, really seeing me, and apparently liking what he saw. "You're going to let me buy us a house?"

I pulled back a little further. "No, you can use the money from your apartment towards it, but the balance we're splitting. It won't be ours if you buy it. And I

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not sure I want a house, maybe a condo. Like one of those high-rise condos with the gym, and the pool, and all of those things right in the building. That way you won't have to go far to work off all the food I cook."

Edward's lids dropped slightly and his crooked smile crept on his face and I knew what he was going to say before he opened his mouth. "Baby, I wasn't planning on going any farther than the bedroom."

I smiled back and leaned into his neck, letting my breath blow against his ear as I whispered. "Well then, why don't we start with tonight's dinner?"

Edward's eyes bugged again and I laughed at how I had seen all of my favorite looks in a matter of minutes. Edward was already at my door, sweeping me up into his arms. He kicked the door closed and locked it as he carried me over to the elevator. When the doors opened we walked in and he managed to keep a safe distance until the doors closed. As soon as they did all restraint was gone as his lips were on mine again and they stayed there the entire ride up, as well as the walk to his door, and the clothes shedding stumble to his bedroom.

### **EPOV**

I rolled over as the insane beeping reached a fever pitch, slapping the alarm and groaning at seeing 6:30am for the first time in a while. Before I could roll over, Bella's arm wrapped around my waist and she kissed between my shoulder blades. "So we're really doing this? We're really finding a place together?"

I rolled to face her, stroking her cheek. "Yes love, we're finding us a place. But do you want to wait until after everything with the bar and the movie?"

Bella shook her head and leaned in to give me a quick peck, "No, I want to do this, and besides, I'll have help while you're out of town. And Jake will be supervising everything in Portland. I want to make a home with you." I pulled Bella on top of me and she quickly wiggled out of my arms. "Sorry, we have to shower and head to the theater. I have to get everything set up before I go and let them make me beautiful."



## Dance With Me

"They can't improve on perfection." Bella rolled her eyes and then ran to get in the shower down the hall.

We were both dressed and in the car thirty minutes later, heading the 45 minutes to Alice's theater. The entire ride up Bella was looking over the floor plan and the checklist that she and Alice had made. When we finally pulled in I saw why Alice had chosen this place, it was cute and kooky and perfect for her. Bella and I walked in and the "soldiers" immediately took notice. Bella quickly set Laurent and Emmett to work getting the tables and chairs out of the storage building next to the theater. Next, Jasper and I were setting up a gauzy fabric outside, over the front door to the theater, as well as the stage door where the guests would enter. My dad was helping Bella arrange Greek-looking pedestals, which were adorned with white, navy, and gold ribbons. When the tables had all been brought in, we arranged them in three small v-shaped arches with a small table for two at the opening of the last arch. The rest of the space was left open for dancing as Bella grabbed the gold table clothes and had us dress the tables. Around that time the caterers showed up and Bella showed them the wall shared with the lobby that they would set the buffet line up against and then let them set up everything. Finally we set the gift table up behind Alice and Jasper's table and then began placing eight chairs around each table while Bella followed behind us placing a navy napkin at each chair. When the florists arrived, Bella showed them which flowers went as the centerpieces and which were for the pedestals before taking the box of white rose petals and scattering them in the center of each table.

As the reception area finished taking shape, Bella brought our attention to the stage where we set up nine rows of eight chairs, with the aisle in the center. Bella set up the small table for the priest to use and then placed the last few pedestals and flowers on the stage for the ceremony. Finally, we pulled the curtain so that the reception area would be revealed after the ceremony and Bella finally turned to me. "Okay Cullen, I have to go and get ready, you make sure the caterer has everything set, and if they have any questions tell them to find me."

I kissed her forehead. "Yes ma'am."

## Dance With Me

Emmett laughed. "Watch out Eddie, she's bossier than my Captain."

"You Cullen boys need bossy women, it's the only way to make sure you straighten up and fly right." Bella said smirking back at both of us.

"That's for sure." Our dad remarked and he and Bella both laughed to themselves.

Bella turned back to Emmett. "Alright, I'll see later, and Emmett, I'll see you when we line up. And I'm expecting you to keep me from breaking my face in the heels Alice picked for us."

Emmett let out a booming laugh. "No problem Mighty Mouse."

With that Bella grabbed the box of bouquets from the florist and looked over both spaces, signing that everything had been delivered and then handed my dad the boutonnieres and walked back towards the dressing room.

### **BPOV**

I walked into the dressing room to see Kim smoothing Alice's cropped do into a sleek look. She was beaming as she sat there in a button down shirt and shorts, and looked up to me anxiously. "Everything's okay out there?"

"Perfect, the caterer is finishing up, but besides that, we're done." I put down the box of flowers and sat in the chair near Alice as Rachel, the makeup artist that Alice hired went to work on me. Everyone else was ready and dressed, so I was the last piece of this.

Rosalie was standing in front of Alice. "So as soon as you're done, we'll help you get dressed while Kim works on Bella's hair."

I reached into my purse and handed an envelope to Alice. "Wait, this is for you."

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Alice opened it and read the card out loud. "Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue, and a sixpence for your shoe."

"You wear it in your left shoe and it's supposed to bring wealth and good fortune to your marriage." I smiled at Alice who turned to look at me.

"Isabella Swan, I love you." Alice was blinking to keep from crying, and I began doing the same. A few minutes later Alice stood up and stepped into her dress. As they were buttoning her up, Angela ran over in her ruffled layer dress with a navy ribbon around her waist, and smiled up at Alice.

"Aunt Alice, we match!"

Alice laughed and smiled down at her. "Yes we do, sweetie."

Kim was hard at work piling my hair up on the top of my head, supremely grateful that I had agreed to cut off my hair, because now there was significantly less to play with. All three of us wore matching hair styles specifically chosen by Alice. As I looked up at her I smiled. Jasper was all she had ever wanted, and now nothing would ever separate them.

Jasper and I were alike in many ways, I hadn't known this until a few weeks ago, but Jasper's Aunt Maria had raised him, and she had passed away a few years back. We were both strays that the Cullen's had taken in and made a part of their family. Carlisle and Esme had compassion that knew no bounds and they had instilled that in their children, and I had been lucky enough to have one of those children walk into my bar, and into my life.

Kim tapped my shoulder, snapping me out of my thoughts and I slipped on my dress. I was strapping on my heels when Carlisle's light rap came on the door. "Can I come in?"

"Yes dad."

Carlisle came into the dressing room and his breath caught. "Alice...you look stunning." A tear came to his eye and he quickly used his handkerchief to wipe

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it away. "The boys are waiting."

With that we walked out into the backstage area, out of view of the stage. Esme took Angela to stand by Garrett, who was fidgeting with a bow on the ring pillow. Angela took her basket of rose petals and waited to for her cue. Esme gave Alice one last kiss and then went to sit down. My eyes met Edward's and he looked as if he might cry, but Emmett quickly stepped up to me. "I don't think so bro, this beauty is mine until after the 'I do's.'"

Emmett took my arm as Edward mouthed "I love you." Edward took Rosalie's arm and Alice took her father's. The music started on the antique piano behind the makeshift altar and the kids headed down the aisle. Irina and Laurent followed after them, and then Emmett and I continued the precession. Edward and Rosalie made their way to the front and took their place in front of the aisle seats of the front row. Esme was sitting behind us with five kids sitting three in her row and two more behind, all behaving extremely well. The music trilled and changed and the rest of the guests stood up and turned to face the Stage Left wing waiting for Alice's entrance.

**OMG! I'm evil, I know...but it would have been far too long to include the wedding. So Bella and Edward are going to get a place together, and are also dealing with their careers taking off, so everything is in full swing. Hope you enjoyed this, and the wedding is even better, I've spent so much time planning this, I'm scared for the eventual B&E wedding, because that's even bigger...but I have a plan! And I've found Bella and Edward's apartment, so when they find it the floor plan will go up, because I'm anal like that and plan out every detail.**

# Wedding Bells!

**HERE COMES THE BRIDE!** You might get a slight case of whip lash during the reception, because I want you to catch the little conversations that happen during some of the dances and I wanted you to get the feeling of them happening simultaneously instead of all in one POV and then switching and getting the whole thing from the other. Another tear warning, I started crying writing the vows, but its happy tears so forgive me! That's why it took so long to get this chapter out and the end, but more about that in the closing author's note! Okay, on with the wedding...

## EPOV

I know that at a wedding you really should be focusing on the bride, it is her day after all, but in that moment my eyes were for Bella only. After stealing a quick glance over her shoulder as she walked ahead of me to make sure Jasper hadn't made a run for it, I stood at my place in front of my chair as the music changed and everyone turned to see my little sister come down the aisle. I, of course, locked eyes with Bella who furrowed her brow and then looked to Alice, so I followed her gaze.

There were no words to describe how Alice looked, the flowing layers of her dress, how she clung to our father's arm to keep from sprinting up to Jasper, the way her whole being glowed from the million watt smile on her face. My little sister, Tinkerbelle incarnate with her optimistic personality and her fluttery movements, was all grown up and filled the image of a blushing bride to a tee. I know it's silly to talk about my 25 year old sister as if she was 4, but she will always be my little sister.

I remembered back to the day Jasper had asked me to be his best man; I was surprised at first because he and Emmett were college roommates and he was the one that had introduced Alice to him at Thanksgiving their freshman year. But I had to admit that over the years Jasper and I had formed a quiet bond, we were the ones left in the wake of the Rose and Emmett wedding, and with Emmett and Rosalie trying to start a family, Jasper and I spent many a night

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watching sports together. He and Emmett were still close, but Jasper had always been the one to keep me from losing it. And after the last three and a half months with Bella, I knew I owed him a lot more. Emmett's response was priceless, he said that it was fitting, Jasper had been his best man, I was Jasper's, and he better be mine when Mighty Mouse and I take the plunge! He loves that nickname...and she thinks it's hilarious. But back to Alice.

She reached the front of the aisle and Jasper stepped forward to shake my father's hand and then dad turned to kiss Alice before placing her hand in his, as he led her to stand in front of the priest. Rosalie and I took our step forward, so that we were in position for the ceremony. The priest began the ceremony and I stood there with my eyes glued on Alice, she was so happy, and I was so proud. When it came time for the vows, I was surprised that they had decided to write their own, Alice always joked that she could barely write a shopping list out of fear of being compared to "the great Edward Cullen," but if there were ever a day to try it, then today was it.

"Jasper, I'll never forget the day I knew that I would marry you, because it was the day we first met. Everyone thinks I met you at Thanksgiving, but we actually met a month earlier. That day, I showed up after Eric had broken my heart, looking for my big brother to go and scare him, but you opened the door and offered me so much more. You told me about everything Emmett had told you about me, and that boys were stupid, and someday I'd meet a man who would be worthy of me. And I knew then I didn't have to wait to meet him, I just had to wait until I was old enough for you to be able to see me as more than Emmett's little sister. You've given me everything I could ever want, you put up with my insanity and you humor me when I come up with some huge plan for world domination, and you love me, and that's the greatest gift you could ever give me, and I will cherish it always." The tears were streaming down the girls faces and I saw my mom use a tissue out of the corner of my eye. I was choked up to, there was no doubt of the love between them, but I sometimes forget that Alice was 14 when she met Jasper, and that after eleven long years they were finally getting married.

Jasper took a deep breath and then began his own vows. "Every day I deal with people in pain, people who have survived suffering, and war, and hardship. I

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listen to their problems and that weighs on me. But then I get home and I see you and that all melts away. You are the antidote for all the horror stories I deal with and you're quite simply my sanity. The day I opened the door to my dorm room and saw you crying in the hallway, I may not have known you were 'the one,' but I knew I had found my calling. Emmett beamed about your spirit, and your fire, and your heart, so to see you so upset, I swore to myself I would make you smile again. And when you did, I knew that I wanted to be a therapist, because the feeling I got when you smiled, was unlike anything I had ever felt. It wasn't until your freshman year of college, when you started hanging out with Emmett, Edward and I at your apartment that I realized that I loved you, but you were worth the wait. I would wait an eternity for you because you give me more than love, you give me hope, and that alone deserves a lifetime of me proving my worth. It's been a long road for the two of us, but I wouldn't change a single step we've taken together." Okay Jasper, screw you! Now even Emmett and I were crying and I turned to see my dad place his hand on my mom's shoulder from the seat behind her, where he sat watching half of his grandchildren.

Alice and Jasper exchanged rings and were declared husband and wife. The wedding party went outside to take pictures as the guests made their way through the small opening in the curtain. The rest of us entered through the lobby while Alice and Jasper went back to the stage. The curtains opened revealing the reception area to Alice who gasped as they made their way down to the dance floor as the DJ announced, "Let me present to you, for the first anywhere, Mr. and Mrs. Jasper Whitlock." Everyone cheered as Alice and Jasper walked down the stairs from the stage to the dance floor. "I'd like to ask everyone to clear the floor so our happy couple can have their first dance together as husband and wife." Everyone stepped to the edge of the dance floor and I made my way to Bella's side. The music began and I was surprised, not by the song, but by the artist singing it.

From beside me I heard Emmett's booming laugh. "Leave it to Alice to pick the Joey McIntyre version of *Come Rain or Come Shine* over Sarah Vaughan." We both shook our heads as Jasper pulled Alice close and they danced in small circles, oblivious to the world around them. As the song ended our dad stepped up and took Alice's hand as *I Loved Her First* began. I felt Bella stiffen at my

## Dance With Me

side as the words began and I pulled her to my chest and stood sideways so we were both still facing the dance floor.

"Love, do you want to step out for a moment, I'm sure Alice would understand."

Bella shook her head. "I'm okay; I just wish I could have had that dance with Charlie some day."

I kissed her forehead, "I know. I love you, sweetheart."

The song ended and the music started up again, Alice ran over and grabbed Emmett and pulled him to the floor leaving Rosalie and Jasper to pair up. I pulled Bella into my arms as we started dancing to the music. "You know, now that Alice's wedding is behind us, life will be a little less hectic."

Bella laughed and looked up at me. "Less hectic? I'm moving, then we're moving, you're finishing your novel, then you're consulting on a movie, and I'm opening a bar, this has been nothing compared to the next month or so." I couldn't help but laugh with her; we did have quite a stretch ahead of us. "I'm going to miss you."

I pulled her chin up so I could look into her eyes. "I'll be losing my mind every moment I'm away." I kissed her and then there was a light tap on my shoulder.

"Sorry to interrupt, but I'm getting my dances in now." Alice smiled and Bella stepped back. I took Alice's hand as Jasper took Bella's and we began our dances.

"You're a vision Alice, not that there was ever a doubt you would be. I'm a little sad though, because I guess I can't call to Tink or Thumbelina anymore, you're all grown up and married."

Alice smiled at me and then kissed my cheek. "You better not retire those nicknames, I love it when you call me them."



## Dance With Me

I spun Alice out, letting her dress flow with her movements, and then pulled her back into me. "So, how long are you going to wait to make me an uncle again?"

"Edward Anthony Cullen!" Alice gasped. "I'll get back to you after the honeymoon." She winked and I laughed again. "How long are you going to wait until I get to help Bella plan your wedding?"

