



Summary

Eighteen-year-old Isabella gets to spend the holidays with her best friend, and she's in for a treat when they arrive at Mr. Cullen's private island. There is no way Isabella can view Mr.

Cullen as Alice's godfather. Luckily for Isabella, her inappropriate feelings are returned. But what happens when obstacle after obstacle is thrown in their way?

Rated NC-17 for graphic lemons and a dirty-talking Domward.

(While there's no real bondage, Edward and Bella live in their own version of a D/s relationship.)

Romance/Drama/Erotica

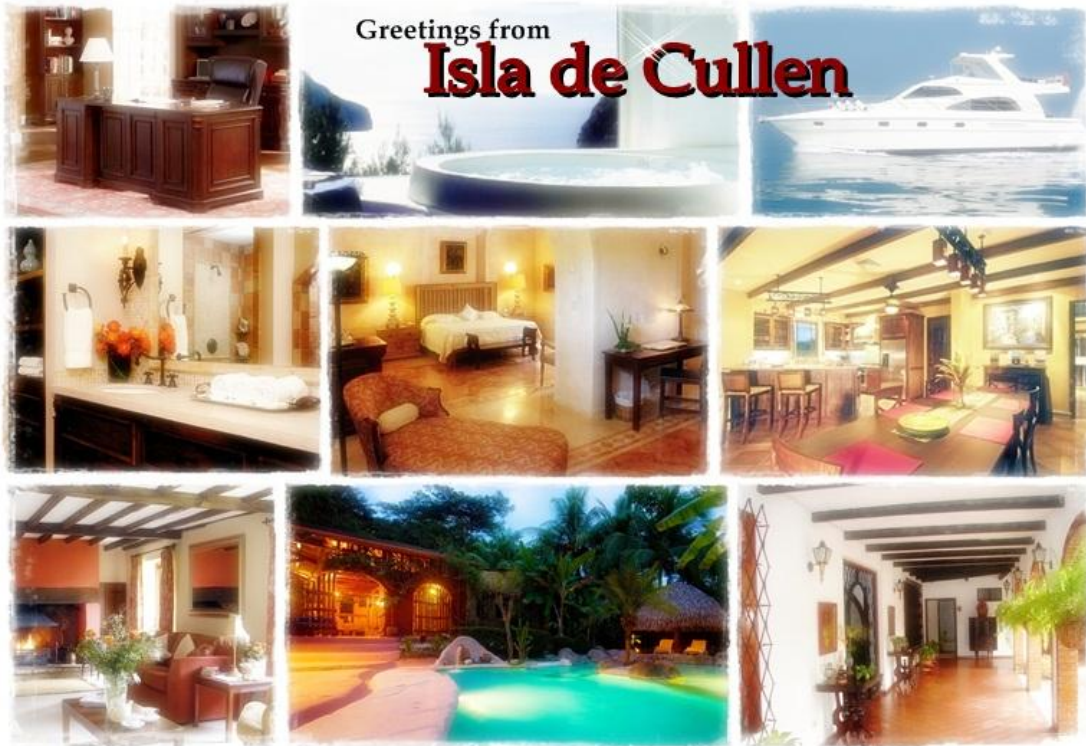
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Beta'd by HollettLA

Thank you, Francesca, for helping me with the Italian. Thank you, Lolytop82, for all the manips you created for this story. And thank you, Soapy, for your manips, too. They sure added to the story ;) Last but not least, thank you, readers, for your continued support.

~CaraNo

Chapter 01



BPOV

I grew up with maids and servants, but I had never witnessed this level of luxury before, and I was completely slack-jawed as we boarded the private jet that would take us to Isla de Cullen. It was where we were spending our winter break. Almost a whole month off—for which we could thank our private school: Clallam Academy. Forks High only had two weeks, and many of their students were pissed.

I digress.

Isla de Cullen was an island owned by Mr. Cullen—a man I had never met before. But he was an old friend of Alice's dad, and this year her family invited me to come with them...seeing as how my parents were on a cruise.

They were rarely home, but I didn't care anymore. I fended well on my own, and I enjoyed the solitude. Alice was the only exception, and I'd say she was my one and only friend in Forks. Seattle was another matter, of course, but that part of my life was hush-hush.

Don't worry, nothing illegal.

I was merely a model for a few photographers. But still, I wouldn't tell anyone, and especially not Alice. She wouldn't like it. At all. No, my reason for loving Alice was that we were both somewhat removed from our peers. In school, we shied away from the jocks, the bimbos, and the other cliché people that high school came with, and if I told Alice—the ultimate good girl—that I was a nude model, I would lose her. And she was needed in my life. If I was going to survive the last semester of high school...yes, I was definitely going to need someone who wasn't like the other idiots.

"Are you all right, dear?" Mary asked.

Apparently, I still showed my state of shock. But seriously, this private jet was...there were no words.

"I'm fine. Just in awe," I chuckled quietly as I buckled my seatbelt.

Alice's mother was the ultimate housewife, and I'd always admired her for that everlasting smile of hers. Always happy. Always eager to help and please. Mr. Brandon should consider himself happy. I knew he did, too. He was the ultimate father and husband.

There were actually many things about the Brandons that were "ultimate." Like Alice being the ultimate sweet girl—smart, polite, well-mannered. A bit safe and boring at times, but I believed I was the weird one for thinking that, because I was far from ordinary.

"Can I tell you something?" Alice asked, now sitting in the seat next to mine. "You have to promise not to tell anyone."

That was new.

"Who would I tell?" I smiled, knowing she would understand, because truly, I had no one *to* tell. Even if I did have someone, I wouldn't betray her trust.

She smiled and made sure her parents couldn't hear from their seats, and then she leaned in and whispered. "I've met someone."

Definitely new!

"Who- what- when- how?" I stuttered.

"At an art gallery in Seattle last month," she rushed out in a whisper, her eyes dancing in excitement.

At the mention of Seattle, I couldn't help but think back on my last few trips there. They had been my most enjoyable visits yet, and I'd had the honor of not just modeling for Jazz Whitlock—one of the most popular photographers in the erotic photography field—but he was actually the one asking *me* to model, stating that I would be perfect for his next exhibit. God, just thinking back on how he had me positioned on that velvet couch...or cuffed to the St. Andrew cross...

Then of course, there was the matter of his being a Dominant that intrigued me. I'd obviously studied the subject, seeing as I'd modeled as a submissive a few times, and though I could honestly say that BDSM was not for me—not in that sense anyway—I did have a wish to belong to someone.

Mr. Whitlock even commented on how naturally submissive I was when I automatically called him Sir—despite his having told me I could call him

Jazz—and I couldn't say I was all that surprised, because I knew he was right.

I had practically grown up with Alice and her family, and Alice's dad always laughed and ruffled my hair when I called him Mr. Brandon and not Jack.

It was just who I was.

However, I was not into bondage. So, no, a D/s relationship was not for me, though I did want to submit to *some* extent.

Anyway, in the next couple of sessions with Mr. Whitlock, he photographed me in various submissive poses, and I couldn't deny that I felt aroused when he called me his "pure submissive". Pure, because I had no experience—whatsoever. No, not even in the vanilla life did I have experience, and when Mr. Whitlock positioned me in the worship-pose, he asked me about my experience, to which I told him the truth. It wasn't a secret anyway and, truth be told, he asked me more for clarification, having already heard the rumor about my experience...or lack thereof.

Since then, he'd called me his Pure, and yes, it did things to me. Not Mr. Whitlock personally, but the power and confidence he radiated.

I was far from clueless, and I knew very well how things worked, but I had no interest in wasting time on the ridiculous jerks in school. I would know when my time came, and I knew it wouldn't be with anyone weak. I needed a strong mind to take charge.

"His name is Jasper H-something. Can't really remember his last name," Alice continued, effectively bringing me back.

I smiled, happy for her. "That's great, Alice. Tell me about him. You met at an art gallery?"

"Yeah, he was there with a friend...Alex or Alec or something... Anyway, I was standing there, looking at a photo of some desert, and I truly didn't understand it. I mean, who takes a picture of sand?"

"So, yeah, he came up to me and asked if I saw something in the photo, and I remember laughing out a 'no.' Then we sorta got to talking, and my gosh, Bella, he's so gorgeous and so nice and polite and sweet. He's a bit older than I am, but that doesn't matter. I just...God, I just love him already."

Wow.

I had never seen Alice so animated about anything before, and she spent the next hour telling me all about this Jasper she now claimed to be in love with—a man whose last name she couldn't even remember, but who was I to judge? This was, of course, where the true Alice shone through; she wasted no time in painting the picture of the future she wanted to have with Jasper. You know, the white picket fence, the children, the golden retriever, the Volvo...

~IdC~

The flight to Isla de Cullen didn't take long, seeing as it was just off the coast of northern California, and as we got closer and closer, Alice and I talked more about the time we had to look forward to on the island. She told me stories about her cousin—Emmett—and his family that was also coming. They, too, knew Mr. Cullen, and it was their tradition to spend the holidays on his island. All together there would be ten of us, including Mary, Mr. Brandon, Alice, myself, Mr. Cullen and a friend of his who was also bringing his sister, and then Emmett and his parents.

I'd heard many stories about Mr. McCarty, and he was apparently a lawyer like my father, travelling a lot just like Charlie and, of course, *just* like in

my family, Mrs. McCarty always joined him on those trips, leaving Emmett alone with maids and servants. It was a life I was very familiar with.

Anyway, there would be four of us around my age, and then the grownups.

I had asked how they all knew each other, and Alice said that Mr. Brandon's sister, Elizabeth—also Emmett's mother—went to high school with Mr. Cullen. And one year when Mr. Brandon came home from college, he and Mr. Cullen had gotten along so well that they stuck together. Then, later on, as Elizabeth met Mr. McCarty, he too, joined the friendship. Apparently—according to Alice—Mr. McCarty, Mr. Brandon, and Mr. Cullen were inseparable during their get-togethers. Obviously because they didn't see each other often. Mr. Cullen lived on his island or in LA, Mr. McCarty and his family lived in Chicago, and the Brandons lived in Forks.

~IdC~

"Dad, who's Edward bringing? All Mom told me was that it was a friend and his little sister," Alice said as we boarded the boat that would take us to the island.

It was already close to midnight, and it was dark and cold as hell, not to mention windy.

Northern California in December wasn't warm. Not one bit.

"Oh, I'm afraid I don't recall his first name, princess," Mr. Brandon replied, getting comfortable in his seat. "Edward called him Hale, I think, and then Hale's sister's name was Rosalie, I believe."

"She's your age," Mary added, but we already knew that.

Alice frowned in confusion. "Huh... So, how old is this Hale? I mean, if he's as old as Edward, then there's a big gap between his friend and his sister, right?"

"I believe Hale is a few years younger than Edward," Mr. Brandon said, rubbing his chin. "And I remember Edward telling me he worked with this Hale."

I tuned out as the boat's engine purred to life, and I spent the short journey to the island with my iPhone, and my...slight...addiction to writing about my life in Seattle. It was definitely Alice's talk about Seattle earlier that brought back the memories, and now I couldn't wait for my next session with Mr. Whitlock.

It was my outlet, to write poems or short posts about my love for erotica, so while Alice and her parents talked about this and that, I gave in to my inner self.

And I wrote.

In that stern voice, with those unyielding eyes

Your power stands tall, everything else dies

I hear the camera working, capturing me where I'm bound

With my consent, you have me kneeling on the ground

Your being screams confidence; you're so sure

I smile, Sir, when you call me Pure

I grinned and sent it to Mr. Whitlock after posting it on my blog, and I knew he was going to tease me in his reply. He always did.

My relationship with him was odd. We were very comfortable with each other despite our age difference—him being thirty and me being eighteen—and though there was never an attraction between us, we were both addicted to the setting we created together. He was able to enjoy a model, and I was able to enjoy a photographer. It was our element, I supposed.

My phone signaled a new text then, and I chuckled quietly as I read Mr. Whitlock's reply.

My sweet girl, when are you going to admit defeat? You are as vanilla as I am. – J.W.

That was when we arrived at Isla de Cullen, and as I focused hard, I could also see a house, but it was too dark to see clearly. I only knew from pictures Alice had shown me that it was a beautiful two-story hacienda, and then there was a group of smaller haciendas on the other side of the island for Mr. Cullen's staff.

Before pocketing my phone, I sent a quick response to Mr. Whitlock.

Never said I was vanilla, now did I? But you know very well I'm not cut out for playrooms ;) Happy Holidays, Sir. – Isabella

"Just got a message from Edward," Mr. Brandon told us. "He's been notified of our arrival and will be here in a few minutes to greet us."

I could see his wide grin—anticipation of seeing his friend again.

My phone vibrated in my pocket once more, and I couldn't stop myself from pulling it out.

"Probably just my parents," I explained to Alice as she eyed me curiously.

Who else would text me, according to her?

Perhaps you are right there, but you were born to be owned, and you know that. Have a wonderful Christmas, my Pure. I myself will enjoy northern Cali with my sister and a friend. How about you? – J.W.

Born to be owned.

I shivered at the words.

But wait...Mr. Whitlock was spending Christmas...*here*?

Northern Cali with his sister and a friend?

No, it can't be.

As Mr. Brandon motioned for us to get off the boat, I hurriedly typed out another text.

So will I. Where are you exactly? – Isabella

His reply was instant.

I'm afraid I'm on a private island. Had I been on the mainland, I would've loved to see you. – J.W.

What the hell?

"Wow, I don't remember your parents sending you so many texts," Alice chuckled jokingly.

I didn't bother with a reply. Well, not to her. But to Mr. Whitlock.

Isla de Cullen? – Isabella

The dock was freezing cold, and while I took my luggage from one of the staff, I glanced up and saw the silhouettes of two men approaching.

I just knew. For some reason, I knew, as I watched the dark figures come closer, that one of those men...was him. Jazz Whitlock.

One of them stopped, and though it was too dark to see, I saw him lower his head, and a faint light flashed. I still couldn't see much, but it was quite clear that the man held a phone. And suddenly, his head snapped up, which was all the confirmation I needed.

Mr. Whitlock was Mr. Cullen's friend. But Hale? Granted, it wouldn't surprise me if Mr. Whitlock went under another name as a photographer. I just found it odd. Much was odd right now, and truth be told, I was in shock.

There was nothing bad about it because I knew he would never betray my trust, and I knew he would greet me like someone he'd never met before, but still.

What are the odds?

Then I saw them, and yes, it was Mr. Whitlock.

I could barely believe it.

I was happy, but...Christ, in *disbelief*.

"Oh, my God," I heard Alice breathe out shakily, gripping my arm. It was difficult, but I managed to get myself under control and forced my eyes to leave the two approaching men.

"What's wrong?" I asked her, confused, not understanding why her eyes were so wide.

"Th-that's Ja-Jasper."

If I thought I was in shock before, I was sorely mistaken.

Chapter 02

EPOV

"Jazz, this photo is exquisite," I murmured, tracing my fingers along the girl's side and breast.

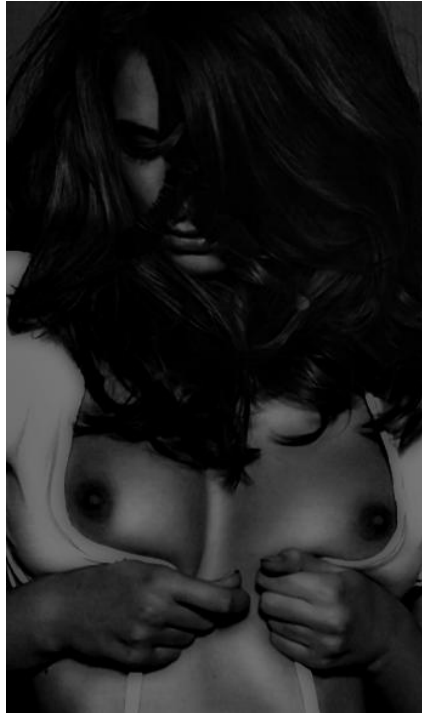


It made me wish I had the actual photo in my hands and not a damn laptop, but it would have to do for now. Well, to be honest, I wish I had that girl here—in that exact pose.

We were sitting in my study, and he was finally showing me the pictures of his Pure—the name of his next line—and I had to admit that it was his best work yet. Both his work and the girl screamed perfection.

"Is there no picture of her face?" I asked curiously, moving on to another photo.

Christ, those tits of hers.



I knew Jazz preferred photographs without faces, and he had a talent for making people want more just because he hid the face of the model. In this case, with this girl, it was usually her long hair hiding her face. It was truly gorgeous—long, thick, wavy.

"No," he replied, chuckling a little.

I nodded thoughtfully before clicking my way through the photos, enjoying each and every one of them. They were all remarkable, and I couldn't wait to display them in three of my galleries next spring.

"She's young," I commented, watching a picture where she stood bent over a whipping bench. "And small," I added as the next photo came up. In this one, she was on all fours in a cage, and the contrasts were vast. She looked so innocent even without her face showing, and in that

environment, in that metal cage, she looked like a girl you wanted to save and protect.

"Eighteen and a natural," Jazz replied. "She started modeling when she was sixteen, and then fell into erotic photography when she was seventeen."

Christ.

It wasn't uncommon, but it still bothered me that there were photographers ignoring their model's young age, even if the model was more than willing.

"That's young," I said, answering to both her age and the age she started modeling. Mostly the age she started modeling, though. "Is she collared?"

"No, she's not a sub."

"Oh?" I looked up from the screen. "I thought you only worked with subs."

"Yeah, but that was before her." He smirked. "She worked with Alec and that's how I found her. I called her as soon as I could, and now I can't get enough of her."

I was surprised.

I had shown Jasper's work many times in my galleries over the years and never had I seen him so attached to a model, but this one was definitely special to him. It actually made me see him in a new light. Before, he was always the Dom. The Dom without attachments, and I knew he loved his lifestyle. It defined him. It was always him. Ever since Alec and I discovered him—back when he was still Jasper Hale—he'd been a Dom and a photographer. Never in a vanilla relationship, and never photographing outside of the erotic genre. He had two lives like many others within that lifestyle, but he separated them with his names, as

well. He was Jazz Whitlock as a photographer—same went for the BDSM community in which he was involved—and then he was Jasper Hale, which was his real name, when he spent time with Rosalie and, generally, in a vanilla setting.

"Are you two a thing?" I had to ask.

It wouldn't be inconceivable, despite the twelve years separating them. Age had never been an issue for me—as long as they were of legal age—and I knew Jazz felt the same. After all, I had seen him with collared subs many years younger than him.

"Oh, no," he said, vehemently shaking his head. "My camera simply loves her, and I love working with her, but no, she's much more of a friend."

I nodded and absentmindedly flicked through a few more pictures.

There was no denying that I loved his work. I loved erotic photography, and though I wasn't a true Dom, I did have those tendencies. Seeing this girl kneeling with her hands behind her head definitely made my pants tighten.

I had dabbled a bit over the years, and I'd been at a few play parties, but the true D/s lifestyle wasn't for me. I knew that for sure, and it had always been hard for me to find what I wanted because I couldn't be in a normal relationship, either. My parents gave up on me giving them grandchildren years ago, for which I was glad, because I didn't see that happening anymore.

At the age of thirty-seven, I'd had precisely two normal relationships, and they both plummeted faster than I thought possible. I had simply never met anybody I wanted to settle down with, but more importantly: I'd never met anybody fully able to satisfy my needs.

"Guys, I'm heading to bed now," I heard Rosalie say, and I looked up to see her standing in the doorway.

"Good night, Rosalie," I said before returning my attention to the screen.

"Night, sis," Jazz drawled.

It made me chuckle a little. I had met Rosalie once before, when she was fourteen, and that was when Jazz still tried to get her interested in anything that didn't revolve around makeup and shopping.

He's given up, for the record.

But their parents weren't alive and they were all they had when it came to family, so when I spoke to him a few weeks back, I didn't hesitate to invite them here. I also figured it would be nice for Alice and Emmett to have someone else here their age. Then of course, Alice's friend, too, who was also coming. Bella, I recalled her name was.

Jack didn't really surprise me years ago when he announced that he was becoming a father, because I knew that was very him. He loved the family life, and as soon as he met Mary from Washington, they didn't waste time. But Elizabeth did surprise me, though, partly because we were four years younger than Jack, and at that time, she and I were only nineteen. So, when she announced *her* pregnancy just a few months after Jack and Mary, I was a bit thrown off.

Garrett, who had ten years on Elizabeth, was of course much more ready, being twenty-nine then, so that was that. My friends were paired off and starting families, and then I left Chicago at the same time as Jack and Mary did.

"Oh, Pure," I heard Jazz chuckle then.

Glancing up, I noticed him fiddle with his phone. "Pardon?"

"It's just Isabella." He grinned. "The model for Pure," he clarified when I didn't understand.

I chuckled incredulously. "You *call* her Pure? I thought it was the name for your work."

"Named it after her." He smirked.

I didn't understand him at all.

"Why Pure?" I asked.

I had my guesses, because she looked very innocent and "pure" being photographed in submissive poses.

"Because she *is* pure." He winked. "Isabella is very experienced and sought-after in the modeling industry, but she has no experience when it comes to sex, and I do enjoy teasing her about the fact that she's a submissive model for me without experience."

To be honest, I didn't really know what to say. I found it very odd that a girl who had no experience in Jazz's lifestyle would be a model for it. And I knew now, after watching his photos, that her pictures would grace the walls of many playrooms.

She was *that* flawless.

"But wait," I said, frowning in confusion over his words. "You said 'when it comes to sex.' You mean as a sub, right?"

"Nope. I mean at all. She's untouched, and everyone knows it. That's one of the reasons so many want to work with her."

My eyes widened in shock, flicking between Jazz and the screen.

I groaned internally, feeling my cock stir.

"Yeah, you see the appeal now, huh?" he chuckled, and I nodded, because yes, she just became that much more exquisite.

My own phone dinged then, signaling the arrival of the Brandons, and I grinned, excited to see my old friend again. "Time to go, and you're about to meet Jack."

After closing up my study, we left the house and headed for the shore.

"You're too rich, Edward," he quipped as we reached the beach.

I smirked. "I do all right."

In all fairness, though, I didn't buy the island. It was passed on to me by my grandparents, but it was my home now, and I spent more time here than I did at my house in LA or the apartment in Fort Bragg.

I loved it here; it was a great place for me to work. Peaceful.

Jazz continued to fiddle with his phone as we reached the dock, and I shuddered at the harsh wind. It was truly cold out here, and I hoped their boat ride hadn't been too bumpy, knowing how easily both Mary and Alice got seasick.

Elizabeth was even worse, and when they arrived tomorrow, I just knew that she was going to spend the first few hours in bed. It was tradition.

"Shit," Jazz hissed, and I looked back, noticing that he had stopped.

"Something wrong?" I asked, watching his wide eyes which were fixed on his phone.

His head snapped up fast, and he *stuttered* out a "no", something that was very uncharacteristic of him, and then we walked again. Briskly. But my confusion was soon replaced by excitement as I saw Jack.

These two weeks couldn't have come at a better time.

"Edward, my friend!" He grinned widely as we approached, and I knew my grin matched his.

"Jack, good to see you," I replied, shaking his hand firmly, adding a slap on his shoulder for good measure. "Once a year isn't enough."

"Indeed it isn't," he seconded.

"You must be tired after your trip," I said, smiling as I moved over to kiss Mary's cheek. "Welcome back, Mary. Jack still good to you?" I winked.

"Better than you," she huffed playfully, smacking my arm. "You're very bad at returning phone calls, you know."

I sighed playfully, placing my hand over my heart. "I know, I know, but work is busy. Though, you guys could always visit more often," I countered.

Then it was Alice's turn, and Lord, she looked more and more like her mother every year. Same spiky bob, same alabaster skin, same blue eyes, and equally petite in their 5"3' frames.

"Lovelier every year." I smiled, leaning down to kiss her cheek, too. "How are you, Alice?"

Perhaps children weren't for me, but I did love my goddaughter, especially now that she was grown up.

"I'm good, Edward, and you?" So polite.

I had always admired her for not being average. She was never one for drinking and partying like the rest of her peers.

"Very good," I responded before turning to Jazz, who stood behind me. "Jasper, this is Jack Brandon, his wife Mary, and their daughter Alice."

"And, Jack, Mary, Alice, this is Jasper Hale, a good friend of mine. You'll meet his sister in the morning."

As they all greeted each other, I took the opportunity to glance over at Alice's friend who stood quietly, slightly behind Alice.

With her eyes downcast, I couldn't see much, but she was as short as Alice and appeared to be a beautiful young girl.

"Oh, and this is my best friend—Bella," Alice introduced. "Bella, this is Edward, and, um...Jasper."

"Pleasure to meet you, Bella," I said, extending my hand.

Good God, she *was* beautiful.

Big brown eyes met mine, only briefly, and she replied very softly.

"Thanks for having me, Mr. Cullen. I really appreciate it."

The wind almost drowned out her words, but I still managed to catch them. I also caught how lovely her voice sounded.

"Anytime, Bella, and please, call me Edward. And this is Jasper, as Alice said."

There was a miniscule smile playing on Bella's lips as she greeted Jasper, and I found myself *quite* distracted by the poutiness of said lips.

Once we'd gotten past the greetings, I motioned for Felix and Demetri to get the luggage and told Jack and the rest to follow.

"Are you all right, Jasper?" I asked quietly as we made our way back to the house.

"I've been better," he chuckled humorlessly. "Actually, could I have a word with you when we get back?"

"Certainly."

A few minutes later, we reached the house, and I was confused as hell. Jazz was always a very confident man, but glancing over at him now, he looked pale. And very distracted.

"Why don't you all get settle in, and then we can have a drink or something before bed," I suggested. "And Ali, you'll show Bella her room, yes?"

"Sure thing. Is it the guest room next to mine?"

"Yes."

I gave them a smile and then nodded toward my study, and Jazz followed.

He didn't waste time once we were inside.

"Okay, so last month, I was at Alec's 'In Nature' show in Seattle."

I nodded for him to continue, knowing about the show since I had helped Alec find a gallery. It had garnered some major attention due to his skill for creating illusions out of ordinary objects, and I was unfortunately unable to attend at the premiere.

"I met someone," Jazz admitted. "At first I saw nothing but a pretty girl; she was staring at Alec's 'Desert', having no clue about the illusion," he chuckled quietly. "Anyway, I walked up to her and we started talking, and I don't really know how it happened, but in the end, I asked her out...on a real date."

A real date.

I couldn't help but laugh, because this, this was certainly a new Jasper.

"You've entered a vanilla relationship?" I asked once my laughter had died down. "Didn't you try that before? With that Maria?"

"You're missing the point here, Edward," he groaned, very frustrated all of a sudden. "Ask me her name."

I was still amused by all of this, but I decided to humor him.

"All right, Jazz. What's her name?"

"Alice Brandon."

All traces of humor—gone.

Alice.

My friend's eighteen-year-old daughter?

I did the math in my head, and it didn't take more than two seconds before I knew that this was never going to work. Not with two such different people. Alice was a sweet girl, and I knew very well what she wanted for herself.

It was not Jasper. Not a Dominant. Not the BDSM lifestyle.

"You'll break her heart, Jasper," I told him, calmly but firmly, and the last thing I wanted was for my goddaughter to get hurt. "She idolizes her mother, and Mary's a housewife. Then of course there's the dog, the family-sized car, the Sunday dinners over at the Webers'. Want to know who the Webers are? That would be the minister's family, and they are all close to Jack and his family."

Jasper understood.

I was not going to read into Alice's personality because, to me, she was family, but sure, I could see the appeal. There was no denying that she was a pretty girl, and yes, she was a caretaker, but not to that extent. Not the kind I knew Jasper couldn't live without.

"I would never meddle," I added. "That's not who I am, and you know that. But I don't want Alice to get hurt." I knew he needed some time to think, so I left him in my study, but with a hand on the door, I suggested, "I assume you haven't told her about your life. Do that and see what happens."

Then I left.

I meant what I said; I didn't meddle, and truth be told, if Alice accepted Jasper's lifestyle, then good for them. But I wasn't her father, so it might be easier for me to think "good for them". Jack was another story, and he would kill Jazz. Alice was her father's princess.

"There you are." Jack grinned as I joined them in the living room. "I hope you don't mind," he said, holding up a glass of scotch.

"Of course not. Help yourself," I replied, sitting down in my chair. "Have the girls gone to bed?"

"No, we're right here," I heard Alice answer from behind me, and sure enough, the three girls appeared, taking their seats around the living room. Mary sat down with Jack, and Alice and Bella on a smaller couch...both of them wearing pajama shorts and snug tank-tops.

Yes, Bella was truly a sight to behold.

"Your house is beautiful, Mr. Cullen," Bella said softly, smiling gently at me. "I love the design; it's very warm."

"It is." I nodded. "And thank you. I must say I love it myself."

I gave Alice a pointed look before facing Bella again. "Make sure Alice gives you a tour tomorrow."

"Of course." Alice grinned. "I can't wait to get in the pool!"

I chuckled, knowing how much she loved the fact that I had the pool heated during the winter.

That was when Jasper returned, and now that I was aware of their situation, I obviously noticed a shift in Alice's behavior as Jazz sat down in the chair next to mine. I would definitely pay attention to that, because I didn't want Jack to find out.

"What time is Garrett coming tomorrow?" Jack asked.

"Felix and Demetri have been instructed to pick them up in Fort Bragg tomorrow at three PM," I told him. "So, I suppose they'll be here around three thirty."

"I'll go with them if that's all right," Mary said. "You have no Christmas decorations, as usual, so I'll get to that with Liz."

"You do that," I laughed quietly.

It was like this every year, and it was the truth; I never decorated. Mary and Elizabeth always took care of it because I didn't really see the point.

"Do you need a hand tomorrow, Mary? I'll be happy to help." Bella said to her.

I couldn't help but watch her, how she sat with her legs folded under her, her hands clasped in her lap, her back straight but posture still relaxed, and then her pajama bottoms in white, her tank-top also in white... She looked very innocent and very young. I knew she was, of course, but

there was something else about her. She screamed of innocence and natural grace; her body was slender, yet looked soft and-

This is not what I should pay attention to.

Christ, I could be her *father*. Literally.

Thanks to my inner war, I missed Mary's answer, but shortly after, the girls decided to head to bed, so I stood up, ready to show them a few things I've had added since last time Alice was here.

"You always have new stuff added, Edward," Alice huffed as they followed me up the stairs. "Always some new gadget that I'll never understand."

"Oh, relax, Ali," I chuckled. "It's nothing complicated."

"That's what you said about the alarm system last year," she shot back.

She's lost a little of her manners since last year.

I reached Alice's room and held it open for them to enter, immediately noticing the way Bella bowed her head as she passed me, murmuring a quiet "thank you."

My cock liked that.

My cock also enjoyed her blush. Immensely.

"All right, what was it, Edward?" Alice sighed, even rolling her eyes. "I really need to sleep."

I'd never been known to have much patience, and I'd always had somewhat of a temper, not to mention I that I did not tolerate sassiness, but I managed to ignore it with Alice. To an extent at least.

"Behave," I told her calmly, tapping her on the nose as I walked past her to reach the balcony. "The locks on the slide doors are new," I explained

to them and showed them the digital display on the wall. "The code is 1918, and then you press that green button." Facing Bella, I added, "The code is the same in your room. Any questions?"

"No, Sir," was Bella's reply.

"No, but you could've just told us this downstairs," was Alice's reply.

Guess which response I enjoyed the most.

Time to leave.

"Breakfast is served at ten AM out on the terrace, and don't worry about the cold. The terrace is heated. Goodnight, girls."

Chapter 03

BPOV

I thought I was going to combust when he told Alice to behave.

That simple command hit home; it did things to me. Again, I should say, because I'd been dangerously aware of Mr. Cullen since he came into view on the dock earlier. Attractive didn't come close to describing him, and once I'd seen him there, I had almost forgotten about Mr. Whitlock. Because seriously, Edward Cullen must be the sexiest man alive. And what a man he was. Tall, at *least* 6"3', broad-shouldered, built, but still graceful and lean. He walked with purpose, he...no, there were no words good enough to explain what I felt when I saw him. He simply screamed certainty and strength. And oh my, he dressed well. In black dress pants and a grey pullover, he looked both relaxed and ready for a board meeting.

I wouldn't mind him. Whenever, however, wherever, and whatever.

With a sigh, I went to bed, but I found myself staring at the ceiling for hours. I just couldn't sleep. Too much was going on in my head, and it was all Mr. Cullen's and Mr. Whitlock's fault. Mr. Cullen because my body was worked up to the extreme, and Mr. Whitlock because...just, *goddamn*, he was the Jasper whom Alice talked about! That was...that was...unbelievable!

And she said he was "a bit" older.

Yeah, right.

Frankly, I didn't care about age difference even a little, but twelve years were more than "a bit."

I knew I needed to talk to him...and to Alice for that matter, because this was huge, and I really didn't understand any of it. I didn't know that Mr. Whitlock dated in a vanilla setting; I didn't think that was him at all.

Obviously, I was wrong, but...huh, just so much going through my mind.

No, sleep wouldn't come.

Glancing over at the clock, I noticed it was now five in the morning.

I won't be pretty at breakfast.

~IdC~

At seven, I still hadn't fallen asleep, and it was too late now anyway, so I got up and took a shower before dressing in clothes I liked.

With yesterday's travels, I had worn jeans and a fitted hoodie, but today I was back in clothes I was more comfortable in—a black skirt, a dark blue cardigan, and a pair of ballet flats which matched my cardigan. I didn't wear a bra. I rarely did, because my breasts didn't really need containing, and I found it more comfortable anyway. Since I was meeting new people

today, too, I even added lip gloss, and then, because I was bored and had time, I found a nail polish that matched my blue clothing.

This was my mom's doing. Always the expensive brands of clothes, and always the fanciest makeup.

At eight, I left my room and made my way downstairs, finding the house quiet except for a few noises coming from the kitchen, so I followed those.

In daylight, I could see more and, as I passed a window, I noticed that we were right on the beach. It was very beautiful here, and I could understand why Mr. Cullen loved it so. I also noticed that there were several small islands in the distance, and I remembered Alice telling me that, and that they were all private.

I reached the kitchen and was met with the smell of coffee and freshly baked bread...and an older woman.

"Oh, you must be Alice's friend," a dark haired woman said, smiling brightly at me. "Bella, that is correct?" I nodded with a smile, loving her warm voice, not to mention her thick accent; she was clearly Italian. "Well, come over here, Bellezza. Let me have a look at you." She smiled and waved me over. "I am Carmen, and I run Mr. Cullen's kitchen."

"Nice to meet you, Carmen," I replied, offering my hand to her.

"Oh no, *topolino*, I don't shake hands," she laughed softly, pulling me in for a hug instead.

Wow.

"Such a beauty you are," she gushed, holding onto my shoulders as she did an inspection of me.

I didn't understand. At all. But I found myself liking this woman.

"*Sarai perfetta, Bellezza!*" Carmen said, and I narrowed my eyes at her because I understood. I knew some Italian. I wasn't fluent, but I knew enough.

She said I was going to be perfect.

"For what?" I heard a velvet voice ask behind me, causing me to stiffen.

I knew very well who it was, and I cursed Carmen as she left the kitchen at vampiric speed.

Traitor.

Swallowing hard, I turned around to come face-to-face...er, more like face-to-chest, with Mr. Cullen—the reason for my dampened panties.

"Good morning, Mr. Cullen," I said demurely.

Mr. Cullen's eyes found me, and I blushed as his eyes gave me a slow onceover. For some reason, I hoped I didn't disappoint.

"Indeed it is," he murmured as his eyes found mine again. "And I'm pretty sure I told you that you could call me Edward."

I can't believe I forgot again!

"I'm sorry," I mumbled, lowering my gaze. "I forget easily."

EPOV

She was too much of a temptation, standing there in that sinful outfit, and I couldn't stop myself from walking over to her and tilting her chin up.

"Don't apologize. If you want to call me Mr. Cullen, then of course you can. Just don't feel obliged," I told her softly.

She had already made me snap, and my night had been filled with dreams of this girl, which both infuriated me and had me elated. It was hard in every way possible, and I had to restrain myself from going into her room last night. So, when she was the first one I saw this morning, I knew I wouldn't be able to hold back *all* of me.

As my eyes flickered to her pouty, glossy lips, I frowned.

That shouldn't be there; she is far too beautiful to wear makeup.

"Don't wear that, please," I said quietly. I kept my eyes fixed on her lips as my thumb brushed over her bottom lip to remove the gloss. *Soft, soft lip.* I swallowed hard, willing my semi-erection to go down, but I knew it was futile. This girl was simply too much for my body to deny. "Can you promise not to wear makeup?" I asked, raising an eyebrow at her.

Her wide eyes were so dark that I... Fuck, how was I ever going to survive these weeks with her? I could barely *think* straight, goddammit.

"Yes, Sir," she breathed out. "I promise."

It made my cock throb to hear her, to see her, to touch her.

"Good girl," I murmured, knowing my voice was laced with desire. I released her chin before I attacked her. "Remove the nail polish while you're at it, little one."

I nodded for her to leave, and she did so, while breathing heavily and blushing.

I knew then.

I have to have her.

BPOV

It was painful as I headed upstairs to remove my lip gloss and nail polish. Truly painful, and my eyes were stinging with unshed tears. No, it wasn't hurt or anything. It was throbbing lust. It was his words, his touch, his soft commands, his burning gaze, his honey-dripping voice...

He called me "little one."

I will give anything to hear him call me that again.

Once in my room, I took my time because I needed to calm my hormonal body down, but eventually I made it downstairs again, and it was now ten AM—time for breakfast.

I had dutifully removed my makeup as Mr. Cullen requested, and there was no doubt. I would do whatever he told me to.

I hoped he wanted me.

I hoped he didn't see me as a pathetic little girl.

Sure, the man could be my father, and a whopping nineteen years separated us, but I couldn't have cared less, to be honest.

"Good morning, Isabella," I heard a quiet voice say then, and I whipped around to see Mr. Whitlock standing there, a small smirk playing on his lips.

"Good morning, Sir," I replied, giving him a small curtsy that I knew he always appreciated.

I did it to show respect, but still, I was as amused as he was by our situation.

He winked, motioning for me to follow him toward the terrace. "Small world, huh?"

"You can say that," I chuckled, because our situation was indeed funny...but there was one situation that wasn't. "And you know Alice."

It wasn't a question, and I gave him a pointed look that told him I knew.

"Mm." He nodded curtly. "But that's for me to handle, right?"

"Of course," I said quickly, lowering my gaze. "Sorry, I didn't mean to imply anything-"

He cut me off, his voice now softer. "No worries, my sweet Pure. I know you're only looking out for your friend."

I breathed out in relief.

We reached the terrace, and Mr. Whitlock put some distance in between us as we joined the others, who were already seated. And yes, I felt Mr. Cullen's eyes on me when I took the only seat available, which happened to be the one next to his.

Coincidence?

I hope not.

"Much better," Mr. Cullen commented quietly and pushed in my chair.

"And please, don't hide your lovely blush from me."

And blush I did.

He called me lovely!

Well, my blush.

"Did you sleep well, Bella, dear?" Mary asked from across the table.

"Um, yes," I lied. "And you?"

She smiled. "Very well."

Conversation was light during breakfast, and we were introduced to Mr. Whitlock's sister—Rosalie—whom Alice seemed to get along with very well, and I was thankful, because I wasn't in the mood for talking. I was a happy bystander, listening briefly to Mr. Cullen and Mr. Brandon. They were discussing Mr. McCarty's arrival later today, and then I listened into Alice and Rosalie's conversation for a while but, as they started talking about shopping, I tuned in to Mr. Whitlock and Mary instead. That was a bit more interesting since he was talking to her about photography. I had to stifle a laugh or two, though, when he was very vague about what he worked with *exactly*.

Then, halfway through breakfast, I felt Mr. Cullen's hand on my leg.

It made me gasp and drop my fork and, all of a sudden, I didn't care for the scrambled eggs anymore. No, I was much more interested in his hand on my bare leg. Just a simple touch, but it set me on *fire*. Shivers ran through my body, and I could feel a rush of arousal dampening my panties. Even worse was when he began rubbing his thumb in circles where my knee bent.

No one noticed what he was doing, of course, because he was still talking with Mr. Brandon.

Higher then, on my thigh now, and I fought the urge to close my eyes.

Oh, my.

It was too much. Never before had I felt this wired, this...this...*desperate*.

Yes. Please. More.

My hands were trembling slightly, so I dropped them to my lap.

EPOV

She didn't push my hand away and, in the corner of my eye, I could see how flushed she was, and I couldn't *fucking* believe my luck.

My pants were straining painfully; I was very aware that there was not a chance in hell I could wait much longer. I needed a release, and I wanted Bella to give it to me. Truth be told, I wanted to fuck her senseless, but I didn't know about her past experience; I didn't know how far she'd gone with men before. And though I was quite forceful in my element, I wasn't an animal. I would never go too far or even suggest anything without being sure she wanted it.

"Are you okay, dear?" I heard Mary ask Bella, but I didn't stop my hand. I kept rubbing her soft thigh, loving the smooth skin, and *Christ*, she was flawless. It made me curious about her pussy. To feel it, to taste it, to *fuck* it.

I doubted she was bare, which was what I preferred, because she struck me as a very innocent girl, and I didn't think she was one to shave or wax. But then again, how innocent could she be if she allowed a man more than twice her age to caress her thigh very suggestively?

"Actually, I'm feeling a bit off," Bella replied quietly. "Would it be all right if I lie down for a while?"

I don't mind at all, little one. As long as you leave that door unlocked.

"Of course, honey," Mary said, watching her with concern. "Just come down when you feel better. Do you want me to pick something up in Fort Bragg?"

"No, no," Bella assured her. "I just need to rest for a while."

She pushed back her chair, and I certainly didn't miss the squeeze she gave my hand...before she stood up and left the table.

It was clear that she wanted me to follow, and I was definitely going to...as soon as my cock allowed it.

About ten agonizing minutes later, filled with chatter I now thought was very painful to sit through, breakfast was finally over and the girls headed toward the pool while Jack and Mary got ready for Fort Bragg.

"Edward, a word?" Jazz asked, and I fought the urge to bark out a "no."

"Sure," I said instead, motioning for us to go to my study.

A few deep breaths later, we were in my study, and this time it was the old Jazz I knew who spoke up. Confident. Firm. Stern.

Much like I was.