"Whoa, we just decided to move in together, and we have a rough month or so ahead of us with all the work stuff happening at once. Don't go pushing us down the aisle tomorrow."

"But soon?" She looked at me with those puppy dog eyes that she knew I couldn't resist.

I smiled at Alice, she knew me well. "The moment I think she's ready for it; I will ask her, okay."

Alice placed her head against my chest. "I know I'm pushing, but I just want you to feel this, I want you to be this happy."

I hugged Alice closer to me. "Don't worry; I'm happy enough for forever right now."

Alice giggled and then there was a tap on my shoulder. "The game of musical partners continues." I looked over my shoulder and then let go of Alice, taking Rosalie into my arms.

### **BPOV**

Alice had just walked away with Edward and I smiled up at Jasper as he pulled me close and we started dancing. "Congratulations Jasper, I'm so happy for you both."

"Thank you Bella. How are you doing?"

## Dance With Me

I looked at Jasper and shook my head. "Oh no, you're not putting your therapist hat on today." He kept staring at me and I finally cracked. "I got a little emotional during the father/daughter dance, but it passed. I'm just glad I was able to make peace with him. Now that I've been honest with you, spill, what's Alice's plan with the bouquet toss, is she chucking it right at my head, or is she going to have everyone stand around me and then run away as soon as it's airborne."

Jasper threw his head back and laughed. "I may have only married Alice thirty minutes ago, but I'm not that stupid, if there's a plan, you're not getting it out of me."

I laughed with him, a little more at ease now that Jasper had gotten me to really smile. "How does it feel, knowing that you two have forever now?"

Jasper smiled at me. "Amazing, I've waited so long to say those words, and now I just get to enjoy my life with her."

"That's nice. I didn't realize you'd known Alice that long, inviting a fourteen year-old girl into your dorm room..." I shook my head at him in mock disapproval.

Jasper laughed again and then whispered to me. "I'll have to show you a picture of what she looked like at fourteen, but if I had been that stupid, at least it would have been worth it." I looked up in time to see him wink at me before I felt Emmett's hand on my shoulder.

"Okay, I'm getting my swerve on with this one before Edward runs with her to Vancouver and never comes back." We all laughed as Alice came back to claim Jasper.

Emmett swung me around, and taking full advantage of the slightly faster pace of this slow song, proceeded to spin me around the dance floor making me squeal and giggle like a child. As we found a more manageable pace, Emmett finally looked me in the eye. "So, you're going to have to give me advance warning, because the bachelor party that I've planned for Eddie is going to be

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legendary, if only to make up for Jasper's."

I laughed at him. "Emmett, when we get engaged, you'll hear Alice's squeal even if you're three states over."

Emmett joined in the laughter and continued on. "Seriously, Bella, you're good for him, and I'm sure there's some reason you keep him around." He arched his eyebrow at me, the way Edward does sometimes and I had to go for it.

"I think I can come up with a reason." Emmett's eyes bugged out of his head and I giggled again.

"Hell, Bells I didn't know you had it in you." I chuckled again at his expression. "Wow, you're minds in the gutter, and coming from me, you should be worried."

We finished our dance and Carlisle came up behind me. "Sorry to keep you away from Edward, but I'd love to take a spin with my favorite ballerina."

### **EPOV**

Dancing with Rosalie was nice, for the first moment she was silent and smirked at me. "So is everyone asking when the wedding is?"

I nodded. "It's alright; I bugged Alice about making me an uncle again." My thoughts jumped to Bella in that moment who I could hear laughing as Emmett danced her around the floor.

"Edward, don't do that. Emmett and I are proof that it can still happen for you. Bella hasn't given up."

My head snapped forward to look at her. "Bella's talked about it?"

"Yeah, she said that back when it happened that her best friend offered to be her surrogate someday, and at one point at the rehearsal dinner, her and I were talking and she said she wants a little Edward running around. Plus, I think she

## Dance With Me

likes the idea of adopting too. She wants a big crazy family, and she never thought about that before you. You healed her Edward; you took the scared 20 year-old I saw in that waiting room and you made her willing to dream again. I'm proud of you, you and I are a lot alike, so I know how hard it's been for you, but you never forgot that Bella was the most important thing."

I smiled and kissed Rosalie on the cheek. "I'm glad we have you to help us through this someday."

Rose pulled back from me and motioned with her chin. "How's my boy behaving, Rose?"

"He's a little antsy to get back to Bella, but he's a perfect gentleman, as always."

I reached around and hugged my mom, and then I put my hands on her waist. "Edward, I'm so proud of you."

"Mom..."

"No, I mean it. You have everything you've ever wanted, you're about to move in with Bella, which is a big deal considering your last roommate just got married."

I smiled down at her. "It's funny, part of me wants to throw her on a plane to Vegas and marry her tomorrow, but the other part; I'm willing to wait as long as I have to. My Bella's worth the wait." The tears welled in her eyes.

"It's so nice to see all my children happy. After what happened at the beginning of the year, I'm so glad to be here for this."

I pulled my mom into another tight hug. "Mom, I know, we were so afraid for you. But, Bella got us all through that to. She was amazing, and after being there while she went through everything with Charlie; I can only imagine how hard it was for her to be there."

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"She's a special woman, *your* Bella." I chuckled at the emphasis she placed on the word "your." We danced in silence for the rest of the song until I felt a small hand on my back.

"Mind if I take Edward back from you?" Bella peeked her head around my back and my mother smiled.

"He's all yours." I kissed my mom quick and then took Bella back into my arms.

### **BPOV**

Carlisle smiled down at me and I wrapped my arms around his neck. "So, I'm your favorite ballerina?"

Carlisle smiled wide. "Yes. Bella, it's a parents greatest joy to see their children happy and successful. Edward always fought to be successful, but I've never been prouder of him than I've been in the last four months. Seeing how he's been there for you, and how he's opened up with you, and how you take care of each other. I know it's been hard for you with everything that happened with Charlie, but I want you to know that I already consider you a daughter, and if you ever need anything, I'm here."

"Thank you Carlisle. You all make me feel like I'm already a member of your family. It's been tough, I see Edward, and Alice, and Emmett with you guys and I see everything I missed, and everything I'm going to miss. But it helps that Edward is so wonderful. You did a good job with him."

Carlisle laughed. "We can't take credit for that, we may have taught him, but you brought it out of him."

"Thank you. I love your son more than anything." Carlisle leaned down and kissed my cheek.

"Then go get him." Carlisle turned me around and I walked over to Edward as the song ended, placing my hand on his back.

## Dance With Me

"Mind if I take Edward back from you?" I peeked my head around his back and Esme smiled.

"He's all yours." Edward kissed his mom and then took me into his arms.

"I'm done with that game, I'm not letting go of you all night."

I laughed and kissed him hard. "I love you."

"I have to thank Alice for that dress, I love you in blue."

I laughed, "That's why she picked it."

Edward took my face in his hands and kissed me again. "So, Leah told you she'd be your surrogate?"

I looked up at him shocked. "Rosalie has a good memory. I don't know we haven't talked about it in years."

"Would you want to?" He looked at me with real interest.

"Sure, I mean adoption is something I would do too, but I'd want to try that first. We could always do both." I smiled at the idea of having a house full of kids, with Edward and I snuggled on the couch watching Disney movies while our children stared up at the screen.

"I want that too. I'm so glad we can finally talk about this."

"Me too. I don't want there to ever be anything we're afraid to talk about."

"Deal." Edward gave up on dancing and kissed me passionately until Emmett and Rosalie spun passed and called out to us.

"Get a room."

## Dance With Me

After that we sat down and enjoyed the food. Everything was lovely and the reception continued on until the DJ brought everyone's attention to the center of the dance floor where Alice was standing next to a chair, holding her "throwing" bouquet. Leah grabbed my wrist and threw me ahead of her on the dance floor. A few other women got up, but there was never a question in my mind that I was the one catching this bouquet, whether because Alice had planned it, or because I was diving for it. Alice threw it high and I got under it, calling it like I was an outfielder and caught it easily.

The single men started to get closer to the dance floor as Jasper kneeled in front of Alice and slid his hands under her dress, coming back a minute later with her blue garter. Edward, who obviously knew what the person who caught the garter, got to do; made his way to the floor. A few of those other single guys looked over at me and started making their way to the floor before Emmett turned to them shaking his head. "Sorry boys, this game is rigged."

Edward smiled and stood alone as Jasper flung the garter at him. After he caught it, I sat down on the edge of the chair and he smiled my favorite crooked smile as he knelt down in front of me. Edward put his fingers on the inside of the elastic of the garter and hooked it over my shoe before sliding it up my thigh at a painfully slow pace. I blushed and Edward's smile got even wider. He pulled his hands out from under my dress and helped me up, pulling me back to our table where Leah was cheering. "That was the funniest thing I have ever seen!"

I smirked at her. "Better be careful, he knows you offered to be my baby factory."

She shot me a look, "Fine, all I ask is that we plan it so I have the kids during summer so I don't miss work."

My eyes bugged out this time. "You're serious?"

Leah laughed at me. "Sure, it's not like I'm having kids of my own anytime soon, and I want to do this for you. Besides I'll automatically be the cool aunt because I birthed them."

## Dance With Me

We all laughed, and Edward pulled me close to his side as he said, "Thank you Leah, it means a lot that you would do that for us."

I stared at them. "How about we table this discussion until there's a ring on my finger, okay."

"No problem, we have plenty of time for that." With that the night continued on as it had before all of the baby talk started. When Alice and Jasper made their way to the car we pelted them with rice, well Emmett pelted them, the rest of us just showered them with it. Edward and I said our good-byes and made our way to his car. "You tired love?"

"Yeah, it's been a long day, and my feet are killing me." Edward pulled out of the parking lot and drove for about fifteen minutes, before getting off the highway.

"Edward, that wasn't our turn?"

He smirked at me. "Wrong, that isn't the turn for Seattle, but it is definitely our turn." We pulled into a small lodge and Edward reached behind his chair where he pulled out an overnight bag. He walked around to my door and opened it for me. I stepped out and we walked up to the door. Edward got us the key to our room and we went up. I walked into the room and kicked off my shoes and started taking my hair down. "Excited much?" Edward snickered from behind me.

I shook out the rest of my hair after freeing the last of it from the pins that now sat on the dresser. "I don't want a repeat of the Valentine's Day incident, and besides, you haven't seen the garter on me yet." Edward took off his coat and unbuttoned his vest, throwing them both on top of the dresser, knocking the bobby pins onto the floor. I whipped his tie onto the floor and began unbuttoning his shirt while he kicked off his shoes and socks, finally taking off his pants as I slipped his shirt off. I turned, moving my hair so he could unzip my dress, and as soon as it hit the floor Edward's eyes started moving south and I grabbed his chin pushing it back up. "Nope, close your eyes." Edward groaned as I felt his erection graze my leg, but closed his eyes. I quickly



## Dance With Me

slipped off my underwear and bra and sat on the bed, resting my back against the wall. "Edward...I'm ready."

Edward turned and opened his eyes and groaned as his jaw dropped and he walked over to the bed, dropping his boxers along the way. He climbed up to me and kissed the skin just below the garter, then grabbing it very gently; he slid it off with his teeth. I was nervous, knowing how he would probably react to what I was about to ask, but still a tiny bit unsure. Edward threw the garter across the room and kissed me, grabbing my hips, but I pulled my lips from his and looked at him. "Edward?"

He heard the timidity in my voice and pulled back to look at me. "Bella, love is something wrong?"

I looked down and blushed. "No everything's fine, it's just..."

He pulled my face up so I had to look at him. "What love?" I took a deep breath but still couldn't say it out loud, so I decided to show him. I took his hand from my face and slid it down my neck and chest, across my stomach and stopping just above my heat. He looked at me wide eyed. "I thought you said you didn't-"

"I've never let anyone try; I was always freaked out a little by it. The only person who has seen it is my doctor."

I blushed again and he looked at me seriously. "You're sure?"

I nodded. "I trust you."

With that, Edward kissed my lips and then slowly made a trail down my front, stopping for a small detour at my breasts, but eventually kissing down my stomach and stopping to look up at me when he reached where my hand had stopped. "If you start to feel uncomfortable, let me know." I nodded and he gently slid my legs open wider. Edward started kissing the inside of my thigh right above my knee and continued all the way down until he reached my center. He looked up at me and then gently began licking my folds. The

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sensation was amazing and I jumped a little, which made him laugh. He continued kissing and licking and sucking as his hands caressed my thighs. I felt his tongue run up to my clit and I bucked a little into him, but he didn't seem to mind. Edward took his right hand off of my thigh and lightly rubbed one of his fingers across my opening before sinking it inside me. I rocked my hips toward him and we both moaned at the same time. He slid a second finger in and then began sliding them in and out, picking up the pace. I felt it building and I had never loved Edward more, because he was the only person I would have trusted to do this, and he didn't betray that trust.

He continued his ministrations until finally I was pushed over the edge, arching my back and slamming my head onto the pillow while I exclaimed, "EDDWWAAAAARRRRRDDD!" I lay there for a moment trying to catch my breath as Edward lay beside me, hugging me to his side. I looked up at him and smiled. "I didn't think I could love you anymore than I did when I woke up this morning, but once again I was wrong." Edward smiled my favorite smile and then kissed my forehead. I looked down and my eyes found his erection, and I smirked, pulling away from him to sit up by his waist.

He looked at me as I moved between his legs and pushed them further apart. "Bella, you don't have to-" But his words stopped as soon as I took him in my hand. I stroked him and he let out a loud moan as my thumb traced his head and then I lowered my mouth to kiss the tip before taking him into my mouth. It was Edward's turn to buck, and when I looked up at him he had a look on his face that was a weird mix of apology and ecstasy and I smiled. He was enjoying this. I sucked and licked as I let him fill my mouth before rising back off him and plunging down again. Reaching down, I rolled his balls in my hand and he let out another guttural moan. I felt his hands in my hair and then he moved them to my shoulders. I looked up at him and he pulled me up on top of him, rolling me on my back and whispering into my ear. "Love, that was amazing, but I couldn't take it any longer; I need to be inside you." And as he said it, I felt him enter me and I arched my back, pushing him into me further. He thrust into me, finding our rhythm quickly and I was already on the verge of my second orgasm. He felt me begin to tense and whispered into my ear, "I'm close too love, cum with me baby." I bucked again at his words, we did talk during sex sometimes, but we had never really been this direct, and I liked that

## Dance With Me

these last shreds of reluctance were falling away and there was no longer a fear of the others reaction.

"Oooohhhhhh...baby...that's feel so good...make me cum with you!" Edward moaned again and I felt the tremors of my orgasm begin as we came together. He collapsed on top of me and I held him close, refusing to let him move. I kissed his neck before whispering into his ear, "I would take every ounce of pain I've gone through again, because it has made every moment with you that much more special. I needed to live in that darkness to recognize just how brilliant your light is."

Edward looked up at me with tears in his eyes. "I love you Isabella Marie Swan, and I will spend every moment that I'm given with you, proving that I'm worthy to have you in my life." We repositioned ourselves so that I was hugging myself to his chest as he petted my hair. I snuggled as close as I could to Edward and fell asleep listening to his heartbeat.

**So there you have it! The dance conversations crack me up, because if you're the unmarried sibling at a wedding, especially if your younger sibling just got married, you get those questions all night! And I loved the garter toss, it always confused me in the book that Edward threw it at Mike, because then Mike would have to put the garter on Angela with Ben and Jessica watching. I guess it was Edward's way of saying, "That's as close to her as you'll ever get!" But I love that everyone was in on it. And the lodge scene...oh boy! I've never written anything like that before, so I was terrified and was originally going to hold off until the night he proposed to her, but in the end, they spent all day realizing that they could never love anyone more than they loved each other, so I thought it was time that Bella gave him that gift. What do you think about the idea of Leah being a surrogate for them?**

# The Great Real Estate Search

**This chapter took a long time because of the time jumps and trying to get everything right as far as the real estate stuff, because I wanted it to be believable, but I did take some liberties. Big thanks to my sis for all the help with the real estate stuff. As far as the time is concerned, this chapter starts April 9th (the 9th is their day isn't it!) and ends around May 3rd. I did this because I wanted to get through all the real estate stuff in one chapter so they could be settled and move on to more important. You guys are awesome, so without any further rambling from me.**

## EPOV

In the two weeks since Alice's wedding, Bella and I had been so focused on work that we weren't seeing much of each other. Charlie's house had been sold, and now that she finally had the money to buy the bar, she was spending all her time focusing on getting Jake ready to do the leg work. I, on the other, hand had been plowing through my novel, trying to hit my April 16th deadline with a few days to spare. The tunnel vision hadn't stunted our search for an apartment though, and tonight we were ordering in and looking over some of our options.

Around 6:30, there was a knock at my door, and I opened it to see Bella with Chinese food in hand and a bag of paperwork. "No work tonight, you promised." I pouted and she sighed as I took the food from her and we made our way to the table.

"Edward please, Jake leaves tomorrow morning and he needs this paperwork so he can start looking for the new bar." I kissed her and sat down.

"Fine, but I want quality time with my girl, I leave in two weeks and everything's going to get crazy once this draft gets in."

"Jake's stopping by in an hour to pick it up before he heads to the bar, then I'm all yours." She wiggled her eyebrows and I laughed, she knew how to work

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me. I took out the Chinese food and began arranging the containers while Bella separated her paperwork. She scribbled out lists and filled out forms while eating her sweet and sour chicken, and I couldn't help but sit in awe of her. She looked up and recognized the look on my face, and blushed. "What is it?"

"You're amazing. This bar is what you wanted, and you're doing it all on your own. I'm proud of you love."

She smiled at me. "What are we going to do about your apartment? I know you wanted to put the money from it towards our new place, but if we sell this place before we find another one, we'll be moving in with your parents."

I laughed hard and then leaned in. "You know, it's every man's fantasy to *have* his girlfriend in his childhood room."

Bella swatted my arm and there was a knock at the door. Right on time, Jake came in and took all the papers from Bella and quickly went over what he was going to do if he found a place. A few minutes later I was cleaning up our dinner and Bella pulled out the print outs from MLS and we started going through them. "Seriously though, what are we going to do about this place?"

I looked up from one of the listings, "The building owner wants to buy it. He'd rather pick a tenant himself then have the place go to the highest bidder, he's anal like that. So when we find our place, he'll buy this place from me."

She smiled and returned her attention to the listings. "That's good; it means we don't have to worry about that at least. What about this place?"

Bella held out the listing she had been reading and I looked over it. "Why aren't we getting a house, again?"

Bella's brow furrowed. "I like living in a building and having everything all inclusive, or at least as much as possible. Plus, I like living around downtown, I don't want to have a thirty minute drive home from the bar at 4am."

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I nodded; I didn't like the idea of her driving home when some nights she could barely walk the few blocks it was now. "Okay, no houses." I picked up the few house listings we had and put them in the "no" pile, before picking up her listing and placing it in the "yes" pile. We went through and found six condos that we liked. Bella said she'd check them out tomorrow while I was in my meeting, and if she found a place she really liked, she'd text me and I'd meet her. With that out of the way, we settled into the couch to watch a movie.

I was walking out of my meeting when my phone buzzed. I opened it and saw the message from Bella.

*We found a new place...come now!*

I laughed at her excitement and quickly headed over to the address Bella texted me a moment later. When I reached the door, I could hear Bella's frenetic chatter and knew immediately she was in love. I knocked and walked in and Bella pulled me into the main room. "Edward, this place is perfect. It has a gym, and a pool, and did you see those gardens, it has everything we wanted." She whispered as she pointed to Patti, our realtor, who was out on the balcony taking a call. Bella grabbed my arm and pulled me to the door to start giving me the guided tour. "Look, we can turn this into a guest room, and the second bath is right by the door. Then we have this huge space for our living and dining room. And baby, did you see the view? This is a corner unit so all of the bedrooms have great big picture windows and look at our balcony. You can sit out there with your coffee in the morning and watch your ferries. Plus check out the kitchen." She pulled me into the kitchen, which had a nice sized laundry room off of one side and a pantry off the other. There was a half wall and a bar counter. Bella continued pulling me through the apartment showing me the master bedroom and bath. "The whirlpool tub is huge! And it still has a big shower."

I smiled, happy that she was so giddy over this place, but there were other places that we had looked at that were closer to what we were looking for. "Bella, you're right, but what about the other places, the one place had that huge kitchen with an island, and the other one had a little built in home office?"

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"The one with the office wasn't as impressive in person, and the big kitchen in the other was nice, but I haven't shown you my favorite part yet." Bella grabbed my hand and pulled me into the third bedroom, which was right off the master suite, and I was a little confused. "The big kitchen place had the master bedroom buried in the back of the apartment with the other bedrooms together by the door and I didn't like that. One of the bedrooms has to be a nursery someday, and I want our baby right next door." Bella smiled that million watt smile and my heart melted. Five months ago, she had given up on herself, and now she was standing in the second bedroom of the condo we were thinking about buying, talking about how she wanted our baby's nursery close to our bedroom.

Patti came in and found us, smiling at our ecstatic faces. "So Edward, has Bella sold you on this place yet?"

I wrapped my arms around Bella's waist and pulled her back against my chest. "We'll take it!"

Bella's head snapped up to look at me. "Edward?"

Patti looked equally as shocked. "Edward, I have to warn you, this place is more expensive than the range you were looking in."

I shook my head. "I don't care, make the offer." Patti took out her phone and began dialing as she went back into the living room.

"Edward, you've been all of five minutes, and this place *is* more than any of the other places we were looking at."

I held her close to me and looked deep in her eyes. "Bella, you just stood here and told me about how you wanted to make this room into a nursery someday. We're getting this place. And please don't freak about the money. I know you wanted to go fifty/fifty, but just let me do this for us."

Tears welled up in Bella's eyes and she reached up on her tip toes. "I love you Edward Cullen."

## Dance With Me

Patti came back in and told us that the offer was in as soon as we signed the paper and that if the board approved it, we could start filling out the paperwork for getting us approved. The board would be meeting on Wednesday, and we would know something then. All I can say is thank God Patti was on the ball, because she had us fill out a lot of the different background checks and various other things that the different condo boards would want, so that we were prepared to go forward once the offer was accepted.

A week after we first saw our condo, we signed the contract and sent in a payment to hold the place until the board made their decision. Bella was over the moon, and I was just as excited, with any luck, we'd be moving into our new place in no time. Bella however was now fully focused on her freak out over having to be out of her apartment in thirteen days.

My draft had been turned in and I was happy to have it out of my hands for the moment, because it meant there was one less thing on my plate. Bella and I were knee deep in financial disclosure forms and background info for the board when Alice and Jasper decided to come up for air and visit us.

"Oh my God and I thought we were busy at our place." Alice exclaimed as she saw the table.

"Quit it Tink, I don't want any details about how 'busy' you two are."

Bella laughed and showed Alice the floor plan and explained what she wanted to do with the place.

"Nice size walk-in closets, I'm proud of you Bella." Alice giggled as she went over the plans.

"Alice the closets were the last thing on Bella's mind when she saw this place, trust me."

"So, have you packed up your place yet?" Jasper looked over at Bella who automatically turned as white as a sheet.



## Dance With Me

"No. I'm so screwed, I don't have any time."

Alice patted Bella on the back. "Don't worry we'll make a girls night out of it while Edward's in La-La Land and have everything taken care of."

Bella's face returned to normal as she sighed. And then her phone rang. "Hold on." Bella answered it. "Hey Jake, what's up?" Bella listened for a few minutes and then turned to me. "Edward, I need your computer." I grabbed it for her and she signed into her email account and opened the email from Jake. She downloaded the attachment and squealed. "Jake this place is awesome! You said its right by the university? Okay, I'll see you then." Bella hung up and then turned her big brown eyes on me and made her apologetic face. "Baby, I have to go to Portland Wednesday morning. I don't know how long I'll be there; I may not be back until after you leave."

I pulled her into my lap and kissed her. "Go look at your bar, I'll finish up the paperwork and drop it off so that the board has it for their meeting next Wednesday."

Bella wrapped her arms around my neck and pulled me close. "Thank you!" As soon as she let me go she turned to computer screen to show us the photos Jake had taken of the bar and the surrounding area. "And the best part is Jake may be moving into one of the apartments in the building, so he won't have to worry about the late nights."

Bella and Alice spent the rest of the night talking about the bar and the apartment and Jasper and I couldn't help but shake our heads and laugh. "We certainly didn't pick sane women." I commented as they continued babbling at a speed so fast that the words were lost to us.

On cue, both of them turned and scowled at us and Jasper laughed. "Oh come on, at least it's never boring."

**BPOV**

## Dance With Me

From the moment I walked into the bar, I knew it was exactly what I wanted. The owner was anxious to sell and Jake had already won over the landlady of the building above it. We were lucky that the first few floors above it were offices, which meant we had a noise buffer before the apartments, and most of the tenants were young, so the building was already buzzing about a new bar moving in downstairs. It almost seemed too good to be true. We'd have to do some work, but the former owner had taken really good care of the space and the bar area was in great condition, so I'd have to redo the floors and the walls, build the stage and the raised seating area, but besides that it was simply a matter of cleaning it up and buying the furniture and the booze.

I made my offer and was signing the contract by Monday, like I said, anxious to sell. So Jake and I went to Home Depot, because I'd rather pay them to install things than a contractor, and picked out the flooring and paneling for the wall. Jake signed the lease for his apartment, and I was officially in real estate heaven. I was closing on the bar May 10th, and Edward was already in LA, so when I drove back to Seattle, I was going home to my apartment to pack.

It was a weird feeling, because as happy as I was, everything was happening very fast. You always hear about long closings and months of searching, but it seemed that the universe was giving me a break, or at least running with Edward's luck instead of mine. Looking over the books I knew that it was going to be crazy, but somehow, money wasn't quite as tight as I had thought it would be. The decision to only have the place be a bar, and forget about serving food, meant that we needed less staff, and the amount of money I had set aside for the remodel was not necessary, I actually had a little money "in case shit."

I walked into my apartment and saw Alice, Rose, Leah and Esme sitting on my couch. "Nice, looks like Edward's lead foot is rubbing off on you." Alice got up and hugged me.

"What are you guys doing here?" I was still shocked.

"Bella it's the 26th, you have to be out of here in four days, we're here to help you pack." Leah pointed to the boxes sitting on the other side of my living

## Dance With Me

room and I shook my head.

"Okay, but this isn't going to take nearly as long as you think it is."

We started in the kitchen, wrapping and packing my dishes and cookware because it was one of the few things I had that was nicer than Edward's. I was staying at Edward's full time now so I didn't have to worry about leaving things behind. After the kitchen was taken care of we tackled the living room. Esme was helping me pack up my DVD collection when she asked about the very noticeable lack of a television.

"After the break-in I never bought a new one. I spent so much time at Edward's and if I wanted to watch something, I'd watch it online." I shook my head remembering all the time I spent on Edward's couch watching what I had DVR'd on his cable box.

I wasn't going to be taking much of my furniture, because our new place was too nice for my second-hand college crap, and Esme had made a call so that a dumpster was delivered to save us time. By 3:30 we had moved into the bedroom and Alice took over. I convinced her to box up the clothes I wouldn't be wearing in the next few weeks with the promise that she got to organize my new walk-in. We finished packing everything up and there was a knock at the door. Emmett and Jasper were here to throw out my furniture and I watched as the apartment got eerily empty. My bathroom was all that was left, but only my toiletries were coming, all my towels were worn and Esme insisted that when she brought us shopping for our condo that we'd get new ones. Finally my apartment was boxed up and we carried the boxes to the caravan of cars in the garage. Esme had the company come pick up the dumpster and we loaded the cars and drove over to Edward's. Emmett and Rosalie took forever getting back to Edward's, and it wasn't until they came in with the pizza that I realized why. "Guys, this isn't college, I would have cooked."

Emmett shook his head. "No dice, you've been running around like mad, and you're not coming home to cook for us." He put down the pizza and we sat around and ate before finally unpacking Rose's SUV and everyone but Leah left.

## Dance With Me

Leah started walking to my car, calling over her shoulder. "Okay, I know you're going back to clean, so let's get this over with." I laughed and followed her.

When we got back to my place I noticed that she had left my I-Pod dock and I plugged my I-Pod in quickly, turning on *The Ultimate Chick Flick Soundtrack* so we could sing along as we cleaned. I started in the bathroom, scrubbing and disinfecting, before moving into the kitchen. Meanwhile, Leah had vacuumed the bedroom and living room, winding up the cord and sitting it by the door. She cleaned the windows and dusted the ceiling fans as I mopped the floor. It was almost 9pm by the time I locked up and we brought the cleaning supplies to my car before going to my landlord's apartment and turning in my key. I went back to Edward's and said good-bye to Leah, before bringing everything upstairs. I took a shower and climbed into bed, snuggling up to my pillow, which was wearing one of Edward's shirts, and closing my eyes. I was almost asleep when my phone rang. I reached for it and looked at the display. *Edward*

"Hey baby, how's the land of the spray tan?"

"Very funny, how's my girl?" His voice sounded so good, I missed him like crazy this past week.

"A little tired. But we officially live together, so you're stuck with me now!" I laughed into the darkness and I heard him laugh with me.

"Good. I got a call from the board at the condo; we're meeting with them next Wednesday at 3pm."

"Really, you mean it's almost ours?"

"Almost. So how are things with the bar?"

"Amazing Edward. Jake is taking care of everything, and we close on the 10th." I was excited just thinking about it.

"Wow, that was quick, when do I get to see it?"

## Dance With Me

"Whenever you want. I'm going to have to go down for a week or two to help Jake with a few things, but after that I'm not going down again until opening night, God willing."

"Oh love, I'm so proud of you."

I smiled; I loved it when he said he was proud of me. "Baby, how's the movie going?"

"We had a little fire here that took away from some of the other stuff I have to do, but I'll be good until they start shooting, hopefully we'll know about the condo by them."

"Okay, I miss you." I cooed into the phone and Edward responded with a moan.

"Bella, why'd you go and do that? Hearing you use that tone is going to leave me all hot and bothered." He groaned and my breathing caught.