"There's probably something you should know before you knock on her door," he said dryly, leaning against the closed door with his arms crossed.

Okay, so he knew. That didn't really matter, because he wouldn't talk.

"And what's that?" I asked flatly.

"Her name is Isabella, she's eighteen years old, and she's from a small town called Forks."

My forehead creased in confusion, because I already knew all this. Well, apart from her name, but I gathered it was something like Isabella. But why would Jasper care, and how did he know all this?

"But to *me*, she's Pure, Edward."

My eyes widened in shock.

Pure.

Oh, God.

Bella's Pure?

What were the odds?

Damn, that meant I'd already seen her spectacular breasts, the beautiful arch of her spine, the perfect curve of her ass... The only thing missing was her pussy, really.

And she was up there waiting for me?

Pure, as in untouched. And she was offering something to me.

"You have no idea how lucky you can consider yourself," Jazz chuckled, a bit humorlessly. "Can you even guess how many Doms have approached her in Seattle at various art shows?"

All of a sudden I felt very possessive of that girl, and I didn't want to hear how many men were fantasizing about her. They had no right. They had no claim. I did.

Mine.

"Was there anything else you wanted, Jazz?" I gritted out.

He eyed me for a second or two before he replied firmly. "Treat her well or I'll end you."

I didn't even bother with a response, because he knew damn well that I wouldn't do anything Bella didn't like.

When I finally reached her room, I knocked only once.

"Who is it?"

I smiled. "Edward."

"Come in."

I opened the door, closing it as soon as I was inside, and when I saw Bella standing there, wearing her innocent white pajama shorts and her matching tank-top, I knew that those were the clothes I loved on her. White and innocent.

"Feeling a bit off?" I asked, smirking slightly.

She blushed and bowed her head, effectively bringing my cock to life.

Walking over to her, I lifted her chin, much like I did this morning, but this time I was closer—our chests pressed together.

"Have you been kissed, little one?" I murmured, letting my thumb ghost over her plump bottom lip.

"No, Sir," she breathed out.

Truly untouched, then.

"May I?" I asked softly.

"Yes," she whimpered.

Her sound went straight to my hardening cock, and I had to purse my lips to stop from groaning at the sheer desire I saw in her eyes. It was mutual, and there was no way I could step away now.

Cradling her face, I dipped down and captured her soft, pouty lips with mine, claiming her first kiss. Again, there was a side of me growing possessive. I wanted her. I wanted her to be mine. I wanted to show her how perfect she could be for me, and I would love to show her everything I knew.

She was hesitant at first but as the tip of my tongue swiped over her bottom lip, she moaned quietly, letting her hands trail up my arms and around my neck. I mirrored her, and my hands found purchase on her hips as we deepened the kiss. Tongues meeting softly, breaths exchanged, firm lips moving in sync.

"Feel how much I desire you, kitten," I whispered into the kiss, pulling her closer to my body, and there was no mistaking it. The second she felt my erection pressing against her stomach, she moaned, and our kiss deepened further.

I was ready to have her at my mercy.

"Please," she panted breathlessly as I broke our kiss. "Please."

"What do you want?" I murmured huskily as I dropped soft kisses on her jaw. "Tell me what you want and I'll give it to you."

"I...I...want to please you," she gasped, trying to duck her head.

I didn't let her. Holding her chin up, I told her quietly but firmly, "Don't ever hide from me, Isabella, and don't ever shy away from telling me what you want. Understood?" She nodded. "And you please me just by being here, but I do feel that we need to talk before we go any further."

She gulped. "Um, okay?"

I decided to just tell her.

"Jazz told me after breakfast that you are his model for Pure."

Her eyes widened. "Are- Um, are you mad?"

My eyebrows furrowed in confusion. "Why on earth would I be mad?"

Yet again, she tried to shy away from me, so I picked her up, eliciting a sound of surprise from her, and carried her over to the bed. I sat down with her on my lap.

"Jazz showed me a few of the pictures before I knew it was you," I continued. I was also rubbing circles with my thumbs on her hips; it seemed to relax her. "You are so beautiful, my little girl." I dropped a sensual kiss on her neck. "So, why would I ever be mad at you for showing your exquisite body in such a way?"

"I don't know," she whispered, shivering as she tilted her head to give me access to her neck. "Perhaps you would want, um...a more experienced girl?"

I couldn't help but chuckle as I slid my nose along her jaw line. "No, Isabella. The fact that you want to offer me to be a part of any of your firsts... Christ, sweet girl, you don't know how much that means to me."

She relaxed fully, apparently happy with my answer, and I cradled her face once more and kissed her perfect lips a few times. Just because she tasted so damn good.

"They're all yours," she mumbled in between kisses. "My firsts, I mean. If you want."

If I want?

"Can you not feel how much I want you?" I teased, rubbing her against my very erect cock. "I would want nothing more, but I need you to be sure."

"I'm sure," she whimpered, clinging to me. "It's just, um...I want it to be good for you."

Fuck, her innocence was driving me insane with desire for her.

"I know you will please me greatly," I whispered before kissing her nose.

She smiled shyly.

"Can I?" she asked, blushing harder than before as she looked down at my bulge and made it clear that she wanted to touch me.

But I wanted her words.

"Can you what, little one? Tell me."

"Um, t-touch you?"

God, yes.

Without saying anything, I motioned for her to stand, which she did, and I stood up too, and said, "You can touch me however much you want, baby. How about you take those clothes off, because I really want to see you."

I was thrilled when, without hesitation, she began to undress in front of me. It had me elated that she was comfortable in her beautiful body, because it truly was a piece of art. And good Lord, my girl was bare...flawless. A pretty little pussy I couldn't wait to taste.

To fuck.

Time to shed some clothes.

I did.

She watched.

And once I was naked, too, I positioned myself on the bed and held my hand out for her.

"Come here." I helped her get into position between my legs. I'd never seen anything so sinfully sexy, which I told her, and she flushed scarlet,

much to my satisfaction. But now I wanted more than just to watch. I wanted to feel. "Touch my cock, kitten," I murmured, propping myself up on my elbows. "Just use your fingers and mouth as you choose, and feel no pressure. Do what you feel comfortable doing."

I groaned as her wide eyes were fixed on my rather large cock, and I could practically see the question in her; how I was ever going to fit in her.

Oh, it'll fit. I'll make sure of it.

Then finally, she touched me. "Fuck, yes," I hissed quietly. She wrapped her small hand around my erection, and goddamn, the sight of her fingers barely reaching around the shaft...I could come just from that.

It had been years since I last had sex, and it was hardly worth remembering. Honestly, I rarely tried, because there really were no women who I found appealing, and I stopped settling for "okay" a long time ago. So, to say that this, Isabella touching me, was almost enough to drive me insane would be the understatement of the year.

"It's so big," she breathed out.

Unable to speak, I just watched her as she played with my cock. Slowly, like testing the waters, she caressed, rubbed, and stroked it, making me moan in both pleasure and frustration.

It got even worse when she licked her lips, and I found it impossible to hold back.

"Kiss it, little girl. Kiss my cock," I whispered, urgency lacing my voice.

She flushed scarlet at my words, but as I watched her rub her thighs together, I knew I wasn't moving too fast. She wanted this, too.

Slowly she leaned down, and I moaned, even throbbled, as she gave the tip of my cock an open-mouthed kiss. It looked like she was fucking savoring my taste with the way she sucked on the tip. Kissed it. Licked it like a goddamn lollipop. There was no way I'd stop her. Ever. She could play with my cock for as long as she wanted.

"You're doing so well, kitten," I moaned, caressing her cheek as she sucked me in deeper. "Mm, fuck yes, so good." Threading my fingers through her hair, I guided her slowly, encouraging her to go deeper. I knew she could; only half of me was in her mouth. "Christ." I fought hard against my need to thrust down her throat. "A bit more, little one. I know you can suck me deeper."

She actually *moaned* around me at that point, and I relaxed further, knowing that she was comfortable with my needs.

But then she let me go.

"Um, I want to do well," she panted, blushing hard. "But what if I, um...you know, can't?"

Jesus, did she not know how her much her words affected me?

I doubt it.

"Come here," I said softly, motioning for her to straddle me and, once she did, I positioned my cock in between her slick folds. I kissed her neck passionately, also fighting the urge to feel more of her pussy. "You'll be perfect. You already are," I whispered and moved her on top of me so that the tip of my cock hit her clit. "Does that feel good, my baby? Do you like having my cock there?"

"Yes, Sir. So good," she mewled, closing her eyes.

"No, open your eyes for me. I want you to watch us," I commanded quietly. "Just look at the pleasure we can give each other."

We both moaned as she began moving on top of me, and I was painfully hard, watching her watch us. Watching my glistening cock slide between the very slick lips of her little kitty.

"See how perfect you already are?" I rasped. "See how much you're already pleasuring me?"

"Mmm, feels so good," she moaned. "Oh, *Edward*."

My eyes flashed to hers at the sound of my name, and I knew right then and there that I needed to hear it more. Over and over, I wanted to hear her moan my name. I was being truthful when I told her that she had no obligation to call me Mr. Cullen. I wasn't like that, and I had no intention of having her call me Sir, either. Of course, I still loved the fact that she was so respectful, and it was a turn-on, but what it came down to was her comfort. I wanted her to be comfortable around me.

But my name on her lips. Yes, I needed to hear that again.

Stilling her movements, I lavished her neck with open-mouthed kisses as I revealed more of myself. "I want you to suck my cock now, and then I'll make you scream my name when I eat your pretty little pussy."

"Okay," she gasped, scrambling back to kneel between my legs again, but I stopped her.

"Sit on the edge of the bed instead," I told her, getting up from the bed. She obeyed me, and once I was standing in front of her, I put one leg up on the bed and threaded my fingers through her silky hair. "I'll go slow, little girl, I promise. Do you trust me?"

"Yes, Sir," she panted. Right before her eyes, I stroked myself. "Please..."

"Please what?" I teased, holding my erection in front of her mouth. "I want your words."

And again she whimpered. "I...I want to make you feel good. Please."

"You will, baby," I said confidently. "Now, open your mouth for me and breathe through your nose."

Slowly, I slid my cock into her hot and wet little mouth, not stopping until I hit the back of her throat.

When I felt her gag on me, I whispered, "Relax your throat, little one. Just relax and breathe deeply through your nose."

She obeyed.

It took a few tries, but she worked hard to take me down.

"Oh, you're so good, my Bella," I moaned as I felt her relax. Again, I read her body for signs of discomfort, but there were none. In fact, she was rubbing her thighs together. It calmed me down fully. "Yes, that's it. Suck my cock hard," I groaned, moving in and out of her a bit faster now. "So perfect..."

I looked down at her through hooded eyes, at my erection and how it slid in and out of her hot mouth, and I was an honest man. Feeling her choking on my cock definitely brought me closer to my orgasm—it turned me into a fucking savage.

Fuck, I wanted to keep her.

"I'm coming soon," I grunted and began to fuck her mouth in earnest. As long as I saw her pretty pussy glistening with arousal, there was no fucking way I'd stop. "You're going to swallow my cum, baby girl?"

She hummed and nodded, my cock rubbing against the back of her throat, before redoubling her efforts. It made my heart swell to see her so intent on pleasing me. It was something I'd never felt before from any woman, regardless of the nature our relationship. Of course, since I wasn't a stranger to the world of Doms and subs, I'd felt a sub's eagerness to please me, but not like this. Not so naturally and wholeheartedly.

"You're so perfect for me," I panted, feeling my balls tighten. My entire body tingled as my orgasm approached. "Such a good little girl." I let my head fall back as I exploded down her throat. My hands were holding her in place. "Fuck! Yes, drink me down, baby."

And she did. She swallowed every drop I gave her, even licking me clean while I struggled to catch my breath.

As I slid my cock out of her mouth, I was already anxious for next time.

"You did so well, Isabella," I whispered, dipping down to give her a soft kiss. "Now, lie back in the middle of the bed, and I'll show you how thankful I am."

She did, and I groaned at the sight of her. Her constricted nipples, her slightly flushed chest, her glistening pussy, her thighs rubbing together, her darkened eyes, her...flawless form.

With my hand, I parted her legs to kneel between them, and then I hovered over her, dropping wet kisses along her neck. Then I finally cupped her supple tits. I kneaded them softly, eliciting quiet moans from her, and I smiled against her skin when I pinched her nipples, because she grew louder.

God, her taste was exquisite. Like the rest of her.

It made me doubt that I'd ever get enough.

"Want to know what my plans are for you, little one?" I whispered as my lips ghosted over her jaw line. She just shivered and whimpered in response, so I continued as I covered her body with mine. "I'm going to turn you into my personal little cock-slut."

Her response was now a wanton moan.

She even arched her back to get closer to me.

I chuckled darkly before kissing my way down her exquisite body, not stopping until I reached her kitty. All mine. I'd be the first one to touch it, kiss it, lick it...suck on her clit, drink from her, finger her, and lastly...fuck her.

Isabella was mine for the taking, and take her I would. I planned to show her everything, after which, in the end, she'd still want more and more.

Chapter 04

BPOV

I was so desperate with need by the time he settled between my thighs that I thought I was going to combust.

It was him. All him.

There was something so different with Mr. Cullen, and I realized that it was the way everything about him was contradictory—like there were two sides of him. It was in his soft yet firm voice, his kind yet ready-to-devour eyes, his gentle murmuring of dirty words.

He wanted to turn me into his cock-slut.

These were words he whispered softly.

"God, you smell fucking delicious, Isabella," he moaned quietly, and I felt him literally nuzzling my pussy. "And you're so wet for me."

Sweet baby Jesus.

His tongue flicked my clit, and all the anticipation I had built up... God, it was almost too much. The sheer desperation I felt, the quivering, the needy whimpers, the powerful fog of lust that consumed me... He had me at his mercy. I was ready to beg.

All this, and he had barely started.

Please.

I gasped, fisting the covers as he suddenly sucked hard on my clit, and I was aching for so many things. Release, friction...but above all, I wanted to be good. I wanted Mr. Cullen to give me praise again, I wanted to behave, and I doubted he would approve of me writhing like a crazed animal, because that was what I wanted to do...so badly! Fuck, just his touch sent me into a wild state of *something*, but I had never felt this way before, so it was all so very new. And I was needy. So needy.

"Oh!" I moaned, arching my back in reflex when I felt one of his long fingers tease my opening. Unbearable was what it was. Slowly, he circled his finger around my hole, only to stroke the length of my sex, gathering wetness...soaking me, and good *God*, his tongue. It was sweet, hellish torture!

"Ple-ase," I whimpered brokenly, knowing that my knuckles were white from how hard I was fisting the covers.

He chuckled against my flesh, so confident, powerful, sexy.

"Is my little girl desperate?" he teased and let his hot breath wash over my sensitive clit.

Before I could beg, plead with him, that yes, I was desperate, he licked me. Hard. Using the flat of his tongue, he licked from my entrance to my clit, making me moan embarrassingly loud, and then...then...his tongue *entered* me. Slipped *inside*.

Firmly but slowly, his thumb rubbed circles on my clit, all while his tongue fucked me. At the same agonizingly slow pace.

He groaned as he sucked on my flesh, and I was barely hanging on. He was testing my limits, teasing me, making me throb. I wanted to cry. Literally, I wanted to fucking *cry*.

EPOV

She tasted so fucking good, and watching her lie there, trying desperately to keep still...it made me feel so goddamn powerful. It made me feel like I had her at my mercy, which I knew I did right this minute. I owned her right now. She was mine, and the way I worked her delicious pussy was something she'd never forget. I was making sure of that.

"Watch me, Isabella," I told her quietly as she squeezed her eyes shut.

"Watch me fuck you with my tongue."

Her dark eyes met mine right as I thrust my tongue inside of her, and it took all my willpower to keep from closing my own eyes. But I refrained and kept my eyes locked with hers as I fucked her a bit faster, moved my thumb over her little clit a bit harder, and fuck, the sight of her...

"Yes, Edward! Oh, God!" she cried out.

I was hard again, and with a throaty moan, I sped up, wanting her to come hard. Wanting her to come harder than any self-gratification could ever accomplish. It was something I needed. I needed for her to never forget who gave her this pleasure, because I sure as hell wouldn't forget the sight of her sucking my cock. Never would I forget the amazing feel of

her throat constricting around my length as she gagged on me. The way I watched her throat as she swallowed my release...

I knew she was on the brink, but I brought her back every time.

Like the greedy bastard she'd turned me into, I took from her. Licked, kissed, and lapped. Loving it. But I wanted to see *it* now. Her face. The face she made as she came. So, as I felt her tight walls tremble around my tongue, I didn't stop. I didn't bring her back from the edge. Instead I pushed two fingers inside of her and moved my mouth to her clit, sucking it hard between my lips.

And she fell over the edge. Moaning, gasping, almost choking out her orgasm, and I took it all.

She was left panting and gasping for air, and I smirked internally, satisfied with my work. The way she breathed out thank yous to left and right sure helped with my wish to be unforgettable for her, too.

I had worked her delicious little pussy for a long time, so I wasn't surprised when I saw how her eyes fluttered. I had really tired her, I thought smugly. So adorable.

Even in her sleep, she looked utterly delectable.

After getting dressed, I covered her in blankets before walking over to her vanity where there was always a pen and notepad.

My sweet Isabella.

Come find me when you have rested.

I wish to speak to you, but you are far too beautiful to wake up.

- Edward.

I placed the note on her nightstand, and after dropping a soft kiss on her forehead, I made my way out of her room.

~IdC~

Having Bella's scent and taste on me proved to be too hard for me, so after I had left her room, I took a shower before heading downstairs. God, the memory of tasting her just made me want to go up there and do it all over again. The girl had no idea how she affected me, and as I mentioned in the note, I did need to talk to her, because I knew I would find it impossible not to see her again. And if she was willing, I hoped she wouldn't mind sharing my bed for the duration of her stay.

As I took my seat in my study, I powered up my laptop, thankful that I was alone in the house. Well, not completely alone. Jazz was probably walking around here somewhere, and Alice and Rosalie were most likely in the pool out back, but I was glad I could have this moment alone.

It was of course a risky move to get involved with Bella, but for some reason I couldn't find it in me to care too much about it. If we both wanted it, I saw no reason for backing off, and though it would mean trouble if this got out, I sincerely doubted Bella was one to divulge information. Not even to Alice. Bella seemed to be a very bright young woman; she certainly didn't strike me as one to gossip.

While I sat there in my chair, I also watched Jazz's photos again. The photos of Bella, and...things were different now. I'd seen her gorgeous face, tasted her pussy, felt her luscious lips wrapped around my cock... No, she wasn't *that* pure anymore. But the appeal hasn't disappeared. Not that I expected it to, but what surprised me, as I flicked through the images, was that the appeal had grown instead.

I wanted more, which wasn't *that* odd—the girl was exquisite, after all—but there were now *other* things I could picture with Isabella.

I could see her in my bed. I could see myself fucking her relentlessly, working her up, having her beg for me. But then...I could see more, like I said. It felt odd to have such feelings for a girl I'd just met, but they were there nonetheless. I felt protective of her.

I wished to keep her.

I felt like I had a claim. I didn't, which was unsettling.

I'd always been an owner, and I did not enjoy the feeling of wanting and not being able to have.

There was a knock on my door then, interrupting my inner musings, and I told whomever it was to enter.

I wasn't all that surprised when it was Jasper walking in.

"Edward," he said, nodding once as he took a seat across from me.

I withheld my smirk, knowing that he was here to find out about Bella and me. I also knew, though, that he would never ask. That was not what we did, but I still decided to throw him a bone, because judging by the way he tapped his knee, I could see he was desperate to find out.

"She's fine, Jazz," I told him. "I won't hurt her."

I knew he was concerned for the girl he obviously cared about, which was why I divulged any details at all, because truth be told, I should find it insulting that he would think of my hurting her, or anyone for that matter.

He nodded, placated, I hoped. "And where is she now?"

I admit it; it was very hard to withhold that smirk this time.

"She's resting," I replied, focusing on Bella's photos instead.

Jasper snorted. I smirked. Couldn't help it. I did feel smug about working my little kitten so hard, and I supposed my male pride controlled my facial expressions.

Jazz couldn't possibly know what Bella and I had done, but I sincerely hoped he didn't think stealing that girl's virtue was the first thing I had planned. Not that it wasn't on the agenda, because I'd be lying if I said I didn't want it, but...all in good time.

I decided it was time to change the subject.

Closing the laptop, I gave Jazz my attention and asked, "Have you talked to Alice yet?"

He sighed, slumped back a bit in the chair. "Briefly."

I raised an eyebrow, waiting for him to continue.

He did. "We agreed that it was weird how we were both here... That was our icebreaker, I suppose." He sighed again. "And then we agreed to have a talk later tonight."

"You're telling her about your lifestyle then," I stated rather than asked.

"Yes. I wouldn't mind telling her right now, but she and my sister are out back by the pool."

I nodded once, satisfied with that, and assumed they, too, would keep things quiet. It really wasn't any of my concern, anyway. As long as Jazz kept his promise to tell Ali about his lifestyle, I was happy to stay out of it.

There was another knock on my door—a much quieter one—and I raised an eyebrow in question to Jazz, knowing that it was most likely Isabella. Jack wouldn't be back for another couple of hours with Mary and the McCartys, and Alice and Rosalie were occupied by the pool.

"I don't mind." He shrugged.

Okay, then.

"Come on in," I said.

Sure enough, it was Bella.

She was back in her black skirt and dark blue cardigan, and I had to fight the urge to groan when I noticed her hair. It was now in a ponytail and I could just picture myself wrapping her hair around my hand while I...

Damn.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Mr. Cullen, I can come back-"

I cut her off because she wasn't interrupting. "Nonsense. Come here, kitten," I told her gently, motioning with my hand for her to join me. "We don't have to hide anything from Jasper. He knows."

Bella walked over to me with her eyes downcast, and I could see she still needed reassurance about either not being in the way or about Jasper knowing about us. I was willing to give her anything as long as she felt comfortable, and seeing as she already knew Jasper...I doubted it would take much.

She blushed as I pulled her into my lap, but she also relaxed against me. No matter what, I would always be myself when it was possible, and around Jasper there certainly wasn't a reason to hide anything.

Truth be told, I didn't have anything to hide from *anyone*, but I did believe Bella had.

"I'm sorry I fell asleep," she whispered quietly.

I smiled, happy to have her close to me now. Happy to *feel* her close, to have my hand on her creamy smooth thigh. "Don't worry about it."

Bella, being the polite girl she was, turned slightly on my lap and faced Jazz as she leaned back against my chest. "I hope I didn't interrupt anything."

"Of course not, Isabella," Jazz assured her. I found myself wanting to see the two of them interact. I was curious about their relationship, and though I was immensely relieved that the two of them were only friends, I was still eager to find out just how close they were. "Actually, now that you're here," he continued, "would you like to see your photos?"

"Oh, I'd be happy to. You have them all here?" she asked, glancing at both of us.

"Yes." Jazz smirked. "It's actually in three of Edward's galleries I'll be showing them."

Bella gasped in surprise, and I chuckled as her blush appeared again. Leaning forward, the laptop buzzed to life as I slid my finger across the touchpad; the photos of Bella flashed on the screen. Fuck, she was so stunning. On and off screen.

I kissed her shoulder as Jasper joined us on this side of the desk.

"You've seen them?" she asked me quietly as she played with the hair on the back of my neck. I found the feeling oddly intimate and very pleasurable, and I wondered if she was even aware of doing it. "I mean, I know you said... Or have you only seen the ones that made the cut?"

"I've seen all of them." I nodded. "Before you arrived on the island, Jazz and I went through them, and then he made his final selection. They're all in black and white."

"Twenty-seven were selected," Jazz added.

The first photo came up, and I couldn't stop myself from running a hand up and down her naked thigh as Bella watched herself on the screen. She was exquisite. Wearing nothing but a black thong and stilettos, she stood in the middle of a playroom with her back to us. Her hair was draped over her shoulder, and in her hand was a pair of shackles.

"That's beautiful with the shadows," Bella commented softly, her finger tracing the curve of her left side that was shadowed. "And I love the way you have to guess what I have my eyes on."

"Exactly," Jazz replied, nodding thoughtfully. "You understand now why I told you to find equipment in the room to focus on?"

"Yeah," she chuckled. "I also understand why you told me to focus on equipment either close to you, or to the sides when I had my back to you. I certainly see the appeal with this; it leaves you wondering and guessing."

I stayed silent as we watched the pictures, and to be honest, I was in awe of how professional Bella was. She definitely did not appear to be an eighteen-year-old girl when she talked with Jazz. She was experienced, comfortable, talented, and extremely beautiful. And what I found most desirable was the way she could watch herself and speak of sex and beauty. Bella knew she was gorgeous, and she showed it perfectly without coming off as conceited or vain. She didn't praise herself or even give herself a single compliment on her body, which she should have done according to me because it deserved to be said, but anyway...she still knew. Knew that she was perfect for this, and it showed in every photo how comfortable she was.

"Do you remember what you were watching there?" Jazz asked.

In this photo, Bella was tied to a bed, and you could see her straining to look at something behind her, which was the way of keeping her face hidden. They were still in the playroom, but Jazz had positioned the bed in the middle of the room. It was simply exquisite. Black and white, shadowed, dark, sexy, and yes, it kept you on your toes. The photo, the way Bella was positioned, the way certain parts of her were hidden, it all kept you wanting more. You wanted to see her. You wanted to know what she was looking at. You wanted to be a part of it.

"The St. Andrew's Cross." Bella nodded and pointed at the x-cross behind the bed. "I focused on the cross many of the times because I love the way the silver looked against that burgundy wall."

Yes. Professional.

And so goddamn sexy.

How a girl could come off so innocent yet so experienced was beyond me.

"This one is perfection to me," Jazz murmured as the next photo appeared.

I agreed. "To say the least." I moved my finger over her stomach in the photo. "Her skin is flawless, and the way the light reflects here almost turns her skin silver."

Christ, she really is perfection.

She was on her back, on a whipping bench, and she was facing the other way. You didn't need to see her face for this one, though. The way she held the paddle above her stomach made things very clear. It appeared that she was in thought—with the way she held the paddle loosely, her fingers absentmindedly tracing the texture... The photo oozed comfort and ease, and it all came from Bella. She just lay there. Comfortably. In thought. In a playroom.

It's art in its finest form.

I snaked an arm around Isabella's waist, simply needing to make sure that she was here. With me. On my lap. Squeezing my arm against her stomach like she wanted me to hold her tighter. So, I did, and she sighed softly. Contentedly.

My wish to possess her was growing, and it unsettled me fiercely. She wasn't mine in that way; I had no true claim. It was disturbing.

After we had clicked through all the photos, Jasper took his seat on the other side again. As I glanced at the clock, I knew the boat would return soon and I hadn't talked to Bella about...whatever it was we had, or wished to start.

"Isabella?" Jasper asked.

"Yes, Sir?"

Yes, she was a natural.

I wondered if she was aware that she was brushing her fingers along my arm. Just lightly, gently, but it was a soothing feeling, and her nature for taking care shone through her. It also made me wonder if she really wasn't a submissive—if she really wasn't perfect for a D/s relationship.

That would never be me. I knew myself very well and just because I was an owner at heart did not mean I was into bondage. I was forceful and quite rough, but I had no desire to use toys or equipment. Not to that extent, anyway. I would never have a playroom, and I would never have a woman calling me Sir or Master. Same went for interactions; I wanted my partner to be able to speak freely at all times.

Of course, there were a few toys I found very appealing, such as handcuffs, blindfolds, a few floggers and crops...but all of that was still

vanilla, so to speak, and those items were nothing I *had* to have. Trying out new things was fun and sexy but not what I craved most. And that was the issue with me. I wasn't a true Dominant in that sense; there would be no canes, whipping benches, fucking-machines, or other contraptions, but then...there were the traits of mine that I couldn't hide, nor did I want to hide them.

My love for owning. My desire to be in charge. My need for control.

These were things that defined me.

They were also what kept me from having a normal relationship.

Most women didn't appreciate it when I ordered them what they should wear to bed. Most women were independent and had their own lives. What I wanted was someone to stay with me at all times. One who went where I went. One who I provided for. One who I took with me when I went out of town on business, which was often.

I sighed to myself, ridding the thoughts, and focused on Jazz and Bella's conversation instead.

"You want to reschedule?" Bella asked, confused.

I didn't understand, having missed the beginning of the conversation.

"Or perhaps cancel," Jazz replied, and if I didn't know any better, I'd say he was teasing her.

"What are you discussing?" I asked curiously.

Jazz turned to me and smirked. "I have one last photo session with Isabella after New Year's."

I understood immediately, especially if he was talking about canceling it.

He obviously named his line "Pure" for a reason.

I wasn't quite sure how I felt about that, because the last thing I wanted was to stand in the way of Bella and Jasper's work. And if this was important to Jazz, which it evidently was, then Bella needed to remain untouched—she needed to remain a virgin.

Realization seemed to dawn on Bella at that point, and I forced myself to stay out of it, curious to see what her answer would be.

"Then we'll cancel it." She shrugged.

My eyes widened momentarily.

Very rarely did anyone catch me off guard, but this was definitely one of those rare moments.

I'd stated it before and I'd do it again: I was an honest man.

What Bella said, it mattered to me. Very much. Because there was no doubt about her reason for agreeing to cancel. It was me. She was canceling without hesitation because of me, and that...well, that warmed my heart.

Call me sick, call me twisted, but the fact remains.

However... "Bella, sweet girl," I said quietly. "This is something you should think through properly."

I felt compelled to say that, I *needed* to say that, because I was not taking this lightly. She appeared to be a very smart girl, but her decision still seemed rash, and I wanted no regrets.

"I have," she replied, still facing Jazz.

After a few seconds, Jazz nodded once, firmly, his eyes locked with Bella's. "Yeah. She has."

It felt like I was missing something.

Chapter 05

BPOV

"I have," I replied, quietly but confidently, keeping my eyes on Mr. Whitlock.

It was the truth. I had thought it through properly, and after a few moments of contemplating, Mr. Whitlock seemed to know it, too.

"Yeah. She has," he said.

Mr. Whitlock knew me very well, and right now he knew that my mind was made up. He knew I had found what was perfect for me. He knew I saw more in Mr. Cullen, and I did. I never expected this to happen, I never even thought it was possible, and definitely not this fast, but it was still the truth. Right now as I was sitting here on Mr. Cullen's lap, I'd never felt more protected and safe. Without any doubt in my mind, my body belonged to him, and I was his for as long as he wanted me. It was nothing I could explain, but it was what it was, and I knew I wouldn't lie if Mr. Cullen asked me. Because I saw the possibilities.

Mr. Cullen didn't seem to understand right this second, so if he asked, I would simply tell him, and that was that. With my body came honesty, and I had never denied my body's needs before, nor did I plan on starting.

"There is one thing we could do, though," Mr. Whitlock continued pensively. "Edward, if it's all right that I use one of your rooms, I could

always put a few things together, and that way, we could do the last shoot here on the island."

Huh.

Well, that could work.

"Sure you can," Mr. Cullen said. "Just let me know what you need, and I'll send for it."

Turning around in his arms, I faced him and asked, "But is it okay that I work with Mr. Whitlock?"

I just needed to be sure, because if Mr. Cullen didn't want me to, I wouldn't.

He just looked confused, though.

"You need to explain to him, Pure," Mr. Whitlock chuckled, and I looked at him curiously as he continued. "Edward doesn't understand why you're asking him for permission. So...I think I'll step out while you talk things through."

Oh.

Right. Of course. I should explain myself. God, sometimes I was stupid.

Before Mr. Whitlock left the office, he told Mr. Cullen, "Come find me when you have made your decision."

This of course only confused Mr. Cullen more, so when it was just the two of us left, I hitched a leg over him, straddling him, ready to explain myself.

"I think you have some explaining to do, little one," he chuckled quietly, watching his hands make their way up my thighs.

It was very distracting.

"I'm just saying that if you want, all decisions concerning me are yours," I said softly, trying not to get too affected by his touch. But it was impossible. The shivers came. "I want to be good for you." I closed my eyes to keep my focus. "I want to please you. It's what I need..."

Oh, God.

Unfortunately, he stopped.

Opening my eyes again, I found Mr. Cullen sitting back in his chair, studying me with intense eyes.

"You do know you're a natural submissive, right, Isabella?"

I nodded. I did know. "Yes, Sir. To some extent, but I'm not looking for a Dom. I don't belong in a playroom."

"Apart from when you're modeling," he concluded.

"Exactly."

He was quiet again. For a while. Just studying me.

"What you're telling me..." He trailed off, frowning his brow.

"I'm telling you that my body is yours for as long as you'll have me."

His eyes burned. His jaw tensed. His teeth clenched.

Then he spoke. Quietly. Commandingly. Velvety. Strongly.

"I will show you *me*, Isabella. All of me. And if at the end of the day, you're not unhappy with who I am..." He trailed off again.

I understood.

But for some reason I also knew that I wouldn't need a "trial run".

I gave it to him, though. Maybe *he* needed it. "Okay."

No, I didn't really know him. I didn't know what his element was, but I didn't believe he would disappoint me.

He certainly hadn't so far.

"No matter how well you receive me," he continued. "I'd still like for us to talk. If you find me too demanding or too controlling, I will back down. For you."

I swallowed hard, doubting that I would ever want him to back down. I wanted him to be himself. Of course, I could see him backing down. This was only temporary, after all—a thought that already saddened me. Because I wanted him. I wanted him to want me, too, and I wanted to be good for him. It was who I was.

"I want you in my bed every night," he murmured, still with those intense eyes that made me shiver. "I want you sitting next to me at all times."

"Yes, Sir," I breathed out.

I trusted him to make things look casual and inconspicuous in front of the others.

"And..." He sighed, pulling me closer to him, and oh...

I moaned quietly.

So hard.

He leaned in, letting his nose slide along my jaw. "I want to be there when Jazz takes those pictures of my sweet little girl."

His girl.

"Yes," I whimpered, grinding against his hard cock.

"Not now, little one," he chuckled. "I want you desperate for my cock tonight."

Oh, fuck!

EPOV

Was this God's way of punishing me?

In that case, I had to ask what I had done to deserve this.

After Bella and I talked, I sent her on her way. I couldn't have her close to me at this time. I needed to collect my thoughts, and...make plans.

I found it unfair that such a perfect girl offered me her submission, and then I only got to keep her for the holidays. And this was of course why I was wondering if someone was punishing me, because I wanted her for much longer. Even a year didn't seem like enough. Would two? Three or four? I doubted it, because the plans, the fantasies I had...they were endless. Especially now when she'd literally given herself to me.

That opened up an entire world for me, which was why I sent her to schedule the photo shoot with Jazz, because now...all I could see were the possibilities.

I could see myself sitting on the jet, on my way to my gallery in New York, and Bella sitting next to me. I could see myself buying lingerie for her. I could hear myself telling her what a good girl she was for pleasing me so. I could see myself at a gallery opening with her on my arm, dressed in a beautiful dress, the sight of her making other men envy me. I could feel her next to me as we woke up together in my bed. I could see us sharing every meal together. I could see it all.

And I only get two weeks?

Certainly someone was punishing me.

~IdC~

I couldn't help but laugh as I saw Elizabeth wobble her way off the boat.

She really was a land person.

"There you are, Cullen!" Garrett called, grinning widely.

"Welcome back," I chuckled as I approached them on the dock. "Lovely Lizzy, you're looking a little green," I teased and kissed her cheek. "Good to see you again."

"You too, Edward." She smiled tiredly. "You know, it wouldn't kill you to live on the mainland."

"You say that every year," I laughed, walking over to greet Garrett. "Good to have you back, man." I grinned and shook his hand firmly. "Did you have a pleasant flight?"

"Ah, yes. You really don't need to send the jet every time, Edward," he chuckled. "We would've come anyway, you know."

"You and Emmett, yes," I joked. "But would Lizzy?"

"I heard that!" Lizzy laughed from behind us. "I'm not that bad when it comes to seasickness, am I?"

Garrett and I just looked at her, because yes, she was that bad, and I could only imagine the bitch-fit she threw before they left Chicago.

Lizzy huffed at us before she and Mary took off, carrying bags and boxes filled with Christmas decorations no doubt.

"Women, eh?" Garrett sighed.

I snickered. "I hear ya."

Emmett was next, and he looked much like his old man. Not quite as tall as Garrett, or me for that matter, but he was certainly built, and I knew he was doing very well on his football team.

"How are you, Em?" I shook his hand and squeezed his shoulder. "Hasn't your father told you to lay off the steroids?"

"Aw, funny as always, Mr. C," he laughed. "Let's see how funny you are when I kick your ass!"

"I'd like to see you try," I replied dryly. "Your father never succeeded. What makes you think you could?"

"Dad's ten years older than you. Of course he never managed! But I will!"

"All right, all right," Garrett laughed. "It's freezing cold out here. Let's head inside."

"We'll bring the luggage to their rooms, sir," Demetri said, coming from the boat.

"Thanks, Demetri," I replied before motioning for the guys to follow me.

"Let's get you settled in." But then I stopped and frowned in confusion.

"Where's Jack?"

"Oh, something about an emergency phone conference with his board," Garrett told me. "He checked into a motel in Fort Bragg to get that over with before he returns in the morning."

"Okay." I shrugged, unsurprised.

Jack was always a busy man, and his company in Seattle often kept him from his home. Lucky for him, Mary often visited him, and the two had a small apartment there for when Jack worked long hours.

I could never imagine being a stockbroker.

"Am I in my regular room, Mr. C?" Emmett asked as we reached the house.

"Uh, no, actually. You're in the room on your parents' left," I said. "Ali's friend is in your old room. I figured they'd wanted to stay close."

And this was where Emmett showed his true self. "She hot?"

She is, yes. And stunning, gorgeous, sexy, sinfully beautiful, and mine.

"I see you haven't changed, Em." I smirked and ignored his question.

"How about you all get settled in, and I'll have Carmen get some food ready?"

"Fucking A." Emmett grinned, nodding furiously. "Her mini pizzas are to die for!"

"I know you think so." I shook my head in amusement. "Now, get out of here and we'll meet out on the patio later."

As I made my way to the kitchen, I made sure to ignore the living room where I could hear Mary and Lizzy dealing with their decorating, and of course, I also avoided looking out the windows on my way, knowing the view would be of the pool.

I knew Bella was there with the other girls.

I didn't need her to distract me right now, especially not if she was in a bathing suit.

"Ah, *tesoro mio*," Carmen greeted me as I entered the kitchen. "What can I do for you?"

I adored Carmen. She'd been my personal chef for ten years now, and she lived in one of the smaller haciendas on the eastern side of the island. Always the mother, that one. Most likely because her own children lived in Italy, and in me she found someone to mother.

"Well, Emmett's back." I gave her a pointed look.

"Oh! I better get started with the pizza then." She was eager to feed her Emmett. "How many should I make for, Tesoro?"

I smiled. She always made me smile, because she was truly not an employee to me. Carmen was family, and she treated my close ones like family, too. Emmett and Alice were very much included, and ever since Carmen first met them, Ali had been Chiacchierone—chatterbox—and Emmett was Fossetta—dimple.

"All of us, I believe. So, ten. Eleven, if you could join us for once," I said, giving her my crooked smile.

It was the only way to get her to surrender, because it was a sad fact that she rarely joined us when they were all here.

But my smile often worked.

"Don't do that to me, Tesoro," she hissed, narrowing her eyes at me. But pretending to be upset with me never worked for long. Obviously, I smiled wider, knowing she was caving. "I cannot believe you," she sighed and threw her hands up in frustration. "*Peccato che ti voglio bene! Bastardo, io ti maledico!*"

I laughed, loving her insane muttering. First saying that she loved me, only to curse me and call me a bastard next. But that was what she did

when she surrendered to me—muttered in Italian, often cursing my charm. Yes, she was indeed a mother.

"Eleven, then." I grinned in victory. "*Perfetto, angelo mio.*"

"Such a smooth talker," she muttered, rummaging through the cupboards. "But...remember karma, Tesoro. You have your work cut out for you. Washington long way from here."

"What?" I chuckled in confusion.

She stopped, wiped her forehead, which left a small trail of flour there, and then she cocked an eyebrow at me. "You are no fooling me, Tesoro. Bellezza is no fooling me, either."

That had my attention, because I remembered. I remembered what she called Bella this morning. I also remembered what else she told her.

"*You will be perfect.*"

That was what she had said.

I narrowed my eyes at her and decided to ask what she was up to. "*Cosa stai pianificando?*"

Perhaps I *should* treat her as an employee, because the woman just shrugged innocently before ignoring me completely.

I loathed being ignored by this woman, because I found it impossible to be mad at her—something she knew and used to her advantage far too often.

With an annoyed huff, I left her there and made my way outside instead.

The patio was not only heated but also secluded, so the harsh winds never reached us. When the sun was out, it could even get quite warm.

Once I passed the French doors, I was met with the sight of three girls in the pool, but they weren't alone. No, Emmett was there too, and right now, he was definitely testing the waters around Bella and Rosalie...not to mention my limits. There was only so much I could take, and my Bella in a white bikini was definitely something I preferred only *I* saw her in.

"You're surprisingly easy to read, Edward."

I spun around, a bit startled, and saw Jazz sitting at the table where we had breakfast this morning. It felt odd. Was that really this morning?

So much had happened since then.

"Easy to read?" I asked, making my way over to join him.

He nodded with a smirk. "I knew she would have an effect on you. I just didn't know how fast or how great."

Of course he understood. I did, too. And he was right. The possessiveness I felt toward Isabella was far from healthy, and it had happened so fast. Too fast, and when I thought about it, it shouldn't have happened at all, because she was not mine in that sense. It was only temporary. *Very* temporary, even.

"Did you two set a date?" I asked, effectively changing the subject.

To be honest, I couldn't wait to see it. That she so easily agreed on my sitting in on the photo shoot was a massive weight lifted off my shoulders—a weight I didn't even know I was carrying until she gave me her consent. But that was another thing to file under the category of me growing too fond of being in charge of her.

Jazz was a man she had worked with at several occasions now; they knew each other well, they were friends, and still...I felt like I had more claim than he did. Which was why I was a bit uncomfortable with the idea of

them being alone together, especially in that setting—her being practically naked...

No, I cannot allow that without me being there.

Christ, this was going too far too fast.

"Tomorrow," Jazz answered. "If that's okay."

"Absolutely." I nodded. "Is there anything you need from the mainland? Jack is staying in Fort Bragg for the night—he had some business emergency. So, Felix and Demetri will head there tomorrow morning, I think."

He nodded thoughtfully, obviously considering things he'd like to use.

For *my* Bella.

Dammit.

"Do you have anything here?" he asked curiously.

I knew what he was referring to. "Not much, no. I have a few smaller items, such as handcuffs, blindfolds, and riding crops."

Rubbing his chin, he returned to his thinking for a while.

I took the opportunity to ask something I was curious about. "Is Bella with an agency?"

I assumed she was, but I knew that no respectable agency would have taken her on as a client when she was underage.

"Yeah, she's with Denali. Tanya and Kate took her in the day after she turned eighteen," he chuckled. "They were eager."

"I can imagine," I laughed.

Tanya Denali and Kate Aro were good friends of mine, very well-respected in the modeling industry, and I shouldn't be surprised that they snatched Bella up as soon as they could.

"I heard those two finally got married," I continued conversationally.

"Yeah, they eloped." Jazz grinned. "They're leaving Seattle, though."

"Oh?"

He nodded. "Moving to New York."

"Branching out or relocating?" I asked, wondering about the clients they had in Seattle...namely Bella.

"Branching out. They're leaving Tanya's sister in charge of the office in Seattle."

Our conversation died then as Carmen came out, followed by Garrett, Lizzy, and Mary.

Then of course, Emmett caught sight of Carmen.

"CARMEN! I'M BACK!"

Yeah, that would be Emmett's booming voice.

But all that, simply *everything*, was forgotten as Bella scurried over to take her seat.

Next to me.

Dressed in way too little. Still just the bikini. It made me frown, because Emmett was enjoying the view. Immensely. In fact, he was loving the sight of both Bella and Rosalie at the moment, and had it not been for Carmen's pizza keeping him in his seat, he would've crawled over the table by now.

"Rose, go get dressed," Jazz ordered. "I don't want you to catch a cold."

Glancing over at him, I caught the small smirk he sent me. And as Bella and Alice also got up, following Rosalie, I understood. Damn, was I really that transparent?

I breathed out in relief when Bella returned wearing a cardigan.

I gave her an appreciative smile.

How sad was it that I wanted to rip an eighteen-year-old boy a new one just because he was staring at Bella?

Chapter 06

BPOV

"Emmett is so hot!" Rosalie whispered frantically.

"Eww," was Alice's reply.

But it would be weird if she thought otherwise, seeing as they were cousins and all.

After a delicious meal on the patio, I was cursing Mary, because after the pizza, she had said, "How about you kids go enjoy yourselves for a while?" Yes, that was what she said, and that was why I was sitting by the pool now...with Rosalie and Alice. And the very loud Emmett was thrashing around in the pool, unaware of the looks Rosalie was sending him.

I was bored.

I'd much rather be with Mr. Cullen...or even Mr. Whitlock, but no. Instead I was sitting here, pretending to read the magazine in my hands.

"Bellezza?" I heard a voice call—a voice that could only belong to Carmen.

"Yes?" I replied. Looking over my shoulder, I could see her in the kitchen window.

"Could I have a word with you, *bella topolino*?"

Anything to get me away from this.

Putting my magazine aside and throwing the cardigan on again, I made my way to the kitchen where Carmen waited with a big smile.

"What can I do for you, Carmen?" I asked, smiling back to her.

"I wanted to know if you'd like to help me?"

"Of course, anything you say."

Sitting outside doing nothing was fine. For an hour. That hour had passed hours ago, though, and Carmen certainly saved me in the nick of time. But that had always been me; I needed something to do, something to occupy my time with.

"We're eating my special pasta Alfredo tonight, and perhaps you can make a salad," she suggested, bringing vegetables out of the fridge. "Do you like to cook, Bellezza?"

I blushed at the nickname as I washed my hands, wondering a little why she seemed to have taken an interest in me. I hadn't seen her do the same with Rosalie or Alice.

"I do," I replied as I dried my hands. "And I love Italian cuisine. It's one of my favorites."

"Oh! Have you ever been to *Italia*?"

She handed me a cutting board and a knife, and I gathered the vegetables next to the board, smiling as I realized there were ingredients to make my-

Huh. Um...

"I have." I nodded, smiling at the memory. "My dad took Mom and me there over the summers when I was younger. By the way, do you have pine nuts?"

"*Certamente, si!*" she replied, apparently excited about that...for some weird reason. "Where in *Italia*?" she continued. She rummaged through the cupboards until she found the nuts and handed them to me. "There you go."

"Thanks." I smiled. *Now* I had the ingredients to my favorite salad. "Lake Como?" I had no idea why it came out as a question. "My dad rented a house there sometimes, and we always loved going there but...uh, Dad's sorta busy, so we haven't been there for years."

That always saddened me, that Dad started working more. I didn't think about it often, because this had been my life for the past seven or eight years. It was normal to me now, but still, when I looked back at the family vacations and outings, it made me sad that we didn't have that anymore. Well, Mom and Dad still traveled. A lot. But I didn't. I was stuck in Forks.

At least until I graduated from high school next spring.

"Why the sad face, *bella topolino*?" Carmen murmured.

I shook my head, ridding it of the sad thoughts, because I was just being silly, especially here on Isla de Cullen—a place meant to be savored. It was an island I already loved; it was stunningly beautiful here. I could

only imagine coming here when it was summer. How gorgeous it had to be here then.

"I'm fine," I said, smiling genuinely as I focused on the salad. "I love it here," I added truthfully, looking around me. "It's all so rustic and warm."

"It is." Carmen nodded, smiling. "Tesoro even redid the kitchen for me when I moved here. Before, it was all black and white. Didn't fit the house and it didn't fit me," she said, puffing her chest out, which made me laugh. "Now it fits."

I agreed.

"You call him Tesoro?" I asked curiously as I started chopping the lettuce. She referred to him as Mr. Cullen earlier but now...hearing her calling him Tesoro, or "treasure", I found it fitting. Most likely because Carmen didn't seem like one to use formalities, and also because Carmen was more like family. That was very clear before when we ate outside. She and Mr. Cullen talked like friends, and Carmen struck me as a mother figure, even to him.

"He is Tesoro, *si*," Carmen chuckled. "He is always around so many who work for him. He is boss all the time. I like taking care of him."

I smiled. It was obvious that she loved Mr. Cullen.

"Do you have children of your own?" I asked next.

"*Si*, Tia and Angelo. I show you picture later. They still live in *Italia*."

"And what are you ladies doing?"

Velvet voice.

Shivers. Oh, the shivers.

"Oh, Tesoro! I'm just getting to know Bellezza," Carmen exclaimed with a wide smile. "Did you know she has been to Lake Como?"

I narrowed my eyes at her, feeling like...*I don't know*...like she had some ulterior motive.

"Has she now?" Mr. Cullen took a seat on the barstool across from where Carmen and I worked. His smile was beautiful, and his eyes were curious. "When was *she* there?"

I chuckled. "*She* was there for the last time when *she* was eleven."

His smile widened; it reached his eyes. "With your family?"

"Yes. With my mom and dad." I tried but failed to keep myself from blushing. But in my defense, it was his intense gaze, the way he looked at me.

"Do you have any siblings, Bellezza?" Carmen asked.

"Um, no," I replied as I took the salad bowl she handed me. "It's just me."

Mr. Cullen was next. "And your father's a lawyer?"

"Yeah." I nodded, figuring Mr. Brandon had told him. "He has an office in Seattle but travels all over the country, and then he's home during the weekends. Or some of them." Once I had finished cutting the vegetables, I poured them into the bowl before grabbing the bag of pine nuts. "No one's allergic, right?" I held up the nuts.

"No," Carmen said. "Though, I am not sure about Jasper and his sister."

"I can go ask," I offered.

The last thing I wanted was for someone to have an allergic reaction just because I crushed nuts in the salad.

I quickly located Rose, and she told me that she wasn't allergic but that she didn't like them, so I decided to ask Carmen if I could make a simple garden salad for those who didn't like pine nuts.

Mr. Whitlock was harder to find, but after a while I managed to track him down on the patio with a book in his hands, and thankfully he wasn't allergic. So, after that was taken care of, I returned to the kitchen, and I had a feeling I walked in on something because Mr. Cullen was scowling before he spotted me, and Carmen was...well, she was smirking.

"Oh! Was anyone allergic?" she asked, motioning for me to join them, but...I wasn't sure. I didn't want to interrupt.

"Um, I can come back if I was-"

Carmen cut me off. "No, no! Come here, Bellezza."

I chanced a glance at Mr. Cullen, but he was smiling at me so I figured it was okay.

"No one was allergic," I said, answering her earlier question. "I was wondering if I could make a small garden salad, though, because Rosalie doesn't like nuts."

"Oh, you are so considerate, Bellezza," Carmen gushed. "Isn't she, Tesoro?"

Again, I narrowed my eyes at her, studying her as she took out more vegetables for me.

What is she playing at?

"I never said she wasn't, Carmen," Mr. Cullen chuckled, half in amusement and half in what appeared to be annoyance. I decided to

ignore whatever had transpired while I was gone, and instead I focused on the salads.

But of course, Carmen wasn't quiet for long.

"What are your plans after high school, Bellezza?"

"I don't really know yet." I kept my eyes on the cucumber I was slicing.

"All I know is that I'm leaving Forks as soon as possible."

"You do not like small towns?" she continued.

"Yes and no. I enjoy the quiet, but I get bored easily and Forks is just too mundane and grey. Everything is on repeat almost. Sunday dinners, gossip...it's just always about the same things..." I trailed off, realizing I was rambling.

Mr. Cullen asked the next question. "No plans on going to college?"

"No, Sir," I replied, chuckling a little. College was the last thing on my mind right now. "I mean, who knows in the future, but for now I'm happy with modeling."

I really expected a question coming from Carmen about modeling, but it never came.

Perhaps she already knows.

When the salads were done and Carmen had prepared the pasta, she started talking about setting the table in the dining room, so I offered to help, but she shook her head at me and said, "Go rest for a while, *bella topolino*. Thank you for your help."

I was about to protest because I wanted to help, but...well, Mr. Cullen spoke then.

"How about I show you the garden?"

I loved that idea.

Once we reached the living room, Mr. Cullen asked if anyone else wanted to join, but before I could plan a pity-party about not having this moment alone with him, I figured out that Mr. Cullen was way ahead. No one was interested in seeing something they'd already seen countless times before, and Mary and Elizabeth were busy with the decorations.

So, we left. Just the two of us.

"You knew they were gonna say no," I chuckled.

It wasn't very cold right now, though it was windy, but my cardigan was enough.

"I did, yes," he replied, smiling down at me in amusement.

We walked in silence for a while, apart from a handful of times when Mr. Cullen pointed out a few things, such as the path that led to the staff houses, the path leading down to the beach, the beautiful rose garden his grandmother had built when it was their island. And that was how I found out that Mr. Cullen had inherited the island, and that he had left Chicago as soon as he could in order to move here. He also had a house in LA but was rarely there.

"Wow, this is amazing," I whispered, completely wide-eyed as we reached a small beach on the other side of the island.

It was a fair-sized island, long but thin, which meant it only took about fifteen minutes to walk across it, and right now we were on the opposite side of where the docks were.

This beach was nothing but gorgeous. Small and secluded with rocks and cliffs, white sand, exotic trees and bushes. It was clearly manmade. There was also a small, white beach hut, and when I saw the little porch, I could picture Mr. Cullen's grandparents sitting there, enjoying the sunset, having a romantic dinner... It was so beautiful.

"My grandfather made this because it resembles the beach in Brazil where he proposed to my grandmother," Mr. Cullen explained, smiling. "And when they passed, I made sure to keep it maintained."

I was speechless.

"Come with me," he murmured, taking my hand.

The shivers came, but it felt like that was something I would have to get used to, because they were there whenever he touched me. He turned my body into a mush of need and want.

The inside of the hut was simple, yet luxurious. Only a single room, and it was painted in white—everything was white. The plush couch, the pillows, the drapes, the small coffee table, the thick rug, the wooden dresser in the corner...all white.

Then I felt Mr. Cullen standing right behind me. Closely.

"Take off your clothes," he commanded quietly.

I drew a shaky breath, shivered violently...and obeyed.

My breathing picked up.

I heard Mr. Cullen unzip his slacks.

My cardigan landed on the floor. So did my bikini. I was naked. The tension crackled. He was so close, standing behind me.

In my periphery, I saw his black pullover and his pants being dropped on the floor.

Oh, God.

Then, dressed in nothing but black boxers, Mr. Cullen walked past me and sat down in the middle of the couch.

He was hard. Rock hard, huge, and ready.

"I need that little mouth of yours again, little one," he said huskily as his eyes roamed over my body. "And I need to prepare your sweet pussy for me, because I won't wait long." As he spoke, he stroked his cock outside the boxers. "In fact, I'm pretty sure I will take you tomorrow after the shoot."

I exhaled, feeling my body heat up.

"Do you want that, sweet girl? Do you want me to fuck your pretty little pussy tomorrow?"

I flushed scarlet and moaned. "Yes. *Please, Sir.*"

"Good. Now get over here. I want you on all fours."

I scurried over, whimpering in desperation as he gripped my hips, positioning me on all fours on the couch so that my face was directly above his huge erection. Oh, and his hand...his large hand on my ass, kneading, teasing...fingers wandering. No, he wasn't one to ask for permission twice. He was going to take what I had offered without hesitation. Just like I wanted him to. Just like I *needed* him to. This...forceful, this controlling, this...strict man, he had me at his mercy.

With his other hand, he pushed his boxers down, and I moaned again when his cock sprang free. It was difficult not to lean down and kiss that

drop of pre-cum away. I wanted it. I wanted it all. I wanted to do better this time. Not that I didn't please him before, but I knew I could do better. I *wanted* to be better.

"Suck me off, little one," he whispered softly, just as two of his fingers made contact with my slit. "Now."

Fuck. Yes. Now.

Remembering his earlier words, I breathed deeply through my nose, preparing myself for his not-so-gentle personality, and I sucked him in as deep as I could. I struggled, trying to relax my throat to accommodate all of him.

"Fuck, yes," he hissed, and I smiled internally as he throbbed in my mouth. "Use your tongue, little girl. Get me nice and wet."

Ungh.

I obeyed, sucking him deeply before licking him on to upstroke, and then repeating, but it was goddamn hard to concentrate when...oh...his fingers were...slowly pushing inside me. Two of them. Stretching me. Teasingly yet persistently.

His left hand fisted my hair, and he tugged harshly, forcing me release his cock with a pop, and I met his eyes. His dark eyes, commanding, sexy, smoldering.

"Focus on sucking my cock, understand?"

Oh, God. This was the real him. This was him not holding back.

"Yes, Sir," I breathed out, trying to rub my thighs together for friction...but Mr. Cullen wouldn't have it.

"No. *I* will please that pussy of yours. Not you. Now, suck me hard."

Fuck!

He pushed me down, keeping his hand on the back of my head, and I gagged.

"Relax," he moaned, still holding me down. "Relax your throat, my sweet girl."

Breathe through your nose, Bella!

It worked after a while, and I chanted it like mantra in my head. Just breathe through your nose. Breathe through your nose. Relax. It worked, and my desperation returned in full force but, thankfully, Mr. Cullen appeared to know my body very well, and he resumed fingering me. Harder now, and I understood. If I sucked him hard, he fingered me hard.

"Mmm, that's it," he groaned. "Such as good little girl."

My entire body became a live wire.

I knew Mr. Cullen loved it hard, so I added as much pressure as I could, hollowing out my cheeks and adding teeth as I took him down my throat over and over. More. Faster. Fucking frenzy. It made me feel good.

"Fuck!" he moaned loudly, and then he slammed in a third finger into my soaked pussy, making me gasp around him. "God, you're a great little cocksucker, kitten...*ungh*...so *fucking* good."

His praise, his fingers, his moans, his everything, it made me swell with pride. Not to mention my approaching orgasm that came closer and closer, faster and faster.

Yes!

So close. So close.

"Yes, fuck," he grunted. "That's it...swallow my cum. Swallow it all."

A second later, he swelled in my mouth and pushed me down on him hard as he exploded. spurts of the hot liquid slid down my throat, and his roughness sent me to the edge.

"Don't you dare come yet, Isabella."

Shit!

Before I could even register the movement, Mr. Cullen flipped me over, and I was suddenly on my back with him leaning down toward my throbbing pussy. As soon as I understood what he was doing, my eyes stung, craving tears, as I tried to hold back the orgasm.

"Make it a rule, little one," he told me sternly. "Either you come on my cock, or in my mouth...unless I say otherwise. Understood?"

"Yes!" I practically sobbed out. "Please...ungh, *please*, Edward!"

"Perfect. Moan out my fucking name," he whispered.

I will, I screamed internally as I spread my legs wider.

"Good girl," he muttered. Then his mouth was on my pussy, and I thought I was going to fly off the couch with the way I arched into him. "Such a greedy little girl," he moaned against my pulsing flesh. "Good thing I'm greedy, too."

Please, please, please.

I panted.

Gasped.

"Come in my mouth, little one. Give me everything."

I screamed.

He moaned and licked and sucked.

I was out of breath.

I came so hard. So fucking hard, and I had no control over my body whatsoever.

"Again," he demanded, and with that, he curled his fingers inside of me, reaching a spot that caused me to choke.

He rubbed and circled.

I was out of control, forced to go along with what my body did—how it reacted. He was rough, adding so much pleasure and slight pain; it was enough to send me over again. Only this time, I couldn't fucking *breathe* as the orgasm assaulted me.

By the time I managed to gasp and gulp for air, I was pretty sure he'd killed me for a while. No, that didn't make much sense but...shit...I was done.

I just focused on breathing. For a long while.

"Christ, I love your body," I heard him whisper.

It made me smile, and I would've said something in return but I was still a bit dead. Even as he trailed soft kisses up my body, I said nothing. But it was all his fault. His fingers, his words, his roughness, his magic tongue...

I shivered.

He kissed me, softly on the lips, and I was still smiling. I smiled as we kissed slowly, our tongues mingling caressingly. Couldn't stop smiling.

"I must say you have a very cute post-coital smile, Ms. Swan," he teased before dropping a soft kiss on my nose. "Quite adorable."

I flushed. Of course.

"Yes," he murmured slowly. "Then there's that blush of yours." He pressed his body fully against mine, making me shiver again. "Feel what your blush does to me?"

God, yes, I felt it. He was already getting hard again.

Nothing wrong with his libido, that's for sure.

"Had not it been for the fact that we're probably late for dinner, I would've needed that mouth of yours again."

Christ, this man and his words.

Yes, too bad we have dinner.

Chapter 07

EPOV

A part of me wanted to laugh at the absurdity, but the other part didn't. No, the other part of me wanted to thank her profusely. Which I was pretty sure I'd end up doing.

The "her" I was talking about was Carmen. Yes, that perceptive woman was very aware of...well, everything. She stated that "Bellezza" would be perfect for me. She would be everything. And that was why Carmen helped us. Because as Bella and I returned from our...*walk*, Carmen had put off dinner for an hour, which meant that when Isabella and I came

back, she could take her time to freshen up before catching up with the girls, and I could have a drink with Garrett, Lizzy, and Mary.

In other words, nothing looked suspicious to the others.

Like I said, it was a bit absurd, and I wanted to laugh at the situation we found ourselves in, but I knew there'd be no laughing. No, I was most likely going to give Carmen a raise for how much easier she made things for Bella and me.

When I sat in the living room with my friends, I didn't focus much on what was said. I found that impossible. With the day I'd had, especially the time I had spent with Bella in the beach hut, you could say I was a bit distracted. Isabella on that couch...Christ, there were no words. Not only did she respond well to my true self, but she was encouraged by it. She worked so hard to please me, and please me she did. Like no other.

Tomorrow...yes, I would take her. As long as I got her worked up, I knew she was ready. And I did believe she'd be able to take all of me.

Hell, I'd make sure of it, because what I told her was true. I was greedy, and holding off out of the question. I needed to get my cock deep inside her tight pussy. *So tight pussy.*

~IdC~

Later that night, we were all sitting in the living room—a living room that was now very Christmassy—and like previous years, the men were gathered in one group, and the women in another. This obviously meant I didn't have Isabella sitting next to me, but that was okay for the moment. I found it relaxing, because that girl...dressed in those white pajama shorts...

Have mercy.

Safe to say, I had been the recipient of more than one of Jasper's sly smirks. Apparently, he noticed everything but, luckily, he didn't linger long, and when Alice declared that she was going to bed, Jazz said that he was going for a walk.

Bella and I exchanged a small smile, both knowing that they were going to talk things out. But I also knew that Bella was nervous since Jasper was telling Alice about his lifestyle.

When I had told Isabella about it earlier, she said the same things I already knew, that Alice didn't come off as the type of person who'd embrace a BDSM relationship, and I supposed we'd just have to wait and find out.

"Well, I'm off to bed, too," Mary yawned, stretching her arms as she stood from the couch. "Edward, did you talk to Felix and Demetri about tomorrow?"

"Yep." I nodded. "They'll be in Fort Bragg around ten AM to pick up a few things, and then they'll wait for Jack to call them."

I glanced at Bella, who was sitting with Liz and Rosalie, and I had to fight a smirk when I saw that delectable blush creep forward. It was obvious why she blushed, of course. She knew very well what "few things" I was talking about. Well, not *exactly*, because Jasper and I had ordered them in my office after dinner, and Bella wasn't with us, but she knew what *kind* of things we had ordered. It was a very well-placed rush order.

My cock stirred with the knowledge of what tomorrow was going to bring us.

The only thing I didn't know yet was what Jasper had ordered for her to wear.

"Thank you," Mary sighed, smiling gratefully. "Okay, I'm off. Goodnight, everyone."

"Goodnight, Mary," I returned, followed by a few similar words from the others.

Carmen appeared from the kitchen, announcing she was heading home and that she would be back at seven tomorrow, and I was careful not to roll my eyes at her as she smiled extra sweetly to Bella, whom she had evidently grown fond of.

"So, what's the plan for tomorrow, Mr. C?" Emmett grinned.

I chuckled at him and shook my head. That boy was nothing if not transparent. "Yes, Emmett, you may take out the boat tomorrow."

On my staff's side of the island, there was a smaller dock, and a speedboat that Demetri and Felix used for supply runs. Emmett had a great attachment to the boat. For its speed, no doubt. Then of course there were his own words, "It's a goddamn pussy magnet, Mr. C!"

Yes, quite colorful.

I wouldn't know because I had never needed a boat to succeed with women.

"Fucking A!" Emmett boomed, even fist pumping the air.

"Language, Em," Garrett sighed, aggravated.

I withheld a smile.

"Sorry, Dad," Em grumbled. He was more embarrassed because of Garrett admonishing him in front of Rosalie and my Bella than remorseful for his language in the presence of said girls.

My Bella.

Yes. It does have a nice ring to it.

"Actually, it is getting a bit late," Liz said. "Shall we turn in, dear?"

Garrett nodded. "Sounds good."

I took my cue. "Yeah, I'm going to bed, too."

More goodnights were said, and I gave Isabella a pointed look, silently telling her to hurry along.

I didn't want her down here. I wanted her naked in my bed. Stat.

I knew it would be somewhat torturous to have her next to me all night, but my plan was to tease her relentlessly before tomorrow.

I had to smile as I entered my bedroom because I was aching to play out my fantasies with her. Aching to have her begging for my cock, which she would be doing very soon, and then as I got ready for bed, I smiled again because I could still come. Just because I was about to refuse Bella a release didn't mean I had to deny myself. Fuck. That little girl sure had turned me into an insatiable man. So...it was only fair that she took care of my predicament then, yes? She was at fault, after all. Of course she should take care of it then. And the fact that my sweet Isabella was turned on by pleasing me was just splendid, because that was going to get her even more worked up—worked up for tomorrow.

A few minutes after I had settled in bed, there was a tap on the door. I smiled to myself, unable to do otherwise. Bella simply brought it out of me.

"Come in."

The door opened and...

Good God, she is a vision.

I wondered briefly if she knew that I loved innocent clothes on her, because there she stood, in a white camisole that was short and loose on her body, and lastly...a pair of light pink panties. Ruffled ones. Christ, she looked so gorgeous.

My cock hardened further, and I did nothing to hide it. I wanted her to see it. I wanted to make her blush like the little girl she was. Perhaps that was perverted of me, but I certainly didn't give a fuck.

"Close the door behind you," I commanded. In need of friction, I gripped my cock through the sheet. "Then sit down over there," I continued, pointing at the chair in the corner. "And remove your clothes."

Fuck, tomorrow cannot come soon enough.

She obeyed me.

I swallowed hard and watched her every move.

How her chest heaved, how her nipples strained against the soft fabric...how her lovely cheeks reddened.

Too bad I was going to deny her tonight, though it was all for the best.

I wanted her pussy soaked and throbbing for me tomorrow.

"Put your feet up, little one, and spread your legs."

Mine, I thought as I walked over to her. *All fucking mine.*

I stood before her, naked and hard, stroking myself, and groaned as I saw the desire in her eyes. Not to mention her pretty little pussy that was glistening with arousal.

"My dirty little cock-slut," I chuckled quietly. "So fucking wet already."

She whimpered and bit down on her lip, and I noticed the way her fingers twitched. She wanted to touch herself.

"Do you want to touch yourself, baby girl?"

Her eyes were fixed on my cock. "Or touch *you*, Sir."

She truly was perfection.

And my plan was formed.

"As you wish, little one. Start by kissing my cock," I said, standing in between her parted legs. "And savor it, because I won't come in your mouth tonight."

Fuck me if she didn't pout.

I swallowed a groan and threaded my fingers through her soft locks, just needing to feel her.

She closed the distance and lavished my erection with open-mouthed kisses that made my balls tighten, and my God, she really fucking savored my taste. Humming and moaning quietly, she kissed and licked me, even drawing arousal from me when she fucking *suckled* me like a goddamn pacifier.

"So greedy," I moaned quietly and gripped her chin, causing my erection to slip out of her mouth. "As long as you're only greedy for me. Understood?"

She nodded furiously, licking her lips.

"Answer me." I cocked a brow at her. "I want your words."

"Yes, Sir. I'm only greedy for you. I promise."

She was making me lose my fucking mind.

"My good girl," I whispered and leaned down and kissed her luscious lips. Then I straightened and sighed contentedly. "Okay, you may suck my cock properly now."

Isabella didn't waste time, and my chest constricted in an odd way as she immediately took me down her throat, using all she had to please me. Teeth grazing gently, tongue swirling around my shaft, and fuck, she sucked me *hard*. She knew what I wanted and gave it to me eagerly.

I let my head fall back and focused on just feeling her hot mouth on me, and I didn't even thrust. I just savored the feeling of her working me. Working me perfectly.

I groaned when she cupped my balls. "Oh fuck, yes... Suck on them, baby." Looking down again, I watched as she licked her way down my cock, and then how she parted her lips and sucked on my balls. First one then the other. Moans and whimpers escaped her, and what an eager tongue she had.

My breathing became labored, and I closed my eyes, even smiled a little as the room filled with nothing but the sounds of us together. She was back to sucking my cock, and I knew—much to my chagrin—that it wouldn't be long before I had to stop her.

My orgasm was approaching quickly, so I wasn't the smartest man on earth when I opened my eyes to see her pouty lips wrapped around my cock, because it only brought me closer.

I began to thrust slowly, knowing it was time for the next part of my plan.

"Touch your pussy for me, Isabella," I rasped. "But do *not* come."

She responded to my command by sliding two fingers up her wet slit, at which she moaned, and in turn, it made my entire body tense up. The

vibrations her moaning caused me to reach that point where it was almost too late. Luckily, I pulled out before I could come.

With a harsh tug on her hair, I made her look up at me.

I smirked at the desperation I saw in her big doe eyes.

"Lean back and keep those fingers on your pretty pussy for me," I told her, stroking my cock. "Remember, you're not allowed to come."

She nodded in understanding. "Yes, Sir."

I pumped my cock hard and kneeled on the floor between her parted thighs. It brought me so close, and my erection was perfectly aligned with her tight little kitty. Fuck, I could smell her.

I breathed in deeply, a low groan rumbling in my chest.

The mere sight of her had me throbbing like a goddamn teenager. Everything about her turned me on: her pouty lips, her beautiful eyes, her perky tits, her flawless skin, her toned yet soft body, her grace, her gorgeous face, her natural beauty, her manners, her eagerness to please me, the sound of her voice, her innocence...and to be honest, her young age.

I wanted to corrupt the girl. I wanted her to be mine in every way.

"Fuck, Bella..." I moaned as I got closer.

She had what I evidently craved. The innocent façade, and then...behind that innocence...Christ, she was a wild little slut ready to be fucked into oblivion.

"I'm gonna come," I gritted out. "I'm gonna come all over your sweet pussy."

My breathing got stuck in my throat as Isabella moaned out my name and spread her legs wider.

I exploded.

In hot streams, I soaked her pussy with my cum, and if I thought having Bella choking on my cock would turn me into a savage, I was wrong. *This* turned me into a motherfucking savage, and I continued pumping my cock, milking myself dry, just to prolong the magnificent feeling of marking her pussy with my release.

She's fucking mine.

Bella's gasps brought me back to reality.

My chest heaved as I listened to hear breathless pleading.

Only I could give her the climax she begged for. Because I was in charge of her. I controlled her. I fucking *owned* her.

"Stop," I panted, still coming down from my high, not to mention the fucked-up thoughts raging inside of me. "Stop touching yourself."

She obeyed with a look of despair on her face, but to her credit, she didn't complain.

I ordered her to go wash up in my bathroom, which she did, and while I cleaned myself off, I had to ask myself...*What the hell is wrong with me?*

Sure, I had a need for owning, but...this was ridiculous. Out of hand. Truth be told, I'd never felt *this* possessive of anything before, and *Jesus*, she had only been here for less than two days.

Shaking my head, I focused on anything else—didn't matter what, as long as it wasn't Bella—to get some clarity, because regardless, I was going to enjoy these couple of weeks. I refused to worry about the future yet. I

had two weeks of owning her, two weeks of using her exquisite body for my pleasure, two weeks of showing her all I knew, two weeks of making her scream my name.

Two weeks of showing her what her life could be like...

Yes.

I lingered on that last thought, despite what I had just told myself—to let go of the worries concerning the future.

I was smiling as I got into bed, and I felt better.

I'm going to show her.

~IdC~

When Isabella returned from the ensuite bathroom, there was a pang of something unpleasant coursing through my body when I saw her. She looked thoroughly miserable, which obviously stemmed from being denied earlier, but it made me nervous. Was she going to think that I was too much? Too demanding? Too controlling? That I gave too little? That I came on too strong?

Stop.

Right. If she didn't like me for me, then there was nothing I could do.

I hoped, though. I hoped something fierce that she was the one I had given up on ever finding.

As for her misery right now, I knew it was for the best. Things would be easier tomorrow if she was nothing but desperate for me, and I needed that. I needed for her to be pleading if my nine inches were going to fit inside of her.

I didn't call her "little one" for no reason. She was slight, supple, short, and it was going to be a tight fit.

"Come here, baby," I murmured, motioning for her to come to me. Naked and stunning, she made her way into my arms, snuggling as closely as she could. I smiled and dropped soft kisses on her face, loving how cuddly she was. She felt so right. "You have no idea how much I want to lick your sweet pussy, little one," I whispered. My hand cupped her breast as I nuzzled her neck. "But I need you to be ready for my cock tomorrow."

"I just don't want you to be in unnecessary pain," I added softly.

"I understand," she assured quietly, giving me a small but genuine smile as I searched her face for dishonesty. "I really do, and I know you have my best at interest heart."

I smiled a little in relief and hugged her body to me.

"Try to get some sleep, my beautiful Bella," I whispered, kissing her softly once more before letting my head fall back on my pillow.

~IdC~

After breakfast the next morning, I was glad to see everyone scatter. Emmett was taking Rosalie and Alice out on my boat, Mary and Liz continued decorating the rest of the house, and Garrett grabbed his golf clubs and made his way to the small range I had on the west side of the island. He and Jack did this every year, and I sometimes joined them, but it was still something he usually did with Jack. Golf wasn't really my sport, but I still kept the range when my grandparents left me Isla.

With everyone off on their own, I was left with Jazz and Bella—Bella who was ordered by Jazz to get ready for the shoot.

Felix and Demetri wouldn't be back until noon, which left Bella about two hours to spend in her bathroom.

Jasper never required makeup for Bella, for which I was glad, because that saved me the trouble of saying no. As long as I was around, she wasn't allowed to wear that nonsense.

But in this case, "getting ready" meant waxing and plucking and all that, and I had to admit I was surprised to hear that she carried such things with her. Pleasantly surprised. My sweet girl was obviously very meticulous about her appearance, and I adored that.

"I suppose I can show you what Isabella will be wearing for the shoot." Jazz smirked slyly as we made our way to my office.

It was conflicting.

I wanted to be the one purchasing lingerie for her, and *I* wanted to be the one she showed it to, and *only* me. But like I'd already established, I was acting like a possessed animal around that girl. This was just something I had to deal with.

Which was why I said, "Sounds good."

Once we were seated in my office, I powered up my computer and hoped Jazz would tell me something about his chat with Alice, but...he did not. They hadn't acted differently this morning at breakfast, but it would've been nice to know if he'd told her and, if he had, what her reaction was. But since he didn't say anything, I let it go and kept my focus on the photo shoot.

"Did you decide on a location?" I asked as I logged on.

Jazz hadn't ordered any big contraptions, which meant he could choose pretty much any space in the house...or on the island for that matter. I

almost suggested the beach hut but quickly decided that I didn't want him there. That was a spot for Isabella and me now, and I already had plans for a revisit. It was, after all, one of the few places where my little girl could be vocal, and I was dying to hear her screams instead of settling for her cockteasing little whimpers.

I looked up from my computer when Jasper hadn't answered and found him watching me with a thoughtful expression.

"What?" I asked.

He pursed his lips and leaned back in his chair before he asked very bluntly, "You wish to own her, yes?"

I saw no reason for lying to him. "I do," I replied, nodding once.

"Basically, you want to be the only one to touch her, and you want everyone to know it."

It was a statement, not a question, and that was good. Had it been a question, I was sure I would have laughed, because it was very clear that I wanted to stake my claim and let the world know. Alas, it wasn't a question, so I remained quiet.

With a dip of my chin, I simply raised an eyebrow in "go on".

He leaned forward and spoke as if he was thinking out loud. "The name of my line isn't carved in stone and I had an idea last night." After a couple of seconds, he continued. "I know Isabella very well, and I doubt she would refuse, but given the circumstances, I know the decision is yours."

"And what do you need me to decide?"

Again he was blunt, something I appreciated. "I've never done it before, but I'm willing to try because the opportunity is there, and I find it very

intriguing.” He paused. “What I want to know is if you’re willing to work with Isabella, and not just by posing.”

The last five words were said with a pointed look.

I understood and leaned back in my chair, thinking about it.

This was certainly not a decision I could make solely on my own, because Jasper had literally just asked me to fuck Isabella while he photographed us. Of course, Isabella would have a say, but I couldn’t deny that I hoped she’d agree. Just the thought of claiming her as mine...and then to have people see it afterward in photographs...to have people know that I was one who claimed “Pure”...

Jesus Christ.

For being thirty-seven, I knew I looked very good. I ate well, worked out regularly, and took care of myself. So, though I had no experience whatsoever with modeling, I knew I at least had the looks.

Perhaps it was also easy for me to make this decision because I knew that Jasper was a professional, not to mention that I was aware of how these shoots went.

The setting would be tasteful, erotic, sensual, and comfortable.

My job was to make sure Bella remained comfortable, something I couldn’t see myself failing at. Her comfort was priority. Bella was my priority, period. I would make her forget that there was a camera in the room.

Everything suddenly dawned on me—Jasper’s purpose for the entire shoot.

I had to smirk. He was good.

"This line will be about her going from pure to...well, for a lack of a better word, impure. Am I right, Jazz?"

In my professional opinion, I had to say that Jasper was goddamn genius. This would take him wherever he wanted, pretty much, because the attention this would give him...

I could picture it all. I could see myself entering a gallery and starting at the beginning. The beginning where Isabella was untouched, looking both innocent and sinfully sexy as she posed as a submissive. And then as I continued, she would gain more experience. She would still be a submissive, of course, but she wouldn't be alone in the photos anymore, and I could imagine Bella carrying herself with more confidence, more maturity.

I would be there with her.

Jasper's voice brought me back to reality. "Exactly, and I would like to start light. I want you in the background as Isabella stays in focus."

I nodded, seeing the whole thing unravel before my eyes. "I will basically be the predator."

"Yes, and then we proceed. You get closer and closer."

Fuck, yes.

"And in the end, I take her," I finished, trying but failing to hide my satisfaction.

Safe to say, our plans had changed, and as soon as Jasper and I finished our conversation, I headed for Bella's room.

Chapter 08

BPOV

Mr. Cullen told me everything. Everything that that he and Mr. Whitlock had talked about.

Of course I said yes.

There was never any doubt. Just the thought of having him claiming me as his on *camera*... No words could describe the elation, the pleasure, the feeling of belonging, I felt.

And now, two days later, there was a plan.

We had to hurry, because Christmas was only a few days away, and we didn't want to wait. Truth be told, I didn't think I *could* wait. I needed him. Literally, my body gravitated toward Mr. Cullen, and he made me feel so good. He gave so much. So much I didn't know that I desperately craved. But I did, and he was the one giving it to me, he was the one taking charge, he was the one making the decisions.

Over these past two days, he had proved repeatedly how perfect he was for me, and it wasn't just his strong character that appealed to me. He was also sweet, eager to get to know me, and spoke to me like I was an adult, not a kid who didn't know anything.

I digress.

We didn't want to wait until after the holidays, and since we had a lot more to shoot now, Mr. Whitlock said that he preferred to do this in his studio back in Seattle. Therefore, Mr. Cullen and Mr. Whitlock conjured a plan.

The three of us needed to head to Seattle for two days without making it look suspicious, and my job was to develop homesickness, which I had. I talked to Alice about missing home, claiming that it was the season that

caused it. Because I knew Alice wouldn't believe me if I just said that I missed home for no reason.

Plus, my parents weren't even home. So, I blamed the holidays and told her—even cried a little—about how I missed my room, my bed, my things... Pretty much everything that was normal for me—things I was used to having around me at Christmas.

As I told Alice all this, Mary and Liz walked by, because I made sure we weren't in my or Alice's room for privacy.

Mary and Liz felt sorry for me.

Whatever.

Granted, I loved my parents, and when they were home, it was all good. But they were very rarely in Forks, and I was used to that.

I had a better relationship with our maid, Mrs. Cope.

Anyway, mission completed. Alice, Liz, and Mary were feeling sorry for me, and the pity-party had begun with sad smiles and looks of concern.

~IdC~

"I'm just gonna go upstairs and call my parents," I mumbled, lying. Alice nodded sadly, and I went up to my room.

Instead of calling Mom and Dad, I posted a new poem on my blog.

On my body, you've left an invisible mark.

On camera, I will see you lurking in the dark.

Stake your claim, make me yours.

Out in the open, but still behind closed doors.

By now you should know you have my consent.

Sir, my body is yours...to every extent.

I was pretty sure that my posts would all be about Mr. Cullen from now on.

Sighing to myself, I got dressed in more—supposedly—comfortable clothes. Yoga pants and a hoodie—nice additions to my “state of distress”.

I snorted.

Distress. Yeah, right. I would only be in distress if the plan didn’t work.

“But it *will* work,” I muttered under my breath, and then I headed back downstairs where Alice waited for me in the living room.

Next up was Mr. Cullen and Mr. Whitlock’s part of the plan.

Any minute now.

“Hey,” I mumbled as plopped down on the couch. I pulled up my knees, resting my chin on one, and made sure to look troubled. “Where’s Rosalie?”

I had a feeling I knew where she was, especially after Alice had told me about the three of them being out on Mr. Cullen’s speedboat for the past couple of hours. Apparently, Emmett and Rosalie had hit it off.

“With Emmett by the pool.” Alice grinned, though it faded quickly. “Feeling better in your comfy clothes?”

There’s nothing comfortable about raggedy sweats, Alice.

I wanted to say that, but I refrained. It was the truth, though. I hated t-shirts and sweatpants, and the only reason I owned them was because

this was what I wore when I used face masks or when I was around other lotions and products. I also wore this when I was going to a spa.

In response to Alice, I just gave her a small shrug.

"You should have come with us today," she murmured, patting my leg in a comforting manner. "Maybe if you didn't shy away, you wouldn't have time to miss home."

Yeah...sure.

"Tell me about Mr. W...Hale instead," I said. "I need a distraction."

To be honest, I felt a little guilty for not asking her before, and I was dying to know what Mr. Whitlock had told her.

Could Alice really adapt to his lifestyle?

I wasn't sure, but I found myself hoping.

Alice's entire demeanor changed, and she became more guarded, which I took as confirmation. She definitely knew.

"Um, we talked. Only a little. The day before yesterday," she said, chewing on her lip

"About what?"

When she didn't say anything, I continued, prodding a little. "Um, he seems like a nice guy. Polite and mature...?"

Then she sighed. In defeat. "Okay, I need to tell you something." She grimaced. That couldn't be good. "He told me that he's...*different*."

Uh-huh. Go on.

"Different how?" I asked, hoping I came off as confused.

"Well, he...um... He told me something about himself... And, shit." There was sighing, huffing, eye-rolling, more huffing, and lastly...a sad face. Then she whispered, "He gets off...beating women."

I coughed. Eyes bugged out.

Oh, no. No, no, no, no. No, Alice, you're wrong. You have it all wrong!

"What are you talking about?" I managed to choke out.

I didn't believe Alice would have much knowledge of BDSM, but this...oh, no, this was too far out there. Beating women? That was what she thought BDSM was about?

"He said he was a Dominant, or whatever it's called," she all but hissed out. "And that it was all about BSDM."

I whimpered, trying to keep my incredulous laughter at bay.

BSDM?

Was her life really that sheltered?

The thing was that my reason for keeping this part of my life secret...was all about my parents. They would not just disapprove, but they would try to forbid me, regardless of my being eighteen now. They still supported me, and they would, without a doubt in my mind, make things difficult if they knew about me. This was also my reason for not telling Alice. Not that she would necessarily gossip and tell my parents, but there was still no reason for me *to* tell her.