"Are you in your hotel room?" I blushed; Edward was pretty accurate on our date when he said he was going to help me tick off a bunch of things from "Never thought I'd do that" list.

"Yeah...why?" He was still clueless.

"Get your Bluetooth earpiece and get into bed." I reached onto the nightstand and got mine, pressing the button and then clipping it to my ear, setting the phone back on the nightstand.

"I'm ready." The timbre of his voice sent a shiver down my spine.

"What are you wearing?" I felt the heat grow on my cheeks, if Edward were here with me he'd be laughing that I was blushing so hard he could feel the heat coming off my face.

## Dance With Me

"Nothing but my boxers. What are you wearing under my covers?" I could hear the smirk in his voice.

"A tank top and a pair of your boxers."

"Thief." We laughed together as he dropped his voice down to that sexy growl. "I think you're a little over dressed."

"Well then, why don't you help me out of them?"

His breath hitched this time as he whispered. "I'm reaching down to the hem of your shirt and pulling it up slowly, exposing those glorious breasts of yours." I did exactly what he told me, feeding off of the excitement of the moment.

"Thank you, that's much better. But now I think you're a little overdressed, I think I'm going to have to help you out of your boxers."

"I will if you will." I laughed and reached down to pull off his boxers and drop them on the floor. "Now I'm brushing my fingers down your neck, all the way to your breast. I cup both of them and begin kneading them...playing with your nipples...making them hard." I was beginning to pant as I played with my boobs, feeling my arousal growing.

"I'm running my hands over your chest...sitting on your stomach. I can feel you...pressing up against my ass." I moaned and Edward responded with another growl.

"Oh fuck Bella; I'm so hard right now."

I smirked and then took the plunge. "Well then, let me take care of that. I rest up on my knees...and then slowly lower myself over you." As I said it, I slid my hand down to my core and began to work out my frustrations.

"Oh...shit...Bella, I wish I was there." His breathless statement let me know that he wasn't far off and neither was I.

## Dance With Me

"Edward...I'm so close...cum with me baby..."

"I can feel you start to tremble around me." Hearing how into this he was, I lost my grip on the edge and let out a long moan as I rode the waves, my back arching off the bed. "Uuuuhhh...Bel-laaa!" We were both panting into our headsets, trying to slow our heart rates and come down. "That was hot, but now I wish you were here so I could pull you close to me."

"Then come and get me." I needed him too and I hated that the best I would get was a late night phone call.

"Bella, believe me, the minute I'm done here I will be on the first plane back to you."

"I know, I'm going to bed, I have a busy day tomorrow and I have to close the bar."

Edward sighed. "I should be home Sunday or Monday. Call me tomorrow so I know you got home okay."

"I will, Sam'll walk me home if I'm really tired. Night."

Edward yawned. "Goodnight, love."

I took off the ear piece and turned off my phone, before clutching my pillow to me and falling asleep, breathing in his scent.

## EPOV

The flight home was unbearably long. My body seemed to be able to sense that it was getting closer to Bella and I ached because it was taking so long. When I got off the plane I went straight for the escalators that lead to the security area, scanning the crowd for Bella, but as I reached the bottom of the escalator I saw Tyler holding a white card with my name on it, my heart fell. Bella must have been busy, so she had Victoria's office send a car for me. I walked over to him and we made our way to baggage claim and after fighting to pull my bag off

## Dance With Me

without hitting the woman who refused to move out of my way, we went out to his limo. Tyler loaded my bags into the trunk and then opened the door for me. I climbed in and closed my eyes tight, pinching the bridge of my nose, wondering what time Bella would get home tonight, and then I heard it. "Why so sad, love?" My eyes popped open and sitting across from me on the other bank of seats was my Bella, smiling and looking so damn beautiful I couldn't stand it. But before I could tell her, she leapt into my arms, claiming my mouth with a desperate kiss. My eyes flashed to the partition, which was closed, and I could hear the music coming from the front seat, Tyler was trying to give us as much privacy as possible. I had my left hand tangled in Bella's hair while my right was roaming over her back as she pressed herself closer to me, gripping my legs as she pushed them further apart so our chests could press up against each other. She finally broke the kiss, pulling back to look into my eyes. "Welcome home."

I kissed her again and then told her, "I'm so glad to be home. It broke my heart when I saw Tyler waiting by security; I didn't know you were being sneaky."

Bella blushed and looked up at me from under her eyelashes. "I wanted to surprise you, so I had Victoria order the car, I like Victoria by the way; she's a trip!"

I pulled Bella up into my lap and held her close. "I love you."

She giggled and then ran her fingers through my hair. "Are you tired? Because I wanted to go out to dinner with you, but if you're tired we can do it tomorrow."

I stroked her cheek and kissed her forehead. "I'd love to go to dinner with you." We sat there holding onto each other until the limo pulled up to our apartment. Tyler opened the door for us and got my luggage for me before I tipped him very well and went upstairs with Bella.

I took a nap while Bella did some work and was woken up by her sweet kisses. "Hello." I said as I looked up at her in nothing but a towel.



## Dance With Me

"I'm sorry to wake you, but you should get in the shower if we're going to make dinner." I kissed Bella quick and made my way into the bathroom.

When I was done, I walked out into the living room and Bella was sitting on the couch. She stood up and took my breath away. She was wearing a simple aqua halter dress with splatters of blue and green and gold on it. I was so relieved that I was home and that I got to spend the night with her on my arm.

Bella and I went to a nice little steakhouse and sat in our signature silence, both so pleased to have each other there that no words were needed. When we did talk, it was mainly about LA and when I'd have to go back. They wanted me to be there on the first day of shooting which meant that I'd have to be there on the 18th, but if our closing hadn't happened by then, they were aware that I would have to get away to handle that. I was going to be there when we were handed the key to our place. Bella was nervous about our meeting with the board on Wednesday, but I knew we were fine.

"Edward, how are you going to put the money from selling your apartment towards the condo if we're staying there until we finish decorating it?"

I sighed; she was always so worried about money. "Bella, I've tried to have this conversation with you more than once, even when we were filling out our financial profile for the condo, you wouldn't let me bring it up. But I want you to know, and you should know exactly what I mean when I say I'm 'well off'. Bella my grandfather was extremely wealthy, and quite frugal. And when he died, he left my mother and his grandchildren with considerable inheritances, and I've only added to that in the last six years. I've never been extravagant with my money, even the money from my books, but this is an exception because I'm investing in our future."

Bella looked up from her plate and our eyes met. "I wasn't trying to be difficult Edward, I just never cared about the money, I'd love you if you were dirt poor, but you're right, it's time I know, if only so I know when it's appropriate to freak out about a money matter."

## Dance With Me

I smiled, knowing she would probably freak out more than a little. "I know you weren't, and I love that it's never mattered to you but...Bella, I'm worth roughly \$100 million."

I didn't miss her eyes bug out before they shot up to meet mine. "\$100 *million*! I thought authors don't make a living off of writing."

I laughed. "Most don't, I got lucky and fit into that niche of being like a poor man's James Patterson, the grittiness of my novels is a big hit and I've been consistent. I had the one series and some stand alone novels, and this movie thing might just be the beginning of something if it does well. A lot of it is from my trust though, my dad was really smart about helping me invest some of it, and we were never risky. So please don't worry, we'll never have to be concerned about money like that." I reached out my hand and took hers, as tears began to well up in her eyes. "Hey, why the tears love?"

She took a steadying breath but didn't look up at me. "I just feel like I have nothing to offer, you give me everything and I can't contribute in any way that really matters."

I pulled her chin up so I could look at her as I told her this. "Bella, what you give me is so much more important than money. You're everything. Yes, I'm buying the property, but you're going to make it a home. My mom and Alice picked out everything last time, and I'm not really picky with that kind of stuff, all that matters is that you're there with me. All I want you to offer me, to bring to our new home, is what you have brought me since the first moment I met you, warmth and love."

The tears that had started somewhere near the beginning of my little speech were still flowing, as she looked deep into my eyes with those beautifully deep brown eyes. "Edward, you're everything to me too...you're the one person who I wouldn't survive losing."

I wiped her tears and then took her hand in mine and kissed it. "Well then, it's a good thing that I don't plan on ever leaving you." She smiled and blushed as I got the waiter's attention and asked for the check.

## Dance With Me

We walked out to the car and made it back to the apartment fairly quickly. Bella and I went into the bedroom and she left to go to the bathroom to change while I did the same and climbed into bed. When she came back in she had on a cute little tank top and a pair of my boxers...damn she looked gorgeous. She climbed in next to me and draped my right arm around her back and snuggled to my chest, taking in a deep breath. "More than anything else, this is what I missed. I missed falling asleep with your arms around me." I pulled her closer to me and then kissed her forehead, content to have her back in my arms.

### **BPOV**

Edward and I were sitting in front of the board as they discussed our application to buy the condo, and I was beginning to lose my mind. As if he could read my crazed mind, Edward took my hand in his and gave it a squeeze. "Love, breathe, we're fine." I took a deep breath and the president of the board turned to us and asked us about our plans for a family and if we currently owned any pets, pets weren't prohibited, but they did have to be cleared with the board.

I felt like we had been in there for ages when the president turned to look at the other board members and nodded. "Well, it seems like everything is in order here, now let me be the first to congratulate you on your new home. It won't take too long for the papers to be drawn up, so we're going to set your closing date for May 15th." I took another deep breath as Edward and I got up and thanked the board before making our way out of the room.

As soon as the door closed, Edward's arms were around my waist, lifting me up and spinning me around. When he finally put me down, after much giggling on my part, he kissed me as passionately as he dared in the outer office of the condo and then smiled down at me. "We did it baby, we got our home!"

# Without You

**This chapter is fun and it continues moving forward as Edward and Bella are continuing their long distance relationship. Good times!**

## **BPOV**

Edward and I went straight from the condo to Alice and Jasper's. As soon as the door opened Alice shrieked. "You got it!" Obviously, the smiles on our faces were a dead giveaway. Alice pulled us into the apartment and started babbling and bouncing up and down as she started talking about fabric choices and paint colors, and I couldn't help but laugh.

Alice was sitting at her drawing table, which was set up in the middle of the living room at the moment, working on sketches, but she quickly pushed them aside and pulled up a chair for me to sit with her.

"I'm gonna grab a beer, you ladies want anything?" Edward was planning on staying clear of this estrogen ocean until Jasper got home, and then they could hide in some sporting event on ESPN.

"That sounds good, get me one too."

"Soda." Alice called over her shoulder, before turning back to me. "What are you guys thinking about as far as a color scheme?"

Edward came in and handed us our drinks as he turned one of the dining room chairs to face us. "Well, I like cool colors in the bedrooms, because it's soothing, but for the kitchen and the main room, I want to use warm colors, like a nice brown, or maybe a muted orange. Nothing too crazy."

Alice giggled. "Nice, and here I was afraid that I'd have to twist your arm to get you to even think of using color."

I shook my head. "When I was younger my room was brown, I love that color."

## Dance With Me

Plus if we go with dark woods and neutral colors the paint will really stand out."

"Mom's going to be so excited to see how into this you are. It was like pulling teeth to get Edward to help with our place, I had to help her with everything." Alice smiled at Edward and he rolled his eyes.

"Just don't let Alice paint the place with you, she's horrible." Edward bit his lip to keep from laughing at his sister.

"Are you going to paint it yourself?" Alice cocked an eyebrow at me and I nodded.

"I enjoy it; I'm going to be painting the bar with Jake too. I really don't see the point to paying someone else to do it when I can do it myself. I'll get Leah to help, it'll be fun."

"When are you going down to Portland?"

"The closing is in a week, so I'm going down there on Tuesday. I'm so excited. Jake and I have everything coordinated, so as soon as we get the key's we're going to hit the ground running." I was ready to have it done already, I'd been planning it for so long I want to have the work done and have the place open.

"When are you going down Edward?" Alice turned to her big brother, trying to include him in the conversation.

"I'm going down on Sunday to see the place and then Bella and I are coming home for our condo closing on Monday." The smile on his face was undeniable and I just had to cross the few feet between us and plant a big kiss on those perfect lips of his. We waited around for Jasper to get home, wanting to share our news with him, but he wasn't much in the mood for celebrating.

"I'm sorry guys, you know I'm happy for you, but today was a long day." Jasper said as he took the seat next to Edward at the table.

## Dance With Me

"Jasper, don't worry about it. We should probably get going anyway. Talk to you later, son." Edward clapped Jasper on the back and we said our good-byes and made our way to the door.

I was pulling up to my hotel in Portland when my phone rang; I looked down and smiled as I saw Esme's number show up on the display. "Hi Esme."

"Bella, sweetheart, I just spoke to Edward and I'm so thrilled that you want me to help you decorate the condo. I was wondering when you were free so we could get together." Esme's quiet enthusiasm colored her words.

"Esme, I'd love to get together with you, but I'm in Portland until Sunday, can we do it next week?"

"Oh, of course honey. I'm sorry, Edward mentioned something about you going to work on some things with the new bar, but I didn't realize you had already left. Call me when you get back into town and we'll talk then. Bye Bella."

"Bye Esme." I hung up and checked-in before dropping off my stuff and heading to Jake's apartment.

"Bella." Jake pulled me into a bone crushing hug before letting me go and pulling me into his new apartment. "Okay, so I know we don't have a lot of time before you have to get back to Seattle, so I wanted to show you everything that I've got."

I sat on the couch with him as he began flipping through an accordion folder. "Hit me with it."

Jake laughed and pulled out several applications. "So, I've been interviewing some prospective bartenders and waitresses and I've got some really good possibilities. These two guys used to bartend at the place that was here before, and the old owner said they were great, and they're responsible. They showed up fifteen minutes early to their interview, and you can tell they work really well together. Next is Lydia, this chick is crazy, she knows every mixed drink imaginable and she's really outgoing, plus I think she'd balance out the guys on

## Dance With Me

nights she worked with one of them. Then there a few possibilities for waitresses, but with them it's really a judgment call, any of them would be fine. Oh, and this is the best, there's a DJ in the building. I know you wanted to have music here more often than at Ballet Studio, and she said that if we wanted she'd help us pick out sound equipment and set up the booth. She used to be a theater techie, so she knows her shit. And there's Felix, this guy is built like a brick shithouse and he's an ex-cop, he's the only guy I even considered for a bouncer."

I smiled and looked over the applications Jake was showing me as I listened intently to his descriptions. "Okay, so why don't you call them and see when they can come in, we can sit down with them at the bar and I'll give you my opinions, but unless there's something extreme, I'll go with you on this. Oh, and try to get your DJ down ASAP so we can talk to her about sound equipment. Because I want to be here for that."

"Sure, sure. Oh, and the sign is being delivered and hung on Thursday, here's a picture of it." Jake handed me the picture of the oval sign in its deep cherry finish with the gold lettering and accents, *Charlie's Place*. I smiled down at it and then handed it back to him. Jake took out his phone and was making some calls, setting up the various interviews, and when he was finished we went over some more of the installation stuff and then he got the call from DJ Nik, who would come by tomorrow. I left Jake's and headed back to my hotel, going to bed early so that I was ready for the long ass day tomorrow.