That and, of course, the fact that I doubted Alice could handle my secret.

But...I *did* feel the need to straighten this out. It was a horrible misunderstanding—one I truly didn't want her to keep believing--so I

made the decision to at least tell her a little. At least to the extent where I could blame it on, "Oh, I heard it on TV"...or something like that.

"Um, Alice...that's not what *BDSM* is about," I said, fidgeting a little under her gaze. "Not that I know much, but I, uh...saw this documentary? And, um...it's not about beating women. But what did Mr. Hale tell you?"

"He told me to Google it when I didn't wanna listen to his explanation." She scoffed. "But I know enough."

No. You really don't.

I was about to tell her what I knew from that "documentary" when I heard Mary and Liz come closer...with Mr. Cullen in tow.

I bit my lip at the sight of him.

"Wait, so they couldn't hold off until after the holidays?" Mary was saying.

"No," Mr. Cullen replied as his eyes flickered to mine. "I usually let my employees deal with it alone, but since the show is right after New Year's, we need to be there."

I fought a smile.

I knew he had just told them about Alec, and that there was an "emergency" with his art show which Mr. Cullen and Mr. Whitlock needed to help with. It was so funny that it almost hurt my stomach, because I knew Alec, and he was the biggest goof ever. If he had a problem, there was no way he'd call Mr. Cullen. Firstly, because Alec wasn't showing anything at Mr. Cullen's gallery—there had been a double booking or something, so Mr. Cullen had helped him find another gallery—and...secondly, because aside from being a goof, Alec had such a big heart. He would feel terrible about disrupting anyone's holiday.

Hell, Alec even refused to let me call him Mr. Peters, stating that it was too formal. So...he was Alec.

"We?" Liz questioned, effectively bringing me back to the present.

"Mm." Mr. Cullen nodded firmly. "Jasper, too; we're both working with Alec. It's only for a couple of days, though. We'll be back on Christmas Eve."

Mr. Cullen, Mary, and Liz continued talking about the trip, and when Mr. Whitlock joined them to announce that Mr. Cullen's pilot had been informed, I made sure to look like the sad creature I was supposed to be.

"So, where are you going? New York? LA?" Mary asked.

"No, we're going to Cullen Three," Mr. Cullen replied. "Seattle."

I was a bit embarrassed by the fact that I hadn't heard of Mr. Cullen's galleries until he told me yesterday. Not just because there happened to be one in Seattle, but because they were apparently very well-known in the industry.

Cullen One—the first gallery he opened—was in LA, Cullen Two was in Chicago, Cullen Three in Seattle, Cullen Four in New York, Cullen Five in San Francisco, Cullen Six in London, and Cullen Seven in Barcelona.

To say I was in awe would be an understatement. I was literally gaping when he told me, and he told me so casually. Like it was no big deal. Clearly it was.

"Wait," Mary said. "Seattle, you say?" Then she turned to me and frowned. *Come on, Mary, say it. I know you're thinking about it.* She turned back to Mr. Cullen again who stood there, acting very casual. He showed no sign of knowing what was going on. "Um, Bella hasn't been feeling very well."

Yes, go on.

"Oh?" Mr. Cullen inquired, letting his eyes flicker to me. There was concern. "Something I can do?"

He's good.

We weren't counting on Mary to unknowingly help us, but we *were* hoping for it, and it looked like things were working well so far.

"Well, it's not my decision to make," Mary said, hesitating as she looked at Mr. Cullen one second before turning to look at me, and then back at him. "But if you're going to Seattle..." She trailed off.

Mr. Cullen took his cue. "You wish to go home, Bella?"

Not really, no. Well, not home, per se.

"Um..." I chewed on my lip and gave a one-shoulder shrug. "I don't know?"

"No, you can't go home, Bella," Alice piped in, using her eyes to plead with me. "We were supposed to spend Christmas together!"

Shit.

God, I felt like the worst friend in the world.

Her pleading eyes changed, however, and her face lit up. "What if you go home for just a couple of days? You can go home and rest and maybe pack a few things with you that you miss, and then when Edward and Jasper return, you can come back with them!"

Done. Yes, thank you, Alice. Sounds perfect.

I pretended to hesitate, to think about it.

"It's your choice, Bella," Mr. Cullen told me softly. "You're more than welcome to come with us, and I'll make sure you get to Forks safely. And then if you want to return with us, I'll send a car for you."

Everyone looked at me in question as I pretended to think about it for a few seconds. I was impressed with how calm and nonchalant Mr. Cullen and Mr. Whitlock were about it.

"Okay," I mumbled after a while.

And that was how I ended up on Mr. Cullen's private jet a few hours later.

Not before I hugged Alice tightly and promised I would come back two days later, though, and I also made her promise to Google BDSM. Because I wanted her to see that Mr. Whitlock was a very good man, and there was a part of me that liked the idea of them together.

I had no idea if they would be compatible, but I wasn't ruling out the possibility at least.

~IdC~

We arrived in Seattle in the middle of the night, and we quickly made our way to our hotel.

The Fairmont, of course, because that was just who Mr. Cullen was.

"You'll have the best while you're with me," he had told me.

I didn't mind one bit, and I loved the way he always kept me close to him. It started as soon as we had left the island. He entwined our fingers and that was how we stayed. Close and connected, all the way to Seattle. It felt wonderful.

As soon as he checked us into the hotel, we said goodnight to Mr. Whitlock before we headed to our suite. Once we were there, he ordered

us some room service and we spent a little while talking about tomorrow before going to bed.

I loved sharing his bed, and he had turned me into some kind of insane cuddler. I just couldn't get close enough but, thankfully, he didn't seem to mind. At all.

~IdC~

I felt him.

I was on my stomach, having just woken up. To soft kisses down my spine.

This is the life.

It felt different than when we were on the island. This felt more. More open.

"I know you're awake, beautiful girl," he whispered against my skin. I shivered and smiled into my pillow. "I have to say, Ms. Swan...I love waking up next to your naked body." He hummed, making me smile wider, and my skin broke out in goose flesh as he covered my body with his larger one.

Oh, my.

"Mmm, good morning," I murmured sleepily.

He was hard and ready, pressed against my ass, and started kissing my exposed neck. It left me feeling so desired and wanted. I knew that I was. He never made me feel otherwise, and I hoped he felt the same—wanted by me. Because he was. It didn't matter that it had only been a few days.

I couldn't ever deny Edward Cullen.

Just thinking about his name had me in a tingly mess.

I didn't utter his first name enough, and I knew why. I was eighteen years old, inexperienced and clueless. Not to my peers, but definitely to a grown man like Mr. Cullen, and every time I moaned his first name, it made my insides flutter. Perhaps I was clueless about how the world worked, but I knew one thing for sure: Mr. Cullen was a man you fell for.

I couldn't afford that, not when this was so temporary. Which was why I saved his name for the throes of passion. Because that was the time and place my body took charge and I couldn't control what I did or said.

Speaking of throes of passion...

"I can't wait for the shoot," I yawned.

I felt him smile against my neck, and...oh, he dipped his hand underneath my body, to...yes...there.

He moaned quietly, we both did, as his middle finger parted my wet folds. I wanted more than teasing. So much more. No, I couldn't wait for the shoot. I couldn't wait to feel him claim me, to take my virginity, to mark me as his...even if it was temporary. Well, it was temporary for him, anyway. I doubted my desire for him would ever disappear.

"Is that all for me, little one?" he whispered huskily as he teased me at an agonizingly slow pace. "Tell me it's all for me... Tell me *you* are all for me."

Sensory overload. So much. His finger entering me, his thumb on my clit, his hot mouth on my neck, his body pressed tightly against mine, his words.

Definitely his words.

"I'm yours," I whimpered. "All yours, Edward."

"Fuck, baby," he practically growled, making quick work of flipping me over onto my back. "Say it again."

I moaned loudly, feeling his cock press against my slick pussy. "Just...yours! *Ungh...* Edward!"

"Yesss," he hissed before crashing his mouth against mine.

Throwing my arms around him, I welcomed the forceful kiss-

Knock, knock!

"No!" I whined.

Mr. Cullen cursed.

I wanted to cry.

"It's probably Jazz," he grunted. After dropping a kiss on my forehead, he got out of bed, grimacing as he went. "Fucking cockblocker," he muttered, at which I giggled.

~IdC~

Four hours later, the three of us entered Mr. Whitlock's studio, and while he and Mr. Cullen headed for the playroom, I was sent to get ready in Mr. Whitlock's dressing room.

After we left the hotel this morning, we had eaten breakfast together and discussed Mr. Whitlock's plan for the day. Once that was done, Mr. Cullen tended to some business while Mr. Whitlock took me to buy an outfit for the shoot.

Yes, I noticed the reluctance in Mr. Cullen as he kissed me goodbye.

I loved it. I loved that he wanted to be there with me.

Anyway, up next was my spa appointment, and I was lucky to be in Seattle for that, because my regular at Vida always took care of me quickly. Besides, there wasn't much to take care of, so that went by in a flash.

Now I was a bundle of nerves. I was very sure I wanted this, and there wasn't really anything negative about...well, anything, but...it was the anticipation, the knowledge that this was actually happening. Of course I was nervous. Everything was changing. What was once something simple and sensual had now morphed into an erotic story—a story where I started out as innocent and inexperienced...and ended with Mr. Cullen taking me, claiming me, turning me into a woman, so to speak.

This was new to all of us. Firstly because I was literally losing my virginity while a man photographed us, and...*let's face it*...the very idea of that sounded a bit insane. *Good thing I'm not normal*. Secondly, Mr. Cullen had no experience with modeling, and thirdly, Mr. Whitlock had never shot sex-acts before.

The plan was for my face to be out of view, and the same went for Mr. Cullen's face, but...we were still going to be on display.

Sliding on the pair of black panties in see-through lace, my body was buzzing with nerves. Black heels made of studded leather followed, and lastly the miniscule robe that I would lose very soon.

I was ready for this.

God, I *wanted* this. So badly.

With a deep breath, I left the dressing room and headed for the playroom/studio.

I stepped inside.

My fucking God.

Right there. He stood right there. Black dress pants, a white button-down, sleeves rolled up to his elbows, and his eyes, full of desire, met mine.

So much for those panties.

Chapter 09

EPOV

I was on edge. Anxious for her to enter the room—the playroom.

It was definitely a perfect setting Jazz had here. Of course, this wasn't his real playroom. This was much more of a studio, and on the white painted wall—the wall where the door was—there was studio and camera equipment hanging everywhere.

Then there was the rest of the big square space.

One wall was dark blue, the four-poster bed with a massive headboard in focus. There was also a sex swing and some other things I didn't really recognize. Then there was the deep burgundy wall where the aforementioned silver St. Andrew's Cross in—the one Isabella liked—was attached. There was also a portable cross next to it, and I knew we were going to use that today.

The last wall was painted in dark gold, and it was littered with toys. Hanging on the wall or sitting on shelves in transparent plastic containers...floggers, crops, paddles, shackles, dildos, ball-gags, ropes, ties, handcuffs, vibrators, canes, clamps, beads...you name it. It was an impressive collection, and sure, it made my pants a bit tighter, but it still

wasn't for me. I was more for full body contact. I'd much rather *feel* Bella's ass if I spanked her. I didn't want a toy in the way of that.

"Could you set up the cross, Edward?" Jazz asked.

He was pushing a few contraptions away from the blue wall where I knew Jazz wanted us today.

"Sure thing," I replied, rolling up the sleeves on my white button-down shirt.

Jazz and I had discussed what I was to wear, and we settled on black dress pants and a white shirt because it was what I felt most comfortable in. Jeans or leather wasn't me.

Once the cross was set up in the middle of the room, Jazz told me to pick out a one crop and one flogger that we would use, and as long as they were both in black, he didn't have preference. Well, they wouldn't be used for their intended purposes, but they would be a part of the photo, and I knew I was going to hold one of them as I approached Isabella.

It was after I had decided on a flogger in black leather that I heard the door click, and...I turned around...to see my girl walk in.

I fought a predatory growl as my eyes drank her in.

Sinful.

Sublime.

Exquisite.

Beautiful.

Sexy.

All mine.

Surely nothing could compare to Bella. She had to be the most flawless creature alive.

“Gorgeous,” I murmured huskily, motioning for her to come forward.

Dressed in a miniscule black satin robe, barely covering her barely-there panties, she walked toward me. Feline. Full of grace.

Goddamn, her legs.

I groaned internally.

“Hi,” she breathed out shallowly as she reached me.

My little kitten was affected, flushing, breathing heavily as her eyes took me in, and I saw every reaction. I saw the way she swallowed hard as her eyes flickered to the flogger in my hand, I heard her gulp as she watched my forearms, I watched her eyes widen as she took in my attire, and my chest fluttered in a weird way when her skin broke out in goose flesh as her eyes finally landed on my face.

It appears I’m not the only one at a loss for words.

That thought thrilled me.

Her eyes were out of this world. Beautiful. Big, endlessly deep, shining, dark coffee brown.

“You look stunning,” I whispered, watching as my hand cradled her soft cheek.

She closed her eyes and turned slightly toward my hand, and again there was that odd constricting in my chest. I saw the small smile that played on her pouty lips—it meant a lot. She looked truly comfortable in this setting, which made me feel indescribably good.

The sound of a click burst our bubble, and we both looked up to see a smirking Jazz, standing by the bed, holding a camera.

“Ready to begin?”

Without a doubt.

“Yes, Sir,” Bella replied softly. “Should I pick out a collar?”

“No,” Jazz chuckled, shaking his head in amusement. “Not this time.”

And he left it at that.

I dipped down and kissed her cheek before walking over to the significant item I purchased while Isabella was at the spa.

Jazz grinned knowingly when I retrieved the box.

Walking back to Bella, I winked at her and lifted off the lid of the black box. “Though I have no desire to see anything but platinum around your neck, this is, as you know...necessary. But if you are to wear one, it should be mine.”

Bella’s reaction was a smile. A really radiant one.

A part of me didn’t want to see a thick leather collar adorn her milky neck, but it was a part of the shoot, and like I said, if she was to wear one, it was going to be mine. Because that was what she was. Mine. Only mine.

Once I had strapped it around her neck, I kissed the spot below her ear, and then it was time to start.

The first two hours were pure agony.

It was foreplay.

I was hard.

So hard.

Jazz took shots of us in various poses, always with me lurking in the background, coming closer and closer, always with my eyes on a Bella who acted like she didn't have an idea I was there. She was in focus, posing with her head lowered or turned in the opposite direction from me.

It was frustrating, and I could see that I was not the only one who thought so. Bella thought so, too.

Just the memory of standing behind her as she was cuffed to the cross...I adjusted myself.

Then finally...

"Edward, walk up behind her," Jazz instructed. "Dip your fingers under her panties...and let your hands rest there on her hipbones."

Bella was standing on the floor, in the middle of it, all alone. Just standing there, her head bowed, her hands behind her back. And it was finally time to touch what was mine. I had been denied for too long.

Walking up behind her, I did as I'd been told, dipping my fingers under her lace, and I fought both a smirk and a groan when her breathing picked up.

I moved her hair aside, unable to keep myself from smelling her neck, tasting it, kissing it...

The camera clicked. Over and over.

"Eager?" I whispered, inhaling her scent. Bella rubbed her tight ass against me in an attempt to reach my erection that was now painfully hard. "Can't quite reach, can you?"

I chuckled lowly as she whimpered.

Looking at Jazz in question, he nodded to me once before continuing working his camera.

Slowly, I slid her panties down. Down her silky legs that trembled slightly as my fingers ghosted over her skin. And she stepped out of them, breathing heavier, now fully exposed. Entirely naked. Nothing to cover her. Not even her hair. Sure, her face was hidden, but her gorgeous body was on display, and it was mine to play with.

"Inspection pose, Isabella," Jasper said. "And Edward, you fist her hair, making her look up at you as you stay standing behind her."

Wordlessly, Bella kneeled on the hardwood floor, spreading her legs wide, and placed her hands behind her neck, effectively pushing her breasts together.

It was a magnificent sight, and as I wrapped her soft hair around my hand and tugged harshly, making her head fall back, I saw it all. I saw everything that was mine. Her supple breasts with constricted nipples, her flushed chest, her darkened eyes, and...oh, *fuck*. Her scent hit me. The smell of her arousal. My girl was so fucking horny.

"Are you already soaked for me, little one?" I whispered. I brushed my knuckles over her cheek. "I can fucking smell you."

She gulped. Her pupils dilated. She shivered violently. And I groaned. Palmed my steel hard cock that was unfortunately clothed. Brushed the pad of my thumb over the head of it.

"You can take her over to the chair now."

Jasper barely got the last word out before I pulled Bella up to a standing position, and then I led her over to the black chair that stood in front of a full-length mirror.

Bella was chewing her lip, giving me that face of misery she had given me the night I didn't allow her to come.

I sat down in the chair and parted my legs slightly, knowing that Bella would use them to anchor her own legs, which would give the camera a magnificent view of her sweet pussy.

"Come here, little love," I murmured huskily as I motioned for her to sit on my lap.

She practically flew into me, and I kissed her passionately just because I fucking *had* to, as I positioned her on my lap. It was a bit overwhelming to feel such a need to kiss someone. A bit unnerving. I wasn't used to it. In fact, I'd never felt it before.

"Please," she gasped in my mouth. "I...I need..."

I moaned, feeling my cock throb where it was nestled against her ass.

Not yet.

With a groan, I ended the kiss, grabbed her chin, and forced her to look in the mirror.

"Not yet, sweet girl," I told her in a gruff voice. "Look in the mirror."

I heard Jazz shuffle closer, and the camera captured it all, but I paid no attention. It was my job to make sure that Bella wouldn't even know he was here.

In the mirror, Bella and I locked eyes. We looked perfect together. Her on my lap, her legs tangled with mine, her head resting on my shoulder, her back flush against my chest, and my arm snaked tightly around her waist.

"Watch as I play with your pussy, baby," I whispered, letting my lips ghost over her jaw line. For a second I allowed myself to close my eyes as

my hand reached her pussy. She was so fucking wet for me. Warm. Soft. Smooth.

We both watched the mirror. We watched and felt how her soft, slick folds coated my middle finger. Her flesh was swollen and so responsive...so ready. Ready for my cock, ready for me to take her, for me to be her first.

And her last?

I sighed. I closed my eyes again for a second and got rid of that goddamn thought. Now was not the time.

“Oh...”

Yes.

I focused on Bella instead, her moans, the way her pussy felt, the way she clamped down as two of my fingers entered her. I focused on my other hand kneading her perfect tits, on her nipples and how the skin pebbled as soon as I came in contact. I focused on her breath on my neck and how it made me shiver. I focused on my thumb rubbing slow circles on her clit.

A third finger was added.

So tight.

My cock throbbed.

She was getting close already. Gasping and moaning.

I gave Jazz a pointed look, to which he nodded in return, and I removed my hand from her pussy.

“No, please!” Bella cried out, locking her arm around my neck. “Please, Edward!”

Nuzzling her neck, I chuckled quietly.

"It's time, kitten."

"Oh!" she gasped, suddenly eager to get up.

Christ, she really wants this.

"The bench," Jasper said quietly.

I nodded in understanding and led Bella over to the whipping bench. Thankfully, it was padded and covered in suede, which made it comfortable. Because I wouldn't exactly allow for Bella's first time to be more painful than it was already going to have to be.

We reached the bench, and I dipped down, letting my hands brush the sides of her breasts, and planted an open-mouthed kiss below her ear before I whispered softly to her.

"Kneel for me, my Bella."

With wide eyes and a broken whimper, she nodded and obeyed, kneeling in front of me like the good girl she was.

"Unzip my pants and pull my cock out," I commanded quietly.

I unbuttoned my shirt and dropped it on the floor.

Watching her trembling fingers as they worked to free my erection, it was almost too much. This was really happening, and as I looked down at my sweet girl, I saw that I was not the only one aching for this. Bella was, too, and my wish for her to be desperate had definitely come true.

"Fuck," I whispered, feeling her fingers on my cock. "You look so good on your knees for me," I added softly, caressing her cheek. She kept her hungry eyes on my erection. "Do you want to suck my cock for a while first?"

"Yes, please, Sir," she breathed, licking her lips.

"As you wish." I smiled and tucked a piece of hair behind her ear. "But I want you to touch your sweet pussy while you suck me off."

I threaded my fingers through her hair and pushed my hard cock down her throat, groaning loudly as she choked on me before remembering to relax. It was so fucking hot—all of it. The feeling of her using her mouth on me, always making sure to suck hard and swirl that tongue of hers around my length. Then when she added moans and hums...there was nothing like it.

So far. There would be soon. Very soon, and as I fucked her hot mouth and watched her play with her pretty little pussy, I knew that the only thing topping this would be to fuck her. Fuck her raw.

Enough is enough.

I pulled her to a stand without warning and grabbed her hand, sucked her juices off just because I fucking loved her taste, and then I lifted a very stunned Bella up, and...sat her down on the edge of the whipping bench. I was insane. Mad for her. I needed her. I needed to take her now. It was time. Time to take.

"Oh God," she gasped, watching me with wide eyes as I wrapped her legs around my waist. "Yes...oh yes, Edward..."

Exactly.

We had discussed this earlier and Bella had chosen, decided, that she wanted me to enter her swiftly—not slowly. That was very fine with me. Extremely.

"You ready for me, my Bella?" I asked, barely recognizing my own voice. It was dark, gruff. Husky as fuck. "Is my girl desperate for my cock yet?"

"Yes!"

I teased her by dragging the head of my dick along the length of her soaked pussy, and when I made contact with her swollen clit, she moaned out loudly. My name. Leaning forward, I placed a soft kiss on her luscious lips. In thanks. In passion. In appreciation. Because what she was about to give me was a gift, and it mattered to me. Immensely.

"My beautiful little girl," I whispered against her lips as I positioned myself at her entrance. I throbbed. Leaked. "I'm sorry."

I slammed into her.

FUCK!

I growled internally. And moaned loudly, allowing my head to fall back. She was tight. *Unbelievably* tight. Clamping down on me, making things worse. Or better. *Jesus Christ*. Completely buried inside of her, I fought the urge to move. Instead I focused on Bella and her gasps. It killed a part of me to see her in pain, and I leaned forward, kissed her face, softly, whispered my apologies, brushed away a lone tear, tasted it.

"I'm so sorry, my sweet girl," I whispered again. I let my lips ghost over her cheeks. "It will pass...I'm sorry." I caressed her sides as it seemed to relax her. "Beautiful Bella."

"I'm...I'm fine," she breathed out. "You can...you can move now."

I searched her face, needing to see the truth, because I wasn't sure I believed her. But her eyes were sincere, and there were no unshed tears.

She squirmed slightly under me, tensing her walls, and I groaned.

Sweet torture, so tight, pulsing.

"Positive?" I gritted out quietly.

"Yes...please, more."

With a small nod, I straightened my body and focused solely on Bella's pleasure as I began moving slowly. I stretched her fiercely. I rubbed her clit, getting her thoroughly wet for me again, and caressed her sides, thighs, breast, and stomach. And it wasn't until I heard her moaning for more that I relaxed and allowed myself to look down—to lose myself in the pleasure and her.

The sight made my breathing hitch—the sight of my cock, glistening from her wetness, thrusting in and out of her tight pussy, and what a tight pussy it was.

My heart pounded.

Something inside of me was surging.

I heard Jazz, of course, but as soon as he entered my mind, he disappeared again. I focused on me and Bella. It was just the two of us. Just her and I.

"I want you to watch us, little one," I moaned quietly. Holding my hand out for her, she took it and propped herself up on her elbows. "Do you see, baby girl? Do you see how perfect you are for me?"

Bella moaned louder than I'd ever heard, and it was a beautiful sound. It was wanton and desperate.

I felt her clamp down on me, making me grunt as I thrust into her.

My orgasm was approaching too quickly for my liking.

Then again, this was only our first time.

"You're mine, Bella," I groaned, moving harder and faster. "Say you're mine."

With the knowledge that her pain had subsided, I began to focus on my own pleasure. This was her first time, so it was unlikely that she'd come, but I was certainly going to.

"Yes!" she gasped. "Yours...*ungh*...more...always!"

Always.

That word made me snarl.

Her slick walls fluttered then, and a few drops of wetness coated my cock as I slammed into her again. Once more, I turned into a savage. So, I fucked her. I fucked her pretty little pussy hard, and my head lolled back as I just let go. In and out. Yes. Tighter. *All mine.* Wet, wrapped around me. Faster. In. Out. *In.*

She trembled and practically sobbed out my name.

Over and over.

Tighter.

"*Fuck,*" I moaned. "I'm gonna come, kitten."

Every muscle in my body tensed as I fell over the edge. There was just no holding back, and with a final thrust, I shot my release deep inside of her, claiming her as mine.

I was a live wire.

Holy fuck.

Never had I experienced something so feral, something so intense. On its own accord, my body covered hers, and I buried my face in the crook of her neck as we both panted our way back to reality. Deep breaths. I breathed her in. Her scent. My scent. Mingled together.

I heard a door open and close in the background, and I knew Jasper had just left to allow me some time with Bella. Because there was without a doubt need for aftercare now.

"Are you okay, baby girl?" I whispered before I kissed her shoulder.

I felt her nod, heard her hum. It made me smile, and it was with great reluctance that I pulled out of her, but I needed to take care of her now. Not just because it was the right thing to do, but because I truly needed it. I *needed* to make sure she was fine, and I *needed* to make sure she was taken care of properly. Regardless. As long as she was mine, I was going to take care of her.

After laying her down on the king-sized bed, I got dressed in my pants and shirt again. A twisted part of my mind smirked when I noticed the few streaks of blood on my cock. Yes, I had really taken her.

"You don't have to do anything," I heard Bella murmur as I headed for the door. "I'm fine—well, that's an understatement."

I chuckled and looked at her over my shoulder. She was blushing.

How she could blush after what we had done, I didn't know.

"Hush, baby." I winked. "I'll be right back."

A few minutes later, I returned with a towel and some hot water, and I sat down on the edge of the bed. I watched *again* how she blushed.

"Are you suddenly shy, kitten?" I teased as I parted her legs.

This only made her blush harder, of course.

I gently dragged the wet towel over her pussy and couldn't help but smile when I noticed her eyes darkening. But that was what mesmerized me about Bella Swan. She could blush and bow her head in embarrassment,

but then she could also allow me to fuck her while someone was taking photos of us.

“Does it feel good?” I asked quietly, smirking a little.

She hummed and closed her eyes.

It made my cock twitch, and my mind began working. Working, making plans, thinking of times and places when and where I could take her for the next ten days or so.

Oh, how I will take her.

Chapter 10

BPOV

I wasn't overly excited when we boarded the boat that would take us back to the island. Not after the two days I'd had in Seattle with Edw—with Mr. Cullen.

“Are you okay, little one?” Mr. Cullen asked quietly as we took our seats.

I nodded and snuggled closer against him, glad that it was just the two of us, and sighed contentedly as he wrapped his arm around me.

Mr. Whitlock had stayed behind in Seattle, unable to wait to develop the photos. He was going to return to the island on Christmas Eve instead, which was tomorrow.

After the day in Mr. Whitlock's studio, I was sure Mr. Cullen would take me again, but he never did. He told me that I was still sore, but...but who cares?! I sure as hell didn't. And it made me a bit grumpy the day after, so I went on a shopping spree to take my mind off things. In the

meantime, Mr. Cullen and Mr. Whitlock headed back to the studio where the dark room also was.

I couldn't say I loved to shop, but I did want to buy something for the both of them. It was Christmas, after all, and it also gave me time to purchase a few pieces of lingerie that I wanted to wear for Edward.

Mr. Cullen.

"Bella?" he asked, lifting my chin. He had an eyebrow raised. "You are an awful liar. Tell me what's bothering you."

I flushed and tried to duck my head, but he didn't allow it.

"It's just...um, we'll be back...on the island," I mumbled.

"Yes? Go on."

Crap.

I shrugged a little. "Uh, you know...back to secrecy."

It wasn't something I was eager to admit, but I had promised myself—and him—honesty, which was why I told him. And it was the truth. Yes, it hurt when he slammed himself inside of me. It hurt a lot. Like a son of a bitch. But it was what I wanted—to be taken and claimed by him so roughly, and...once the pain had subsided, it was everything to me. It was so much, and I felt so connected to him...in other ways than the obvious. There was the insane pleasure, of course, but there was also something deeper.

It was just my luck to feel this now. Of course it was the teenage girl who fell a little too deep. So typical.

"Ah." He nodded—in understanding, perhaps. "Well, I'll be sure to keep you close to me, my Bella. And as soon as there's something on your

mind, I demand you talk to me. Is that clear? I can't help if I don't know what the issue is."

I nodded once more, taking comfort as he hugged me close, and then I just prepared myself to see the others again.

~IdC~

A couple of hours later, we were all sitting in Mr. Cullen's living room, and everything continued like we had never left.

Mr. Cullen told them briefly about the "emergency" back in Seattle and that Mr. Whitlock was staying behind to tie up a few loose ends before returning. And I told Mary and Liz that I felt much better after being home for a day. That was that. Of course, I knew Alice would ask me more once we were alone, but I didn't worry about it. After all, what could she possibly ask me? I had just been home, recuperating. Nothing interesting.

A couple of things had changed on the island, though, and apparently Emmett and Rosalie were now somewhat together. That was very fine by me...until Rosalie just said that it was a vacation fling, and Emmett winked at me and said, "There's always room for one more."

That grossed me out, and Rosalie, too, judging by the smack she gave him in the back of his head. But other than that, the only thing that had changed was that the two sets of parents had now officially gotten into the Christmas spirit, and they were quick to include Edward as soon as we arrived. So, that brought us all into the living room, and there were eggnog and Christmas decorations all around.

I sat next to Alice in the loveseat, hoping I'd get the chance to talk to her soon, because I was dying to know if she had researched BDSM while we were gone. But so far she had been very quiet. Almost too quiet, and her focus was on whatever her mother and Liz were talking about.

Eventually, I brought out my phone, because I had no desire to listen to the mindless chatter going on, and I definitely had no desire to hear what Emmett and Rosalie were whispering about.

First I texted my parents, telling them I was okay and all that, but there was still so much going on in my head after Seattle, so I hit up my blog after that.

You already have my body, it is yours.

You've taken care, and there's so been much pleasure, of course.

But now you're invading my thoughts, you're always on my mind.

It's unfamiliar to me, to feel this way, and now I'm flying blind.

Is my body not enough? Must you take more?

But truthfully, I want you to take it all. I know that, deep in my core.

As soon as I had posted it, there was a text, and I assumed it was from my parents.

It wasn't from my parents, and I snapped up to see Mr. Cullen pocket his cell phone while he was in a deep discussion about...something...with Mr. McCarty and Mr. Brandon.

I gulped and read the text again.

I want you naked in my bed in ten minutes. – Edward

Oh, my.

My breathing picked up as I tried to act calm, which was ironic. Only a minute ago, I had been so bored, and now...now I was anything but bored. My heart was racing and I faked a yawn, hoping no one saw through me. I knew I was blushing.

"Um, I'm tired," I mumbled and stood up from the seat. "I think I'm gonna go to bed."

"Okay," Mary replied, smiling softly. "It's good to have you back, dear. Sleep well."

"Yes, goodnight, Bella," Liz said, also smiling.

A few more goodnights were delivered, and then I headed upstairs, smiling to myself. I passed my door and continued until I reached Edward's door. Once inside, I didn't waste time after I had brushed my teeth. I just stripped down, dropped my clothes on a chair, and crawled under the covers.

I was already in love with Mr. Cullen's bed. The sheets were incredibly soft. Egyptian cotton, of course. Anything less would have surprised me when it came to him.

My heart couldn't calm down, though, regardless of the damn thread count of the sheets. The knowledge that Mr. Cullen would be coming into his bedroom within the next few minutes had my body spiraling out of control, and the suspense was killing me. I was already wet, too, and he wasn't even in the room!

Wet, I snorted to myself. *I'm soaked.*

The door opened and closed, and before I could look up, he flicked off the light.

I drew a shaky breath.

The room was pitch-black and I saw nothing, heard nothing.

My heart pounded harder.

Can he hear it?

“Did you enjoy Emmett’s advances?”

My sharp intake of air was audible. His voice was hard, dark. But not cold. It sent shivers through my body, and I guessed he was at the foot of the bed. I swallowed hard.

“No, Sir,” I answered truthfully.

I heard him unzip his trousers.

“Good girl,” he replied huskily. It was a voice that made my pussy throb. “Because I’m the only one to take you, yes?”

Oh, God.

“Yes,” I whimpered, fighting the urge to touch myself.

Fabric landed on the floor.

I was hot, pulsing, and he hadn’t even touched me yet.

“Is your sweet little pussy still sore?”

Goose flesh. All over.

“No, Sir.” I shook my head even though he couldn’t see me in the dark.

“Please...”

He chuckled darkly. “My dirty little girl. Always begging for me. You’re coming off as a bit desperate, you know.”

I gritted my teeth. It was his fault! He was the one turning me into some wanton hussy!

I told him the truth. "It's because of you."

Two seconds later, I felt his breath close to my ear. It made me gulp.

"Elaborate, kitten. *Now.*"

He ripped off the covers, leaving me naked for him.

"You're..." I swallowed a moan as his fingers brushed over my nipples. His touch felt so good. "You're the one...making me desperate."

"Christ, my sweet, sweet Bella," he whispered so softly, so quietly.

I squirmed and whimpered like the desperate bitch he'd turned me into, all because his touch set me on fire. It was brushing and ghosting, teasing me, giving me nothing good. *Oh*, his fingers ghosted over my slick folds then. *Please*. But he didn't add pressure.

"So you wish to be fucked, is that right?" he murmured softly before his tongue flicked my earlobe. "I take you once and all of a sudden you've turned into some cock-slut?"

"Oh *God*, Edward!" I moaned loudly, even arching my back. Anything to feel more!

My hand traveled south.

"Don't you *fuckin*g dare, Isabella," he seethed and snapped my hand away. "All you have to do is tell me exactly what it is that you want, and *I* will give it to you."

Fine!

"I want you!" I cried out. "Please, I need you...I need your cock. I need you to fuck me."

"Excellent answer, my sweet girl," he cooed as two fingers brushed over my mouth. Two wet fingers. I knew where they had been. "Taste yourself, baby girl. Taste how delicious your pussy is."

I obeyed and sucked his two fingers into my mouth, letting my tongue swirl around them. It was nothing I hadn't tasted before.

He groaned as he pulled out his fingers again, and soon I felt him. His body as he hovered over me. Finally. And he was naked. Hard. Rock hard and huge. Against my thigh, I felt a bead of pre-cum as his cock grazed my skin. I wanted it. I wanted everything. Everything he would ever give me, I would accept gladly.

He parted my legs and kneeled between them; I felt the moist tip of his cock touch my entrance. I tried to squirm closer but, of course, he wouldn't let me.

Then came another soft murmur. "I take what I want, and I own your pretty little pussy. You will ask for permission to touch it from now on. Understood?"

"Yes!" I gasped.

He gripped my hips tightly. "Good girl." Then he rammed his thick cock inside me, burying himself to the fucking hilt. And before I could scream, his hand covered my mouth. "You wanted to be fucked, baby girl," he breathed shallowly, close to my ear. "I *will* fuck you, but you better stay quiet."

I want to scream!

There was a little pain, but the extreme pleasure of being filled overrode it, and I wanted more. More. So much *more!*

"I fucking love that you're needy for me," he grunted, sitting up slightly before setting a fast pace, fucking me hard. "And you're so goddamn wet for me. Fucking perfect. *Soaked...tight...mine.*"

Thrust. Moan.

Thrust. Moan.

Thrust. Moan.

I still needed to scream. I needed so much.

He was thick and hard as steel inside of me, and he used me like a ragdoll, fucking me harder and harder with every thrust, but it still wasn't enough. I still wanted more. Christ, what was happening to me?

I yelped as he flipped us over so he was on his back.

"Ride my cock, Isabella. Show me how much you fucking need it."

Shivers. Moans. I panted. Harder and harder.

I rode him. I let go of all my barriers and I fucking rode him, showing him just exactly how much I needed him.

"Fuck, baby," he moaned. "You feel so...*ungh*...fucking good, Bella."

Yesss. Oh, God.

Leaning back, I rested my hands on his muscular thighs.

We met each others thrusts.

“So perfect...mmph, yes,” I panted incoherently. “Oh...Edward...yes, there!”

“That’s it, little one. Just feel me,” he grunted, gripping my hips tighter before he sat up. Then, oh *God*, his mouth latched onto my nipple. He sucked on it, kissed and nibbled; I was ready to keel over. Everything he did just felt so amazing. “Feel how fucking perfect we are together.”

“Yes, yes...yes...close...wanna scream...”

So close. Please.

I was gone the second he pressed down on my clit, and his hand covered my mouth again as I let out a muffled scream. Waves upon waves rocked through me, assaulting me from every angle. Over and over. I could barely hang on, and I was vaguely aware of Edward holding me. I heard him, though. I heard his sexy, animalistic groans and grunts as he spilled into me. But I was...I was just not there.

After a while, I was able to breathe. Or gasp. And I shivered as we sat there together—in a sweaty, tangled mess. He dragged his fingers across my back while I noticed my fingers were doing the same in his hair. I also realized that I needed this as much as...er...fucking. Classy. Still true, though. But this, yes, I needed this. I loved it. I loved feeling him so close, and I loved the way we both had our faces resting against the other’s neck.

He smells so good.

How was I ever going to be able to let him go?

I only had a little over a week left here.

We both sighed and tilted our faces together, slowly, and met in a soft kiss—a kiss unlike any kiss we’d shared before. This was tender. Sweet.

Again I promised myself to always be honest with him. By the end of this, whatever this was, I would tell him. I didn't know what *to* tell him yet, but I had a pretty good idea where I was heading. Like I'd stated before: Mr. Cullen was a man you fell for.

It was his strength, his confidence, his lifestyle, his personality, his extremely good looks.

"Shower now or in the morning?" he mumbled as he nibbled on my bottom lip.

I tightened my arms around him. "Tomorrow."

~IdC~

"*Buongiorno, Bellezza!* Welcome back to Isla," Carmen greeted me in the kitchen next morning. She was beaming like the sun. "You are up so early. How come?"

How she was this happy at seven thirty in the morning, I didn't know.

I woke up alone, and I didn't like it. Not one bit. And yes, I woke up way too early.

"I couldn't sleep," I yawned, sitting my sleepy ass down on one of the barstools. I was *not* the cheeriest morning person. I hadn't even bothered to get ready, still dressed in my white pajama shorts and a snug t-shirt in baby blue. "And thank you. It feels good to be back."

I was half-surprised by my sincerity, but it *was* true. Even if I could be myself with Edward in Seattle, I loved this island.

"And how was Seattle?" she asked and gave me a glass of orange juice.

"Thanks," I replied, smiling gratefully before taking a sip. *Oh, have mercy, it's freshly squeezed.* Why was I surprised? "Uh, I live in Forks. It's about four hours from Seattle."

I ducked my head.

"Ah." She let out a chuckle. "But you were not in Forks, no?"

Dammit.

I looked up, and I knew my cheeks were red.

"Don't worry, Bellezza. I will not tell." She winked at me. "*Si*, I knew you would be *perfetto*. I am right again." She looked victorious.

I sighed, realizing that this was what she meant that first morning. I was going to be perfect. That was what she had told me in Italian.

Did that mean I didn't have to pretend anymore? Was it even worth it? Because if she already knew... But could she? Could she really know? And wait! I would be perfect?! For Mr. Cullen?!

My shoulders slumped.

If only she was right.

"Again I ask you, *cara mia*, how was Seattle?"

I flushed. "Um, Seattle was good."

"Oh, I bet it was!" she laughed.

Cheeky old lady!

"And why are you laughing, Carmen?" asked a velvet voice.

I smiled in reflex.

Couldn't be helped.

I turned toward the doorway and, oh, I think I died a little. My mouth...so dry. My jaw...so dropped. I had seen this man naked, yet nothing could've prepared me for this. Dressed in black basketball shorts, black sneakers, and a soaked t-shirt in dark red that clung to him like a second skin, he looked like he just walked out of my smuttiest dream. One that had apparently taken on a sports theme, because this...clearly this was too sexy for reality. *Surely*, it was illegal to be that sexy, right?

My eyes zeroed in on the small bead of sweat that slowly slid down his temple...down, down, down...his neck...down, disappearing under his t-shirt.

No one is having mercy on me today.

My eyes took it all in. Big feet, muscular calves, muscular thighs... Why, hello there, bulge. Mmm, abs. Broad chest. Christ, those biceps. I was done for. Cooked and done.

"That's not very subtle, little one," I heard him whisper all of a sudden.

Shit, how did he appear right next to me just like that?

I shook my head to clear it, because my mind had headed straight for the gutter. I wasn't even able to think properly, and if I couldn't think, I was not going to be able to speak.

I took a deep breath and ended up shivering because he was so close. Standing right next to me. His hand on my back.

This was not me, for crying out loud. I was not one to lose myself like that, but now, now I felt like...well, to be honest, I'd say this was how normal eighteen-year-olds would think, react, and behave. I was never one of those girls, but...

I stand corrected.

Deep breaths.

“Ummmph?” was my response...to something.

What was *wrong* with me?!

“Well, aren’t you a treat this morning,” he chuckled. Then he tugged on my ponytail, making my head fall back, and he dipped down to kiss me. “Good morning, sweet girl,” he mumbled against my lips. “I didn’t expect to see you up this early.”

Oh, how I loved his lips. They were soft and smooth, even when he kissed me hard and passionately.

Wait. Wasn’t Carmen here just now?

I cleared my throat, and Edward broke the kiss, at which I pouted. Couldn’t help that, either. “I couldn’t sleep,” I answered him quietly.

“You two are so sweet!”

Yep, Carmen was still here.

But since Edward just looked amused, I didn’t panic.

“She won’t talk,” he whispered...the mind reader. “Besides,” he added as his eyes twinkled, “she would just annoy us to death if we didn’t admit anything to her.”

Then there was the Edward Cullen wink.

I flushed.

“Ah, Tesoro, just say I was right,” Carmen said, placing her hands on her hips.

Edward raised an eyebrow. "Have we not already confirmed everything?"

"Not yet," she replied cryptically, but before Edward or I could retort, she changed the subject. "Tesoro, you need shower, and Bellezza, you need to get dressed. Breakfast on patio at ten, and it's a cold day. Bundle up. No short pajamas will keep you warm. Now, leave my kitchen."

"I swear you're on a power trip," Mr. Cullen told her with a playful glare.

I felt entirely relaxed in the situation and found myself chuckling to myself as I left the kitchen and headed upstairs to get dressed in my room.

I'd offer Mr. Cullen some company in the shower, but I thought better of it when I made up my mind about what I wanted to wear today. I knew he would like it, and that meant he would make sure to get some alone time with me today. And that was what it was all about suddenly. I didn't care about the others as much as I cared about my time with Edward. I was already prioritizing him, and I doubted that that was healthy, but I wasn't going to do anything about it. I was going to enjoy the time I had with him.

With a smile, I opened the closet to bring out my outfit for today.

Knock, knock.

"Come in," I called, not bothering to turn around. It was probably Mr. Cullen, anyway.

.

.

"So, you're screwing Edward."

Chapter 11

BPOV

With a gasp, I spun around to see...

Rosalie.

She stood in the doorway with her hands on her hips and her expression unreadable, which made me nervous, because I didn't know whether to freak out or laugh. Was she serious? Did she really know? Was she joking? Had she seen anything? Was she going to tell anyone? Was she mad? Amused?

I didn't know *anything*, so I just stood there. She could see my shock, that much was clear, but I also knew that she at least couldn't see my fear because I had none. Not yet anyway. Perhaps I would be afraid soon.

She held up a hand then and spoke as she counted down on her fingers. "I saw you tiptoe your way out of his room this morning. I know what my brother does for a living and who he is currently using as a model. I noticed Edward's eyes on Emmett as he made some crude remark about 'there's always room for one more.' I heard Edward and the housekeeper—Carmen?—in the kitchen a couple of days ago. And...since I know my own brother, I've been introduced to Alec. He doesn't display anything at Cullen Three at the moment."

Uh...

Then as she flipped her hair over her shoulder, she added, "People really don't give me enough credit."

Apparently not.

I couldn't speak.

So, she knew. She knew too much for me to even begin to work on excuses and lies. She simply knew it all.

"I think we should have a talk. Don't you, Bella?"

Gulp.

"You see," she stepped closer, "you have something that I want."

EPOV

I knew it was pointless to hide anything from Carmen, which was why I didn't. She knew anyway, so why even bother trying? But I still found it pleasant that she knew. However, I didn't expect that it would also feel a bit *freeing*. Now that I thought about it, though, I supposed it did make sense.

I wished to keep my Bella, after all, so...no, in retrospect, it didn't surprise me that I found it freeing that people knew. It was one more person to make it real. One more person who knew about us. One more person closer to have everyone know, which was the ultimate goal.

What used to be about her body...was now much more. I wanted it all.

Heart, body, and soul.

My mind had been made up.

Bella belongs here with me. Me. Only me.

Now I just needed her to see it, too, because I certainly didn't appreciate the hold she had on me...unless I had the same hold on her.

And as I got dressed in a pair of black dress pants and a dark grey shirt, I found myself chuckling to myself. It was quite ridiculous that I got dressed in these clothes, especially when I knew that Bella was the reason.

I had worn something similar yesterday when we got ready for our journey back to the island, and when Bella had entered the bedroom in our suite, she was quite clear with what she thought.

"You look so handsome in that."

"Oh yeah?" I smirked. "Is that a fact?"

"Mm, dangerously handsome." She licked her lips as her eyes roamed over me. "So...sexy."

It was a sad fact that we had to check out from the hotel at that time. It was also a sad fact that she was too sore at the time.

But she isn't now, I smirked to myself. Although, after last night's passion, I wouldn't be surprised if she was. Christ, she was wild. We both were.

I sighed and rolled up the sleeves on my shirt, and then I left the bedroom and headed downstairs.

It wasn't quite time for breakfast yet and the downstairs was still quiet, so I decided to take a few minutes to respond to a couple of emails in my office.

I had to say there was one thing I looked forward to after the holidays, and that was definitely the opening of Cullen Eight. Everything was on schedule, and by this time next month, I'd be in Rome for the premiere. My eighth gallery, only this one would be a bit different. As for my other galleries, I displayed close to everything except for big installations and sculptures. But I showed oil paintings, sketches, photos, you name it. And in every genre—though I rarely displayed erotica at Cullen Three, but that

was mere coincidence—however, Cullen Eight was going to be *all* about erotica.

I had offered Jazz a section at the opening in Rome, but he wanted to keep his work in the US. So, instead of Italy, he opted for Seattle, San Francisco, and New York. I could understand that. He was known but not overly so, and I knew he wanted to make a name for himself in the States before he aimed for Europe.

He was actually going to be the first one to show erotica at my gallery in Seattle in over three years, and I hoped I would be able to attend the opening with Bella as my date. Not just because the photos would be of the two of us, but because I'd managed to make her mine by then.

It's in March. That better be enough.

There was a knock on my door, and I told whoever to enter.

Alice.

"Good morning, Ali." I smiled, motioning for her to come in. "What can I do for you this morning?"

She was nervous and fidgety as she took the seat on the other side of my desk, and it didn't take a genius to figure out that she was here for a particular reason.

Isabella had told me about Alice's views on BDSM—Jasper too, when we were in Seattle—and I had to say Bella wasn't the only one willing to give Ali the correct image of the lifestyle. I found myself wanting to do the same.

"Um, I was wondering if I could ask you something? And uh...it's very personal," she mumbled.

"Of course, honey," I replied, lacing my fingers together on the desk.
"Anything you tell me will stay with me."

It hit me hard the second those words left me, because my statement wasn't entirely truthful. For some reason, ever since we learned about Jasper and Alice, Bella and I had been open about it. We talked about things as if we were a couple, and that included whatever Jazz and Alice had confided us in—things they might have preferred to keep quiet.

"I met this guy," she all but whispered, keeping her eyes downcast. "So yeah, uh...he...and then...I mean, I didn't know. I didn't know what it was, you know?"

Poor girl, so confused.

I knew this was hard for her, and since I was not supposed to know what she was talking about, I had to ask her to elaborate. But of course I knew. She was obviously talking about Jasper's lifestyle.

"I'm afraid I don't understand, Ali," I said, feigning confusion.

There was one thing that had me *truly* baffled, though, and that was why she was here, talking to *me* about this. Why not Isabella? Or Jasper?

She sighed, chewed on her lip, glanced around my office, obviously debating whether she should tell me or not.

Then she did. "I found out he had uh...another lifestyle? Um, one that's not...normal."

"Go on," I urged gently.

"Yeah, and um, I found out that, uh...you probably know about it... So, I was wondering if you could help me?"

Now I was *really* confused.

"I'm not following you, honey," I told her, furrowing my brow.

Obviously I knew about BDSM, but how could Alice know that?

"I looked it up," she said, fidgeting nervously in her seat. "And there was a link on the site about related art. It led to photography about that, uh...lifestyle."

Ah.

Of course.

"And I was mentioned," I said, filling in the blanks.

This didn't surprise me. I was often mentioned in the BDSM community when it came to the arts. Simply because there weren't many art galleries displaying erotica on that level, at least not as frequently as I did.

"Yeah...and um, Cullen Five in San Francisco," she mumbled, blushing furiously.

I fought an amused smile. Alice had clearly seen pictures.

That it was Cullen Five mentioned did not surprise me, either. The BDSM community was very established in San Francisco, and my gallery was popular.

"Can I assume you're talking about BDSM, Alice?" I asked, tilting my head slightly.

She flushed and nodded minutely.

"All right," I replied slowly, deciding to help her out a bit. "So, you met someone who's into that lifestyle?"

"Yes," she whispered. "So, it's true? You know of it?"

"I do, yes," I said casually as I leaned back in my chair. "I'll be happy to answer your questions, but I don't want you to be embarrassed."

She nodded pensively before asking quietly. "You're one of them?"

"One of *them*?" I laughed softly. "Honey, it's not an alien species. But if you are referring to whether or not I'm into that lifestyle, I can tell you yes *and* no." I was certainly not embarrassed by anything in my life, so I continued since Alice was at a loss for words. "I take it you have read about Dominants and submissives?" I asked, cocking an eyebrow. She nodded and blushed again. "Right, well, I can tell you that I am not into a relationship of that kind. I am, however, not a stranger to the lifestyle, and I do enjoy certain aspects of it."

"Like what?" she asked hesitantly.

I pursed my lips, debating, deciding. What she really wanted to know more about was Jasper, not me. But she was hesitant, wary, and was afraid to ask direct questions.

"Honey, are you sure you want to hear this? I mean, I'll be happy to help you, but are you willing to listen and take everything in? Because what it comes down to is sexual pleasure. You know that, yes?"

"Uh, yes." She gulped, eyes wide. "I...I, uh, need to know. Um, about the lifestyle."

"Very well." I nodded, downplaying her discomfort. "The first thing I need you to know is that no matter what you have read or seen, there is always mutual consent. Nothing is forced upon anyone and this is about pleasure, not pain. It's not about torture."

"The most important thing in a D/s relationship is trust," I continued, nodding to myself when I saw that the term D/s was not foreign to her. "Before two people enter one of these relationships, they talk at length

about what they are into—about the limits they have. There can be a particular piece of equipment or an act that one of them is not comfortable with, and then they will talk about it, sometimes compromise, sometimes skip altogether.

“My point, Ali, is that if you’ve seen a picture of a woman getting flogged, shackled, or maybe bound in an odd position that looks painful, I assure you that this is pain she finds pleasure in.”

I paused and allowed for her to absorb it a little because I could tell she was really listening, and I was glad she had taken Bella’s advice seriously. That, and the fact that her feelings for Jasper must be rather deep for her to make sure she had everything right before making her decision.

“Um, this guy...” She trailed off, not willing to mention Jasper by name, of course. I couldn’t blame her for that. “He told me he was a...a...*Dom*. What is that exactly?”

Again, I ignored her discomfort, hoping that she would relax if she saw that I was nothing but casual.

“Dom is short for Dominant, as you’ve probably read. And the Dominant is what it sounds like—the dominant partner in the relationship. He or she is the one in charge, the one giving commands, administering rewards or punishments. The Dom, is simply put. the owner of the submissive.”

She gulped. “Owner?”

“Yes,” I replied matter-of-factly. “But remember what I told you from the beginning—it’s all mutual.”

And then because I didn’t want her to think that the sub lived the life of a pet 24/7, I continued. “All D/s relationships are very individual, Alice. The two partners come to terms about everything, and one of those things is

how often they are to 'play.' For instance, weekends are very common to use.

"The sub will simply go home to the Dom on, let's say Friday, and then they will have that weekend as their play time—the time they live out their fantasies. And then when the weekend is over, the sub goes home and they return to their everyday lives, so to speak."

This was all news to Alice, and I smiled as I added, "You thought a D/s relationship was forever and around the clock."

She nodded, wide-eyed again.

"It's not," I assured. "Like I said, these are all subjects properly discussed before entering a relationship of this kind. I also need you to know that this is nothing like boyfriend and girlfriend. This is a way of giving in to desires, and like I told you: it's about sexual pleasure. But no, it's not for all hours of the day. You live your everyday life, too."

I didn't tell her about consensual slaves or 24/7-relationships because this wasn't really about that. This was about her and Jazz, and I knew he was a Dom who preferred weekend relationships. His weeks were busy with work, which left him with weekends as his only free time.

After checking my watch, I realized it was time for breakfast.

"You're welcome to ask me anything, Ali, but I see you have a lot to process," I said, smiling in understanding. "How about we join the others for breakfast, and then you can just ask me whenever you have a question."

"Uh, okay." She smiled weakly. "But, uh, you won't tell Mom and Dad, right?"

I chuckled. "No, honey. For *both* our sakes, I'll keep this from Jack and Mary."

~IdC~

"*Grazie mille, angelo mio,*" I said, smiling at Carmen as she served her delicious annual holiday breakfast. "What would I do without you?" I winked at her.

Cinnamon waffles, is all I'm saying.

Carmen just scoffed and threw me a playful glare before retreating to the kitchen.

"Will you ever change, Ed?" Liz sighed and shook her head at me. "Still the same smooth talker."

I grinned, knowing that Liz was referring to my younger days. "Hey, I'm just being truthful."

I was far from a womanizer, but I knew how to use my charm, and it always worked. It used to annoy Liz like crazy because many of her girlfriends liked me but hated it when I turned them down. And this ended up pissing Liz off since said girlfriends would take it out on her, seeing as they couldn't stay mad at me when I turned on my charm.

I'd always been quite...*selective*. Liz called it "picky and beyond frustrating." But if a girl didn't capture my attention, I certainly wasn't going to stick my cock in it—*her*, just because I was a hormonal teenager.

I had standards. High ones, and that has definitely not changed.

"Why don't you use that smooth talking to find someone you can settle down with?" Liz continued, and Mary laughed in agreement.

Believe me, Liz, I am.

"Most likely because he'll never find someone good enough for him," Mary chuckled. "He'll never settle for anything less than perfection, Liz. You know that."

My hand found Bella's thigh, and I was glad she was sitting next to me.

"You're right there, Mary." I smirked, squeezing Bella's thigh under the table. "Why settle for less?"

"I'll drink to that." Jack grinned, holding up his coffee as he winked at Mary.

The rest of the breakfast passed, and while I conversed with Garrett and Jack about the next few days, I found myself reveling in the feeling of Bella holding my hand. Another thing that was new to me. Handholding? I couldn't say I'd ever understood the appeal of that before, but I sure did now.

I desired this girl like no other. Romantically, physically...

Damn it. I really needed to make her fall for me, stat.

~IdC~

After breakfast, I spent a few hours reminiscing with Jack, Mary, Garrett, and Liz. High school days, college days...we did share a lot of memories, after all. We also talked about what we were up to nowadays.

Jack told us about cutting down his hours in Seattle so he could be home more, something that thrilled Mary, and I was happy for them, knowing all too well that neither of them really loved Seattle. They preferred the small town of Forks.

Garrett and Liz were the opposite, enjoying the city life in Chicago, as well as travelling, which they did often. Much like Isabella's father, Garrett was

a lawyer and traveled a lot, and Liz often went with him. It was a life they loved, I knew that, but I couldn't help but wonder if Emmett thought the same. Because I remembered Bella telling Carmen about her parents and how they were rarely home. The expression my Bella wore was not one of "this is perfectly fine", and since Emmett pretty much shared that situation with Bella, I was curious what he thought about not having his parents around.

~IdC~

The rest of the day passed slowly but surely, and it was with chagrin I watched Bella being occupied all day. Obviously, I wanted some alone time with her, and I supposed I could've just sent her a text and demanded it, but she appeared to quite busy with Rosalie.

Everyone was scattered around during the afternoon, busy with Christmas preparations. There was secrecy, gift wrapping, preparing of foods and snacks, pretty much like every other year. Christmas Eve was always like this, and I found myself—along with Jack and Garrett—doing nothing. Just wandering around, making small talk with the ladies, keeping Carmen company, etc, etc.

When Jazz returned before dinner, he gave me a quick nod, silently telling me that he had the photos, and then we all gathered around for Christmas Eve dinner.

I noticed that Bella did not sit next to me. In fact, she barely looked at me, almost as if she was avoiding me.

That was unacceptable.

And thinking about it...

Hasn't she avoided me since breakfast?

It angered me.

Understatement.

I was suddenly furious.

Chapter 12

EPOV

Bella definitely noticed my mood change over dinner. I could tell. Her posture changed after she gave me a quick glance, but instead of offering a look that said, "I'll explain later", or even a fucking smile...she just returned to avoiding me.

I was livid by the time dinner was over, and it was close to impossible to even pretend I was listening to the others.

Mary asked me if I was all right. I waved her off and blamed my mood on a migraine I didn't have, but if Isabella didn't get her act together, I *would* get a migraine.

Instead I brought out my phone and subtly sent her a text.

My office, Isabella. Now. – Edward

After I had sent her the text, I quickly excused myself to go lie down for a while.

The dinner was over anyway, and I knew that the rest would just hang around in the living room now, but I was too furious to participate.

My fuse had always been short and I'd never been able to handle avoidance, but when it came from Isabella, my fuse became non-existent.

Once I was in my office, I sat down behind the desk and forced myself to act like I wasn't about to explode.

I waited.

Waited.

Glared at the door.

She will not avoid me.

I own her.

I waited some more.

Then, fucking finally, there was a quiet tap on the door.

"Enter," I all but growled.

Bella came in looking terrified and closed the door behind her.

"Sit down."

She obeyed and silently took the seat on the other side of the desk.

"I'm pretty sure I told you to come to me if something was wrong," I said quietly as I kept my glare intact. "In fact, I'm sure it was a demand, was it not?"

With wide eyes, she gulped out a "Yes, Sir."

"Yet, you're hiding something from me," I stated. "I do *not* tolerate disobedience, Isabella, so you better start talking. Now."

My resolve started to crumble when her eyes welled up with tears, but another part of me only grew stronger, because I couldn't help her if she kept quiet. It was impossible for me to take care of her properly if she hid

things from me. And I wanted my sweet little girl happy at all times. Therefore, I demanded that I know everything. It didn't matter if it was big or small. I had to know.

"Tell me, Bella," I urged, still firmly but I couldn't hold the damn glare on my Bella. She looked like she was carrying the world on her shoulders and that was what pained me. I needed to know in order to take that weight off of her.

"I'm...I'm sorry," she cried then, breaking down. She buried her face in her hands before crying harder.

Every muscle in me tensed.

My heart pounded.

Before I could do anything, she stood up from the chair, rushed to my side of the desk, and threw herself at me, practically sobbing as she held on to me.

I was stunned.

She kept crying against my shoulder, kept chanting out apologies, and I finally snapped out of it and brought her to my lap. I held her tightly.

"You have to tell me, little love," I whispered in her hair. "I can't make it better if you don't confide in me."

After a while, she sobbed out the story.

BPOV

Rosalie gave me a fake smile as she strode over and sat down on my bed.

"Here's the thing, Bella. I don't want to go to college after high school," she said, still all casual. "But since Jasper's supporting me, he's sorta in charge, ya know?"

She looked at me like she expected an answer, so I nodded in understanding.

Truth was, though, I didn't understand a thing.

"Right. Well, my brother wants me to go to college," she continued. "*But...*he did give me an out."

Again, she waited for me to acknowledge her, so I did.

"My brother said that if I managed to secure my position at Volturi, I'd be allowed to put off college for a while."

Volturi, Inc. That was a modeling agency that was a rival to Denali.

Rosalie worked there?

"Now, here's the kicker." She smiled smugly. "Before we arrived here, I told my boss that I was spending the holidays on an island called Isla de Cullen.

"We were just conversing over lunch, ya know? Little did I know that I would get the offer of a lifetime!" she laughed.

I was still thoroughly confused, but I had a nasty feeling that things were about to change...for the worse.

"Apparently my boss, Gianna, knew about Isla de Cullen. Isn't that funny, Bella?" she asked me, but this time she didn't wait for an answer. "To make a very long story short: Gianna knows all about Edward Cullen, his fancy galleries and his mighty wealth, and she wants him. She promised

me I could take over her department when she gets promoted next month.”

I swallowed hard.

Dread crept up my spine.

Rosalie went on. “Safe to say, I had no idea how I was going to help her!” she cackled. “But all that changed the minute I realized that not only were you the Isabella who my brother worked with, but you were also Edward motherfucking Cullen’s dirty little secret. By the way, small world, huh? Ha! This is just priceless. Still can’t believe you’re the Isabella my brother mentioned.”

I paled.

Oh, no...

“So, this is how I see it.” She grinned. “I don’t know if your parents are aware of the fact that you’re a model, but if they are, I’m pretty goddamn certain that they at least don’t know that you’re fucking a man who could be your father. I’m also pretty sure that Jack, Mary, and Alice don’t know, either.

“So, I have at least *one* hold on you, Bella.”

Her smile was angelic. “Now, here’s the question. Do you want Edward’s reputation harmed? Are you willing to risk Edward’s friendship with Jack and Garrett? Not to mention Liz and Mary. And lastly, would you mind if I told your parents about your holiday...*activities?*”

“Oops,” she giggled. “I guess that was more than one question.”

I stared at my feet. Chewed on my lip. Willed my tears back.

It was all very simple to Rosalie, and I obviously understood her plan.

"Oh, I forgot to show you this!" she exclaimed, standing up abruptly as she brought out her cell phone. Then she showed me a grainy picture of me sneaking out of Edward's room in nothing but pajamas. I felt nauseous. "Ever since I found out about you two, I've been waiting for this."

So, so nauseous.

"You see where I'm going with this, Bella?" she asked. I said nothing, but of course I understood. It was clear as day. "You stop seeing Edward and you help me with my boss...or I tell your parents. I'm sure they're not that hard to track down. And if that won't stop you, I'm sure my telling Jack and Garrett about their best friend's activities will."

There was no stopping my tears anymore.

"Now, now, Bella, don't cry," she laughed. "We have a lot to do, so stick with me today so we can plan this thing, because I really want that position at work."

EPOV

I sat in the chair next to my bed for hours into the night, just staring at the beautiful girl in my bed.

Once she had told me everything and had calmed down, I took her to bed, laid her down, promised her I would fix this, and kissed her goodnight.

I will fix this.

After listening to my sweet girl's apologies about her dreading that my close ones would find out about us, I was even more determined than before. And I had to admit I was curious as to why she didn't once mention her parents finding out about our relationship. No, her only concern seemed to be me, and the girl was full of apologies.

There was so much despair in her words.

This was why I demanded that she talk to me about everything, because though what we had was temporary—so far—she was still mine for the duration of her stay. That meant she obeyed me. And my reasons were obvious. It was all about keeping my Bella protected, safe, and happy. I refused to see that expression on her again—the one where she looked so devastated, the one where it appeared she was carrying the world on her shoulders.

As long as she is mine, I make the decisions.

I'm in charge.

I carry the burden.

I control it all.

Did it feel good when Bella clung to me like a child, in nothing but relief, after I had told her I would take care of everything?

Of course.

I had stated it before, but I'd do it again. I was an honest man, and I had no shame when I said that I wanted Bella to depend on me. Not just because it felt good to be needed, but because if Bella couldn't fend well on her own, she'd need me for it. *She will need me, period.*

I wanted her co-dependent. I wanted her to confide in me, to trust me, to believe that I was always going to make decisions based on what was best for her. Us. Decisions based on what was best for *us*.

For starters, I needed to deal with the little brat named Rosalie.

I had no idea she was capable of something like this.

Did she not know her own brother? Jasper would go ballistic if he knew. No, I had no plans on telling him about his sister's scheming. I was very capable of taking care of this by myself.

Volturi, Inc. Of course I knew that agency—very well, even—but I couldn't for the life of me recall ever meeting a Gianna.

I found the whole ordeal despicable and, truth be told, I had no wish to think about this now.

I'll worry about this after Christmas.

Besides, my issue with Rosalie shouldn't be too hard to take care of.

With a sigh, I got up from the chair and quickly undressed before I joined my Bella in bed. My bed.

Fuck, she looks so good here, in my bed, in my home.

With me.

Unsurprisingly, my body reacted the moment I had Bella close to me, and soon I was rock hard.

Taking her once, twice, three or four times...there was never enough.

Covering her sleeping form with my insatiable one, I started lavishing her dusky pink nipples with open-mouthed kisses. I groaned. *So fucking good.* I sucked harder and pressed my body firmly against hers, obeying my body's need to feel more.

Tiny moans and whimpers escaped her, but she was still asleep.

Her tight little body wasn't, though, and as I parted her legs using my knees, I was met with nothing but warm slickness as I pushed two fingers inside of her.

My cock leaked and throbbed against her thigh.

It made me smile, seeing my cum on her body.

“Oh...”

She squirmed, but not to get free. To get closer. Even in her sleep she wanted me.

I couldn't wait.

Nudging her legs farther apart, I positioned my aching cock at her tight, hot entrance.

I covered her mouth with my hand, and then I pushed hard.

“Fuck,” I exhaled sharply as I stifled Bella's shriek of shock...perhaps a little pain, too.

Completely buried, I felt myself pulse inside of her.

I moaned.

So hot. Wet. *Tight.*

“Shhh, baby girl,” I breathed out. “It's just me.”

Fuck, she feels perfect.

Wide-eyed and panting, she took in her surroundings, realizing where she was, understanding what I was doing, and then, *fuck*, she clenched down on me. *Hard.* It made me moan out loudly, and I knew the look I sent her was nothing but animalistic. Pulling out of her, I could tell she knew how I was going to enter her again.

Hard. So hard.

"Please, yes," she begged.

Sitting up slightly, I held onto her hips, allowing my fingers to dig into her soft flesh, and then I rammed my cock into her, making us both gasp. And that was how I fucked her. Hard. Relentlessly. In and out. Over and over. Deeper.

Never enough.

I gripped the headboard with both hands; I felt every muscle in my body tense as I continued abusing her pussy with my cock. Harder and deeper with every thrust, encouraged by her breathless moans, I fucked my little girl, and she loved it. I felt it. I felt it in the way she squeezed my cock, in the way the heels of her feet dug into my ass, in the way she clung to me desperately. Yes, I felt her need for me.

More. She whimpered my name.

More. She moaned my name.

More. She choked out my name.

Yes.

Take it, little one. Pleasure me.

Her juices coated us both and trickled down to her ass...

I grunted and pulled out of her.

"Get on all fours, kitten," I commanded gruffly. "I need to see that tight little ass of yours."

"Oh God, oh God, oh God," she chanted breathlessly. Over and over, as she scrambled into position and pushed out that delectable ass into the air for me. "Yes...oh, God, yes..."

"You okay, little love?" I asked quietly.

I licked my lips as I dragged the tip of my cock along her soaked pussy.

"Yes! Yes, please...I *need* you, Edward," she cried out.

Fuck. Yes. She needs me.

Again I gripped her hips, and then I filled her roughly from behind, feeling her tight pussy clamp down fiercely on my erection.

"Good," I gritted out as my head lolled back. "I need you, too, my Bella."

Thrust, moan.

Thrust, moan.

So fucking tight.

Deep, so goddamn *deep*.

I continued pounding into her, loving the sound of our skin slapping together. It obviously drew my eyes to her pert ass. Fucking perfect, and I kneaded it, gripped it, and...

My hand made impact.

"Gah!" she gasped, before choking on her breath.

I loved taking her when she was unprepared.

What I loved even more was how her body responded to me.

"You liked that, baby girl?" I groaned, continuing to fuck her soaked pussy. "You'd love a good spanking, wouldn't you? Like a kinky little slut."

I spanked her again.

And again.

She moaned wantonly, fisting the covers as she started meeting my thrusts. And while she was fisting the covers, I fisted her hair. I pulled, and the way her back arched...

Goddamn perfection.

"My dirty pussycat," I grunted, striking her left ass cheek twice with my free hand. "Fucking love it."

"Edward... *Ungh*...need...on-only you..."

Only me.

Fuck, the tensing. The coil. The way she squeezed my cock.

Closer.

I wanted more.

"Touch yourself, little one," I moaned as my own hand went straight for her wetness. "Rub your clit for me."

I ran two fingers up and down her flesh before returning them to her ass.

I slowed my movements, only a little, and let my fingers circle her back entrance.

"Oh, fuck, Edward!" she gasped, bucking wildly against me.

A smile played on my lips as I pushed one wet finger, slowly, inside her tight ass.

I groaned loudly as she tightened, tensing every muscle around me.

"Relax, baby girl...just relax and feel me," I panted. "Don't deny me."

I had to take her in the ass before this holiday was over.

With that thought, I was close to coming.

“One day soon, I’m gonna fuck your pretty ass, baby girl,” I told her breathlessly. She didn’t tense this time. Instead she moaned my name, evidently not appalled by the idea. “You like that, sweet girl? You like the idea of my cock up your ass?”

She moaned, I moaned.

We were done.

One last time, I rammed my aching cock inside of her, burying myself to the hilt. I came hard, feeling my entire being buzz with pleasure. It was everything—feeling her taking pleasure from my words, my cock, my touch, my body, and...my taking pleasure from her, her pussy, her ass, her need... I was going to take it all.

In a sweaty mess, we lay tangled together, panting our way back to coherency, but we stayed close. Neither of us moved to breathe easier or get away from the other’s sticky skin. We stayed, even holding each other tighter.

I wasn’t sure how we ended up the way we did, but after a while, I had her head resting on my chest, and I was playing with her hair as she drew lazy circles over my abs.

I was quiet, just listening to her soft sighs, as a war raged inside of me. The rational part told me it wasn’t possible. Not this soon. The part that wanted this so badly told me it was already a fact. It wasn’t about the norm, about what society said, or what was supposed to be appropriate. It was about how I felt deep inside of me. That, no matter what, I knew the truth.

As a sigh slipped through my lips, I diverted my eyes to the ceiling, one hand behind my head and the other around Bella.

This was not me. I was not one to lose control. I was never confused. Nothing ever overwhelmed me. I always had my ducks in a row.

In an attempt to get some clarity, I thought back to our time in Seattle, and I wondered that if I perhaps kept my thoughts focused on the physical pleasure, I might find that I didn't need more than that...

Christ, I wasn't even making sense in my own fucking head. Ridiculous.

Seattle.

Fuck.

I couldn't focus on only my taking her in Jasper's studio, because there was more than that.

It was also about getting to know each other, and a part of me didn't like to admit it, but it was beyond me now. There was no denying that I soaked up every word she told me. Everything she said fascinated me. Whether she talked about books, music, or art, I listened to it all, and I even shared my own thoughts with her.

We didn't broach the subject of her returning to Forks, but I knew she thought of it.

Did she want to go back?

Of course she does. She has school. Obligations.

That won't stand in my way, though. I'll still try.

One way or another.

I had already admitted to myself that I cared deeply for her...and that I wanted more from her. With her. Romantically.

But the *depth* of my feelings...

Another sigh escaped me, and I looked down to see my Bella asleep on my chest.

She was so mindblowingly beautiful. Sexy, wild—a woman. But still a bit of a sweet girl—innocent, young. But not gullible. I'd learned that. Bella was a smart young woman, an old soul. She was wise beyond her years, and I found it refreshing. I found talking to her refreshing.

I'm losing my mind over this girl.

Yes, internal war to say the least.

Bella's quiet sleep talk settled things for me, though, and with three mumbled words leaving her mouth, my inner turmoil died down.

"Don't...leave me."

I was falling in love with her.

Chapter 13

Translation

E' la mia cucina, no la loro = It's my kitchen, not theirs

Queste qua arrivano e pensano di essere a casa loro = They come here and think they own the place

Guarda che ti ho sentito = I heard that

Rilassati. E' solo per un giorno, angelo = Relax. It's just one day, angel

BPOV

I should've known from the start. I should've told him right away.

But I didn't.

Instead I let Rosalie's words echo. The words about ruining Edward's reputation.

That was unacceptable to me. No way in hell would I allow myself to be the reason for that to happen. So, I kept quiet and spent the day either alone or with Rosalie. So stupid. I thought avoiding Mr. Cullen would solve things. I thought he'd get the hint. I thought he'd leave me alone.

I never thought he'd care so much.

But he did, and in the end, I told him everything.

"I'll take care of this, little one. Don't worry, I'll fix it," he had whispered to me over and over as I cried, and I believed him instantly. I knew he could and would. I trusted him with my life.

I will simply obey and let him take over, and then I'll shower him with my gratitude.

With a sigh, I got out of bed, perhaps pouting a little for waking up alone again, and headed for the shower.

My mood wasn't the best.

And it got even worse when all I got from my parents was a text message wishing me a merry Christmas.

No call. They didn't call. They texted me. Or Mom did.

~IdC~

"Merry Christmas, honey," Mary said, smiling that motherly smile of hers as I joined them for breakfast.

"Merry Christmas, everyone," I replied, trying to smile genuinely.

They were all here, *all* of them, and I frowned as I took the seat between Alice and Emmett. It didn't feel right when I didn't sit next to Edward.

I knew I was acting like a lovesick teenager...which I was, of course.

Yes.

Lovesick.

I knew it was going to happen. I said it all along. From the beginning, I knew that Edward was a man you fell for, and...well, that was just my luck. It happened. I fell. I fell hard.

I ate in silence and kept my eyes on the plate. I just pushed food around, and I was glad that everyone else seemed to be in a great mood, because that kept them distracted. I didn't want them to ask how I was. Truth be told, I wasn't sure I could pull off another lie.

I felt eyes on me every now and then. Most likely Mr. Cullen and Mr. Whitlock, but I didn't look up. I couldn't. I felt so juvenile all of a sudden, and I didn't want them to think less of me for being so needy. Needy for him, needy for more, needy for reassurance. All of it.

I...I wanted to stay. Here. On the island.

Christ, pull yourself together, Bella.

I sighed.

Rosalie must have noticed my mood because I heard her laugh quietly, and it didn't take a genius to figure out that she was laughing at me.

It hurt.

When did I become so weak?

"Can I talk to you after breakfast?" Alice whispered closely.

I nodded and gave her a small smile, thankful for the distraction.

More petulant than ever, I cursed Rosalie to the fiery pits of hell to make myself feel better. Yes, I was losing my mind.

~IdC~

After breakfast, Alice and I made our way upstairs and into her room, and at first I thought I was going to have to drag the words out of her because we just sat on her little balcony for a long time, saying nothing.

We sat there, both of us somewhat curled up into two balls in our chairs, and I waited.

Waited some more.

I knew this was hard for her, so I gave her space, my eyes focused on the ocean view.

It was beautiful even in the winter.

"I researched it."

Okay.

Her voice was quiet and hesitant, but at least it was without disgust.

"Have you spoken to Mr. Hale about?" I asked softly, still looking straight ahead.

She was quiet again, and after a while I glanced over at her, only to be met with a thoughtful expression...directed at me.

"What?" I asked.

Tilting her head, she stayed quiet for a few seconds longer before asking, "Why do you say Mr. Hale? Or Mr. Cullen? Heck, you even call my dad Mr. Brandon and you've known him all your life."

Yep, she's studied the subject thoroughly.

I didn't know how to answer or even *what* to answer, but before I had the chance, she continued, now also looking out over the ocean. "I'm not a natural, that's for sure."

I was confused. "Natural?"

"Submissive. Apparently you can be a natural," she chuckled humorlessly, even rolling her eyes. "And I'm not."

"But does the lifestyle appeal to you?" I asked curiously.

"Maybe a *little*." She grimaced a bit. "But it's terrifying, too. There's so much."

I couldn't help but smile. Apparently, I was wrong about Alice, and I was glad for it.

"I know," I chuckled, resting my chin on my knee.

"Yes. You do."

Huh?

She had the bitch brow cocked. "Christ, you're going to have to try harder than that."

Wh...what?

"Bella, how could you know how much there is to know if you've only watched a documentary on it?"

Oh.

Crap.

"I'm a straight A student," she sighed, aggravated. "I don't get straight A's by just sitting down. I've obviously researched, and before you say anything, I know judged this whole BDSM thing before I really knew what it was, but I know now. And my research was extensive."

I cleared my throat, not really knowing what to say. "Okay...?"

"I researched art within the BDSM community." Pointed look at me.

I paled.

"We grew up together, Bella. You don't think I recognize your body even if your face is hidden? Please, I know every tiny scar on your skin. I wouldn't even have to see your hair to know it's you. Don't you remember being clumsy growing up, huh? And don't you remember that I was there every single time?"

I gulped.

No.

Oh, God. Not again.

"The two tiny birthmarks on your hip? I know about them. The scar on your forearm from when you fell on the rocks in La Push when we were

little? I know about that, too. Oh, and the scar above your knee that you got when you were seven and fell off your bike shows very well... when you kneel on the floor... wearing nothing but a damn thong.”

She knows. Oh, God, she knows. Everything.

“Last question, Bella. Who are Jazz Whitlock and Alec Peters?”

EPOV

I was furious again by the time breakfast was over.

Not at my Bella.

At Rosalie.

It was time to deal with it. I couldn't wait until after Christmas, that much was now clear, because Bella was absolutely miserable at the table.

I will have none of that in my house.

So, when Rosalie announced that she was going for a swim in the pool, I followed her into the house.

“Rosalie?” I inquired, and she stopped as she reached the stairs. I pointed at the door to my office. “A word, please. Now.”

“Um, I was just gonna go change into a biki-”

I cut her off and motioned for her to follow me. “I wasn't asking.”

By the time I was behind my desk, sitting in my chair, Rosalie was nervous to say the least.

“Close and lock the door before you have a seat.”

She obeyed.

I wanted to see her sweat for a while, so I powered up my computer and focused on that for a minute or two before returning my attention to a terrified Rosalie.

She was looking anywhere but at me and began chewing on her lip.

It didn't become her at all.

"So..." I leaned forward and laced my hands together on the desk. "Tell me about Gianna."

Her eyes widened, and I took pleasure in seeing her shrink.

"What you're doing to Bella is downright despicable," I told her. "Juvenile, repulsive, not to mention illegal. I hope you have one hell of an explanation."

She sat there and just stared at me wide-eyed, and after a few moments, I was getting frustrated.

I doubted Jasper would appreciate having his sister thrown off the island without notice, so I cocked an eyebrow, silently telling her to start talking.

Slumping back in her chair, she grumbled like the true child she was proving to be. "She fucking told you. Can't believe it."

"Watch your mouth in my presence. My tolerance is growing thin, and when it comes to Bella, it's damn near non-existent."

"You can't talk to me like that," she snapped. "Jasper would never allow it!"

"Oh, but he would, Rosalie," I replied dryly. "I'm pretty certain he would be appalled by your behavior. All this to escape college? Really?"

She didn't answer, so I continued. "If you have an issue with school, then you better take it up with your brother. I will not have you blackmail Isabella. And to think that I wouldn't notice? That's ridiculous." I scoffed, shaking my head at all of this. This situation, this clueless little girl, all of it. "I must ask: why on *earth* would I agree to socialize with your boss? And I'm curious," I chuckled. "How would you even go about it?"

"You don't seem to have anything planned," I added. "You've made so many slips already, Rosalie, and it would have been amusing to sit back and watch—had it not been for the fact that you hurt someone I care deeply for."

"Care deeply for?!" she exclaimed in disbelief. "Bella's an eighteen-year-old kid like me—"

"You will *not* place her in the same category as you," I seethed. "Or in any category for that matter. What Bella is to me, or what she is to anyone, is not any of your concern. Have I made myself clear?"

I could not for the life of me understand this. Any of this.

I was actually sitting here. On *Christmas*. Having this *absurd* discussion. With my friend's baby sister.

This was beyond insane. I was sure of it.

"You know what, Edward? You don't scare me," she said, trying but failing miserably to look confident. "There's nothing you can do to stop me."

This was quite amusing, I had to admit. Insane, yes, but amusing.

"You have no idea what I'm capable of, you foolish girl," I chuckled as I leaned back in my chair. "Let me get this straight. You know that Isabella is your brother's model, and you have a photo of her coming out of my room. Is that correct?"

She smiled smugly. "Yeah, in nothing but pajamas."

I'll wipe that smugness right off.

"Right, in nothing but pajamas." I nodded once. "So, that's the ace up your sleeve. Anything else?"

She leaned back in her chair, too, and tried to keep her calm façade in place. She was not a good actress. "I don't need anything else."

"On the contrary," I told her. "You're going to need much more than that if you want to get away with this. Because here I was, thinking we could discuss this as adults, but clearly I was foolish for thinking that." I paused. "You're very childish, Rosalie, and you give me no choice but to meet you at your level." Her calm was slipping. I smiled. "One phone call is what it would take me to have you fired from Volturi. One," I emphasized, holding up a finger.

"You...you're bluffing—that's a lie," she said, not sounding so confident anymore. "My position is secured with Gianna."

"Perhaps," I conceded, shrugging. "To be honest, I don't even know who this Gianna is, but that only tells me how insignificant she is, because I only know the board at Volturi."

At my mention of the board, Rosalie paled.

"You know of my company," I continued. "And though I'm not sure you are aware of how successful my business is—"

Rosalie had the nerve to cut *me* off. "I know very well how popular your pretentious Cullen Arts is, okay?" she snapped.

Christ, I could just wring her neck.

"Good," I gritted out, ignoring her remark about my company. "I hope you know then how severe it would be if I started denying artists wanting to show their work in my galleries if they used models from Volturi."

The look she gave me told me how very well she knew and understood.

Good.

"With my contacts, I can assure you that Gianna's position is not secure, and if her position isn't secured, then yours isn't either. See where I'm going with this?"

She knew. She realized.

"I have made myself clear, yes?"

She nodded in defeat.

What a brat...

~IdC~

"There you are!" Mary grinned as I entered the kitchen.

I shot an amused look over at Carmen who glared at me in return.

She did not appreciate others in her kitchen.

"Here I am, yes," I chuckled as I walked over to Mary and Liz. "And what are you doing this," I checked my watch, "huh, where did the time go?" *Didn't we just have breakfast?* "I suppose you're preparing dinner, then."

This was our tradition every Christmas. We ate dinner early, around two o'clock, in fact. Then after dinner we would all move into the living room to spend the rest of the day in there.

"Yep." Mary was beaming. "And you know very well that you're not allowed in our kitchen while we're cooking."

"E' la mia cucina, no la loro," Carmen muttered under her breath and glared at Mary and Liz, both of whom remained oblivious, thankfully. *"Queste qua arrivano e pensano di essere a casa loro."*

I flashed her a grin over my shoulder. *"Guarda che ti ho sentito,"* I admonished playfully. *"Rilassati. E' solo per un giorno, angelo."*

She just huffed before returning to her mixing bowl.

Christmas wasn't Christmas without Carmen's struffoli.

Damn, just thinking about them made my mouth water. Every time I'd beg her to make them for me, she'd ask "Is it Christmas?" with an eyebrow cocked. According to her, you only ate struffoli at Christmas.

"I want mine with honey *and* cinnamon," I told her...as if she didn't already know. And with the look she gave me...yes, I rolled my eyes at myself.

"Such a boy sometimes," she chuckled quietly.

I shrugged. When it came to her cooking, I was eager and *very* appreciative.

"You're still here?" Liz asked me. "We've already kicked out Jack and Garrett. Don't think we won't do the same with you just because it's your house. Now, get going, Cullen."

"Yes, ma'am." I snickered. "But first, have you seen Jasper by any chance?"

"By the pool, I think." Mary nodded. "He's very quiet, that one."

"Always reading," Liz added, agreeing with Mary.