When my alarm went off I got out of bed and put an old Ballet Studio shirt and a pair of jeans before heading over to meet Jake and the owner at the bar. We got inside and signed all the final paperwork and with the cashier's check in hand, we were given the keys. Jake and I immediately set out to paint the back corner behind the stage, and the back office, which was right across from the storage space that would soon have the stage between them. Neither of the jobs took too long and by 1:30 we were cleaning up, excited to be done so the guys from the home depot could install the floor and paneling tomorrow. Jake had the contractor who was building the stage and seating area come in and he was good. He was bringing in a few guys and was going to have the two jobs done quickly, but from the plans he had brought, he wasn't cutting any corners.

## Dance With Me

Seeing how on top of everything Jake had been made me really happy, because it meant that he was the perfect person to get to run this place, and I was happy with my replacement cook, so all was right with the world.

Around 2pm DJ Nik came by and I guffawed as I saw that DJ Nik was a tiny, red-haired girl whose first name was Nicole. She walked around the space telling us that the portion of the wall shared with the office that was sunk in by the front of the stage was the perfect size for a DJ booth and told us about where we could hang speakers and monitors. I called up Jared and asked his opinion of her assessment and he said that she knew what the hell she was talking about, so Jake and I hired her and told her we'd go shopping with her on Friday.

Two of the waitresses came in and I really liked one of them, while the other one was kind of snotty, so Jake and I agreed that we'd hire the one and pick one more out of the other two girls stopping by tomorrow. By some hysterical miracle, all three prospective bartenders came in at the same time and were joking and playfully teasing each other within minutes, so they were officially hired too. I was completely in awe of everything we had gotten done today and how Jake had pulled this together. It's not that I ever really doubted him, but considering the fact that he had never been any type of manager, he was all over everything, coming up with back-up plans and scheduling everything so that it was flowing beautifully. The next few days would be hectic, but I wasn't worrying anymore.

## EPOV

When I pulled up to the address Bella had given me, I thought that I must have gotten it mixed up somehow, because the sign didn't say Ballet Studio, but then I read the lettering and smiled to myself, *Charlie's Place*. It was a nice gesture, and it made sense to make the bar a little more masculine considering the fact that Jake was running the place. I walked in and was amazed by the activity. Bella was standing by the bar talking with this tiny girl, pointing to different spots on the ceiling and gesturing wildly. The petite redhead saw me staring out of the corner of her eye and motioned to Bella. "Edward!" Bella ran and jumped into my arms, laughing and smiling so wide that it crinkled her whole



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face.

"Hey baby, I missed you too." I kissed her quick and then she pulled me back to the bar.

"Nikki, this is my boyfriend Edward Cullen, Edward, this Nikki, also known as DJ Nik, she's going to be our DJ as well as helping with all the sound equipment. And some of her old techie friends are going to come and hang it for us, so we know it's done right." Bella was beaming; this was obviously an unexpected surprise.

I held out hand and shook hers as she turned to smile at me. "Nice to meet you Nikki."

"Same here, Edward." She turned back to Bella for a minute. "So, just to finish up quick. When these guys finish up the seating area, which should be tonight, it's a shame though, because that one guy is *fine*, my guys will come in. If they can get in here tomorrow, that'd be better, because they don't have shows on Monday's but beside that, they'll come in and hang it. Then after the stage is painted we can set up the booth and we'll be all set. I have to go, but I'll see you next time you're in Portland." Nikki hugged Bella and then turned to me and pulled me into a hug of my own. "Good to meet you, I'll see you at the opening!" With that, Nikki was grabbing her stuff and bounding out the door.

"Bella this place looks great! How'd you get everything started so quickly?"

Bella shook her head and let out a small chuckle. "I barely did anything; Jake took care of most of it. He found these guys to do the stage and the platform as a side job, which is why they're here on a Sunday, he found Nikki, he got great employees, and he took care of the minimal renovations that needed to be done. All I can say is thank God the old owner was renovating his bar when he ran out of money and decided to cut his losses and sell the place, because all we had to do was transfer the permits."

I pulled her to my side and held her close. "So, does anything else have to get done?"

## Dance With Me

She shrugged against my chest. "Honestly, we're just waiting on the furniture and the different inspectors and licenses. That stuff will take a while, but it's all a formality now, this place was a bar before and it's in great shape. The inspector who checked it before I bought it said it should be a cake walk. Now I'm just waiting for Jake to get back so I can tell him good-bye and then we can go get some dinner."

I was so delighted that everything was going well here, it gave Bella less to be concerned about, and she had been a little frazzled lately and I was starting to worry about her. She relaxed into my side and then started telling about how the bar would look when it was completed. It's funny because listening to the details I couldn't help to realize that this totally was Charlie's place; from the little I knew of him, it had Charlie written all over it. "So, when'd you decide to change the concept?"

Bella smiled and looked up at me. "As soon as I saw the place it reminded me of him, and then I thought about it, and I bought Ballet Studio with the money from my mom, so why not make the bar Charlie helped me buy a memorial to him." Bella took a deep breath and then pulled me over to the office. She reached into a box of frames and pulled out two of them. "These are going to hang around the place, and some of the smaller ones are going behind the bar." The photos in the various frames were of Charlie; him fishing, standing next to his cruiser in full uniform, and a few pictures of him with friends and two of him and Bella, one when she was about two, and another when she was probably eleven or twelve, and the last was one of Bella, Charlie and Renee when Bella was an infant. Bella's eyes were glassy as she held the picture of her family, before she set it back in the box with all the others.

I pulled Bella into a tight hug and kissed her forehead. "I'm sure he would have loved it, it's a beautiful thing you did, honoring him like this." Bella gave me a quick squeeze before wiping her eyes and leading me back into the bar, where Jake was waiting. "Jake, great fucking job man." I walked over to shake his hand and he smiled wide at me.

"Thanks Edward, but I was just following the plan, this was all Bells." Bella hugged Jake and then got her purse from behind the bar.

## Dance With Me

"Okay Jake, we're going to grab a bite and then we're off to Seattle. Call if you need anything."

"Sure will." Bella and I stepped out and headed to our cars, going to eat at a little diner Bella told me about. We ate and then got back on the road to follow each other for the three and a half hour ride home.

When we got back to the apartment we parked and walked hand in hand up to the elevator. Once the doors opened to our floor, we stepped out and went into the apartment. "You haven't started packing?" Bella looked around and saw that there was little that had changed since she left.

"No...but I will. I just don't know where to start." I knew it was a little bit of a copout, but I just didn't do much but go over the revision of the novel without her here.

Bella raised an eyebrow. "Start in the bedroom, pack up anything you don't want me to pack, or anything personal that you may not want me to see. That way if you get called to LA and we're not done I can finish without worrying that I touched something that you didn't want me to."

I pulled her against my chest and kissed her hard. "There's nothing you're not allowed to see, no secrets here."

Bella arched an eyebrow at me mischievously. "Really? You don't have a porn collection hidden like the entrance to the bat cave?"

She giggled and I used one of my hands to arch her neck so she was looking up at me. "Baby, why have that trash when what I have in my hands is so much better." My lips crushed hers and I felt her hands running over my scalp, while my hand returned to her waist. I bent down and lifted her bridal-style and carried her to the bedroom to give her a proper homecoming.

Bella and I woke up and got ready to go to the condo and sign the papers. The room felt electric, and not in the normal way it felt when we were together, but heightened, as if our excitement was adding to the intensity. We drove over to

## Dance With Me

the building and walked up to the offices. We sat down with one of the board members, who handled all of our paperwork and finally handed us the keys. Bella and I went straight to our new home and she started bouncing up and down as soon as she crossed the threshold. "It's ours! It's really ours."

I wrapped my arms around her and smiled down at her. "Welcome home, love." Just then, there was a knock at the door. I opened it, and my mother was standing there with two bags filled with swatches and samples. "Mom?"

"Hello darling, where's Bella?" My mom walked in and Bella ran over to hug her.

"Esme, I'm so glad you came. I want to tell you what I was thinking about as far as colors." Bella latched onto my mom's arm and began walking her through the apartment as my phone rang. I went to the balcony to answer it.

"Hello?"

"Edward, it's Robert at Summit. Look, Edward we have a problem."

Fuck! "What's wrong Robert?"

"There's a problem with the script. James wants to redo the opening, but he wants to make it different from how it is in the book."

I could tell he was holding back. "How different?"

"He wants to start with a flashback to Harry's childhood."

Oh for the love of everything that's holy. "You can't start with an explanation of why he is the way he is. The whole point is you spend the whole movie trying to figure out what made him that way and if he'll be able to change his ways. If you explain that up front, you've just killed all of the suspense. He's a screenwriter for crying out loud, shouldn't he know that?"

## Dance With Me

"I know. Edward, he won't listen to anyone but you, because it's your baby, you have to come down here and kill this. You have veto power when it comes to this crap."

"Can't I just call him? I just closed on my home this morning, and I was counting on the next few days to get everything set before coming down for the beginning of shooting."

"I'm sorry Edward, you have to at least hear him out before you tell him no and he wants to pitch the idea to you in person. We can get you on a flight at 8pm."

I growled quietly to myself, pinching the bridge of my nose. I was supposed to have the week with Bella, and now I was hopping on a plane for the next two and a half weeks while I left her to deal with everything. "Book it." To say I was miffed at having to go in there and tell Bella that I was leaving her to deal with everything while I went to go kill James was an understatement. I know I gave her free reign with the decorating, but I at least wanted to contribute by packing up my stuff.

"We'll send you the flight info, see you tomorrow." The line went dead and I walked in to see Bella and my mom looking out at the balcony, waiting for me to come in.

"You have to leave early?" Bella already knew it was bad news.

"I'm on the eight o'clock flight tonight."

She took a deep breath and blew it out, clearly disappointed. "And you'll still be there until the first?"

"Probably, but if I can get away sooner, then I will. After they start, then I'm really only there to see some of the dailies and approve of certain things, but once they're underway they won't need me anymore."

My mom walked over and hugged Bella. "Okay, why don't we finish this up tomorrow, and you two spend some quality time together before you go." My

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mom wrapped her arms around me and gave me a quick peck on the cheek. "Fly save, I'll talk to you soon."

As she began to pull away I stopped her. "No, you guys finish here, that way you can get the paint taken care of. I have to pack for the flight anyway. We'll get something easy tonight for dinner and stay close to home until I have to leave."

Bella nodded. "We won't take long; I'll see you in a little while."

I left, and headed back to pack for the trip. It didn't take too long to pack, seeing as I was so annoyed, and when my luggage was by the door I returned to our bedroom to pack up the rest of my clothes so that would be one less thing Bella would have to do without me. I got through with that and decided to make my way to the bathrooms. There wasn't much to pack there, only toiletries or cleaning stuff, but everything else I knew my mom was going to get based on the color scheme they chose. I left nothing but Bella's stuff in the master bath and brought the garbage to the dumpster. I started wrapping up the photos and paintings that were around the apartment, there weren't too many, and it didn't matter what room they had been in, because I was sure that would change in our home. All of the little knick knacks my mother had picked out with Alice were next, once again there wasn't much, as Alice took the ones she liked when she had moved and I hadn't felt the need to replace the missing items. It was 1:42 when Bella came in the door and saw me writing a note before putting it in the box I was finishing up and taping it up.

"You were busy." Bella smirked at me.

"I had to contribute in some way; by the way, the bathrooms are finished with the exception of your stuff. And if there's anything that doesn't work with what you guys are doing, don't worry about it, none of this stuff ever held any real sentimental value for me except a few things in that box over there." I motioned to the box I had just taped up.

Bella nodded and then took my hand, giving it a gentle squeeze. "Okay, what do you want for lunch?"

## Dance With Me

I cocked my eyebrow and dropped my voice down to the husky timbre that always got a reaction out of her. "You." Bella's breath caught and she was on her tip toes and capturing my lips in an instant. I picked up her up by the waist and she wrapped her legs around me. I carried her to the bedroom for the second time in as many days, and lowered her onto the bed. We quickly stripped off our clothes as our heart rates raced and our breath became shallow. Bella rolled on top of me and slowly slid me inside her. I grabbed her hips and thrust up as she came down to meet me, enjoying the sensation. We found our rhythm and I was mesmerized by the movement of her breasts as she slammed into my pelvis. I started panting as I got close to cumming, reaching up to stroke her bundle of nerves, when Bella stopped and grabbed my hand.

I looked up at her concerned as she smiled devilishly at me and leaned down to whisper in my ear. "If this is the last time I get to be with you for a few weeks, then I'm going to make it count." She leaned back up into a sitting position and took both of my hands in hers and intertwined our fingers. She started moving again, bringing us both to the edge before pausing long enough to bring us down some. This time she placed my hands on her breasts as she arched back and gripped her ankles, changing the angle and pushing me closer to the edge. As she slowed a third time, I pulled her to me as I rolled over growling, "Bella, as amazing as this is, I'm about to explode!"

She giggled to herself and whispered as she tangled her hands into my hair. "Well, I wouldn't want to be responsible for that..." she sucked my earlobe quickly into her mouth before releasing it and breathing into my ear, "take me...I'm yours." Her words and the passion behind then sent me spurring out like a rodeo rider as I thrust into her at our rhythm and within minutes we were both quivering and calling out to the others names.

I collapsed on top of her, resting my forehead on hers and tried in vain, to move. "I don't think I'll be able to move to get on the plane."

Bella chuckled, shaking us both. "My plan worked. But let's go. We have to get you showered, and dressed and fed before I put you on that plane."

## Dance With Me

So Bella and I did just that. We took separate showers to keep us moving and got dressed before ordering Chinese food for what seemed like the 50th time this month. As we sat at the table eating, I stared at her intently, trying to commit her features to memory so I'd make it through the next few weeks. "I can't wait until you have the new kitchen all set up, I love watching you cook."

Bella shot me a funny look and rolled her eyes. "You like eating my food. But I can't wait for that either. Maybe I'll be able to get everything done now that I have more free time."

"Free time?" She was still pretty busy with the Ballet Studio, so I couldn't see her having a ton of time.

"Yeah, I'm giving Emily a trial run. She's going to school for accounting, but what she really wants is to be a bookkeeper, and when Jake was going through everything she told me she'd like to do something like that someday, so I told her I would train her after she graduates in June, and make her an assistant manager eventually. I've been doing it on my own for so long, it's nice to have someone that I can leave in charge. I haven't taken a vacation since Leah and I went to New York." She shook her head.

"Isn't that like four years?" I can't imagine not taking a vacation for that long.

"Five this July."

"Well that'll be the first thing that changes when I get back; we're going to plan a trip."

Bella smiled and stared at her plate, pushing her rice around with her fork. "I'd like that."

We pulled into a parking space and I got out, taking my luggage out of the back of Bella's SUV. "I hate waiting in the airport, people go to the bookstores and buy one of my books and then see me sitting there; it's such a pain!"



## Dance With Me

Bella smiled apologetically at me. "Poor baby, let me kiss it and make it better." Bella closed the small gap between us and kissed me sweetly, yet still passionately. "Come on, let's get you through security before I decide to lock you in the apartment and never let you go." Bella was joking a lot about my leaving, but I knew it was hard for her. As much as she trusted me, she was still afraid that I'd be taken away, and going to the land of busty actresses and cosmetically enhanced women was eating away at her insecurities somewhere in the back of her head.