They continued talking about Jasper so I just made my way out of the kitchen. Sure enough, Jazz was on the terrace reading a book.

I wouldn't call him quiet, *per se*, but I knew he wanted this time to relax, because his fall had been busy to say the least. His work with Bella wasn't his only project—far from it.

"Everything all right?" I asked, sitting down in the lounge next to his.

He nodded and closed his book. "Absolutely. Thinking about moving to California," he joked. "The weather is certainly appealing."

I agreed. Even though the sun wasn't out right now, it wasn't that cold. Especially not in my well-shielded garden. The winds never reached in, and for that I was thankful, because that was why I didn't care for Chicago. I'd always wanted heat.

Deciding to sit back and enjoy the day, I made myself comfortable in the lounge, glad I settled for loose-fitting slacks and a simple pullover today. Again with Bella in mind, I realized. There was no denying that.

She seemed to like black or grey slacks and pullovers on me, and it had me wondering how far I would take it to please her.

I was by *no* means whipped, and if Bella loved the color orange, I certainly wouldn't dress in it, but I still wanted her to appreciate my looks. Most likely the same way I knew she dressed for *me*. Simple clothes that allowed for her beauty to be in focus. No makeup.

It made me smile and I hoped she'd appreciate the gift I bought her in Seattle.

It was a gift I'd decided to give her tonight. Behind closed doors.

Gifts, I sighed to myself. Always a struggle. Honestly, I didn't enjoy it one bit. Not that I didn't want to buy my close ones presents, because I did, I supposed, but it was pretty difficult. I always ended up with jewelry—a safe choice. Because I didn't know what to buy otherwise. Not necessarily because we had all grown apart over the years, though that was a factor. It was more about the fact that we all had what we wanted, and I found it utterly ridiculous to buy things just for the sake of it. *But* it was tradition, which was why I had my traditional collection of blue boxes in my office at the moment.

Hell, I'd even bought Bella something before I'd even met her, only to play it safe. I didn't exactly want Alice's friend to feel left out.

Little did I know at the time that she's now the last one I would leave out.

A loud splash got my attention, and I chuckled as I saw Emmett resurfacing.

"Mr. C! Come on, I know you want in!" he bellowed.

I laughed quietly. "It's warm, Emmett, but not that warm."

"Aw, don't be a puss- I mean, don't be a wimp! Uh, hey, Dad."

"Nice save," I chuckled, watching Garrett and Jack coming out of the house.

"Come on, Edward." Jack grinned. "We're getting in, too."

"Every year, man," Garrett added. "It's tradition."

I sighed, not really eager. I had already taken my morning swim, and considering that Emmett was in the pool, I knew I was in trouble. But when I saw Ali, Bella, and Rosalie come out, dressed in bikinis, my mind was made up.

If Bella was going in, then so was I.

"What the hell," I conceded. "I'll go change."

~IdC~

Once I had changed, I made my way downstairs again, hoping to catch my sweet Bella's reaction to me in nothing but swim trunks. She'd seen me naked, yes, I was aware. But judging by her reaction to how I looked after my morning run yesterday...

"Tesoro! Phone for you," Carmen said, walking toward me.

I frowned. "No calls. I'm on holiday, Carmen. You know that."

"He said it was an emergency," she replied, handing me the phone before returning to the kitchen.

Sighing, I brought the phone to my ear. "Edward Cullen speaking."

"Edward Cullen? My name is Charles Swan; I'm Bella's father. You know her? I mean, she's there on your uh, island, yes?"

Bella's father.

I chuckled internally, wondering what he would think if he knew just how well I knew his daughter.

"Yes, she's here. You wish to speak with her?" I assumed.

"Yes, thank you. And also, is there a Gianna Marin there? I was contacted by her, and I wondered if she's one of your guests."

Gianna Marin.

Marcus Marin's relative? Marcus, as in Marcus the CEO of Volturi, Inc?

Fuck.

"No, I'm afraid there's no Gianna here," I told him, remaining calm. But on the inside, I was raging. There was no way I'd keep this from Jazz now. He needed to know what his sister had done. Evidently, I hadn't made myself clear to her, after all.

"Oh, then...how could she—this Gianna—send me a picture of my daughter if she's not there?"

My eyes widened.

Chapter 14

EPOV

Pressing the mute button on the phone, I walked out on the patio. A dip in the pool was truly the last thing on my mind now.

"Isabella," I called. She looked up from where she sat by the pool. "Phone for you."

She looked confused as she headed over and even more so when I followed her after I'd given her the phone.

"The office," I said, motioning for her to follow. "It's your father, and there might be a problem." Once we were inside my office, I locked the door. "I want you to put him on speaker. I hope that's okay."

I couldn't demand it, but I really needed to know what I now most likely had to fix.

"Um, okay," she mumbled, confused. I took my seat behind my desk, and she sat down across from me. "What's wrong?"

I shook my head. "Not sure yet, but it has to do with Rosalie and her boss."

Bella's face fell. It only fueled my rage.

"Don't worry, Isabella. Whatever it is, I *will* take care of it. Understood?"

Chewing her lip, she nodded minutely as she stared at the phone.

"Come here, little one," I murmured.

She didn't hesitate. In fact, she was very eager to reach me, and once she was on my lap, I felt her relax at least a little.

"Go on; talk to him. And don't mention I'm here," I urged softly.

With a sigh, she obeyed and pushed down the speaker button on the phone.

"Dad?"

I held her, hating the apprehension and fear in her voice.

"Are you alone?"

Bella tensed at the coldness of her father's tone, and it was quite obvious that he was furious with whatever Gianna had sent him. I couldn't wait to deal with her. Her *and* Rosalie.

"Um, yes," Bella lied, resting her head on my shoulder.

"Good. I would ask if you're enjoying your holiday, but I think we both know that you are. A little too well, huh? Seriously, Isabella, why has someone sent me a picture of you sneaking out of a room? And why does someone have a reason to say that you have met someone. Someone you should not be with? Answer me!"

I had to bite my tongue, because every fiber of my being screamed to tell this man to fuck off. I couldn't, of course, nor could I tell him how to speak to my Bella. But fuck me if I wasn't furious again.

How much would Bella have to suffer?

Christ, all because of me?

I cannot allow that.

"I...I don't u-understand," Bella replied shakily.

I held her closer to me, kissed her temple, rubbed her thighs, hoping it would relax her, hoping she understood that I was here for her.

"You don't understand?! Well, allow me to explain then!" he said angrily, which pissed me off further. *"This morning, I checked my email and found a message from some Gianna Marin. There was a blurry image of my daughter leaving a room in some barely-there sleepwear, and then a message. Want to know what it said, Bells?! It said that you were some man's dirty secret! You have one minute to explain yourself, young lady!"*

Bella gasped before tears flooded her beautiful eyes, and I couldn't stop myself.

I hung up the fucking phone and turned it off.

"Bella, my little sweetheart, listen to me. Don't let this get to you," I murmured, holding her tightly as she cried. "Shhh, baby girl—I'll fix this. I promise."

BPOV

Once again, I found myself clinging onto Edward as he tried to stop my sobbing.

I felt like such a child, and I wanted to be a woman for him. Not some uncontrollable teen with too much shit going on. Truth be told, I had no idea why Edward hadn't just dropped me yet. I would.

Eventually my crying stopped, and Edward continued holding me, comforting me, but how long would he be there? How long until he said "enough is enough"?

"You're too beautiful to cry, little love," he said softly and cradled my face. "Now...tell me how to make things better. Anything."

This only brought a fresh set of tears to my eyes.

Shaking my head, because there was nothing he could do, I just wrapped my arms around him.

So much had changed. What used to be this massive secret was now something I was too tired to care about. I didn't care who knew about me or knew what I did with my free time. So many knew already anyway. Why keep up the charade?

Alice proved to be supportive and understanding—not what I had expected at all. She did tell me that if she had found out about my modeling before we arrived at Isla de Cullen, she would've freaked out. And a part of her was still apprehensive, but she was still there. For me. She didn't accuse me of anything; she didn't barge out.

She didn't blackmail me.

She was pissed. There was no denying that, and she was rightfully upset, because I had hid the truth about my relationship with Mr. Whitlock from her. Had I been a good friend, I would've told her what I knew from the start. But there were so many obstacles and what ifs, and I was glad that Alice saw that, too. Instead we just hugged and said all was forgiven. Well, I apologized profusely, and she was the one saying all was forgiven.

In the end, I had told her about everything. Explained everything—except the part where Edward was involved. That was still secret, and a part of me felt guilty about that. A big part, actually, but though I had underestimated her with my modeling, I highly doubted she'd react in a good way if she knew about my...fling?...with Edward.

Lastly there were my parents. I was only freaked out about because they supported me. I lived in their house under their rules. They controlled my credit cards, paid for my car, and...everything. They were in charge.

It was obvious that the picture my father now had was the one Rosalie took of me, but what I didn't understand was how he got it. Well, that wasn't entirely true. Rosalie sent it to Gianna, of course, who sent it to my father. But I didn't understand *why*. Why would Gianna send it to him?

Christ, so much shit from a woman I don't even know.

And Rosalie...why would she do this? Why send Gianna that picture before she could force me to agree to her plans?

I just didn't understand anything!

"Can you tell me what you're thinking, baby girl?" Edward asked softly, dropping soft kisses on my shoulder.

It made me shiver and tighten my hold on him.

"Don't even know where to start," I mumbled.

I loved the crook of his neck. Warm. Safe. Smelled so good.

"Hey," he whispered, "look at me, kitten." Again he cradled my face. All I saw in his beautiful eyes was comfort. I needed it. Him. I needed him. "I mean it, Isabella. Whatever you need, okay?"

Instead of letting me answer, he leaned in and kissed me. Gently at first, slowly, lips moving. Then his tongue swiped over my bottom lip. It made me moan quietly, and I opened up for him, needing more, so much more. But that was Mr. Cullen. You always wanted more from him.

He groaned in my mouth.

I hitched a leg over him, straddling him, desperate to feel more. More of him. All of him.

I was wet. Feeling him getting harder and harder by the second.

"My little cocktease," he moaned. His mouth latched onto my collarbone, followed by his hands on my breasts. "Shouldn't we be talking?"

He pinched both my nipples harshly, making me gasp in shock and pleasure.

"Talking comes later," I breathed out, letting my head fall back.

I was suddenly very thankful that we were only dressed in swimwear. Edward was, too, as he flicked my bikini top off before he captured my left nipple between his teeth.

I arched into him and felt his hard cock pressed against my pussy.

"So hard," I moaned.

"Yes, and you're going to take care of that, little one," he groaned, emphasizing *that* with a thrust. "But first I need to lick your sweet pussy."

Next thing I knew, I was lifted up until my ass hit the edge of his desk, and my bikini bottoms were shoved down.

Oh, my.

Propped up on my elbows, and with my feet on the armrests of his chair, I watched as he stared hungrily at my pussy.

“My, my, little one...you’re practically sopping for me,” he cooed as he traced a single finger along my slit. “I love this, baby girl. To have you this way...bare, spread, and fucking desperate.”

I bit down on my lip and stared with wide eyes as Edward leaned down and parted my slick lips with his tongue. When he reached my clit, he sucked hard on it, making my hips buck wildly against him.

“Be still,” he commanded as he spanked my pussy.

Easier said than done!

He grabbed my ass, shifting me closer to him, his mouth, and I cried out as his tongue entered me all while his fingers rubbed my throbbing clit. So wet. I was so wet for him, aching, needing. He wasn’t joking. I truly was desperate for him. Teasing me, he spread my arousal around with his fingers and tongue—from my clit, all the way to my ass, he teased me.

I moaned.

Then I cried out loudly when I felt his index finger enter my ass. Slowly. Using my wetness to guide him in.

It stung.

He watched me. I watched him.

Ow. I cringed. Held my breath.

“Relax, kitten,” he told me with a kiss on my clit. “I need to get you ready for my cock.”

I shivered.

It was his words. I loved his words. His husky voice.

He withdrew his finger and looked up at me. "Stand up, little one. I want you bent over my desk."

Oh!

He stood up, pushed his chair aside, and lowered his shorts all the way. I bit down harshly on my lip to stop the whimper from escaping. The sight of his fat cock...*Jesus*.

"I don't have all day, Isabella," he said impatiently. "Now, bend over for me."

I quickly scrambled to my feet, obeying him, and bent over the desk. And since I knew Mr. Cullen, I gripped the edge of the desk, knowing very well that he never went for slow.

"*That,*" he said as he spanked my ass, "was for keeping me waiting. Don't ever do it again. Am I making myself clear?"

"Y-yes, Sir," I whimpered, and I was confused by the feelings rushing through me. I was more desperate than ever. There was something...*surging*...inside me. Adrenaline. It was breath-hitching. I found myself wanting more. More of this Edward. More of this man in charge.

"Look at that," he muttered as he dragged his cock along my slit. "All that sweet nectar going to waste. Just trickling down."

Oh, fuck.

"Was it because I spanked you, hmm?" he cooed closely. "Are you this fucking soaked because I spanked your little ass?"

Insanity. I was going insane. He was close. Close enough that I felt his body heat, but not close enough to touch me.

"Answer me!"

Oh, God!

"Yes!" I practically sobbed out. "Please, Edward! Please! Just..." *fuck me!*

Shaking. Oh, God, I was shaking.

He chuckled as he gripped my hips. Chuckled.

He owned me.

Then, without warning, he slammed into me from behind.

I screamed, but it was muffled by Edward's hand. I didn't even know how it got there.

It hurt.

It hurt so good.

It wasn't just his cock pulsing inside me.

It was also two fingers in my ass.

Stretching me.

I couldn't breathe. Could only clench down.

There was pain. So much pain. But I couldn't understand it, because I still wanted more. More of that kind of pain. The kind that left me breathless and eager. The kind that told me how much in charge Mr. Cullen was. The kind that shot through me, rocked through my body, in waves, intensifying the pleasure.

"That's it, little one," Edward gritted out through clenched teeth. "Squeeze my cock. Fuck...always so goddamn good," he groaned loudly. "Addictive motherfucking pussy."

I whimpered.

"Christ, I can't wait to fuck your ass."

I started panting, eyes closed, hands balled into fists, eyes stinging with tears, and I just...loved it all. It was mindblowing. I felt so much. All of him. Filling me. He fucked me slowly and deeply, keeping the same pace with his fingers, and eventually I got used to it. I was able to relax around him, and it helped further. Soon, there was nothing but pure pleasure.

"You're such a good little slut for me, Bella," he whispered darkly in my ear. "Always taking my cock perfectly."

His words set me on fire.

I wanted to be his good slut forever.

"Anything for you, Edward," I vowed breathlessly, but I wanted, needed, to get it out. It was my truth. "I wanna...*ungh*...be good...for you..."

I choked on a moan when I felt a harsh sting at the back of my head, and it was Mr. Cullen. He'd pulled my hair back, and I arched backward as he leaned forward.

So much happening at once.

His thick cock inside my pussy.

His fingers in my ass.

His hand tugging my hair, holding me in place.

His breath ghosting over my neck.

His body heat.

He stilled all movement, and once again I was met with his two sides. The sides that always contradicted each other and worked perfectly together at the same time. Opposites, yet synched.

The way he was harsh, unyielding, demanding, rough, and relentless.

And.

The way he murmured sweet words, whispered softly, cooed, caressed, and took care of me.

Two sides. I craved them both.

"You're perfect for me, little love," he whispered softly, letting his lips brush over my earlobe. "Nothing but pure perfection."

My eyes welled up.

I was so in love with him.

The hand holding my hair let go and snaked around my waist, up, up, up until he cupped my breast, squeezed it, pinched my nipple. He kissed my neck hotly, wetly, and he started moving inside me again. Keeping me close to his body, he moved inside of me. Deep strokes. Long thrusts. Oh, so deep. Pleasure. Passion.

"Edward," I moaned, snaking my arm around his neck.

Closer.

Scorching.

My head fell back against his collarbone. My eyes closed.

Sizzling.

"That's it, baby girl...just feel me...feel my cock...feel what I'm doing to you."

I did.

I felt it all.

Sensory overload.

My muscles tensed.

"Yes, come, Bella," he moaned. "Milk my cock."

The waves of pleasure ripped through my body. Rushed, surged. It was hot like fire. Refreshing like a cool breeze. Contradictory. All there. Making me incoherent. Nothing made sense, but it felt so good. So good.

Edward was next, and as my orgasm subsided, he rammed his cock inside me and spilled into me.

We pulsed together, breathed together, regained our bearings together.

Slumped down in his chair together.

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"Let me keep you, baby girl," he whispered so quietly I almost missed it.

But I didn't.

I heard it, and warmth spread in my body.

He wanted more?

He could have all of me.

It hadn't even taken two weeks.

I already belonged to him, and I was about to tell him just that...as someone knocked on the door.

Edward, being the confident man he was, didn't even freeze, curse, or panic. He simply gestured for me to stand up, which I did, and I couldn't help but to whimper as he pulled out of me.

"Who is it?" Edward barked out as I put on my bikini bottoms again.

EPOV

"Who is it?" I asked, unable to hide my frustration.

I quickly handed Bella her bikini top before putting on my trunks.

"It's Carmen, Tesoro."

Oh.

Bella visibly relaxed, making me smile a little at her.

I walked over to open the door as she sat down in one of the two chairs in front of my desk.

"May I just check my email, Edward?" she asked softly.

I wondered if she was aware of the change. The change from Mr. Cullen to Edward. Regardless, I liked it immensely.

"Of course." I smiled at her before opening the door.

My smile morphed into a frown when I saw Carmen's expression. Worry, concern. A look that didn't become her.

I asked her what was wrong. *"Che cosa?"*

Her eyes flashed to mine, and she whispered, "It is about Bellezza's father."

I sighed heavily, resigned.

"Go on," I muttered, preparing myself for even more to handle.

But for Bella...there was no limit. I'd do anything.

"I was on patio," she continued in a hushed voice. "Mr. Swan called Jack. They on the phone *now*, Tesoro."

Fuck.

Running a hand through my hair, I looked over my shoulder, glad to see Bella occupied on the computer.

"All right." I sighed again and turned back to Carmen. "Could you keep Mary and Liz busy? I don't want Jack to turn to Mary the first thing he does."

"They still in my kitchen," she grumbled. "Very busy already."

"Okay," I chuckled. "I'll right out. And *grazie*, Carmen, really."

"Anything for Tesoro and Bellezza." She winked before she left.

Anything for Tesoro and Bellezza.

I closed the door to my office again. "I believe that woman needs a raise," I mumbled under my breath.

I figured there was no point in stalling, so I told Bella about what Carmen had said, and I wasn't surprised when my sweet girl started crying again. And again I held her until she had calmed down, though I had to shush her firmly when she started apologizing, because it was utterly ridiculous. The girl had nothing to apologize for, and I refused to hear about it.

When she had calmed down once more, I told her to keep Carmen company in the kitchen, because I didn't want her too close to Jack in case he knew something and would approach her. Luckily, Bella was eager to comply.

Soon after, Bella left my office and I sat down in my chair, needing to organize my thoughts. Much had to be dealt with now, and I wanted it done as smoothly as possible.

I needed to find out what Jack knew.

I needed to speak to that brat named Rosalie again.

Lastly, I needed to speak to Jazz.

What a lovely Christmas, I thought to myself with an incredulous chuckle.
Not a dull moment this year, that's for certain.

A knock on my door interrupted my thoughts.

"Come on in," I said and turned my attention to the computer.

One thing was clear.

I needed Jenks.

"Tell me it's not true, Edward. Christ, you could be her father!"

Chapter 15

EPOV

"Tell me it's not true, Edward. Christ, you could be her father!"

With a very heavy sigh, I looked up from my computer, not at all surprised to see Jack stand there. It was almost expected, though I wished I had more time. But he was here now and it was evident that he knew about the damn picture.

"Have a seat, Jack," I replied dryly, leaning back in my chair.

"Is it true, Edward?" he asked, almost pleadingly, as he walked over to sit down. "Bella's dad called me, completely freaked out, and then he sent some image that would apparently explain the whole thing." He shook his head and looked down as if to gather his thoughts. I let him. He needed to get this out, so I just waited. After sighing tiredly, he continued. "I recognized the damn side table with the flowers you have outside your room."

He wasn't done. "So, when Charles told me what Bella might be up to, you have to understand that I almost had a goddamn heart attack when I realized which room she was leaving in that fucking picture."

Jack Brandon never curses.

Well, that used to be the case.

"Are you just going to sit there and say nothing?" he snapped.

I cocked an eyebrow. "So, you're done then?"

"Yes, I'm done, Edward! Will you please tell me there's some huge misunderstanding?!"

"I can't do that, Jack." I shrugged. "Not that it's any of your concern," I added pointedly. "But yes, Isabella has spent the past few nights with me."

No need to tell him just how much time she's spent with me.

Jack was at a loss for words, most likely because I wasn't embarrassed, nor did I try to hide it. I went on. "What Bella and I do is obviously our business, but I hope you have enough faith in me to know that everything is mutual." I shrugged again. "She was attracted to me; I was attracted to her. We're both consenting adults. I see no issue, and neither does Bella."

"Consenting adults." He scoffed and rolled his eyes at me. I did *not* appreciate the gesture. "Barely, Edward. She just turned eighteen in September, for crying out loud!"

"I'm very aware."

He stood up from the chair and started pacing.

"I can't believe this," he muttered to himself. Then he stopped short and looked at me. "When did this," he waved his hand, "whatever it is, start?"

"I don't see how that's any of your business," I told him.

"Oh, but it is, Edward." He was fuming. "Because I'm the one dealing with my daughter's best friend's father at the moment. Not you!"

"I apologize for getting you involved," I said calmly. "But you have no obligation whatsoever to deal with Isabella's father. I'm very capable of solving this on my own."

"Are you?" He scoffed again. "Then please tell me how a picture like that could even end up in Charles' hands. Charles, who is currently on a cruise in Greece—that's halfway around the fucking world."

I closed my eyes, pinched the bridge of my nose, and fought my temper.

"I'm not a child," I gritted out, keeping my eyes closed. "I know very well where Greece is, so don't ridicule me. And as for the damn picture: believe me, I'm handling it. We *just* found out."

Christ.

Opening my eyes, I found Jack pacing again, and sure, I knew he had questions. Most likely very many of them, but there was no way I could tell him anything. Firstly, because I had too many questions of my own, and secondly, because I was not betraying the trust Bella and I had in one another.

"Mary would freak out if she found out," he muttered.

"Then I suggest you keep quiet about this," I said. "It's not for you to tell, regardless. This is between Bella and me, and I assure you that I'm more than happy to deal with her father.

"What did you tell him, by the way?" I asked. "I need to know what I have to work with."

Chuckling humorlessly, he replied. "I told him that I would get to the bottom of this, and then I would call him tomorrow."

I nodded. "I'll take it from here."

Ten minutes later, Jack left my office, obviously not happy with me, but I would have to worry about that later. At least he wouldn't talk, and I knew that was important for Bella. And speaking of Bella, I decided to keep this from her until tomorrow, because this day had already been too much for her.

~IdC~

Christmas dinner was an odd affair.

The ones completely oblivious were Garrett, Liz, and Emmett.

Jack was moody, which pissed me off because that alerted Mary to that something was not entirely right. Rosalie avoided me for all she was

worth, and that had me wondering if she knew that Gianna Marin had sent that image to Bella's father. Carmen sent me looks of concern and, *bless her heart*, she tried to keep everyone occupied with mindless chatter. Alice was stiff as a stick, as was Bella. Jazz sent me questioning looks and I was...goddamn, I was stressed out.

There was much to deal with and I would've preferred to work alone. Not on Christmas. Not when my oldest friends were here. Not when so much depended on silence, and not when my Bella was worried sick.

~IdC~

If I thought dinner was tedious, it was nothing compared to the long hours that followed in the living room.

Carmen said her goodbyes, stating that wanted to spend some time with the other staff before she called her children back in Italy. I gave her a Christmas bonus that she couldn't deserve more, to which she told me that her struffoli would make an appearance when all this had blown over. That was perhaps the first smile I cracked this evening.

Thankfully, Jack got his act together, which calmed Mary down, and that made me relax a little at least, because that left my old friends occupied.

Once we had gotten through the gift exchange, there wasn't much to do but pretend that I was interested in everything that went on around me. But all I wanted was to have Bella to myself. I wanted to reassure her that I was taking care of everything, because it was obvious that she was in need of just that: reassurance.

Mary noticed Bella's somber mood, but luckily everyone believed Bella when she blamed homesickness once more. Everyone but me and Jasper, of course...and most likely Rosalie who seemed to be quite cozy with Emmett.

That infuriated me.

If anyone deserved discomfort, it was her. Not my Bella.

All in good time.

Hours later, Bella and Alice said goodnight, and she gave me a small smile as she passed me, leaving me confused. But with Rosalie around, I couldn't exactly follow Bella immediately.

Christ, she has hell to pay.

I couldn't believe that an eighteen-year-old girl had control over my life, especially not when it was not with my consent, as was the case with Bella. Because it was quite clear that Bella had a large hold on me, but as long as my hold on her was equally strong, I didn't mind at all. Rosalie was another matter entirely. *One that I can't wait to deal with.*

When Jasper announced that he was going to bed, I followed suit and said goodnight to everyone before heading upstairs.

Finally.

Another Christmas had passed. More cufflinks, golfclubs, bottles of scotch, and fancy office supplies. In other words, things I could not care less about.

When I reached the landing, my head snapped up as something moved in my periphery; it was Alice. I had to chuckle when I saw her sneak into Jasper's bedroom.

I supposed things were working out for them.

"Something funny?" Jazz asked, oblivious to what I had just seen as he came up from behind me.

"No." I snickered, waving him off. "Have a good night, Jasper."

With that said, I headed for my own bedroom.

Once I was inside, I closed and locked the door, and then I turned to the bed.

She was there. Sitting on the edge of the bed, wearing nothing but a silky, dark blue robe that ended mid-thigh.

Exquisite.

"Well, isn't this a lovely surprise," I murmured huskily.

With a soft smile, she approached me, not stopping until she was standing right in front of me. She started unbuttoning my shirt. "I want to show you something," she said, eyes on my shirt. "I want to show you how thankful I am for everything you've done and continue to do."

She was breathtaking.

Her hands slid up my chest. She watched the movement, and then as they went under my shirt, she looked up at me with her big eyes. "I want to take care of you, too," she whispered, and then my shirt ended up on the floor. "I heard you earlier...in the office. You want to keep me?"

She'd heard me.

She didn't stop. Once my shirt was gone, she started unzipping my pants. "I don't know how it would work," she mumbled quietly. My breathing sped up. "I trust you, though. And if you want me for more, I'm yours, because it's what I want, too."

I swallowed hard, feeling nothing but love for this girl.

"If you believe it can work, if you think we can *make* it work...then I believe it, too." Slowly, she pushed my pants down over my hips. "I've never wanted anything more...than to be yours."

I was in awe of her.

In love with her.

Rendered speechless, I wordlessly stepped out of my pants. Bella straightened up again, now turning her attention to my undershirt. When she couldn't reach, I took over and pulled it over my head, dropping the cotton tank on the floor.

Then, with her fingers tracing the waistband of my black boxers, she looked up at me again. "In other words, I'm yours as long as you'll have me, and I will show you how thankful and grateful I am every day I can."

I stared at her, studied her, let her words settle inside me.

She was offering herself to me.

Completely.

"I want all of you," I heard myself say. "I want you to be mine. Period."

"Then I'm yours," she replied simply. "I trust you to make decisions based on what's best for you, me, us."

I tilted my head slightly, still studying her, and I grasped her chin.

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"Mine."

It felt indescribably good to say it out loud, knowing that it wasn't temporary. It was more. So much more. Permanent.

It felt heavenly.

"Yours," she breathed out.

My sweet, sweet little Bella.

I knew that there was so much to be dealt with, but I would take care of it all, and as I kissed her once, gently, I knew what my first action would be.

"Um, I uh...I bought something in Seattle," she said then, backing away from me before turning around. "It's not much but, maybe you'll like it?"

I chuckled, shaking my head in amusement at her. She had just put herself on the line without batting an eyelash, but this made her nervous? A gift?

She was rummaging through a bag next to the bed, and I walked closer, needing to feel her, all of her, so I didn't stop until I was right behind her. Gently I grabbed her hips and felt the silk of her robe. I didn't want it there. I wanted her naked.

I heard her breathing hitch as my hands went under the robe.

My sweet girl wasn't wearing anything underneath.

"My sexy kitten," I whispered as I caressed her ass.

She stood up, having found whatever she was looking for, and turned in my arms and presented me with a rather large black box.

"Um, it's my real Christmas gift for you," she mumbled shyly.

I brushed my knuckles over her rosy cheek. "Exquisite."

With a curious smile, I took the box and opened it.

Good God, I groaned internally.

"Mr. Whitlock helped me," she said, pointing to the album.

The black album had "*Isabella before...*" embossed in dark red, and I immediately knew it held photos of her. Photos of her before I entered her life, before I became a part of the photos.

I opened it, flipped through it, unable to wait even though I would study each and every one of them more closely later. There were many of them. So many. All flawless. Each page was made of thick black paper and held two photos of her, all in black and white. So gorgeous. All mine.

"Thank you, baby girl," I murmured, tilting her face up. "It's a beautiful gift."

Another blush crept forward, and I brushed my thumb over her cheek before letting her go.

"I suppose it's my turn now." I winked.

"Your turn?"

I smirked. "Christmas present, of course."

After setting the album down, I walked over to my safe where I had her gift, and now that our relationship had been defined, I was confident that she would appreciate it.

"But...you've already given me my gift," I heard her say.

I chuckled. "The gift I gave you downstairs was nothing, little one."

She was staring at me in disbelief when I turned around and walked toward her again, so I explained. "My personal shopper at Tiffany picks

out gifts every year, which means that the bracelet I gave you is ridiculously insignificant because I only want you to wear what I pick out." Standing before her now, I added, "You're mine now, little love. That means I will be in charge of you, yes?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied, and this time her blush reached her chest. My sweet girl was getting a little horny. "I want nothing less."

"Good girl," I murmured, letting my fingers untie her robe. "Then you'll let me buy you things I wish to see you in."

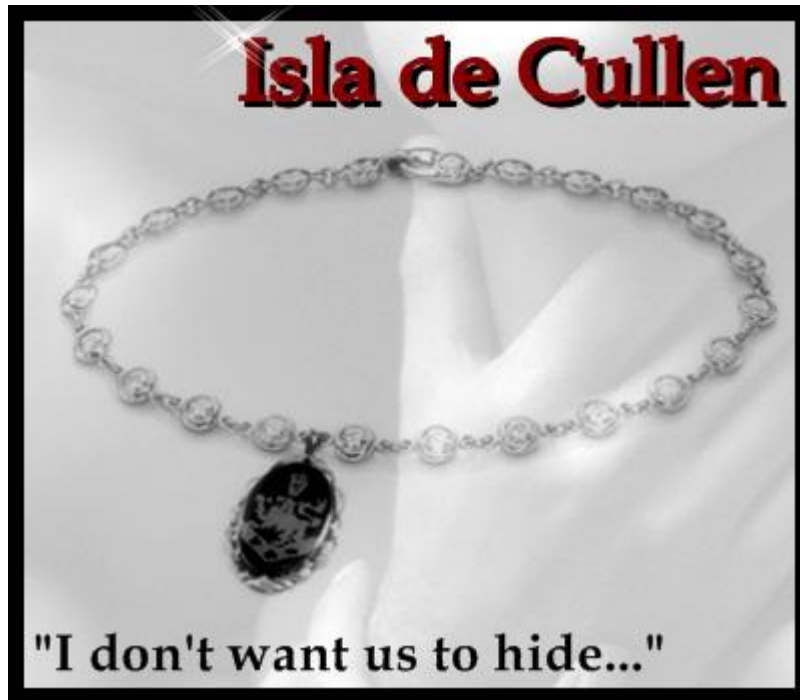
She understood what I wanted and shrugged out of the robe, leaving her flawless body naked for me.

Perfection.

"I hope you'll wear this," I told her and offered her the box, not at all surprised when my voice came out huskier. "Perhaps not now, but...sooner or later."

As Bella opened the box, I stepped closer, close enough to feel her body heat, and let my hands caress her sides. All the way up until I cupped her breasts. She whimpered as I pinched her nipples. Her fingers trembled, but she tried to keep her focus on the present, on the platinum choker with a charm—a charm that left no question unanswered about to whom she belonged.

On the front of the charm was my family crest, a crest that was also a part of my company logo, which meant people knew it very well.



"It's too much," she whispered thickly.

"Nonsense," I said, cradling her face as she held up the choker.

The charm twisted between her fingers, showing both the crest and my last name, which was on the back of it.

"But...why wouldn't I want to wear it now?" she asked, frowning in confusion.

"It's up to you, sweet girl," I told her quietly. "But you need to know that once you start wearing it, people will notice."

"But that's what I want," she said as her eyes welled up. "I don't want us to hide..."

My chest swelled.

She really understood; she really wanted it all.

"I don't want us to be a secret," she croaked.

I lifted her up and carried her over to the bed where I sat down on the edge. Bella straddled me and held me tightly as I whispered sweet nothings in her ear, hoping her tears would stop. I wanted no more of this girl's misery. I only wanted her happy.

"What would make you happy, little one?" I whispered in her hair.

"For us to be real," she cried.

"We are, my Bella," I murmured. "And if you're ready, if you're sure, then we'll tell people, because there's nothing I want more either."

She relaxed instantly, and once again it struck me that she was my perfect match. We both wanted the same things, and we didn't care about outsiders.

She released me slowly and, chewing on her lip, she held up the choker. "Will you put it on me?" she asked timidly.

"Of course, baby," I whispered.

Once I had put it on her, I knew I had never seen anything more exquisite. Marked with my crest, my name, she was mine for everyone to see.

"You're so fucking beautiful," I murmured as my nose slid along her jaw. "And you've made me a very lucky man."

She moaned as I pushed her down on my cock, and I was about to tell her to stand up so I could get rid of my boxers, but Bella stood up before I could get a word out.

"C-can I, uh...can I show you my appreciation now?" she asked shyly.

Chapter 16

EPOV

"C-can I, uh...can I show you my appreciation now?" she asked shyly.

I said nothing. Instead I supported myself with one hand behind me on the bed, and the other grabbed my still-clothed erection, because I loved watching her get affected. Loved watching her blush spread. Loved seeing her flustered. Desperate.

With a tilted head, I kept my eyes on her as I slowly stroked my aching cock. Her eyes went to it immediately, and I had to smirk when she bit down on her lip. My horny little kitten started rubbing her thighs together, and that just wouldn't do.

"Spread your legs, Isabella," I commanded quietly. She obeyed with a whimper. "Good little girl."

Keeping my eyes fixed on her pussy, I leaned forward and traced a single finger along her soaked slit, making her moan and buck her hips against me. I smiled.

"Such a pretty little pussy you have, little one. And so wet for me."

I pinched her clit. She moaned my name.

I rubbed my leaking cock. She pleaded for me.

Enough is enough.

"You want to show your appreciation?" I asked, cocking an eyebrow.

"Yes, Sir—*please*," she gasped.

"Very well." I nodded. Standing up, I started pushing down my boxers, but Bella stopped me and took over, already filling her role as the caregiver I wanted.

"Lie down on your back, please," she said softly as she placed my boxers on a chair.

Christ, so polite. My sweet girl.

I did as I'd been told, curious to see what she had planned.

Bella joined me, and I made room for her between my legs when she nudged them apart, and fuck, seeing her there...no words could describe how good she looked there.

I throbbed when she wrapped her little fingers around my cock, and again, it did things to me when her fingers barely reached around it.

"Don't tease me, sweet girl," I told her huskily as I placed one hand behind my head. The other one went to the back of hers. "Feeling your breath on my cock only fuels my desire to fuck your pussy raw."

"Oh, God," she whimpered under her breath.

Then her mouth was finally on me. Hot, wet, eager. She sucked me in hard, down her throat, and I saw... Literally, I saw the way her throat expanded for me.

"Fucking hell," I breathed out.

My little Bella could suck cock like no other, and I told her that over and over, because she was goddamn magnificent. She did it all. She sucked me hard and deep, using teeth and tongue, hollowing out her cheeks, all while cupping and tugging lightly on my balls. Humming and moaning around me, even.

"Goddamn, sweet love," I moaned loudly as her nose touched my pubic bone. "I need you closer, baby. I need to feel your pussy."

She obeyed and kneeled next to me on the bed instead, and my hand immediately found her drenched pussy. Wasting no time, I slammed two fingers inside of her. She gasped around my cock—a cock that glistened from her saliva as well as my pre-cum.

"This is my pussy now, Isabella. You will never touch yourself without my permission," I told her sternly. "My pretty little pussy, my tight ass, my flawless body... Everything belongs to me. Understood?"

She nodded like the good, *perfect*, little girl she is.

I was close.

"You've become my perfect little cock-slut."

Again, she moaned and whimpered around me.

I watched her suck my cock as I fucked her pussy with my fingers, and she was getting close, too. But I wanted more. Always more, so I gathered plenty of her sweet juices and circled her tight ass...

"Touch yourself," I grunted.

Fuck, so close.

Slowly but surely, I pushed two fingers inside her ass, loving the way she constricted around me. Though I knew very well that my angel was not into much pain play, she did enjoy this side of me as much as I did. And I loved pushing her limits. I loved being in control, and I loved being the one she experienced it all with.

Fuck!

"I'm coming, little one," I choked out and, not a second later, I spilled my cum deep into her mouth. Breathless, I continued pumping my fingers in and out of her ass, and my Bella was so close. Right there on the edge.

And then she came. As she released my softening cock, she clamped a hand over her mouth to muffle her own sounds. I stared at her gorgeous face as she rode out her orgasm.

Afterward, I cleaned us up quickly.

"So beautiful," I whispered as I pulled her to me, tucking her head under my chin. "You're so unbelievably beautiful, my Bella."

She was panting heavily and clinging to me.

In my arms, she fell asleep.

Right where she belongs.

~IdC~

I woke up feeling oddly refreshed, but I knew why. It was simply because I had what I wanted now. She was mine and she was in this relationship as much as I was. We were both on the same page, and I was ready to make plans for the future.

As I showered, I made plans for the day, and the first thing I was going to do was to call my Realtor, because I wasn't stupid. I knew this was going to take time. I also knew there was much to take care of.

The few days we had left on the island wouldn't be enough to settle even half of it, which was why I knew I'd leave Isla the day after New Year's just like the Brandons...and Bella.

Until everything was fixed, I would simply spend as much time as possible in Seattle, hence calling my Realtor.

Hopefully, Isabella would be able to spend a few days out of the week with me.

I was probably going to look for a place closer to her than Seattle, too. I'd heard of Port Angeles. Perhaps I could find something there.

Once I was dressed and I had kissed my sleeping girl, I made a mental note to ask her about school.

She didn't come across as one who loved Clallam Academy.

You can graduate online nowadays.

Very true. And if it wasn't possible at her private school, I was positive money would talk in the end.

Then there was the matter of her parents. Obviously, I knew they weren't going to think highly of me, not that I cared, but I would have to make sure to ask what Bella wanted. It was her decision to make. Not her parents. After all, my little one was eighteen. And since I had every intention of taking care of her, she didn't need her parents.

I left my bedroom, noticing that it was already ten in the morning, and headed downstairs for breakfast.

Since yesterday had been trying, not to mention long, I decided to let Bella sleep in. I could just bring her some breakfast in bed later.

I stopped short, though, when I reached the French doors that opened up to the patio.

Everyone had gathered for breakfast, except my Bella, of course, but what I noticed was the wild gesturing and the angry, if not horrified expressions. A few were standing up, a few were sitting down.

Then the noise reached me.

They were fighting.

My name was mentioned more than once, as was Bella's.

Accusations.

In the middle of it all sat Emmett and Alice, both very quiet.

When they finally noticed me, everyone went quiet.

I had a pretty good idea, especially after I caught a glance of Rosalie and her tear-stained cheeks.

Jack was sitting down, pulling at his hair.

I cocked an eyebrow.

Mary was the one who spoke up.

"Jasper's sister said you're intimately involved with Bella."

Jasper's sister, that meddling little bitch.

"Oh, did Jasper's sister say that?" I sighed, dragging a hand over my face before I walked over to the table and took my seat. "Well, Jasper's sister is going home today." I gave Rosalie a very pointed look as I poured myself some coffee.

After taking a sip of it, I turned to a conflicted-looking Jasper. "I'm sorry that this affects you, but your sister has crossed a line more than once, and I've had it with her."

Sending her home was definitely not all I'd be doing.

I will destroy her.

That thought was the only thing keeping me sane at the moment.

I considered myself an honest, good, hard-working man, but I had limits. And nothing was going to stand in my way of getting what I wanted. Not even laws. I wasn't *that* good of a man.

"I will explain everything," I added to Jasper. He seemed placated at that, and then I turned to my four friends. Four gaping friends. Not Jack so much, though, considering he knew already. "Could you please fill me in? I've seem to have missed quite a lot this morning."

Since Jack already knew, perhaps that was why he was the one finding his voice first. "Ali was asking if anyone had seen Bella, because her room was empty this morning," he sighed heavily. "Rosalie chuckled and said something about 'perhaps you should check Cullen's room.' This obviously got everyone's attention."

"I see." I nodded once, taking another sip of my coffee, which gave me time to rein in my temper once again. "Well, carry on. Keep discussing my private life; don't let me stand in the way." I waved my hand dismissively then grabbed a scone.

"You can't be serious," Liz of all people hissed at me. "Don't you think we deserve some answers here, Edward?"

I cocked an eyebrow at her before returning to my breakfast.

"This is hardly about what anyone deserves," I chuckled humorlessly. "Because this is my life we're talking about. Not yours. Am I wrong?"

It was a rhetorical question, but *Mary* evidently didn't get that memo.

Or perhaps I've been spoiled with my Bella's good manners and intelligence.

"Just tell us the truth, Edward," she seethed. "Are you...*intimately* involved with Bella?!"

I did *not* appreciate the disgusted face she shot my way.

"Intimately?" I gritted out. "Yes. I am. Romantically involved? Yes, that too."

Gasps all around.

I actually rolled my eyes.

"We were going to tell you all today," I told them as I reached for the financial section of the Seattle Times. Jazz had brought it with him from Washington, so it was a couple of days old. But I hadn't read this yet, seeing as I didn't have a reason to care for anything about Seattle before now. "I'm not stupid, people," I said as I flipped the paper open. "I knew you wouldn't react well to the news, but it's the truth, regardless. Bella's mine."

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"You DAWG!"

Emmett. Who else?

I chuckled but kept my eyes fixed on the paper.

"I cannot accept this," Mary muttered.

"And I couldn't care less about that, Mary," I replied dryly. "It's what both Bella and I want, and again, let me emphasize on the point that this is none of your *goddamn* concern."

"But she's half your--"

"Age. Yes, I know, Liz," I said, cutting her off. "I'm very aware of our age difference, but if it's not an issue for us, then I don't see how it would be for any of you."

Christ.

"Bella's parents will give you hell, Edward," Jack said quietly.

I shrugged. "Let them. But if they make Bella unhappy, I will give them hell in return."

Many times over.

"How will you make it work?"

That quiet voice made me look up in surprise because it was none other than Alice asking.

She looked timid, shy, and hesitant but there was no disgust.

That's new for her.

"It looks like I'm moving to Seattle for a while," I replied.

This of course caused the next round of gasps.

"You're moving?!" Mary screeched.

"Of course," I replied, furrowing my brow. Clearly they didn't understand that Bella and I were serious. "She still has obligations in Forks, and until she finds another way to fulfill them, I will be in Washington."

This time there was a gasp coming from behind me, and I understood that Bella was awake.

Looking over my shoulder, I was immensely relieved to see her eyes full of happiness as she stared at me.

I assumed my news about coming to Washington was well received.

Wordlessly, she made her way over and took the seat next to mine, and though she was both blushing and keeping her eyes downcast, I recognized the strength, the courage. She was here, not hiding in our room or something.

"I'll explain everything later," I whispered against her temple.

She was timid. "Okay," she breathed out.

Obviously, I felt every set of eyes on us, and it was starting to piss me off because they made Bella feel uncomfortable.

With a sigh, I folded the paper and placed it next to my plate before I put my arm on the back of Bella's chair—another movement that caught every set of eyes.

Ridiculous.

I was about to voice my opinion, but I didn't get a chance because my sweet girl could also be a fiery kitten when needed. She may be timid at times, but she was not one to allow others to step on her toes.

"I'm sorry, but you're making me feel like a caged animal," she told everyone. Simply and softly, but still confidently. "I don't know what Edward has told everyone exactly, but by the looks of it, I'd say you know most of it. So, could you please just say what you have to say to me and get on with it?"

Had it not been for the fact that we weren't alone, I would've told her I loved her.

I was proud of her for standing up for herself.

"Bella," Mary said, a bit pleadingly. "Are you really serious with this? I mean...your parents, your differences..." She trailed off weakly.

"My parents can say what they want," Bella replied. "And our differences? I'd say we're more alike than you think."

Again I was in awe of Bella Swan.

No one said a word after that, and I kept my arm on the back of Bella's chair seeing as she appeared to be more relaxed when it was there.

After we'd eaten, Bella surprised me by kissing me in front of the others. It mattered a lot to me, and it only proved further that she was all-in. Regardless of what other people thought, we were together now.

"I'm gonna go talk to Alice," she whispered.

I nodded once and she took off with Ali.

I stood up, too, ready for this breakfast to be over. "Jasper, perhaps we should talk," I suggested, to which he nodded. "And bring Rosalie."

I heard Rosalie plead with Jazz as I opened the door to my office, and I took great pleasure in it. She was done. Well, she was going to be done, finished. Soon.

As usual, I took my seat behind the desk, and a furious Jazz sat down across from me, followed by his crying sister.

"How much do you know, Jasper?" I asked him, glaring at Rosalie.

"Far from enough," he replied. "All I know is that Rose has obviously shared something that is not hers to share."

"Yes, that would be putting it mildly," I said dryly. "Your sister should be happy Bella doesn't want to take this further."

Then I told him.

Everything.

Everything about what Rosalie had done. Gianna, blackmailing, sending off that photo, threatening...

"I didn't know Gianna would send it to Bella's dad!" Rosalie defended herself while wiping her face. "I sent that picture to her before you talked to me, Edward; you have to believe me!"

"Be quiet." I sneered at her. "It doesn't matter. You messed up, Rosalie, and you will accept the consequences now. It's as simple as that. You're done. Once I'm through with you, you won't be able to set a fucking foot in the modeling world."

Facing Jasper, I continued. "I hope you know I wouldn't do this if I didn't have to, but my limit has been reached."

"Believe me, I understand," he sighed. "Do what you must, Edward. I will arrange for us to go home today."

I sincerely didn't want Jazz to leave, and I was glad he knew that, but I understood that he couldn't leave his sister home alone.

"Go pack, Rose," he told her sternly. "And you better believe your days with Volturi are over, not to mention your car, your credit cards... Everything. It'll be school and charity work for you now."

"No!" she screamed. "Don't do this to me, Jasper! Please!"

"He's not," I snapped. "I am. As soon as you're out of this office, I'm calling Marcus Marin."

Rosalie's response?

She stomped her foot and turned crimson with rage.

What a child.

"If he didn't get you fired, sis, I would," Jazz gritted out. "You should consider yourself lucky that Isabella isn't pressing charges!"

"I only did what Gianna told me to!" she cried.

"And that just proves how incredibly stupid you are," I said flatly. "Trust me on this one, Rosalie. Had it not been for the fact that your brother is one of my best friends, I would've *forced* Isabella to press charges."

Five minutes later, Jazz left with his petulant sister—a sister that tried one last time to sound confident when stating that Marcus Marin would never fire his own daughter.

It was the first I heard of the exact relation Gianna was to Marcus, and I would need that confirmed.

But before all that, I contacted my Realtor.

BPOV

Fifteen minutes after Alice and I had left the house, we found ourselves wandering the beach on the other side of the island.

Was it weird that I already missed Edward?

After everything. After this morning, after yesterday... Christ, I ached for simpler times. Not that I wanted to go back to sneaking around, because that was the last thing I wanted, but I did want some alone time with Edward.

We're not temporary anymore.

I sighed. My body felt oddly warm.

Absentmindedly, as I walked the beach with a thoughtful Alice, I played with the necklace he gave me last night. It was gorgeous, sexy, but more than that it was a symbol.

The submissive in me smiles and whispers, "I'm collared. I'm owned."

I shivered in pleasure.

"It's a lot to take in, Bella."

I knew that, which was why I hadn't said a word to her so far. The walk here had been in silence because I knew she had a lot to think about. So much had changed for her, but I also knew that a part of her was hooked. And that part was growing.

Had it not been for all the things I'd kept hidden for Alice, I would be spending this morning asking her about Mr. Whitlock; I knew they talked last night, and I was curious. Alice had told me that she didn't want to shy away. She still liked him, although she was scared—intimidated—but talking was good. Talking would take them places, hopefully to a relationship.

"How long...?" She trailed off.

We kept walking and we looked straight ahead.

"Pretty much since day one," I replied quietly.

"And it's serious?"

"I'm in love with him."

Alice stopped. Gaped at me. I stopped, too, and faced her.

"I know this is..." I shook my head, trying to find the word. "Weird," I supplied, though it wasn't weird for me...or Edward, but for everyone else it was. "But yeah, I'm in love with him, and yes, it's serious."

"Christ," she whispered under her breath. "I don't—I don't know what to say," she sighed. "I mean, this is...I mean, it's Edward!" she laughed—a little in disbelief, I guessed. "He's my godfather; did you know that?"

It was a rhetorical question, so I kept quiet, but yes, I knew that.

"And he's moving to Seattle for you?"

She was still in disbelief.

As for the move to Seattle...that was news to me, too. But I couldn't deny that I fell in love with him all over again when I heard him say it.

Did I want him in Seattle?

Of course. At least until I'd settled things with my parents...not to mention school. And hopefully, I'd be able to fix things without too many problems getting in my way. But I knew my parents were going to go berserk.

When it came to money, I knew I could fend well on my own for a little while. Tanya was in charge of my earnings, because she knew I didn't need the money while living with my parents, and she also knew that my parents were totally unaware of my job.

I sighed. No matter what...this was going to work out. I had to believe that.

Two hours later, Alice was still next to me. Next to me, as in she hadn't bailed or ended our friendship. For that I was thankful, because I loved her. It also appeared we had more in common than I ever thought possible, and I would hate to see our friendship go to waste. But so far it

hadn't. She was still here. Still in disbelief, and still thinking out loud about how messed up this was. But at least she wasn't judging me. Not much anyway.

Before we headed back to the house, she told me that she needed to think about all this, but she was clear on one thing.

She was still my friend, my best friend, and I was hers.

That was all I needed to know in order to be calm, and I told her that all my cards were on the table. She knew it all now. Well, not the particular thing about Edward taking my virginity in front of the camera, but I did tell her that Edward was...er...a part of Mr. Whitlock's work with me. And by the looks of it, Alice had an idea of what we did in Seattle.

The whole thing about Mr. Whitlock being my photographer was still overwhelming for her, but when I saw a flicker of jealousy in her, I knew it was a good thing. Simply because she obviously felt *that* much for Mr. Whitlock.

She did ask if he and I had ever been together, but I assured her that Edward was the only one.

Alice relaxed a bit after that.

She was proving to be a much better friend than I could have ever imagined, and I made a mental note to never make assumptions concerning her ever again. I would also confide in her more, because she deserved it.

So, when she headed to her room, I went to Edward's.

Truth be told, I had no desire to see the others right now. They were clear on their thoughts, so I figured I had the right to stay in a room where I felt comfortable. Then there was the fact that I was horny.

I couldn't help it.

Edward had turned me into a wanton hussy.

Fuck, just thinking about his thick cock...

Yep, time for a long, *satisfying* shower.

Chapter 17

EPOV

It took a while to track down Marcus seeing as it was the holidays, but my assistant in LA finally found him in Aspen and was able to find the number for his ski cabin there.

I wasted no time and dialed the number right away.

"Marin residence, this is Leslie speaking," answered a breathless voice.

"Edward Cullen here. I need to speak to Marcus," I said.

"Just a second," she giggled.

Evidently she forgot to cover the phone with her hand or press the damn mute button. *"Sir, Edward Cullen is on the phone for you..."*

"Thank you, Leslie. Now, get back to bed. I want another round before Jane gets back."

I smirked.

Jane. His wife. Well, well.

Leslie would be the maid, then? Or perhaps an assistant?

Excellent.

"Marcus Marin here."

"Marcus, it's Edward." I grinned into the receiver. "Sorry to disturb you during the holidays, but I have a rather urgent matter to discuss with you."

"Anything, Mr. Cullen. What can I do for you, my friend?"

Friend? Perhaps in your book.

I didn't stall. "Two of your employees at Volturi are unfortunately making my life a bit difficult at the moment, and I need them gone. Both of them. However, one will do for now."

"Oh, uh...all right? May I ask who and why?"

"Rosalie Hale. I believe she works for a Gianna Marin."

"Gi...my daughter? And, uh...what has this Ms. Hale done?"

Daughter. All right. Noted.

"That's of no importance to you," I replied dismissively. "I don't want to bore you with the details, but I can consider this done, yes?"

I knew very well how important Cullen Arts is to him and Volturi, which was why I wasn't surprised when Marcus agreed.

"Just a second, Mr. Cullen, I'll have my PA write it down."

He shouted out for Leslie then, so I figured his PA had to be close to his family to be there with them in Aspen. *Or* maybe...maybe Marcus just couldn't handle simple tasks himself. How sad.

Once I had told him that Rosalie Hale was to be fired without notice or letter of recommendation, I told him that I would get back to him about the other employee.

Then I hung up.

I didn't know how loyal he would be when it came to his own daughter, so I quickly decided that I would do some research about her first. And that was why I called Jenks. I needed information, and I needed to keep track of Rosalie in case she tried anything stupid again. Jenks was my go-to guy for discreet matters like that.

After all that was done, I realized that almost two hours had passed since breakfast, and I was getting rather hungry. However, when I ran into a quiet Liz and a silently fuming Mary in the kitchen, I grabbed some leftovers before heading back to my office. Internally I was chanting, *they're leaving soon, they're leaving soon.*

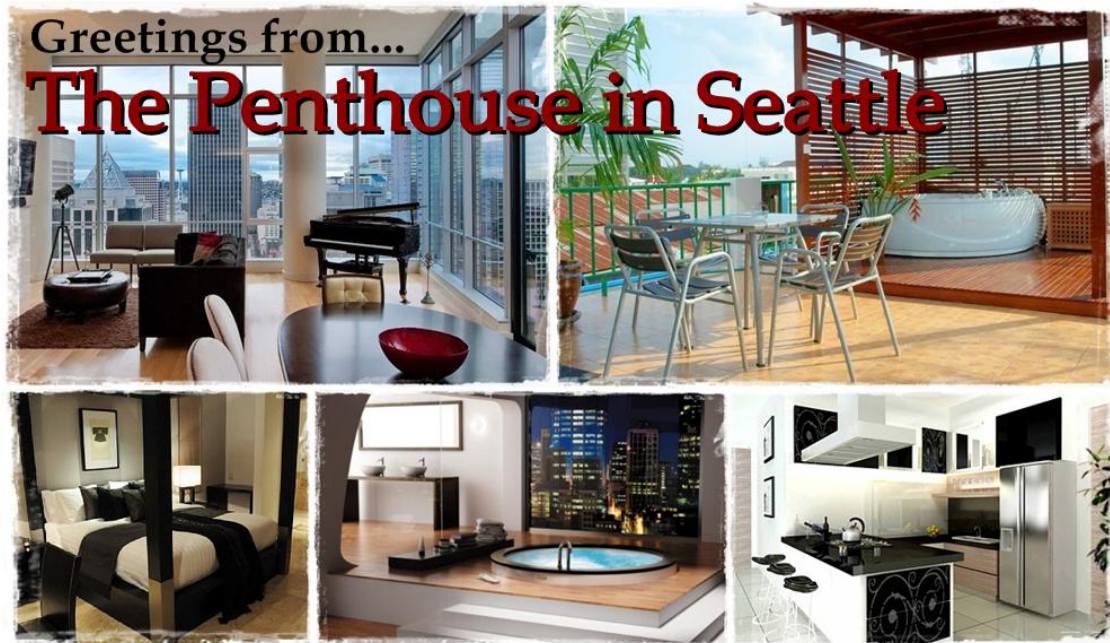
I couldn't wait.

When my computer was powered up, I noticed the unread email from my Realtor, and I sent a silent thanks for his quick work. But I supposed when you owned as much property as I did, I became a priority client.

A while later, I had gone through three of the five listings, and that was when I found my next home.

It was perfect. A penthouse apartment. Central. Close to Pike Place. Not overly huge. I'd say the perfect size.

Clicking on the images, I started with the master bedroom.



Tasteful. Clean. Straight lines. Warm. Black and moss green. A four-poster bed where I could tie up my girl. Marble floor.

Perfect.

I quickly flipped through the images of two guestrooms as well as the study and guest baths, and then clicked on the kitchen.

On the small side. Square. Light and open. White walls and cupboards. Black countertop. *Where I can fuck Isabella six ways to Sunday.*

I palmed my hardening cock with a sigh and moved on to the private rooftop terrace.

Good God, there's a Jacuzzi.

This was not helping me with my erection, and it was with a groan I clicked my way to the master bathroom.

"Fuck," I hissed quietly.

Another Jacuzzi. This one with another spectacular view thanks to the massive window wall. Christ, just thinking about pushing my girl up against that window while I fucked her for the world to see...

In a last attempt to regain some control, I moved on to the living room.

Spacious, light, very open. Dining room table for six, a black leather couch. Fuck, yeah. Baby grand piano... Christ, I saw possibilities everywhere.

And I was rock hard.

Losing my fucking mind over this girl, I thought as I dialed the number to my Realtor.

"Black & Son, Jacob Black here."

"It's Edward Cullen," I said. "I'll take the penthouse near Pike Place—the one that comes furnished. I want it ready for me within a week."

"A—a week?" he stuttered, followed by paper rustling in the background. *"It just went on the market, and—"*

"And it's mine now. Make it happen, Black. Or should I take my business elsewhere?"

"N-no, sir. One week. I'll get it ready for you."

I smirked. "Excellent." Then I hung up.

The only thing I needed now was to make my way to wherever Bella was, so I brought out my phone and texted her.

Five minutes later she hadn't replied.

That's unacceptable.

She knew that.

With another heavy sigh, I closed my computer then left my office before trudging up the stairs.

As soon as I entered my bedroom, I smiled.

She was in the shower. Obviously, she couldn't hear her phone from there.

I was overly pleased by the fact that she chose my shower instead of her own, too, because that was what I wanted. I didn't want her—ever—in a guest room. She belonged to me, *with* me, and with everything else that was mine.

My smile morphed into a scowl, though, because I could hear my girl moaning.

Did I not tell her that she needed my permission to touch herself?

My body tensed.

I believe my Isabella needs to be punished.

Hard.

Making sure I didn't make a sound, I took off my shoes before entering the bathroom and, sure enough, she was there. Moaning. Touching her pussy under the spray. Head thrown back.

"Oh, Edward..."

Right now I don't want you to moan my name, baby girl.

I want you to plead for forgiveness.

Leaning against the doorframe, I watched her through the clear but slightly foggy glass, and my mind was spinning. Spinning, planning. For her punishment.

She was close. I could see that much.

"Enjoying yourself, Isabella?" I asked.

"Holy shit," she gasped, turning around. She stared at me, wide-eyed.

My girl knew she had messed up.

"Didn't I tell you to ask for permission?" I questioned as I walked toward her. Once I had the shower door open, I reached in and turned off the water. "I think we both know I did."

"I-I, I'm," she stuttered, to which I cocked an eyebrow and held out a towel for her. She was going to have to try harder than that. "I'm sorry," she mumbled remorsefully, lowering her head. "I...I'm really sorry. I forgot. I'm so sorry."

"Not yet, you're not," I replied dryly.

Just the thought of not being here when my girl came... To miss that gorgeous face of hers mid-orgasm...

I shook my head, already fucking livid as it was.

Snapping my fingers, I pointed in the direction of the bedroom. "I want you on your back. On the bed. With arms and legs spread. *Now.*"

The last word came out as a growl.

I heard her sniffing as she passed me.

After taking a few deep breaths, I joined her in the bedroom. But I already had an idea for how to punish her, so I didn't stick around. Just said,

"Stay there and don't move a fucking muscle, Isabella." Then I walked out. Down the stairs, heading straight for my office where I kept Jasper's photo submissions.

I located them right away, but I didn't go for the paper copies. No, instead I took out one of the clear CD cases. One of four copies holding the photos of me and Bella.

I grabbed my laptop, too, before returning upstairs.

Bella let out a gasp when I reentered the room, and I smirked as I locked the door behind me.

"Explain yourself," I said, walking over to the nightstand where I powered up the laptop.

Thankfully, she obeyed immediately.

"I was o-on the beach...and was re-reminded of our time in the beach hut," she stammered. "I'm sorry, Mr. Cullen." I was glad that she separated Edward from Mr. Cullen. I was glad that she knew there was a difference.

Edward wouldn't be present for a while now.

"And what did you think about in the shower?" I asked as I inserted the disc into the laptop. "Did you think about when I licked your needy pussy in the beach hut, little one?"

Looking over at my girl now, I saw just how needy she still was. Squirming and whimpering, she lay in the middle of the bed, not getting any kind of friction since her arms and legs were spread for me.

"Answer me!" I demanded.

The first photo flashed on the screen, and I stood up to remove my clothes.

“Yes!” she confessed. “I fantasized about all that!”

I chuckled.

“All that? Since when are you shy, Isabella? You’re going to have to do better than that. Tell me what you thought about in that fucking shower!”

Licking her pouty lips, she focused on my rock hard erection instead of giving me my answer, so it was with force I straddled her chest and gripped her chin.

Leaning in closely, almost with our foreheads touching, I gritted out the words through clenched teeth. “I was evidently wrong about you, Isabella, because I thought you were my sweet little girl. But instead you’re behaving like a naughty slut, begging for punishment.”

Letting go of her chin, I sat up straight and pinched her nipples hard. “Is that it, Isabella? Are you deliberately looking for punishment?”

“No!” she cried out, shutting her eyes. “I swear I wasn’t, Sir. I just...*uuungh*, get...distracted...”

I smirked and started stroking my cock right in front of her face, knowing very well what she found distracting.

“Is that it, little one?” I teased. “Is my cock too much for you to handle?”

“No!” She almost looked horrified at the idea. “I want it...you...all the time!”

And now she was whining.

It was quite amusing to see her so frazzled. So out of control.

"I really own you, don't I, baby girl?" I murmured, brushing my knuckles over her cheek. "It looks like my cock owns you, too. Isn't that right?"

"Yes, yes, oh... Please, I need..."

"You need what, Isabella?" I asked, moving closer to her. I nearly gave her what she wanted when the tip of my cock ghosted over her lips.

"You. Your cock," she breathed. "Please."

"You want to suck my cock, don't you?"

She nodded furiously.

"Too bad," I said, moving back again. "Now push your tits together, because I'm going to fuck them."

With a needy whimper, she obeyed and captured my cock in between her luscious breasts. I needed this badly after having her beg so for me, and as I placed my hands on top of hers and squeezed her breasts together more tightly, I knew I wouldn't last long.

My head fell back, and I focused on myself, focused on just feeling my cock sliding in between her breasts—breasts still wet from her shower. *Fuck*. I sped up, groaning when Bella's tongue darted out to lick the tip whenever she reached forward.

"My dirty little kitten," I grunted. "So fucking desperate for my cum that you lap at me."

I moaned as she mewled.

So close...

I stilled and let my girl reach, which she did, and my entire body tensed as she started suckling my cock.

"Goddammit," I breathed out. "You love my cock that much, little one?" I moaned and caressed her cheek, feeling the way it hollowed as she sucked.

Fuck, closer. The suction...

Her response was another cockteasing whimper, and I withdrew my cock from her before I came, because this was still a punishment. She wanted my cum. She wasn't going to have it. Not in her mouth anyway.

"Squeeze me harder," I ordered, again letting my head fall back, and then I fucked her tits hard and fast. "You better close your eyes, kitten," I grunted in warning. Then I slid out from between her tits and pumped my cock hard, knowing that I was about to come all over her chest and face.

And that thought had me undone.

With a loud groan, I watched as I came on her. Came on her heaving chest, came around her mouth, her neck, her cheeks, and fuck me if my naughty girl didn't moan. Clearly, she was enjoying this.

"Do not lick those lips of yours," I warned breathlessly as I milked my cock over her tits. "I can see how much you want it, Isabella, but you can forget it."

She gave me a pout to that, and that earned her a good pussy spanking. Three sharp flicks of my wrist had her pleading for me. I chuckled and dismounted her, not at all surprised that my little cock slut was dripping wet.

As I regained my breath, I told her to get on all fours. I walked to the other side of the bed, picked up the laptop, and placed it on the pillow in front of my horny girl.

With that done, I walked over to my closet where I had a bag of items I had purchased in Seattle.

"You recognize that photo?" I asked her as I positioned myself behind her on the bed.

"Yes," she panted. "It's us."

"And what are we doing in the shot?" I continued as I squirted a good amount of lube over her back entrance. She tensed, but I paid her no mind.

"I'm...I'm shackled to the cross," she gasped. "And you're behind me."

My cock throbbed as my thumb slid inside her ass with ease.

"Good girl," I praised her quietly when I felt her relax. I knew she was reminding herself that she could trust me. "And tell me, little one...what am I doing behind you in that photo?"

Slowly my thumb fucked her ass, and equally slowly I pushed two fingers inside her soaked pussy.

"You're...you have...ungh..."

I withdrew my fingers from her.

"Focus, Isabella!" I spanked her left ass cheek hard. Four times. And then I added a second finger in her ass and *slammed* three fingers inside her pussy, making her choke on a moan.

"Y-you have your...your hand...on your cock!"

"Exactly," I replied, not missing a beat. "That's because you make me so fucking hard, baby girl."

She was shaking, tensing, moaning.

"Seeing you drip for me drives me to the brink of insanity. Did you know that, Isabella?" I asked softly. "Are you aware of the effects you have on my cock...my body?"

My mind, my heart...

"Please, please...I can't...I can't take it anymore," she cried out. "Please let me come, Sir!"

"No," I chuckled. "You defied me, little one. You were going to come without me. You were going to bring yourself pleasure without me there to see it."

More lubrication was added and I dragged my now-hard cock along her slit, entering her pussy with only an inch of me.

Immediately, she clenched around me.

So, I spanked her clit.

"Oh, God!" she sobbed. "I'm...I'm sorry!"

"I'm starting to believe you," I murmured huskily, gripping her hips. "But you're still not allowed to come."

A few minutes later, we had gone through the "foreplay" of the photos, and my sweet girl was a quivering mess with need. Need to climax, need for relief, friction, but I denied her every time.

The insides of her thighs were sticky; I breathed in her intoxicating scent, feeling a moan rumble in my chest.

A third finger was in her perfect little ass.

"Relax for me, baby girl," I whispered softly as I kissed her spine. "You trust me, don't you?"

"With my life," she moaned without hesitation.

With her life.

Feeling myself cave for her, I pulled out of her and moved off the bed.

I needed to get this over with before I said something stupid.

In other words, proclaimed something very unfitting for this moment.

In my closet, I located one of the toys I had bought, and then I headed back once more, this time with more control.

The toy?

A buttplug.

"Click onto the next image, Isabella," I told her as I kneeled behind her.

She obeyed, and it was the pictures of me fingering her pussy that popped up on the screen.

A pussy that will always belong to me.

I was the one who took her.

Claimed her.

"You're about to be fucked," I said gruffly and added lube on the buttplug.

"Hard. And you're still not allowed to come. Understood?"

"Yes," she whimpered brokenly.

I swallowed hard and aligned myself with her.

"Good girl. Now keep your eyes on the screen."

Focus.

I rammed into her, burying myself completely inside her sweet pussy.

Fuck!

"See that picture, Isabella?" I ground out, feeling my eyes roll back for a second.

"YES!" she screamed.

Christ, so tight. Hot, wet, pulsing.

"See how I'm pleasuring you there? See how perfectly my fingers are fucking your pretty little pussy in front of that mirror?" I fucked her harder, driving into her without any restraint. "That won't happen anytime soon, you disobedient little cock-slut."

Without waiting for a response, and without warning, I slowly pushed the plug inside her ass.

I felt her tense around my aching cock, but I was *far* from done with her.

It wasn't much bigger than three of my fingers, so I knew she was still taking pleasure out of this, although she did gasp at the harsh sting.

"Do not come, Isabella!" My hand struck her ass. Hard. Always hard. Fuck, I loved turning her ass pink.

"Please, please, please," she chanted breathlessly.

"No."

Her legs trembled, her arms could barely hold her up, her breaths were shallow.

My girl was fighting.

"Next picture," I grunted. I kept saying "next" until we reached the exact picture I slammed my cock inside her pussy for the first time. Once we both laid eyes on that picture, I wrapped her hair around my hand and pulled.

She groaned and gasped, obviously feeling the pain, but I didn't stop until I had her arched back against my chest.

"Look at that photo, my love," I breathed hotly against her jaw as my arm snaked around her chest. "So fucking gorgeous... The way you arched off the whipping bench when I slammed inside your virgin pussy."

I nuzzled her neck and smiled against her skin when she couldn't form words.

She smelled of me. My cum on her chest, neck, face.

"I...I...I need..."

"I know, little one," I cooed and pinched her nipple. "You're squeezing my cock so tightly."

Pushing her down on all fours once more, I started moving inside her again. Long, deep strokes, in...out...in...out...in...

I was close.

I moaned, threw my head back, and fucked her roughly.

Thrust.

Thrust.

My fingers dug into her soft flesh.

She pleaded for me.

Thrust.

I let go.

With a guttural groan, I spilled my release inside her.

She milked my cock for a long time, only prolonging my orgasm, and I was left panting with my forehead dropped to her shoulder blade. *Fuck*. I was spent. Drained and pleased in the best way, black spots filling my vision.

Once I'd pulled my softening cock out of her pussy, I told her she was allowed to lie down and catch her breath. In the meantime, I checked her body for any signs of discomfort. Then I took a long shower, already knowing that my next words to her would sting, but that was what you got if you disobeyed me. I had made myself perfectly clear and she still went against me.

After my shower, I put on a pair of grey slacks and a dark blue shirt. I stood next to the bed and rolled up the sleeves of my shirt when I told her that she wasn't allowed to orgasm for two days.

"The plug stays in, little one," I added as I closed the laptop. "I will remove it in a few hours." Then, with a hand on the door... "You can go shower now, and I don't think I need to tell you that you're not allowed to touch yourself."

Chapter 18

EPOV

Two days later, nothing had changed for the better.

Jasper and Rosalie were gone, Alice was moody, Mary and Liz were still mad at me, and Garrett and Jack were stoic. Obeying their wives, they seemed to try to stay out of the whole thing. But staying out in their case was to avoid everyone. The two spent their days playing golf or watching games on the TV.

During these past two days, I focused on returning to work as well as my impending move to Seattle. I'd had my assistant in LA go over all the paperwork for me before I relocate. Cullen Three in Seattle would simply become headquarters for a while, so once again I found myself speaking to Jacob. This time I needed a good office, and I needed it to be close to the gallery.

In the meantime, Bella was trying to reach her parents.

They were dodging her calls, something I found disheartening.

It also made me wonder if they had come to conclusions about her and me and were now avoiding the entire situation. Regardless, you didn't avoid your daughter like that, and I was going to make sure Bella knew that she could stay with me.

To sum up everything: our relationship was perfection. It was the outside world that was, for lack of better words, full of shit.

Too much was standing in our way, and we knew we had to deal with all that before we could really relax.

I didn't love the fact that Bella insisted on dealing with her parents, because I wanted to help her, but I admitted that there wasn't much I could do until we were in Washington. And until then, she kept trying to reach them, and they kept disconnecting the calls.

It hurt my Bella.

It fueled my rage.

And I took it out on Jenks who was still trying to dig up dirt about this Gianna Marin.

~IdC~

"Come in," I said, keeping my eyes glued to my computer.

I had just received an email from Jenks.

Things weren't great.

"Edward?"

I looked up, managed to give Bella a small smile, and motioned for her to enter. "What can I do for you, little one?"

For the past two days, my kitten had been very clingy, something I loved about her, but I knew it also had to do with the fact that she needed me in a very sexual way.

However, looking at her now, I knew the end of her punishment was the last thing on her mind.

Tears ran down her cheeks, and I tensed.

"I talked to my mom." She sniffled, still standing by the door.

BPOV

I was furious with my parents.

I couldn't believe they were actually avoiding my calls like that. I mean, who did that?

Pacing in Edward's bedroom, I tried once again, this time with Mom's cell.

Imagine my surprise when she picked up.

"You're being quite persistent, Isabella," was her greeting.

"Gee, I wonder why!" I snapped. "What is the matter with you two?! I've been trying to reach you and Dad for two days!"

I gritted my teeth when I could've sworn I heard her fucking yawn.

"I'm sorry about that, Isabella, but after what we gathered from Jack, Ms. Marin, and that photo, we had no desire to speak with you until we had taken care of a few things."

I was fuming. "Taken care of a few things? What the hell is that supposed to mean?!"

"Well, we were on the first flight home, of course," Mom said. *"We're home now, and your father has spent the past two days finding out all about our Isabella. Who knew we'd raised such a disgusting little slut."*

I gasped and a hand flew to my mouth.

A...a disgu-

That stung.

"It's a good thing your father is an excellent lawyer, Isabella, not to mention his skills in digging up information. We know all about you, you know," she added pointedly. *"Yes, we know about your modeling. Damn, Isabella...how could you? How could you even think about doing something so vile?!"*

She wasn't done. *"Charles located not one, not two, but three goddamn photographers in Seattle who've worked with you."*

Oh, God.

"You broke into my safe?" I gritted out.

They must have. That was the only way they could've found out about the photographers I'd worked with.

But...only three? I had worked with more photographers than that.

My photos could be found everywhere, but I was never worried. My face was hidden. Not that it stopped Alice, so in retrospect perhaps I should've been worried, but all that was pointless now. No use in thinking about it. What was done was done.

"Of course we did!" Mom screamed. "After what Ms. Marin told us about you, we had no choice!"

"What exactly did Gianna tell you?" I seethed.

Fuck, we were talking about a woman I'd never even met! I didn't know her! How the hell could she know so much about me?!

"She told us that you were with some modeling agency in Seattle called Denali something... And she told us just what kind of model you are!"

I smacked my forehead in frustration.

I had never been a violent person, but I wanted to strangle that fucking bitch.

Gianna, not Mom. Well, maybe Mom, too.

I took a deep breath, and then I spoke as calmly as I possibly could. "All right, so you know. That's that. That doesn't mean I will quit. You can say whatever you want about my life, but it's just that: my life. I'm eighteen. You can't stop me."

"Oh, trust me, Isabella. We can and we will. And before you start talking about how you don't need us, just don't. Because your father and I are not stupid. We know very well that you have earned money with your...your...business."

I laughed without humor. She couldn't even say it.

Business? How about modeling? No? Just because I showed some skin?

Fucking prude.

"So...how would you stop me, then?" I sighed.

"Simple," she quipped. *"With the names of all those photographers--"*

"All those? You said three, Mom."

"Let me finish!" She sighed and continued. *"You're quite experienced, and you've worked for quite a while. So, when I looked through the small portfolio in your safe, I couldn't help but notice one photo in particular."*

I didn't like her tone.

It reminded me of Rosalie's smugness.

"In that photo, I noticed highlights in your hair, and I have to ask, Isabella...isn't it true when I say you haven't had highlights in your hair for a very long time?"

My eyes closed.

Please, not again.

"I hope you understand that I didn't let this go. And neither did your father once I'd told him. He headed straight to Seattle, and he located three photographers. Three photographers you worked with when you were still seventeen."

No, no, no, no... Please, oh God, no...

"What it all comes down to, Isabella, is this: Ms. Marin told us that you were sleeping with an older man. A Mr. Edward Cullen? That's what she said anyway, and do you know why I believed her instantly? That's because it makes sense to me. I may not be around you all the time, but I do know you, and I know very well that you don't like people your own age. I know very well that you're drawn to maturity. Ms. Marin just helped me see that you have already met such a man."

I sat down on the bed, defeated.

How could I get out of this one?

"Then there was the small photo, too, of course, and though that didn't prove anything, it was still enough for me. It raised suspicion, and since then, things have only been confirmed."

She took a breath, and I knew this was it.

"So...it's quite simple. You stop seeing this man, you stop your doings in Seattle, you focus on school, you go to college. You become the daughter we want. Otherwise we will just have to press charges against the three photographers who worked with a minor."

EPOV

She told me.

She told me about the phone call with her parents. Or her mother.

"I understand if you want to give up," she whispered brokenly, lowering her face to her hands. "I'm so sorry..."

I was out of my chair before I knew it, and I strode over to her where she stood.

I wasn't gentle when I gripped her chin, forcing her to face me. My eyes weren't warm and inviting, and my voice wouldn't be soft.

"Are *you* giving up?" I asked.

With wide eyes, full of unshed tears, she gasped out a small "no."

"And why not?" I continued as I walked her backward, not stopping until I had her pressed up against the door. "Why are you not giving up, Isabella?"

I knew the answer. I felt it whenever she touched me. I tasted it in every kiss, and it was about time we laid everything out there. I didn't want there to be doubts between us. I wanted us to be open. I wanted her to know that she was mine.

Forever.

There was no doubt for me anymore. Bella was the love of my life. There was not a thing about her I didn't adore. She belonged to me, and I would fight every battle, but not until she told me to.

She whimpered, closed her eyes, and whispered, "Because I love you."

My heart constricted. I swallowed hard.

I knew it already. I had felt it, but to hear her say it... It felt like everything in me shifted.

Leaning in, I breathed in her scent and slid my nose along her jaw. I reached her temple, smelled her hair, smelled my body wash on her skin. I had marked her, but she had marked me, too. There was no denying that I belonged to her as much as she belonged to me. Giving up was not an option.

"And tell me, kitten," I whispered with my lips ghosting over her temple. "Don't you realize that the reason I'm not giving up is because I love you, too?"

Her eyes flew open.

Cradling her face, leaning my forehead against hers, I told her again. "I'm not giving up, because you're mine. And I love you completely, my sweet Bella."

"Edward," she breathed out, and then my mouth was on hers.

Pushing my tongue inside her mouth, I kissed her passionately, and she clung to me the way I loved. So needy. Just like I wanted her. I wanted her to need me always. I wanted her to be clingy and desperate. And I would be the one giving her everything.

"I will work this out, baby girl," I groaned quietly as her nails dug into my shoulder blades. "Can you trust me to do that?"

"Yes," she gasped, hitching a leg over my hip. "Yes, I trust you... I...please..."

She needs me.

"Not yet, kitten." I cupped her ass. "I'll take you, but not in my office." I broke the kiss and put my hands on her shoulders for distance. "I want you to go to the beach hut. Understood?"

The smile that broke free on her face did things to my chest. It felt odd but very warming.

"Okay," she replied breathlessly while nodding.

I smiled.

"My good girl," I murmured, dropping a kiss on her forehead. "I will be there soon. I just have a few things to take care of first."

Again she nodded, and I loved that she didn't question me. She simply trusted me.

~IdC~

After I had made my calls, I headed to the living room where I could hear Garrett and Jack.

"I'm afraid our holiday has come to an early end," I told them simply. "Bella and I are heading to Seattle tonight, and I have arranged first class tickets for you all to go home."

With that said, I dropped the printouts of their flight confirmations on the coffee table, and then I went back to my office.

There was no use in even pretending that I was sad about them leaving. It was what it was.

Did I expect them to be supportive of Bella and my relationship?

No. And truth be told, I didn't need their support, but I did, however, expect them to be civil about it, especially in my home. But they were not.

Once back in my office, I emailed Jenks, because there was more now, and I wanted him working on it all. Right now.

Sender: Edward A. Cullen

Receiver: Jason J. Jenks

Topic: Top priority

Message: I have received new information, and I need you to call your boys in. I want them all working on it, and I need you to work fast.

Get me all the information you can on Charles and Renee Swan. They live in Forks, Washington. Charles is a lawyer and Renee is a housewife.

I need to know everything you can dig up, especially about Charles, and if he has dealings in Seattle. I need to know who works for him and if he gets all his information legally.

This goes on top of what I already need from you. Meaning, I do not want you to slow down on Gianna Marin or Rosalie Hale.

I hope you understand that this puts you on the next flight to Seattle, as well as your team.

I will be in Seattle myself, and I will stop by in a few days. I expect results by then.

Let me know where you'll be staying.

/Edward A. Cullen.

Chapter 19

EPOV

When I finally reached the beach hut across the island, I half expected to find Bella asleep or something. I had, after all, kept her waiting for almost an hour, but she wasn't. She was on the couch with her phone in hand as I entered, and my sweet girl looked so adorable.

White cotton. Simple panties and bra. Innocent. Beautiful. Perfect for her.

There were two sides of my Bella, and this was the one I was in a relationship with. The sweet girl. The smart girl. The one with a beautiful soul. That was not to say I didn't like her naughty side, because I did. I

loved it. I needed it, too. Her two sides matched my own two sides, but it was the down-to-earth submissive in her that I fell in love with. Her personality, her face, her smile, her soft voice, her natural way of submitting to me. It was all there in my Bella.

"Hi," she said softly, already blushing as she put away her phone.

That blush...

My pants felt tighter. Her smile was shy. I wanted to fuck her roughly. Her nipples strained against her bra. I wanted to pinch them hard and tell her how obvious she was. Her chest heaved under my stare. I wanted to stroke myself just to see her get even more flustered. She squirmed, rubbing her thighs together as I said nothing. I wanted her to choke on my cock. She bit down on her lip. I wanted to spank her pretty little pussy until she screamed.

But I also wanted to make love to her.

I approached her slowly on the couch, loving the way her breathing sped up.

Kneeling before the couch, I said nothing and pushed her legs apart for me. I watched my hands as they slowly made their way up her smooth thighs. I loved the feeling of her skin. It was always so fucking flawless. She took care of herself perfectly, and I loved that about her.

I smiled when my eyes reached her pussy. My hands weren't there yet, and I was in no rush, but unable to help myself, I leaned in and planted a kiss on her pubic bone.

"So fucking good," I whispered, nuzzling her pussy. "You're soaking your panties, little love." My tongue darted out, tasting the damp spot. "We shouldn't waste this." Through her panties, I sucked on her clit. My hands slid under her, toward her ass. I pulled her to the edge of the couch so I

could reach her better. "Look at that, baby girl. You're only getting wetter and wetter."

She moaned and threaded her fingers through my hair. "These...*ungh*...two days..."

She didn't finish. She didn't have to because I knew that her punishment had been hard for her.

Still, she never voiced her complaints. Instead she had sucked me off twice just to take care of me before bedtime. Even knowing that she wasn't allowed to have anything, she took care of me.

Dipping my fingers under the fabric of her panties, Bella understood and lifted herself up for me so I could slide down her panties.

"Take that off," I commanded quietly, eyeing her bra.

Sitting completely naked before me, with her legs spread, and her juices glistening on her pussy, I just watched her as I stood up. She was a vision—always—but in her aroused state, she was a fucking angel.

"Unzip my pants and pull out my cock," I told her huskily, getting rid of my shirt. "I know you're desperate for it."

She was so fucking needy for my cock that she was shaking. Quickly, with those trembling fingers of hers, she pushed down my pants and boxers. She eyed my erection with hunger written all over her features, and then she looked up at me, pleading with her eyes.

Tucking a piece of hair behind her ear, I chuckled quietly. "Is my little kitten hungry?"

She responded with a small nod and lowered her eyes to my cock again. When she licked her lips, I thought I was going to come like a goddamn teenager.

"All right. Kiss it," I murmured. "And use your tongue on me."

Her mouth was on me instantly, wrapping her pouty lips around the head before she- *fuck*, she suckled me again.

It set me on fire, and I threaded my fingers through her hair. "I need more, little one," I groaned. "Open your mouth wider for me."

She obeyed; I pushed my cock down her throat with a rough thrust of my hips.

"Fuck!" I shouted, holding her head in place as she gagged. "Christ, you feel so *fucking* good choking on my cock." My head lolled back. "Breathe through your nose, Bella."