We made our way to the skycap and I checked my luggage and got my ticket before I pulled Bella into the security line with me. With our arms around each other's waists, we snaked through the line until eventually I was near the head of the line. I wrapped my arms around her and kissed her as passionately as I dared in the crowded airport before letting her go and giving her one last peck whispering, "You have my heart, take care of it until I can come back to you both." Bella looked at me and then ducked under the rope, waiting until I had cleared security then waved and mouthed "I love you," before turning and heading back to her car.

### **BPOV**

I showed up to the condo at 8am, ready to get started with the insanity that was painting this monster. Esme had left the painter's tape and a step ladder yesterday and I began taping the second bath, so I could work my way around the apartment. I was in the master bedroom when my phone rang. I reached into my pocket and answered without looking at the display. "Hi Esme."

"Bella, I'm downstairs, could you meet me at the car? I'm parked out front." Esme spoke with that same understated excitement, but it was clear where Alice got her giddiness from.

"Sure Esme, I'll be down in a few."

I went down and met her and she rolled down the window before calling out to me. "Get in; I have a surprise for you." I did what she said and twenty minutes later we were pulling up in front of a large furniture warehouse. "Surprise! I

## Dance With Me

wanted to bring you here before we got all covered in paint, plus if they need to order anything, I wanted us to have a few weeks to play with before Edward gets back." We got out of the car and headed into this behemoth of a building. Esme brought me straight back to the section with the bedroom sets. We were snaking through several displays when I saw it. I walked over and ran my hand over the supple brown leather headboard, with its thick padding; I could see myself leaning against it reading a book. Esme walked up behind me, resting her hand on my shoulder. "It's a lovely piece, and with the shade of blue you've chosen for the master bedroom, it'll look perfect."

I turned to face her, "How did you know...?"

Esme smiled. "No one falls in love with a bed like that and puts it in the guest room. Now what do you think about the rest of the set?"

I looked around at the warm dark wood furniture, caressing the surfaces and opening the drawers. "I love it. Do you think its Edward though?"

Esme nodded. "I think Edward would love anything you pick out, but yes, this is something he would pick out if I could ever get him into a store like this." Esme wrote down the name of the set and the item numbers for the items before we continued. Esme and I continued for a little while until I stopped short again as I came upon another beautiful bedroom set in a rich dark finish. The headboard was curved and had three strips of wood running horizontally, and four vertically creating these broken up arches. The nightstand was smaller than the one in the Master Bedroom set, but the dresser was an impressive piece. I turned to her and Esme laughed and wrote down the information. "So, we have nine pieces in less than two hours. Bella if half of my clients knew what they wanted as well as you did, my job would be exponentially easier." We laughed again and then Esme motioned me forward. "Next we should look for an armoire for your clothes and a media armoire for the living room." Esme and I walked around and found an armoire that looked like it was made for the bedroom set and then quickly followed that with a nice one for the living room. After marking them down Esme and I walked over to the living rooms and sat down on one of the couches. "Is this too much for you? Because we could always check on this furniture and then come back another day and finish it."

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I shook my head. "No, I'm enjoying it, are we going to look anywhere else before we order them?"

Esme thought for a minute before gazing at me with those kind, mothering eyes of hers. "Bella, if I thought we could find something better then yes, but this place has a large selection, and you've found pieces that you adore, there's no second guessing reactions like the ones you had." I was glad that she felt I was one the right page, because I would have been lost in a place like this without her. After another half hour we had found a beautiful coffee table but no other living room furniture. Finally we made our way to the dining room section and after some searching found a nice set that with the leaf could fit eight people, which we would need if we ever had a dinner with his family at our place. Then, I truly fell in love. I found a beautiful china cabinet that would look perfect on the wall next to the doors to the balcony. Esme checked the measurements to the plans and sure enough it would fit there. So feeling supremely accomplished, Esme and I went up to the front and placed our order, before heading back to the condo. "Tomorrow we can go and look at couches and office furniture, because if I know Edward that spare room is going to be his study."

I faced her and shook my head. "He doesn't want an office, he just wants a desk that can temporarily live in the spare room, but it has to fit in our bedroom eventually without getting rid of the furniture we have now."

Esme looked confused, which was understandable considering we were leaving a large room completely unused. "Why doesn't he want to decorate it?"

I took a deep breath and explained the reason. "When I saw the room, it was why I fell in love with the condo, because we could turn it into a nursery someday, and Edward thinks if we make it an office for him, then we'll put off adopting when we get married."

Esme was speechless, if we weren't parked I'm sure she would have crashed the car. "Adoption? Marriage? Have you two...?" She trailed off looking at my face intently.

## Dance With Me

"We've talked about it, and we will someday, but we're not rushing it. But the moment your son asks me, I'm telling him 'yes!'"

Esme beamed and reached across the console to hug me. "Bella, I'm so happy for you both. Just the fact that you've talked about wanting children together, I know with your past that must have been difficult."

I nodded. "It was, but I want that with Edward, and nothing's going to stop me from getting it now."

Esme smiled at me again and we headed inside. It was 12:30 so we decided to finish taping off the spare room and the guest room, before finally taping off the "great" room as Esme called it. We laid out the drop cloth in the guest room and then there was a knock at the door. I opened it and saw Carlisle standing at the door with a hand cart filled with boxes of paint and several pieces of plastic sheeting draped over it. "Paint delivery." He smiled the crooked grin that Edward had inherited from him and I blushed, as my thoughts were immediately 1,000 miles away. I let him in and gave him a hug as soon as he set the cart down.

"Carlisle, I wasn't expecting to see you here."

Carlisle took the drop clothes off and placed them on the floor as Esme began picking out paint cans and placing them in the proper room. "Did you get the other paint supplies?" She called over her shoulder.

"Of course, it's still in the car. Bella, will you come out to the car and help me?"

"Sure." I grabbed my keys and walked out to the elevator with him.

As the doors closed on us, Carlisle turned to me. "Bella, I just wanted to tell you how thrilled I am that you're a part of our family. I know it's not official, *yet*, but I consider you to be a daughter to me already, and I couldn't have found someone better for my son if I had created you myself."

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The tears welled up in my eyes at the sincerity of his words and they spilled over as soon as I blinked. Carlisle pulled me into another hug as I took a shaky breath. "Thank you Carlisle, I never got the chance to know my own father really well, so I know just how lucky your children are to have you."

It was Carlisle's turn to shed a few tears, as he pulled back to look at me just as we reached the lobby. "Thank you, Isabella." We went to his car and got out the rollers and poles that were laid along the back of the leather seats of his Mercedes. He saw me shake my head slightly and laughed. "We can't all have trucks, can we?" I joined in as he continued towards the building again.

Once we got in Esme and I set to work painting the guest room while Carlisle draped the many drop clothes in the great room and then moved on into the bathroom. After he finished he took a roller to the ceiling of the second bath finishing it quickly and moving into the great room. We finished the first coat and moved on into great room, continuing to use the trimming tool so we could begin painting the walls without fear of hitting the section of the ceiling Carlisle had just finished a little while before we began. Around 4pm Leah showed up and took up residence in the second bathroom. We finished up around 7, and Esme and Carlisle insisted on taking us to dinner after we cleaned up.

The next four days were filled with painting and picking out the few remaining pieces of furniture. We found the living room set and a nice chaise lounge for my corner of the bedroom. We also found a few bookcases for Edward's and my massive book collection. That Sunday, when painting the apartment was finally finished, I slowly started emptying the boxes out of our living room and bringing them by the carful over to the condo. Alice called me on my second trip and within an hour there were three more cars outside my apartment. Jasper, Emmett and Alice loaded up their cars and we made a few trips and by mid afternoon I was once again looking at an eerily empty apartment. All of the furniture was still there, and the things I needed to live here for the next week or two, but the place was still bare. We organized the boxes and then Alice set off to attack my closets with her supplies of containers, contraptions, and the "right" hangers.

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Emmett and I went to look at kitchenware, because Edward wanted me to have top of the line equipment, now that I had my big kitchen. Emmett kept me in stitches the whole time, randomly picking up things and asking me what it did, while having a field day with anything remotely phallic. I felt really weird using Edward's card to buy all of this stuff, but as I started to set up the new appliances and nice set of everyday dishes I got really giddy, while Alice's giggles could be heard in my closet. Having prepped the other closets, she was now organizing my clothes by color. Yeah, like that would last. After my kitchen and closets were done, we all ordered pizza and ate it like a picnic in the living room. I called Esme on my way home, mentioning that we had to go get barstools. Monday started the deliveries, and everyday something new would arrive and I would stand there directing traffic. By Saturday I had all of the furniture delivered, and now that I had considerably less to do, I really started to miss Edward. We talked on the phone every day, but we were both too tired to attempt our new phone activity. On Sunday, the guys brought me to pick out a TV for the guest room as well as a small stereo. The boxes were now gone with the exception of the box of knick knacks that Edward had packed himself. I opened it and read the note he had sealed inside.

*B,*

*If you've reached this box it means you're either almost done or going crazy thinking about what this note said. I love you and I can't wait to see what you've done to our home.*

*E*

I took out the items that he had deemed important and smiled at how much they said about Edward. There was the unsigned baseball that Emmett said Edward had caught at a game they had gone to with Carlisle. Or an antique quill pen and inkwell that his grandfather had given him when he decided he wanted to be a writer at 14.

And that was when it hit me. I was living with Edward, I'd been dating him for almost six months and I had never read one of his books. I freaked out and called Leah, who picked up two sets, one for each of us, on her way to help me

## Dance With Me

finish hanging the pictures. I took my set and put them in my nightstand with the exception of the first one, which I brought home to read. Reading the book as I sat in bed, I could feel him with me, his style was so much a part of who he was, and yet the contrast between his hopeful personality and his stories was stark.

In the last couple days before Edward's return I spent more time doing paperwork at the bar, instead of our empty apartment, or lonely condo. Edward was coming home on Thursday, and I had two and a half days left without him. I would be glad when he came home and finished up the apartment, because I was letting the boys handle the heavy lifting, and then we could move into our home. Wednesday was a fun filled day of waiting for the cable guy, but I passed the time reading the third of Edward's seven published books. As I turned out the light in the master bedroom, I smiled at the neatly made bed, because tomorrow, Edward and I would be spending the night here.

### EPOV

Thank God it was Thursday! I went to finish up a few things on set and then said my good-byes and got in the car. The driver brought me back to the hotel so I could get my bags and check out. When I got back into the car he looked at me through his rearview mirror and asked, "Are we going straight to the airport now, Mr. Cullen?"

I looked up and shook my head. "No, I have to make a stop first."

"Very well sir, where do you need to go?"

I met his eyes in the mirror. "The Cartier store on Rodeo Drive."

# Little Things

**Thank you to everyone for the amazing reviews! It has been a wild ride moving this story over here with my others, but fear not, one of my other stories is completely beta'd thanks to my sis and she's working on my last one while I plow through the sequel! Remember to leave me some love at the bottom and favorite me and enable email alerts on your profile so that you will know when the sequel comes up...shouldn't be too long!**

## EPOV

The three hour plane ride was driving me crazy because all I could think about was my Bella. But eventually my flight landed in Seattle and I walked through security, heading straight for baggage claim. When I arrived at the conveyer belts I saw Alice and she ran over to hug me. "Hey Edward, how was your flight?"

"Okay...where's Bella?" I looked around to see if she was hiding somewhere, waiting to surprise me.

"She's not here." Something about Alice's tone immediately had me jumping to every possible worst case scenario.

"Alice what's wrong?" My stomach was in knots as Alice looked up at me.

"Edward, relax, she's not feeling well so she asked me to pick you up. Dad already checked on her, it's a stomach bug and she'll be fine in a day or two."

I let out a breath I hadn't realized I had been holding. The alarm went off signaling that my flight was now loading it's luggage onto the conveyer belt and I walked over to claim my bags. When I turned back to Alice, she was looking a little green around the gills herself. "Alice are you okay, you don't look well? Did you catch it from Bella?"

Alice shook her head. "No, I'm just feeling run down, I'm trying to finish up the



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fall line in time to get it manufactured and it's going to be the death of me."

I hugged my little sister to my side as we made our way to her car. I loaded my luggage into the back of her SUV and climbed in next to her. "So, how's married life treating you?"

Alice beamed as she turned to me. "It's perfect. I can't wait until you know what it's like."

"I may know sooner than you think." I muttered quietly, but Alice heard me.

"What?"

I reached into my computer bag and pulled out the box from Cartier and handed it to Alice. She opened the box and gasped. "Edward, it's beautiful. When are you going to...?"

I shrugged. "I don't know yet, I'm not 100% sure if she's ready, so I'm going to wait until I feel she's a little more open to it. I think Bella needs for us to live together for a little while so she can see that we won't kill each other."

Alice laughed. "Don't wait too long, otherwise I'll go crazy! And besides, she's more ready for this than you think, just have faith."

I smiled and put the ring back in my bag. Alice drove to the condo and stopped by the curb, I looked at her perplexed. "Bella was planning something special for your first night together in your home when she got sick. Go ahead up and take care of my future sister-in-law." Alice smirked at me as she unlocked the doors. I got my bags out of the back and gave her a hug and kiss before I headed to our condo.

I put the key in the door and was amazed by what I saw. The entire apartment looked like we had lived here for months, with everything in its proper place. The great room was a warm brown, maybe a few shades lighter than a chocolate brown which immediately made me smile thinking of the chocolate brown of Bella's eyes. I poked my head in the second bath and the guest room

## Dance With Me

and still couldn't get over how much Bella had accomplished. The room was a nice purple, and the bathroom was a pale gray. I left my luggage against the wall and looked around to see the large shadow box hanging over the fireplace. In it there was a copy of the condo letterhead and the note I had packed in the box.

I still hadn't heard Bella, so I decided to finish the tour before I disturbed her. The kitchen was next, and it was Bella through and through. A muted orange filled the space between the cabinets and the counters and continued into the laundry room. I poked my head into the eventual nursery and shook my head. Bella had painted it a soft green and set up my desk in there with a single bookshelf, both things that could easily be moved when they needed to be.

Finally, I reached the master suite. I pushed off my coat and opened the door, but when I got in there the room was empty. I hung the coat up in the closet and looked around. The sheets had been pulled down, so Bella had definitely been here, and then I saw the light in the bathroom peak out from under the door.

I walked over and pushed the door open to see Bella sprawled out on the tile with her hair flowing behind her off the towel her head was resting on. There was a thin sheen of sweat on her face and she looked awfully pale, even for her. I walked over to her and knelt behind her placing my hand on her clammy forehead. "You're home!" I could hear her attempt at a cheer in her weak voice as I bent down to kiss her cheek.

"I am, and I'm not going anywhere any time soon. How do you feel love?"

As she opened her mouth to answer, Bella flew out from under me and to the toilet. I quickly followed her, pulling her hair back and gently rubbing her back. When she finished, she grabbed some toilet paper and wiped her mouth before flushing the toilet. She tried to stand, and I helped her to the sink. "Edward, I don't want you to sit here and watch me get sick all night, please just go to bed, I'll be fine."

## Dance With Me

Bella began brushing her teeth and I used the opportunity to speak uninterrupted. "Bella, I'm not going to leave you in here to get sick all night by yourself. I'm staying right here with you. Now where are the towels?"

She took the toothbrush out of her mouth and motioned. "In the linen closet outside the second bathroom."

I went out into the linen closet and grabbed two large body towels and went back into the bedroom grabbing two pillows off the bed and a hair thing off her nightstand and then made my way back into the bathroom. I laid down the towels and then sat the two pillows down making a makeshift bed on the tile, handing her the rubber band to fix her hair, and then pulled Bella down onto the floor with me. "I've missed you baby. I hated going to bed every night knowing that you wouldn't be walking in at 4am."

Bella curled into me and I wrapped my arm lightly around her. "I missed you too, I'm sorry I ruined your homecoming, I had everything all planned out."

"Bella, all I need is to have you with me. By the way, I love what you did with the place."

Bella rolled slowly to face me. "Really?"

I smiled and kissed her forehead. "It's absolutely perfect; I only wish I could have helped."

Bella laughed and then looked at me from under her eyelashes. "And deprive me of going kitchenware shopping with Emmett while he fellated anything remotely phallic, I don't think so."

I stared at her, my mouth hanging open as I shook my head. "Emmett's a dead man; I'm *so* telling Rose that."

Bella giggled and then dove for the toilet and dry heaved for a minute. "Edward, can you get me some water?"

## Dance With Me

"Sure." I went to the kitchen and got Bella a glass of water and came back to see her shivering on the floor slightly. "Bella, babe. Why don't we go to bed and I can get you a garbage can in case you have to get sick again."

"Okay." I sat the glass of water on her nightstand and pulled the covers down all the way before going back into the bathroom. When she tried to get up she sunk back down to the floor, so I very gently picked her up and carried her to bed, doing my best not to jostle her. After I laid her down, I got the garbage can out of the bathroom and the bath mat outside the shower and set it up on the floor beside her side of the bed. Finally I picked up the towels and got our pillows and then climbed into bed with her, stroking her arm, happy to be home with her.

### **BPOV**

I woke up feeling slightly better, at least I wasn't getting sick anymore, but then I felt Edward's arm tighten slightly around me and all of that went away. "How do you feel baby?"

"Better, but now I'm starving. And I know I can't really eat anything yet, which really sucks." I pouted and Edward laughed.

"Well then, I'm going to go make you some soup. Don't move. I'll be right back." Edward rolled out of the bed carefully and walked out of the room with a quick smile over his shoulder.

I fidgeted in bed thinking about everything that had changed last night. In all honesty, nothing spectacular had happened, my plans went down the tubes with the first lurch of my stomach. Edward came home and I looked like hell, and he sat with me and tried to make me comfortable, he held my hair back while I got sick for crying out loud. He was so perceptive to my needs and so loving, he said that all he needed was to have me again, and I believed him. I was all he needed, and he was all I could ever hope for, and together we fixed those things about each other that required mending. It hadn't been a long separation in all reality, but it made me see just how much I loved him.

## Dance With Me

Edward returned with a tray that had a bowl of soup and a glass of ginger ale. Sitting on the side of it was a box that was uniquely wrapped in fabric with a large bow holding it in place. I ignored the food and picked up my present. Edward snickered to himself as I took the fabric off, sitting it on the tray as I opened the top of the box. Inside were six hand painted tiles each with a quote on it. I picked them up one at a time and studied them.

*Those who wish to sing always find a song.*

*The measure of love is to love without measure.*

*Joy follows a pure thought like a shadow that never leaves. -Christopher Morley*

*Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul. -Emily Dickinson*

*You were once wild here. Don't let them tame you! -Isadora Duncan*

*The greatest pleasure in life is doing what people say you cannot do. -Walter Bagehot*

As I read each one I felt the tears begin to prick in my eyes. I looked up at him and he was smiling sweetly. "You told me you wanted to get some kind of artwork for the balcony, and when I saw these I thought we could hang them up out there. Do you like them?"

I took a deep breath and smiled back as the tears slowly escaped. "Edward, they're beautiful. That Emily Dickinson poem is my favorite." I put the tiles back as Edward grabbed a tissue so I could wipe my face.

"Now how about we try to get something in your belly? I don't want you to get dehydrated." Edward picked up the bowl of soup and sat it in his palm before raising the spoon to my lips while I opened my mouth to let him feed me. I was able to get down some of the broth, but we decided not to push it much beyond that. Edward gave me a quick peck on the temple and then told me to take a shower and then we could climb into bed and spend the day together. That was

## Dance With Me

the best idea he had ever come up with.

I got in the shower and relaxed, finally beginning to feel a little better. Carlisle had said that I would feel better in the morning, but not to push it until I felt completely normal. So the idea of Edward holding me all day in our new home was fantastic. I turned off the shower and put on a cute nightgown, because I was determined to be as comfortable as possible. I brushed my teeth and put my hair up in a loose bun so I didn't get a headache on top of everything else.

When I walked back into the bedroom, the sheets were pulled up. Confused I pulled them down and my eyes focused on the small red box sitting in front of me.

"Bella." I spun around and Edward was right behind me, having used my confusion to sneak up on me. "The whole time I was away, all I could think about was getting back to you. I have never felt drawn to anything, or anyone the way I am to you. Your spirit has made me strive to be someone worthy of you." I felt this intense desire to interrupt him, not because I wanted him to stop, but because he had it backwards, I was the one who was unworthy of him. But I knew that he probably had a whole little speech planned, so I wouldn't ruin it. "For the past six months I have marveled at how lucky I've been, and that's why I tend to go for the grand romantic gesture. It seems to be our nature, to make elaborate plans and surprise each other just to see the look the others face when the realization hits. And all of that is wonderful. But that's not what makes a life together, this is." Edward took my hands in his and the realization he had been waiting for finally clicked. My jaw dropped open and I stared at him in disbelief. The little red box... "Last night when I saw Alice at the airport and she said you were sick, I lost my mind for a moment, and I couldn't get home to you soon enough. And then I got home, and you were so thrilled to see me, and all I wanted to do was take care of you. Holding you in my arms, feeding you soup when you're sick, looking into those awe-inspiring eyes of yours, the little things are what's really important. I bought this knowing that I would ask you soon, but watching you sleep last night, I knew what I had to do." Edward reached around me to pick up the box and then dropped down onto one knee. Ohmygod! This is really happening...he's really asking me! I wanted to scream and cry and kiss him, but I quickly realized I should let him

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actually ask me first. Edward opened the box and then looked into my eyes, holding them in the intensity of his gaze. "I would be honored if you would wear this ring and dance with me, because there's no one else I'd rather have as my partner. Isabella Marie Swan, will you marry me?"

My hand flew up to my mouth as the tears flowed freely and I shook with the joy I was feeling. I lowered myself to the floor and took a breath before placing a hand on either side of his face. "Edward...you've made...me so...happy. I didn't know I...I never imagined..." Still completely unable to form a sentence, I took another breath and then looked back into his eyes. "Yes!"

### EPOV

Bella seemed to honestly not know what was going on, which was making me both ridiculously nervous and tremendously excited to see what she would say when she understood that I was proposing. As I professed my love I watched her intently and smiled as her jaw dropped, then a moment later when I reached for the ring behind her, her breathing began to speed up and she stared down at me with wide eyes.

By the time I actually asked her to marry me she nearly collapsed to the ground. She was crying and shaking and then clutched my face in her hands. Bella tried to say something eloquent, but her words failed her, so finally she took a breath and simply said, "Yes!"

My lips crushed hers and she threw her arms around my neck. BELLA. SAID. YES! To me. Bella wants to marry me. I know we had danced around it, and talked in vague generalities and far off plans, but to be kneeling on the floor with her after she just made me the happiest man on earth was too much. When I pulled away to take a breath I was crying and we both reached to wipe away each others' tears. I took Bella's left hand and slipped the ring onto her ring finger and she beamed at me.

"Edward it's gorgeous!" She held her left hand in her right, examining it closely.

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"It's a Cartier Ballerine; they say that it's inspired by the movement and grace of the ballerina. Plus, it has an antique design which, considering how upset you were to lose your mother's ring, I wanted to give you something that was in the same vein while still being absolutely you."

"Thank you. You have made me so happy." Bella's face was angelic, but then she shivered as a chill ran up her spine and I pulled her to her feet.

"We'll celebrate this properly when you're feeling better, but for now how about we just lay in bed, that way I can hold my fiancée." I couldn't help but smile saying the word and Bella smiled back.

Bella and I climbed into bed and she rested her hand on my cheek, looking deep into my eyes. I fell into those eyes, so happy that I would be staring into them for the rest of my life. After a few minutes Bella looked down and I pulled her chin up so I could look at her again. "Something wrong, love?"

Bella smiled, rubbing my cheek. "No. It's just when you look at me like that I get a little self-conscious. You look at me like I'm the only thing in the world, and that scares me, because I'm not sure I'm enough." I went to interrupt her, but she stopped me. "I know I'm being stupid, but no one has ever treated me the way you do, and I'm still trying to get used to it."

I cupped her face in my hands and moved my own face closer. "Everything that matters to me is in my hands at this moment. I would do anything for you baby, and I can't wait until I make you my wife." I leaned forward and kissed her sweetly as her arms wrapped around my neck, pulling me closer to her. After a moment, Bella turned so that her back was pressed up against my chest. I continued to look down at her, amazed at how her body fit perfectly against mine.

I had thought she was asleep when I heard her whisper, "What had you planned? If you hadn't come home last night to my camping trip in the bathroom, how would you have proposed?"



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I kissed the crook of her neck and smiled against her skin. "I was planning on a grand romantic gesture. Something big and probably over the top, but then again that's me, always trying to prove my love. But then Alice told me you were sick and I was so worried, I didn't know what it was. Then I got home and started taking care of you and held you while you slept, and I stopped questioning whether I thought you were ready, or orchestrating something huge and decided to simply ask the woman I love to marry me, and she said yes."

Bella laughed a little and then grabbed the hand I had wrapped around her. "Like I could ever say no to you. But I'm glad that it was spontaneous, because it means you didn't script that little speech, not that I would have minded, but it means more that it was what you were thinking in the moment. I love you, Edward Cullen."

I tightened my arm around her, "I love you Bella Swan."

When I woke up several hours later, it was the lips of my love that were pulling me out of my sweet dreams. I opened my eyes to see Bella straddling me completely naked. "How in the world did I not notice this?"

Bella smiled down at me. "Because, I didn't want to ruin the surprise. I'm ready to celebrate with my fiancé."

Bella sat up on her knees next to me and I quickly got rid of my boxers before I sat up and kissed her again. Bella pulled me on top of her as she laid down, never breaking the kiss. I hovered over her, careful not to put my weight on her as I slowly made my way home.

Making love to Bella always felt like a religious experience. Not just the physical pleasure, but the emotional wholeness that it brought me. Every stroke was like an answered prayer, and it had been far too long in my opinion. So that was what I did, I worshipped my goddess, overjoyed to call her mine. As I thrust slowly, I felt Bella's fingers dig into my arms as she pulled me closer. "Edd-waarddd!" I laughed to myself at the frustration in her voice; she wanted me to quicken my pace. I began thrusting faster and deeper and my efforts earned a breathy moan.

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"Bella...oh God...I..." My words continued to get stuck in my throat, so I put all my focus into showing her how good this felt. Within a few minutes I could feel her start to tighten around me as she closed her eyes and bit down on her lip. "Bella...open your eyes, I want to look at you when you cum."

Bella's eyes widened as she crashed into ecstasy, and the look on her face sent me following her quickly. My head rested on the pillow next to her and I took in her sweet scent. I rolled over and pulled Bella onto my chest, where she started kissing me before her stomach growled. She giggled quietly and then looked up at me. "I better go cook something before my stomach eats itself, you hungry?"

I nodded and Bella smiled, picking her nightgown off the floor before slipping it on and walking out the door.

Bella was feeling completely normal today, so we decided to go over to my parents for dinner. My mom quickly called everyone wanting to celebrate my return home. I was glad she had made that call because it wouldn't make everyone suspicious, so we might actually have a chance to tell them before they figured it out. Bella turned her ring around, so only a thin band was visible, giving us the element of surprise. As we pulled up to the driveway and saw that everyone was there already Bella stiffened slightly. I reached out and squeezed her hand. "Baby, it is going to be fine, they're all going to be so happy for us."

Bella laughed and turned to give me a quick peck. "I know, but this is big news, and we just moved in together, I'm nervous they'll think it's a little soon. Now, let's get in there before Emmett sees us and ruins our surprise by guessing it the minute we walk in."

"I'll kill him if he does." We got out of the car and made our way to the door. My mom opened it and pulled me and Bella each into a tight hug.

"Oh honey, I missed you. And Bella, sweetie, I'm glad to see you feeling better."

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The rest of my family welcomed us and we quickly fell into conversation. "So Eddie, how do you like what Bella did to the place?"

I smiled and kissed Bella's left hand, not even getting annoyed at Emmett calling me Eddie. "It's beautiful, my girl has impeccable taste."

Bella laughed as Rosalie reached behind her and pulled out a bag. "I wanted to wait to give you this until Edward was back; I saw it and thought immediately of you."

Bella reached into the bag and pulled out a sizable pewter figurine of an Irish step dancer. Tears welled up in her eyes as she looked over to me. "Rosalie, it's beautiful...thank you."

I squeezed Bella's hand again and she nodded. I looked up at my family as she took her left hand in her right and slowly began turning her ring as I spoke. "Everyone, we have an announcement. Bella and I are engaged!"

The squeals erupted as Alice flew into Bella's arms and my mom did the same to me. We quickly swapped, and then continued to hug and kiss everyone as the congratulations filled the room.

### **BPOV**

Having Edward's family react like that erased any of the tiny fears I had held. Esme was quickly pouring the champagne that she had Carlisle buy off of a *feeling* she had this morning after talking with Edward, but I had been there for the conversation, so I knew it had to be her mother's intuition. As everyone toasted us, I noticed that Alice didn't seem to be drinking hers, but I wasn't planning on asking. After all, it was probably just my overactive imagination getting the best of me.

I wasn't the only one who noticed however, because a few minutes later Emmett wrapped his arm around her shoulder and boomed out. "You haven't touched your champagne Alice. What are you pregnant?"

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The entire room fell silent as we turned to see the color drain from Alice's face. Edward stepped forward and took both of his sister's hands. "Al, are you?"

Tears streamed down her face as she spoke a mile a minute. "We were waiting until I was three months along to tell anyone, and I definitely wasn't planning on saying anything today and ruining your surprise. Edward, I'm sorry."

Edward pulled her into a hug as he ran his hands over her back. "Ali, what do you have to be sorry for?"

"I'm sorry that every time you have news I have something that tops it, and I'm sorry that everyone found out like this, but I'm mainly sorry that Emmett is such an ass!" With that everyone laughed and another round of congratulations started as Esme ran to get Alice some ginger ale to toast with.

Alice was pregnant. I'm not going to lie and say that the green eyed monster wasn't lurking inside me a little, but I had everything I dreamed for, and I believed Edward when he said we would find a way to have a family. But I would never get to experience what Alice was going through. Alice pulled me aside while everyone else was fawning over our men and their good fortune.

"Bella, are you upset with me?" Alice looked honestly afraid of my reaction.

"Of course not. I'm so happy for you and Jasper. How far along are you?"

Alice smiled at the sincerity in my tone. "Almost ten weeks. Oh Bella, I'm so happy for all of us. You and Edward are going to get your happy ending, and I'm going to be a mom!" Alice hugged me tight.

"Let's just hope for the sake of the economy that you're having a girl, so that way you can have your own personal shopping buddy." Alice and I both laughed again and returned to the other room.

As we got ready for bed that night I could see that Edward was trying to figure out how to ask me about Alice's news. So when he pulled me close, I wrapped my arm around his waist and sighed into his side. "We're not out of options;

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it'll happen for us too. I'm not worried."

Edward kissed my hair and then lifted my chin to look at me. "You're really okay?"

A single tear escaped my eye but I quickly wiped it away. "I'm a little sad that I won't get to be pregnant, and the sheer fertility of your family is a little harrowing, but right now I have everything I want. I'll worry about that when it's time to."

Edward kissed me passionately and I looked deep into his eyes. "How did I get so lucky?"

I smiled and kissed him again. "I have such terrible luck, that you have to have some good luck just to balance us out." Edward laughed hard, shaking me too. I pulled him closer and fell asleep resting on his chest.

Edward and I had been living together for two weeks now and all those little things that people do that just drive you crazy were starting to get to me. I was coming home from the bar, before heading back later that night, and when I walked into the kitchen I lost my cool. "Edward!"

I heard him get off the chair in the spare room and come out into the main living area. "Bells?"

He saw me standing in front of the sink and stood on the other side of the half wall. "Edward, I know that you're working all day while I'm at the bar, but would it kill you to do a little cleaning. I mean we have a dishwasher for crying out loud, rinse the dishes and run it."

He walked into the kitchen and turned me to face him. "I'm sorry. I'll do it right now, and I promise that I'll be more domestic." Edward opened the dishwasher and began loading it in silence, but after half of the load was in he turned to me. "Is there anything else that's bothering you?"

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"You drink out of the carton." He laughed and continued his work. "What about me, I have to be driving you crazy."

Edward thought for a minute and then answered. "You leave the bathroom door open when you're in there."

I looked at him like he was crazy. "Why does that bother you?"

"Because...it's weird. I can't explain it right, but you look so...helpless sitting there." I couldn't stop the cackle that erupted out of me.

After a few minutes I finally got myself under control and looked back over at him. "Okay, is that all?"

"I don't like the way you fold my laundry." Edward almost whispered.

I walked over to him and pushed him against the counter jokingly. "Fine, I will never do your laundry again. Better?"

He smiled my favorite crooked smile and kicked the dishwasher closed, turning it on before carrying me into the bedroom.

## EPOV

I was slightly suspicious of Bella this morning when the knock came at 6:30. I opened the door to see Emmett, Jasper and my father standing outside my door. "Eddie! You're 28 man."

"Go away Emmett!" I growled as I tried to close the door on them.

My dad's hand caught it and held it open. "Sorry son, we can't let you do that, we have strict orders. Get dressed and let's get going."

I went back into the bedroom to see Bella had scurried into the bathroom and had the shower running. I got dressed and made my way out to my kidnappers, annoyed that my birthday was starting so damn early.

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We went to breakfast at a greasy spoon near the batting cages my dad used to take us to as kids. It had been so long since we had come here; it was fun to crank it out, and to have Jasper there to share it.

After I exited the cage and Emmett stepped up to the plate, Jasper settled in next to me to torment Emmett and make him lose the bet he had made that he'd hit more balls than either of us. "So Edward, have Bella and you talked about the wedding planning yet?"

"Bella wanted to get married at the Alexis Hotel, so we went to check it out but they don't have a date available until next June, so we didn't reserve it. Neither one of us wants to wait that long, so we're looking for other places."

"That sucks." Emmett was getting ready to swing so Jasper came up to the back of the cage and waited for the ball to come. "Don't screw up!"

Emmett swung and missed wide before spinning around to cuss him out. "What the fuck, man! That was not cool."

Just then another ball got pitched and nearly missed Emmett making him squeal and Jasper and I in turn busted out laughing.

After the batting cages we went to the driving range and had some more fun tormenting Emmett as he hooked everything to the right. I wasn't much better, hooking things to the left, when I got a text from Bella.

*Take off your watch, its adding weight to your arm, and that's why you're earning the nickname 'leftside.'*

I looked around quickly and saw no one with their phone and Bella was nowhere in sight so I took off my watch and sure enough, that little bit of weight from the watch I bought at Cartier with her ring had been throwing off my swing.

After that I was dropped off at Alice and Jasper's where I was put to work moving furniture out of the guest room as they began discussing paint colors.

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"You know its mean that you're putting me to work on my birthday."

Alice giggled and gave me a kiss on the cheek. "Bella wanted you to spend the day with your family, and I needed your help. You aren't really going to neglect your godchild, are you?"

I dropped the chair I was carrying. "You want me to be the godfather?"

Alice beamed at my excitement. "Yeah, and Bella's the godmother, we decided that you guys would be the perfect choice for our first kid."

I scooped my sister up in my arms and swung her around gently. "Alice, thank you! You have no idea what it means to me that you're asking us."

"No problem, but when you and Bella start your family, just remember that you were our first choice." I smiled and mussed up her hair.

"Deal." Just then my mom brought out soup and sandwiches for lunch. After that, we sat around and Alice took out my presents.

"Okay, these are from Jasper and I." Alice pushed two nicely wrapped presents in front of me and I began unwrapping them. As I pulled the paper off I smiled at the voice recorder that Alice had picked out for me. "This way you can keep it in your bag and if you forget your notebook then you can still record your idea so you don't lose it." I was looking down at the box thinking about how much I wished I had this when I was in LA because I would have recorded Bella's voice to bring with me, when Alice broke me out of my thoughts. "You hate it, I knew I should have gotten you camping stuff, but I thought this would be-

I quickly cut her off. "Alice, I love it. I was just thinking about how much I wished I had it a month ago. Really, it's a great gift." I quickly unwrapped the second gift and immediately started laughing. "The Everything Groom to be Book?"



## Dance With Me

Rose and my mom laughed and Alice picked up the book. "Jasper called this his 'duck and cover' book. He said it was how he survived my craziness, so he wanted to give it to you."

Next I got a nice leather laptop bag from Rosalie and Emmett, and my parents got me a gift certificate for the dinner cruise around Seattle. It was about 5pm at this point and Alice informed me that I was now allowed to go home, so Rosalie and my mom dropped me off home without a word about what Bella had been scheming all day.

When I opened the door I noticed the lights were low and there were candles lit on the balcony, and closer inspection revealed that there was a small table set up for a romantic dinner for two out there. Bella's voice caught me off guard as she welcomed me home from the kitchen. "Happy Birthday."

I spun around to see Bella in a lacy dress, if you could honestly call it a dress. It was a black slip with a lacy overlay that was designed to destroy me. As she came around into the living room I noticed the heels she was wearing and how they made her legs look that much longer. Bella walked over to me and wrapped her arms around my neck as she kissed me, and I was all too aware of how her dress raised up because of how she embraced me. This was going to be a long night, but I knew that Bella went to a lot of trouble to plan this so I vowed to be good.

"Dinner's almost ready if you want to freshen up." I nodded and kissed her again as Bella made her way back into the kitchen.

I came out of the master bedroom and Bella was placing the last of the food on the table, and as I joined her outside she smiled and motioned for me to take the seat that gave me a view of not only her, but the city below. As I looked down at the plate of food I smiled, it was the same meal she had made for me at our date at Ballet Studio, and then I noticed the bottle of wine. "That's the wine you picked on our first date."

Bella smiled as I picked it up. "I had my supplier find me a case; I thought it could be our special occasion wine."

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I decided to play with her a little. "Oh yeah, what are we celebrating tonight?"

Bella looked down and then peered up through her lashes. "We're celebrating the birth of the most amazing man I've ever known, and the man that I plan to spend the rest of my life celebrating." At that moment, Bella reached across the table and placed her hand on mine. I raised her hand to my lips and kissed it. Then she lifted her glass and I followed suit. "To my Edward, the stuff that dreams are made of." We clinked our glasses and then each took a sip.

We began eating and I moaned at how good Bella's food was, she could cook almost anything, but her chicken and Mac and cheese was the best meal I had ever eaten. After a little while Bella looked up at me. "I got a call from the Alexis Hotel today."

My eyes met hers and I knew instantly that it was good news. "What did they say?"

Her smile gave her away long before the blush that began to color her cheeks could. "They had a cancellation, and they wanted to know if we were interested in getting married on December 9th."

I dropped my fork onto the plate. "You realize that that's-"

"The one year anniversary of the day we met, yes, I was aware." Bella blushed a deeper red and I knew she was so excited to get her dream location around the time we wanted to get married.

"Did you make the reservation?"

"I go tomorrow to sign the contract and make the deposit."

I stood up from the table and pulled her out of her chair and kissed her before pulling her into a tight hug. "Oh baby, it's like it was fate, we're getting the date we wanted and you're getting your location. That's the best birthday present ever!"

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Bella smiled and backed away from me. "I hope not, otherwise the rest of the night will be a disappointment." She giggled, pulling me back into a kiss. As we sat down, Bella hit the button on the control for the apartment sound system and the music of Linda Eder crooned out of the speaker in the corner of the balcony. We continued eating and talking about my day and some of the things Bella wanted to do for the wedding. She laughed at the book I got from Jasper and promised not to be a bridezilla, which from the sound of it, seemed to be a bad thing. Then she revealed that it was my dad who told her what to say in the text she sent me this afternoon.

As we were finishing our food, *Little Things* came on and she asked me to dance with her, and as the words started she sang along in my ear.

*It's the whisper of the rain when we're sleeping  
The familiar way the scent of you clings  
In the coolness of the night  
It's the little things*

*It's the honest way you ask how I'm feeling  
And the way you still agree though I'm wrong  
It's the little things in life  
That carry me along*

Listening to her sweet voice sing to me I felt such love for her, and I knew this song held special meaning. She was telling me that it was moments like this that mattered the most, and we were about to build a lifetime filled with them. The song came to an end with Bella singing the final lines as she looked into my eyes.

*It's not castles and kings  
It's the little things  
It's the whisper of the rain when we're sleeping*

Bella finished off the bottle of wine, refilling our glasses and turned to me. "Baby, stay out here while I get ready for the next part of the night."

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"Of course love." Bella grabbed the plates and stacked them, bringing them into the kitchen. I looked up and saw the tiles I had bought for her were now hanging around the balcony and smiled. Bella was gone for a few minutes before I heard the dishwasher start up and then she came back out, blowing out the candles and bringing them in to sit on the bar top in the kitchen. Finally she called to me, "Baby, bring in the wine glasses." I picked them up and followed the sound of running water to the bathroom, where Bella had the tub nearly filled. I placed the wine glasses on the edge of the tub and Bella appeared behind me. "Get in."

I took off my clothes and climbed in, and Bella followed me. I pulled her to me and she laughed. "I like where this is heading."

Bella turned to face me and gave me a chaste kiss before moving to the other side of the tub. "All in good time, but first, I want to take care of you the way you do me." Bella reached for the shampoo and dunked my head, before lathering up my hair, being careful to keep her hair dry where it was piled on top of her head. After my hair was all soapy she grabbed the soap and a washcloth and washed me, lovingly rubbing my body. After that, I submerged myself and came up fully clean. Bella and I climbed out and towed off carrying our half-filled wine glasses to the bedroom as the tub drained.

"Lay down on your stomach," Bella instructed as she took my glass and put on a robe.

"Bella?" She smiled and winked at me.

"We're almost there; just don't fall asleep on me like I did on you." With that Bella grabbed a small bottle of lotion and straddled my ass. I heard the lotion squirt out of the bottle as she lathered up her hands and then I felt her tiny fingers rub my tired muscles. "You're so tense baby; let's see if I can get some of these knots out."

Bella's hands on me were magic. Her touch was so firm, yet remarkably gentle as she kneaded my back muscles. She massaged my arms and neck as well and then slid up my back and massaged my scalp. The stiffness left my body and I

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felt more relaxed than I had in a while. Finally Bella kissed the back of my neck and climbed off my back. "You feel better?"

I turned to look at her and ran my hand over her cheek. "Bella, this has been the best birthday ever. It's like you knew exactly what I needed, even before I did, and then you made it happen. Thank you."

"We're not done yet, you still have a few more presents." Bella reached into her robe pocket and handed me a small box. I opened it and saw a silver bracelet.

I picked it up and saw the quote Bella had referenced from *The Tempest*, "'We are such stuff as dreams are made of.' Bella this is amazing, and you're right, we are."

Bella laughed and tapped me, trying to get me to rollover towards her. When I did, she quickly took up residence between my legs, before running her hands up my thighs and kissing the tip of my painfully hard erection. She slid her mouth over my length and went to work on me. The sensation of her running her lips and tongue and teeth along me was heaven and I was afraid that I might not last long, but my girl knew just how to bring me to the edge without pushing me over. Bella continued her ministrations as I bucked and grabbed hold of the sheets on either side of me. "God Bells, that feels so fucking amazing!"

With that bit on encouragement Bella continued on and finally reached down and began playing with my balls, which sent me hurdling over the edge. I called out her name as she drank me up and sat back up smiling. "Are you ready to unwrap your last gift?"

I looked at her with unfathomable eyes, what else could she give me that she hadn't already? Her hand took mine and placed it on the belt of her robe and I was instantly ready to open my final present. I pulled the robe open and slid it off before I laid her down and climbed on top of her.

I entered her, ready to feel her warmth and was not disappointed as we quickly found our rhythm. There were so many things that I loved about Bella, but the

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way we fit together had to be one of my favorites. Bella completed me and in the moments that we were intimate I felt such joy, it was indescribable.

Bella was panting and pulling my lips back to hers for a passionate kiss that was only broken so we could breathe. I pulled her closer to me as I picked up my pace and continued to plunge myself deeper into her. I could feel myself nearing my release so I kept up my pace and looked deep into Bella's eyes. "Cum with me baby, I'm so close."

Saying that always seemed to push her over the edge and her cries of pleasure in turn sent me to my end.

As we lay there, basking in our post-coitus glow, I rested my forehead on hers. "I love you Bella."

Bella ran her hand through my hair and then over my cheek. "I love you too Edward, happy birthday."

**A HUGE I love you to stavanger1 from ff, who read and reviewed every chapter of my story in the course of two days...you made me remember little things I had forgot, and it is what caused a lot of the little details from earlier chapters to pop up in this. Also to lilquackers, lanigirl196003, bammers, trobers and TwiAggie94 for showing me some early love over here! You're the new DwM crew!**

**To everyone who faved, alerted, reviewed or read this on both sites, your love and friendship has meant the world to me and I can't wait to see your reactions to the sequel, *The Family You Make*. The prologue will be up very soon as it is short!**

**A thank you to my sis Patti996 aka Patti25, who brought me to the world of fanfiction and A Cullen Wannabe, who brought me to this site. This was my baby, and my first story and you loved and nurtured me and your support has been amazing.**