Slowly I slid out of her. She gulped down air into her lungs before giving me a nod, silently telling me that it was okay now. I wasted no time. I needed this and I was going to have it. Only Bella knew how to please me perfectly, so it was no surprise that I wanted her often.

Fuck, she was good. Understatement. Perfection.

"*Goddamn*, what a gifted little cocksucker you are, my greedy girl," I moaned, to which she doubled her efforts. We worked together. I fucked her hot mouth, and she met my thrusts, used her tongue, her teeth, her hands on my balls, and my hands in her hair. If only she knew what I had planned for her after this.

She gagged; I fucked her harder.

Her nose touched my pubic bone over and over, and I watched her throat constrict to accommodate me. But as long as her eyes were full of need and lust, I wasn't stopping. I'd take what she was willing to give, and my lord, she was a wild little thing.

"You want my cum, Isabella?" I grunted.

She nodded.

Of course she wants it. She's my cock-slut, after all.

"Good little girl," I moaned. I pulled out of her mouth, stroked myself right in front of her face, and told her to keep her mouth open.

My orgasm approached quickly. Thighs and balls tensing and tingling.

"I'm coming," I gritted out, and I did. I watched as several spurts marked her lips, her tongue, the sides of her mouth, her chin...and my bliss was prolonged when Bella's tongue darted out. She fucking lapped at me. Wherever she could reach, she licked. The head of my cock, down my shaft, then her lips. She licked it all up.

My dirty little angel.

Once she had licked me clean, I reached over to the box of tissues on the coffee table and handed them to her, but if I thought Bella was done, I was wrong. And if I thought she was kinky before, I was yet again mistaken. She was far from done, and instead of accepting the damn tissues, she used her fingers to gather what she couldn't reach with her tongue, and then she sucked her fingers off...while moaning and humming.

Again I was rendered speechless by my not-so-sweet girl.

She was wicked, naughty, dirty, kinky as hell, and eager when it came to sex. Like I said, perfection.

"My turn," I murmured, gesturing for her to stand up.

I sat down at the end of the couch and held my hand out for her. "I want your head in my lap."

I pushed some hair away from her face as soon as I had her in position, because for this, I wanted to see her face.

"Beautiful," I whispered. I leaned down to kiss her softly, my hand sliding down toward her pussy. "You're so fucking beautiful, my Bella."

Again, her blush.

I just *couldn't* understand how such a compliment could turn her into the shy, sweet girl when she had just...*literally* just licked my cum off her fingers.

I parted her slick folds, making Bella whimper against my lips, and I smiled, knowing that she would leave those whimpers behind soon. They wouldn't be enough.

She'd scream.

Two fingers slid inside her and my thumb started rubbing her clit; I kept it slow and gentle for now. I needed to get her thoroughly worked up.

"More," she whimpered. "Please...more..."

Not yet, my love.

I smiled, leaned down again, and kissed her softly all over her face. All while fingering her tight pussy slowly, I dropped kisses on her forehead,

her eyes, her nose, her lips, her temple, and it worked. She was already squirming. Already pleading.

Curling my fingers upward, I soon found that sweet spot, that rough patch that had her gasping whenever I stroked it, but I kept it slow. It was teasing her, I knew that. But I was in charge, and I wanted her to go insane with this.

"Does it feel good?" I murmured with my lips against her forehead. "Does your pussy feel good, little one?"

I added pressure.

"Yes!" she gasped, bucking her hips against my hand. "Oh *God*, yes... So good..."

Several minutes later, she had already been on the edge a few times, and a light sheen of sweat had broken out on her body. She was so fucking beautiful this way that there were no words good enough to describe what I felt when I looked down at her.

My hand was soaked and the smell of her arousal was goddamn heavenly.

I breathed her in deeply.

Speeding up a little, I soon had her squirming more.

Harder.

More pressure on the spot. More pressure on her clit.

"Lift your head," I whispered.

She did, and I maneuvered myself off the couch, kneeling on the floor, next to the couch...closer to her pussy. She stayed, now lying flat on her

back as I worked her. When she tensed, I slowed down. When she relaxed, I sped up and added more pressure.

Minutes passed and I continued while kissing her stomach, her hipbone, her abdomen. I never stopped breathing her in. Her scent was intoxicating. I felt myself needing it.

I kissed her clit.

"Edward, please!" she cried out.

I held her down, using my left hand on her stomach.

A smile tugged at the corners of my mouth, because I knew what came next. I could see it as Bella frowned, squirmed uncomfortably, and bit down hard on her bottom lip.

"Um, Edwa-"

I cut her off softly but firmly. "Don't fight it, little one. Just trust me."

I couldn't say I was all that surprised when she didn't.

I knew that the feeling rushing through her right now was not a pleasant one.

She thought she needed to go to the bathroom.

"It's supposed to feel that way," I told her before my tongue flicked her clit. "It will pass. Trust me. Just let go."

Then I sucked on her clit and stroked the spot inside her tight pussy harder.

So close.

She gasped. I licked her. She thrashed. I held her down. My cock was hard as steel again. She screamed and convulsed. I licked her harder.

Moving myself closer, I towered over her pussy, kissed, licked and lapped, all while fingering her.

Then...

She choked, tensed, and let out a silent scream.

And she came. She ejaculated.

I groaned as I tasted her. Closing my eyes, I just lost myself in her orgasm. I drank from her. Moaned. Palmed my cock and started stroking myself as I felt her, tasted her, smelled her.

When she stopped ejaculating, I slowly brought her down. Kissed her softly, withdrew my fingers.

Gasping for air, tears sprang to her eyes. She clutched her chest and shivered violently.

I covered her body with mine.

I was careful not to crush her with my weight, knowing very well that she needed time to recover, but that didn't stop me from peppering her damp skin with kisses.

"So beautiful," I whispered against her skin. "My sweet girl."

As soon as her breathing had returned to normal, a fresh set of tears filled her eyes, but this time it was different. She didn't speak. She just watched me in wonder...before throwing her arms around me.

Our bodies were pressed together. I groaned quietly against her shoulder when my cock came in contact with her drenched pussy. There was no

stopping me and, with a moan, I slid inside of her, feeling overwhelmed with the emotions that rocked through me. Buried deep inside of her, I felt...

"Christ, I love you, my Bella," I breathed out.

I was shivering. Goose bumps broke out.

"I... I love you, too." She sniffled with her face buried in the crook of my neck. "So much, Edward."

I shut my eyes tightly.

I was out of control. Everything inside of me was twisted. It was new to me. *This*. This was new to me. It was overwhelming, and as I moved inside her, everything was just...different. I came undone in ways I'd never experienced before. There was an urge. An urge, a fire, a *need*. Fuck, I was *desperate*.

In all my life, I had never come anywhere close to this.

"*Bella*," I moaned. "Baby..."

I reached deeper, felt more of her.

Legs tangled together.

She held onto me harder than she had ever done.

I kissed her with more passion than I'd ever felt, pushing my tongue into her mouth, desperate to feel more, to taste more, to have more. Of her. Christ, it was all about *her*. It was shocking to feel so out of it. So out of myself. Gone was composure and control.

It was her, and I saw everything.

A future.

For the first time in many years, I felt like I was doing something for the first time. And I was. I'd never made love before, but it was very clear to me that this was it. It wasn't slow or gentle, as I thought it would be. It was desperate, needy, and fiery.

I had stated before that I was by no means a womanizer, and I hadn't been with that many women, but I was still experienced. Sex to me was an art, and I had studied it. All to receive and give more pleasure, all to know the human body and use it perfectly, yet this...this was new. So new.

With Bella there were many things I had never felt before. Satisfaction for one. I *thought* I knew satisfaction well, but that was before her. No one had ever managed to make me feel completely satisfied the way Bella did.

But this? Making love?

I had no idea it would be this...this consuming.

Watching her, her face, her expression... It was everything.

"Tell me again," I mumbled against her neck.

Our scents mixed together. Intoxicating. Perfect. Us.

And since Bella was my perfect match, she knew what I meant. "I love you," she moaned, clinging to me even more. "I'm yours, Edward... Only yours..."

Fuck. More. Deeper. So much more.

I squeezed my eyes shut again. I just felt her. Harder. Skin on skin. Our bodies moving together. Her hips meeting mine, her nails digging into my skin, my mouth latched onto her neck.

Close.

“Edward,” she gasped. “I’m—I’m...uuungh...fuck, Edwaaard!”

The second she fell over the edge, I went with her. I emptied myself deep inside of her, feeling every muscle in my body tense.

The pleasure was out of this world.

.

.

Minutes later, I had her lying on top of me. It was all about soft kissing, hands wandering and caressing. No words.

This was a place we’d visit many times more, but we were still us. We knew that what we just shared was special to us both, but we were drawn to each other for a reason.

I needed to be in control, and Bella wanted to submit. It was what made us perfect for each other. We were *not* equals in our relationship, because that wasn’t what we wanted or needed.

The hold we had on each other was equally strong, of course. But our roles in this relationship put me above her. It was simple for us. I made the decisions, I took charge, and I made the rules.

“I love you.” Bella hummed quietly against my chest. “All of you.”

I smiled down at her and stroked her hair. “I love you, too, baby girl. Completely.”

Then I sighed, knowing it was time to talk.

“We have to go pack,” I murmured, starting off slowly. “We’re leaving Isla.”

She pouted instantly, so I swatted her on the ass and told her that pouting didn't become her.

I was irrevocably in love with my sweet girl, but I was still me.

BPOV

Everything was perfect.

I knew we had so much to deal with, but I was confident. Whatever the outside world threw us, we'd deal with it together.

"We have to go pack," Edward murmured, stroking my hair. "We're leaving Isla."

I sighed, unable to contain my pout.

Leaving Isla was the last thing I wanted, but I figured he'd say something like that, especially after my parents' bullshit.

"Stop pouting, little love," he chided halfheartedly. "It doesn't become you."

I narrowed my eyes at him and jutted my lip out further, but that just earned me a swat on the ass.

It made me grin.

I loved that I could have it all, because I needed my strong and confident Mr. Cullen, but the fact that I still have the intense Edward...

This was where I sighed dreamily.

Snap out of it, Bella.

Right.

"When are we leaving?" I asked, chewing on my lip.

"Tonight," he told me softly as his thumb released my lip from my teeth. "The jet will take us to Seattle, and then we go straight from Sea-Tac to my suite at the Fairmont to get some sleep. Then tomorrow, you're going to Forks."

I paled.

"What?" I breathed out, feeling my eyes sting.

I was up in a flash, putting on my skirt and sweater.

Forks was the last thing I wanted.

"Listen to me, Bella."

He was shipping me off to Forks? No way. I could contact Tanya. I had money. I didn't have to stay with my parents.

"I said, listen to me, Isabella."

I stopped. He used the firm voice.

In defeat, I slumped down on the couch again, and Edward spoke as he stood up and got dressed.

"I need you to have faith in me," he told me. "I'm going to sort out all of this, but until I do, you need to stay with your parents. We need to pretend in order to get this Gianna to talk, and that's my plan. I have to find out what her game is so I can destroy her."

I swallowed hard.

Destroy her.

God, he was so powerful.

Sighing, I realized he was right. I didn't want those photographers sued or anything, because the choice had still been mine. They knew my age, but they still left it up to me. It was mutual, and there was no blame for me. Well, I did blame myself for putting them at risk, but they still knew what they were getting themselves into. Regardless, I didn't want them in trouble with my parents, and I trusted Edward, so that was that.

Pretending.

Pretending that I'm not with Edward.

Fuck.

"Okay," I mumbled.

"Don't worry, kitten," he said, holding his hand out for me. "I have this under control, and I hope you realize I have plans for us to meet during this time."

I couldn't stop the blush from spreading at the word "meet", and as Edward helped me up from the couch again, he noticed.

"My dirty little girl," he teased, grasping my chin to make me face him. "You can't wait for those meetings either, can you?"

"No," I breathed out as my eyes flickered to his mouth.

"Hmm, my needy little cock-slut," he cooed, nuzzling his nose with mine. "Don't worry; I have plans to make that pretty little kitty of yours purr."

"Oh, God," I whimpered under my breath.

His hands covered my ass and before I knew it, he lifted me up and wrapped my legs around his waist.

"I love smelling my cum on you, kitten," he growled quietly with his face buried in the crook of my neck. "It's a shame you have to wash it off when we get back to the house."

My head fell back as he sucked on my pulse point, and I agreed. I loved being marked.

His tongue flicked the charm of my necklace.

"Mine," he whispered tenderly. "My sweet little girl is collared."

I smiled.

~IdC~

When we got back to the house, Edward pushed me up against the wall—right next to the door leading to the living room.

We weren't hiding anything anymore.

"I love having you close to me, baby girl," he whispered and skimmed my jaw with a finger. "It's where you belong." He kissed my neck; I whimpered and threaded my fingers through his hair. "It's where I'll keep you whenever I can."

I hummed contentedly.

"And once this is all blown over, you're moving here, Bella."

My eyes closed.

Warmth.

Home.

"Yes," I breathed out, feeling my lips curve up in a blissful smile.

"Wherever I go, you go," he moaned quietly.

More kisses.

"Always."

"One way or another, you're coming with me to Rome next month."

I gasped.

I'd heard of the opening of Cullen Eight, of course.

He wants to bring me?

Oh God, yes!

"Yes," I said breathlessly, feeling my eyes sting. "I love you."

He groaned and sucked my earlobe into his mouth. "I love you, too, my sweet angel. With all my heart."

Chapter 20

BPOV

"Feels weird to leave Isla and have you stay," Alice chuckled very quietly.

A lot felt weird.

Not staying on Isla, though.

It felt weird to stand here on the dock saying goodbye to Alice while Edward said goodbye to...the grown-ups? Yeah, that felt weird. What also felt weird was how paired off we were. The adults by the boat, Alice and me farther away...Emmett with...the *grown-ups*. Shit, yeah, weird.

When it was just Edward and me, we were equals. Well, equals as in we were both adults. Granted, he was above me, but that was where I wanted and needed him.

"You're very quiet, Bella," Alice said in a teasing tone.

Teasing. Yes, she sure had done a 180.

I blushed, caught with my staring, but in my defense...Jesus, Edward in his black slacks and fitted pullovers, showing off his muscular-

You're doing it again, Bella!

"Sorry," I chuckled awkwardly.

I looked up when she put her hand on my arm.

I smiled when I was met by her smile.

It mattered.

"It's still so weird," she all but whispered. "Beyond weird." She rolled her eyes a little. "But I can see that you, uh...that you love him, and...I...I know Edward. I haven't seen him this happy before."

Then only thing I could do was hug her, which I did, because I was at a loss for words.

"Thank you for not leaving me," I murmured.

"We'll get this sorted out," she whispered, squeezing me in a comforting manner before she let go. "And once we've dealt with your parents, you might be needed when I'm up against my own parents."

I couldn't help but throw my arms around her again.

I had told her all about my parents' threats, and I was right. It felt better to confide in her right away. And the fact that she still stayed, not to mention that she *joked* about it... Then of course, her mention of a possible future with Jasper.

Jasper. Mr. Whitlock. Jasper. Jasper.

She wasn't shying away from him.

In fact, they had made plans to meet in Seattle to really talk things out—to lay everything out on the table—and I had faith in them now. I could see it work out perfectly, one way or another.

"Okay." I sniffled a bit, releasing her. "We'll talk when I get back home?"

"Absolutely." She nodded firmly. "Besides, we have to make new plans for New Year's now." She winked. "Perhaps we can arrange for both of us to be in Seattle."

Shit, she's really changed.

"Mr. Whitlock will give you trouble for that sass, Ms. Brandon," I teased, to which she completely shocked me by jutting out her chin in defiance.

"I suppose he'll have to put me in my place then, no?"

I gaped at her.

"I've done my homework, Ms. Swan," she tsked teasingly. "Let's just say that I have a lot to talk to you about soon...about this...lifestyle."

The last word was whispered, but her eyes were fucking dancing.

"Can't wait," I half-choked, half-giggled.

It couldn't have been a pretty sound.

In my periphery, I saw Edward walking toward us, apparently done with his goodbyes, and I smiled as he put his arm around my waist.

We're a couple.

"I have a feeling we'll see each other soon, honey," he said, dipping down to kiss Alice's cheek.

"That we will," she replied. "But no more of that 'honey' now. Equal ground. Hurt my best friend, and I'll hurt you where it matters. Now, bye, bye."

Then she left, leaving both Edward and me stunned.

We were standing there, pretty much frozen, as the speedboat took off.

Edward cleared his throat, smiling in amusement. "Well...I'm sure Jazz will have his work cut out with that little hellion."

So it would seem.

"Come on, baby girl. Let's get something to eat before we pack."

~IdC~

Some slight turbulence woke me up, and I turned in my seat, smiling as Edward brought his arm up. Yeah, like I'd say no to snuggling with him.

"Good nap?" he murmured, dropping a kiss on my forehead before turning back to the laptop on the small table.

I glanced at the screen and...forgot his question.

"What's that?" I asked, feeling my cheeks flush.

Lingerie. He was checking out lingerie online.

"I'm purchasing lingerie for my sweet girl," he chuckled quietly.

I swallowed hard and made the mistake of looking down, and that was when I noticed his semi-erection.

Along his goddamn thigh.

"Wh-what?" I breathed out.

I'm going to die prematurely from all this horniness, I swear.

Edward Cullen's libido was out of this fucking world.

I giggled to myself at that thought.

Out of this *fucking* world.

Pun intended.

"What's so funny, kitten?" he asked, amused.

I hummed and snuggled closer to him. "Nothing."

Of course, Edward didn't buy it, and soon I found myself on his lap—my back to his chest, his chin on my shoulder, his right hand and arm covering my breasts, and his left hand moving down my stomach. It suddenly made sense why he loved it when I wore skirts, because his hand went under it, not stopping until...

"Oh," I breathed out.

...he cupped my pussy.

My head fell back on his shoulder.

"You can't lie to me, little one," he whispered as he pinched my nipple. "I hope you don't find it funny that I buy you lingerie, because I plan on dressing that pretty pussy of yours in many things."

Good God.

"No." I shuddered as his breath ghosted over my neck. "I was uh...thinking about how your..." I cleared my throat, knowing it was time to fess up. "Your, um...libido, and...how it's going to be the death of me."

Silence.

Yeah, I flushed.

Then I felt him.

Shaking in silent laughter.

Great.

"You, my love, are great for my ego." I could definitely hear the mirth in his voice. "In all fairness, though...you're the one making me so *fucking* hard."

All traces of humor—gone.

"Now," he said huskily, "I want to play with your pretty little pussy while I buy pretty little things for it."

Or maybe I'll get a stroke from all that dirty talk.

It could happen.

For a while, all he did was tease me. Fingers stroking my pussy, caressing my slit. But his focus was on the computer. Humming and sometimes dropping a kiss on my shoulder. It was maddening. He just sat there. With me on his lap. His fingers teasing me. And his eyes on the screen.

Casual.

Fucking casual.

He might as well have been holding my hand or caressing my arm.

But he wasn't.

He was playing with my pussy, driving me insane.

I squirmed and whimpered, but he continued on like this was nothing.

Nothing sexual.

"Please," I...well, I whined.

"Hush, baby girl."

Fuck!

I let out a frustrated breath, and that earned me a harsh clit pinch that made me gasp. "Please!"

"Be quiet," he commanded quietly. "This pussy belongs to me, and I'll do what I want with it."

So, he continued.

His middle finger parted my lips and spread the wetness around. I couldn't help myself; I continued squirming and begging, but he didn't relent. His attention remained on the laptop, and for a fleeting moment I wondered just how much he was buying me, because there was so much. So many pieces.

"Stop squirming around, Isabella," he sighed. "I won't hesitate to bend you over and give you a spanking."

I fought a growl.

First of all, his spankings weren't some feathery caresses. They hurt, but there was still something that turned me on. So, it obviously left me conflicted. Second of all, it wasn't my fault I was squirming!

"You can't say that, Edward," I complained, burying my face in his neck.

"I can and I will," he chuckled darkly. "It's called restraint, kitten, and you need to learn it."

Two fingers slammed into me.

I clenched down and gasped.

Fuck, the relief.

More. Please.

"I will obviously make sure that we can see each other often, little one, but while we're separated, you're not allowed to come. I hope you understand that."

I closed my eyes.

"I know," I mumbled.

He hummed. "Good girl."

Yeah, what-the-fuck-ever.

I wanted to play, too.

Could I?

Could I turn the tables around?

I decided to try.

My hand traveled higher on his thigh, and I leaned in, closer to his ear. "I want to suck your cock, Edward," I breathed out. His fingers froze. He shivered beneath me. His eyes closed. My hand reached his erection, and I stroked it from base to tip. "I want to choke on it," I moaned quietly, knowing very well those words would set him on fire.

I was right.

He pushed me off him, holding me until I was in a standing position in front of him. Then his eyes...so dark, penetrating. He wanted me. He may own me, but I owned him, too. This was equal. My hold on him was unbreakable, just as his hold on me was.

"You know how powerful you are," he stated quietly, unzipping his pants for me. "You know that I'm yours."

And he can read me like no other.

He pushed his pants down, freeing his thick cock.

"Yes," I murmured, keeping my eyes trained on his erection. "I do know all that...because that's what you make me feel."

"Kneel," he whispered. I did. I kneeled in between his legs and placed my hands on his upper thighs. He continued. "That's what makes us perfect together, love." Soft murmur, loving eyes. "We own each other, and we have what the other needs."

I nodded. He was right. I was what he wanted and vice versa.

I kissed my way up his thigh, his muscular thigh, and my hands followed. I loved feeling him, tasting him...pleasing him. He never failed, and I never wanted to fail either.

"You want to please me, baby?" he asked softly, threading his fingers through my hair. "You want to choke on my cock?"

I whimpered, rubbing my thighs together.

It was his words. Harsh words in a soft voice.

I wasn't stupid. I was human and I needed to fucking breathe occasionally. So, no, I didn't adore the feeling of gagging, but there was more to it than that. It was the feeling of rendering him speechless and completely satisfied. That was the feeling I needed. That was the feeling I wanted. It made me feel powerful and perfect.

So, I replied without hesitation. "Yes."

"Fuck," he whispered under his breath.

I took my cue and lowered my mouth on him, sucking him in completely.

My tongue swirled around him, tasting him.

He moaned.

My lips were perfectly wrapped around his length, feeling every ridge, every vein.

He exhaled sharply.

I cupped his balls.

He grunted and bucked his hips, thrusting deeper in my mouth.

Sucking harder, I focused solely on him, and in return he showered me with praise, dirty words, and instinctual moves. Hips bucking, muscles tensing, grunts, and groans. Edward was a man who listened to his body, much like I did. But though I had always listened to my body, I was now

also listening to his body. I paid attention just like he paid attention to my body and my needs. So, he was right. We were perfect for each other.

Our hearts happened to be perfect together, too.

No wonder we fell in love.

“Christ, I’m close,” he groaned.

I redoubled my efforts.

He fucked my mouth good and hard, making me gag.

He loved it. I loved the reason and the effect.

Not to mention the end result, I thought as he shot his cum down my throat.

I had the power to make Edward miserable. I had him by the balls, to be blunt. I could call him a pussy-slut if I wanted to. Because he was as addicted to my body as I was to his, but why would I do that? Why would I deny him, why would I call him desperate and needy, why would I set rules for him to obey?

Just because I could?

I knew I could, but if I did, *I* would also end up miserable.

I didn’t *want* to be the one making rules, I didn’t want to call him desperate, and I didn’t want to deny him anything. Because that was not me. I was satisfied *knowing* that I owned him.

But when *he* did it? When he called me a cock-slut, desperate, and needy? I just got horny. It reminded me—though I didn’t need the reminder—that he was in charge. Whenever he commanded me, whenever he cocked an eyebrow, and whenever he spoke, I was reminded by the power he oozed.

Strength, comfort, love, confidence, not to mention *man*. He screamed of man. To me, he was the ultimate one.

Slowly, I kissed my way up his body, straddling him in the process, and his arms went around me immediately.

We kissed.

Yeah, I turned the tables.

I knew I could, I just wouldn't do it...often.

Because I wanted him in charge.

"My vixen," he whispered against my mouth. "I love you."

My body heated up.

"I love you, too," I mumbled before pushing my tongue into his mouth.

"Now, let me eat your pussy," he murmured huskily.

Yes, please.

Edward turned the tables again. He took back his control when he didn't let me come for a whole fucking hour.

It was torture.

It was his payback.

I loved it.

~IdC~

"Tired, little one?" Edward asked, sitting down in a plush chair.

I headed for the fridge.

We had finally arrived in his suite at the Fairmont, and...was I tired? Not so much. A part of me was exhausted, but I was more thinking about the fact that I was going to Forks tomorrow. It wasn't my home anymore and I didn't want to be there.

But it's part of the plan, I snarked internally.

"A little," I sighed, opening the fridge to grab a soda. "Do you want anything?"

"Yes, a beer, please."

After grabbing a Heineken for Edward and a Sprite for me, I went back to him, sitting down on his lap.

"Thank you," he whispered, dropping a kiss to my temple.

I knew what was to come.

He knew I knew.

Which was why neither of us was ecstatic at the moment.

Time to talk.

"So," I mumbled, opening my soda.

I watched him gather his thoughts. His right hand was on my thigh, his eyes on his hand...and my thigh. He was frowning. Pursing his lips.

"While you were asleep on the plane," he murmured, "I contacted Gianna Marin via email."

I shuddered. I had an inner bitch just waiting to stomp the shit out of her.

"Uh-huh," I muttered.

"Yes, and I told her in the email that I wished to see her."

Yeah, I figured that was coming.

Fucking bitch.

"If she touches you, I won't be pleasant about it," I huffed.

That earned me a small smirk. "Is my baby girl getting a bit possessive?"

"Of you? Of course," I said bluntly. "You're mine."

His smirk grew, sexy bastard. "And we both know it, Bella. So, you have no reason for acting out, right?"

Then there was the eyebrow cocked.

The one saying, "Do *not* defy me."

"Sorry," I mumbled, snuggling closer to him.

"It's all right, little love," he sighed, hugging me. "I'll go easy on you because I wouldn't stand for having you close to another man if I'm not next to you."

See?

He made me feel so fucking cherished.

"Did she answer?" I asked, sitting up straighter to sip my Sprite.

"She did, yes." He nodded. "I'm meeting with her after New Year's."

Crap.

That was just three days from now.

“And before I meet with her, I have a meeting with my PI. I’m also having a business dinner with Marcus Marin. Tomorrow.”

I hated it.

All of it.

While he was dealing with all of this...*I’ll be stuck in Forks.*

“Now, I have something serious to discuss with you, Isabella.”

Firm voice.

I looked up and gave him my attention.

“You’re aware that there will be collateral damage in this mess, yes?” he asked.

I nodded hesitantly.

What more could we lose? I mean...I didn’t want my parents around me anymore, so I couldn’t say that I cared for them. Heck, I wouldn’t even *call* them collateral damage because they were already on their way out of my life. They were making sure of that by never being home.

“Who?” I asked, chewing on my lip.

Edward gave me a pointed look, so I stopped chewing on it. “The first thing we need to do... Actually, the first and *only* thing I want *you* to do in all this—is to make Jack an unreliable source to your father.”

I frowned in confusion.

He explained. “Your father is a lawyer and can, without much hassle, find out that I’m in Seattle, which is why there’s no point in trying to hide. So, I need you to tell your parents that Jack and I are still close. That he’s a close friend of mine, even *after* our relationship became public.

“And if your parents believe that Jack and I are close, hopefully they will sever their ties with the Brandons. This will make things easier for you and Alice to visit Seattle.”

Ah, okay.

I nodded in understanding.

If Alice’s parents didn’t get along with my parents, it would be easier for me to say that I was spending the night with Alice without having our parents talk about it. With as few friends as I had in Forks, I knew they wouldn’t deny me that at least—even if they didn’t like the Brandons. We would be careful, of course, but I could see it working.

“Is there nothing else I can do to help?” I asked.

I trusted Edward with my life, but I wanted to be there. I wanted to help him—help him make things easier, maybe. I just wanted to contribute.

“No.” He shook his head. “You’re going to focus on school in Forks. Apart from trying to separate your parents from the Brandons, there’s nothing else I want you to do.”

Double crap.

“School.” I pouted. “Can’t I graduate online?”

Again, he shook his head. “If you were to live with me, then yes, but you’re not going to live with me just yet. You need to obey your parents for a while. At least until I have a hold on them. Once I have found something, I will come get you.”

Well...fuck.

“How long until I see you again?” I whined.

Edward sighed. I didn't like it. "Hopefully in a few days. It will be after I meet with Gianna."

I frowned and looked down. That meant I wouldn't get to see him until after New Year's—a thought that could very well bring me to tears.

But what if I came up with something to hurry along the process?

What if I...

My mind spun.

Then...I had an idea.

Yes!

Yes. That could work. I was just going to need Alice and Mr. Whi- Jasper.

I decided not to say anything to Edward. I wanted to surprise him.

Chapter 21

BPOV

The first thing my mom told me when I entered their house was, "Remove that disgusting necklace."

I flipped her off.

Even Edward had suggested that I should probably take it off until this was all over, but no. That was a hard limit for me. I could lie and hide, but I refused to take it off.

Edward wasn't difficult to sway, actually. Most likely because he loved that I was wearing his collar as much as I loved wearing it.

And now I was alone.

I hated saying goodbye to him this morning, and when his driver took me to Forks, I wanted to kill everyone for doing this to us. Admittedly, I was starting to have issues with my temper, and Edward had already scolded me twice for acting out, but I couldn't fucking help it.

The only thing that kept me sane now was the fact that he chided me half-heartedly.

I knew he was just as pissed about all of this as I was but, regardless, he didn't want me to be anyone else. Only his "sweet girl", so he did reprimand me, but...whatever.

I was a sweet person, but right now I had too many bitches in my life and I wanted them gone before I returned to myself. I wanted...needed...payback. Starting with my parents.

Edward may have plans.

But fuck, so did I.

I was heading to Alice's now.

Someway, somehow, I was determined to find dirt on my parents.

Even if I have to fake it.

EPOV

As soon as I watched my driver drive off with Bella, I brought out my cell phone, quickly locating Jenks' number.

"Jenks," he barked out.

"Edward Cullen here," I replied, heading back inside the hotel. "I hope you're on your way to Seattle."

"Just landed, sir," he said, changing his tone of voice.

"Excellent. And I hope you have a man to spare." I entered the elevator.

"Actually, I hope you have two."

"It...it can be arranged."

"Good. I want them both in Forks. One to keep an eye on the Swan residence, and one to keep an eye on Isabella Swan."

I wasn't stupid.

My little girl was obviously planning something, and I was willing to let her. It would help her pass time or whatever, but I needed to make sure it didn't interfere with my own plans.

Not that she won't be punished, because she most certainly will.

"Consider it done, Mr. Cullen. I was sending someone to watch their house anyway."

"Good. Text me when you're settled in. In two days I expect information."

I disconnected the call and went back to my suite, eager for a shower before I started my day.

~IdC~

I smirked when I saw Marcus entering the restaurant.

He was ten minutes early, which didn't surprise me. No one kept me waiting. But I was early myself, already at our table.

It was quite simple: he wouldn't be as comfortable knowing he arrived last.

"Mr. Cullen, am I late?" he asked nervously, taking a seat.

"It's quite all right," I replied dismissively before picking up my menu.

My day had been good so far; much had been done. The meeting with my lawyer went perfectly, and when I then called Kate and Tanya, they were both happy with my plans. So, I saw no reason for letting this day go sour just because of Marcus. He would most likely put up a struggle later on, but by then, the damage would already be done. Unless he said no today, of course, but I couldn't see a reason as to why he would do such a thing. I was much too valuable to him.

The waitress came, took our orders, and then left again.

I wanted Marcus to sweat a little, so I brought out my cell and sent Bella a quick text.

I hope your evening is better than mine, little one. Please call me before you go to bed. Love you. – Edward

I was glad when she didn't put up a fight when it came to my rules for her. There weren't many, but I wanted her to follow the few I gave her, and I hoped she would.

However, I knew she'd already broken one of them.

She had been instructed to text me whenever she left the house. Same went if she'd been fighting with her parents. She was also expected to reply to my every text as soon as she had read it.

I smiled as my phone alerted me to her response.

My day's been so boring. Been home all day. I miss you. Love you, too. – Bella

Strike one, my little liar.

Just a few hours after Jenks had sent two men to Forks, I was informed that Bella had left and was with Alice.

Now I saw a guilt trip in the cards for my kitten.

I'm glad that you're home. I worry less then. Thank you, love, for keeping me calm. – Edward

With a smirk, I pocketed my phone, and then our waitress arrived with our drinks, so I decided to just start.

"I'm sure you've heard about Denali Agency relocating to New York," I said.

He took a sip from his wine before answering. "It's, uh, more of a branching out, though, right?"

My phone vibrated in my pocket, but I let it be for now.

"True," I conceded. "But Tanya Denali and Kate Aro are leaving Seattle, making New York their headquarters. And since I've relocated to Seattle, I want a closer relationship with my partners."

I knew very well how much Marcus loathed Tanya and Kate, and the business relationship I had with Denali was nothing he liked. He obviously wanted Volturi to replace Denali.

"You've left Los Angeles?" he asked in surprise.

"It's just temporary," I told him, leaning back in my seat. "Cullen Three is hosting a few major exhibits this spring, and I want to be closer for that." It was only a half-lie. "Since I'm here now, I wish to expand my business. I want the artists I work with to be able to come to me, knowing that I have the best recommendations when they need new models."

This was true, but Tanya and Kate would be perfectly able to do this from New York.

It wasn't part of my job really, but I saw it as an extra service to be able to give referrals. It was one of the reasons my company was so successful. Not only was I sought after for my experience and popular galleries, but my artists also got excellent service.

There was a line, a selection process to undergo, in order to show art in my galleries but once you were in, you got it all.

"You—you're not renewing your contract with Denali?"

Christ, he's obvious.

"I am not, no," I lied. "I want a modeling agency with a focus on Washington for Cullen Three, and who better than Volturi?"

"I couldn't agree more," he replied, beaming like the goddamn sun.

No, but there are conditions. "I want more than a business contract, Marcus."

"Oh?"

He was surprised again but also growing wary.

I sipped my scotch, keeping my eyes on him.

"Mm." I nodded once, setting down my glass. "I want the final say on hirings and firings." His eyebrows shot up, and I held up my hand before he gave himself an ulcer. "I am not talking about board members, shareholders, and executives, of course. Don't be preposterous." I smirked as his shoulders sagged with relief. "I'm not looking to take over. This is..." I waved a hand. "It's merely an interest, I suppose you could say."

Marcus didn't say a word. Though it was easy to see that he was relieved to know I was not looking to worm my way into his business, there was still a ways to go before I had him in my pocket.

But, in the end, I knew what his answer would be.

He needed me to grow larger than Denali.

"Think about it," I said, reaching down to pull out the papers from my briefcase. "My lawyer's drawn up a contract for you to read through." I handed it to him. "In there you'll find what I want for my company, as well as yours. Cullen Arts and Volturi Inc. could go far together. You know that, Marcus."

That wasn't a lie, actually.

It was just that I could go so much further with Denali.

And I don't settle for second best.

"I, uh...I'll look through them," he said, not so strongly.

This was where I gave him something he couldn't say no to.

"If you agree," I said, leaning forward, "Cullen Arts will work exclusively with Volturi. I will recommend Volturi nationally *and* internationally. Not just in Washington."

That did it.

I could see him calculating and going through the numbers in his head.

He would be able to expand.

He would be able to branch out, even overseas.

Europe was the gold mine.

Remembering my phone and the incoming text, I brought it out to secure my exit.

Yes, about that. You want me to let you know if I leave the house? Even if I'm only gone for 20 minutes? – Bella

Nice try, baby girl.

"That was my assistant," I lied. "I'm afraid I need to cut this short. But you'll get back to me, yes?"

"Um, y-yes, yes, of course." He nodded, standing up as I did.

He brought his wallet out but I waved him off.

"Already took care of it," I told him. "Have a nice evening, Marcus."

I'll give it a day or two. Then he'll call, ready to sign.

As previously decided, my driver waited for me outside the restaurant and, as soon as I was seated, I brought my phone out again.

"Back to the hotel," I told Max.

"Yes, sir."

Trying to tell me something, Isabella? – Edward

I already knew she had been gone for more than two hours, so I doubted she'd tell me the entire truth. Because...twenty minutes? Oh, please.

I saw Alice for a short while. It was an emergency, and I forgot my phone. I'm sorry. I'm going to bed now, btw. – Bella

I shook my head as I chuckled.

Strike two.

Emergency? I don't think so.

Define short while, little one. – Edward

20 minutes or so. I love you sooo much. – Bella

Good one, but playing the I-love-you card won't get you far.

And strike three. Like I said, you were gone for more than two hours.

**I trust you, baby. Thank you for telling me. Love you, too. –
Edward**

“That ought to help her sleep tonight,” I muttered sarcastically to myself.

I still expect punishment. I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner. – Bella

Oh, there will be punishment. Don't worry.

**I'll let this one slide. I'm just happy you see that I'm doing this for
your safety. Goodnight, love. – Edward.**

When her reply came, I didn't answer.

Still, I'd feel better if you punished me, Edward. – Bella

~IdC~

After a breakfast meeting with my staff at Cullen Three, I told Max to take me to Jazz's studio where I was meeting him for some catching up. It was needed, and thankfully it was only a few blocks away from the gallery.

I would've walked, but...this wasn't California.

It was Seattle. In December.

New Year's was tomorrow and my wish for Bella to be with me would probably not come true. I needed more. More time, not to mention a hold

on so many. Time was a virtue, and as much as it pained me, I doubted I'd see Bella before the new year.

It tugged at me in the most uncomfortable way.

I wanted more than just to own my girl. I wanted to give her everything. Christ, I hadn't even been able to take the girl out. New Year's would be a perfect opportunity for that.

If I was able.

If I was able?

"Fuck that," I said to no one as I pulled out my phone. "There's not a thing I want that I'm not able to get."

Quickly I located the number, and then I waited.

"Gianna Marin here."

I shuddered, and not in a pleasant way.

"Gianna, this is Edward Cullen," I replied.

"Oh, Edward!" she gasped. *"To what do I owe this pleasure?"*

I fought the urge to roll my eyes at her attempts at sounding sexy.

"Actually, I was wondering if you'd like to meet me for drinks tonight instead of next week."

"Of course! Anything for you, Edward," she purred. *"When and where?"*

I loosened my tie, feeling an unease creep in.

"My hotel," I forced out. "I'm at the Fairmont. I'll meet you in the lobby at seven."

"Can't wait. See you tonight, handsome."

I hung up.

My hands were clammy, for fuck's sake.

"Christ," I breathed out.

This is going to be harder than I thought.

I didn't hesitate. Immediately, I pressed dial on Bella's number.

Fucking hell.

I *needed* her.

Needing someone was still new to me. So new.

"Hey, sweetheart," I heard Bella's soft voice say.

It was instant the way I relaxed. My entire body just sagged in my seat. Eyes closed, head fell back. And "sweetheart"? That was new. And more welcome than I ever thought possible. In fact...it felt incredibly good.

"Hey, baby," I sighed, pulling at my tie a little. "Just wanted to hear your voice."

"Oh, is something wrong? Anything I can do for you?"

You already did it.

This was just what I needed, truly. She showed care and concern, most likely reading me as well as I could read her, and I felt better already. So much better.

"No, thank you—just a long morning." I cleared my throat. "How are you today, little one? Did you sleep well?" *No guilt keeping you awake?*

The corners of my mouth lifted slightly when she didn't answer right away.

"Yep, sure. You?"

I grinned.

"I slept okay," I answered truthfully. "It would've been nicer to have your naked body next to me, though. *Much* nicer."

Her breathing hitched.

My cock woke up.

"Mr. Whitlock's studio, sir," Max announced.

Too bad.

"I'm afraid we have to continue this later," I muttered. "I'm meeting Jazz now."

"Oh, okay... Um, why? I mean...uh, do you have any particular reason for seeing him?" she asked in a surprisingly small voice.

My eyes narrowed automatically, and my mind started spinning.

Would Bella turn to him? If she did, she was in for a surprise.

"Just catching up," I told her. "I'll call you later, yes?"

"Kay, love you."

"Love you, too."

~IdC~

"Edward, come on in," Jazz said, holding up the roll-top door to his studio.

"I just finished the final editing on your photos."

That certainly had my attention.

"Black and white?" I asked, shrugging out of my jacket.

"Yes, forty-seven of them."

"Impressive," I chuckled. "How many before I entered?"

"Fourteen." He smirked. "Then another twelve with you in the shot before you approached her."

Which leaves twenty-one photos of me taking Isabella.

Me fingering her in front of the mirror.

Her sucking me off in front of the whipping bench.

Then, me fucking her on the bench.

Excellent.

"Have you named them yet?" I wondered, hoping he hadn't. Because once every photo had been named, he didn't show them until the exhibit. A rule of his.

Granted, I could look at the photos from the CDs he'd given us, but they were watermarked.

"Afraid so, my friend." He grinned.

Damn.

"All right." I smiled ruefully and shook my head. "Email me the names and all that so we can get started on the PR."

"Sure thing."

"By the way," I said, "did you change the name of the line?"

"Yes, I changed it to 'Taking Purity'."

It...I...oh, Christ.

"Yeah, I figured you'd like that," he laughed.

Yes. God, yes, to say the least. It was perfect.

"You might as well put up the sold sign on the photo where I enter her for the first time," I told him, because that photograph was mine. Without a goddamn doubt. It didn't matter how much it would be. It was mine.

"Jesus, Edward, who do you take me for?" He snickered. "I hope you understand that you and Isabella will get copies."

I shook my head. "And I'm thankful for that, but I'm still going for that one. No way in hell is someone other than me walking home with that photo at the end of the night."

The copies he was giving us were nothing but a tremendous gift. Not just because they were of Isabella and me, and not because they were very valuable, but because our faces would show on at least a few of them. On many shots, our faces would be hidden because of the angle, but there were still photos where he had to add shadows to make sure our faces were out of sight.

Those shadows wouldn't be there on our copies, and it was no secret that I would've preferred to have our faces shown in all of them. Even Jazz admitted that he would like that in this line, but it was up to Bella. Well, I made that decision for her because I didn't want to make her uncomfortable.

Now, for the *new* reason I was here...

"I have a feeling my Bella's been in contact with you," I said, cocking an eyebrow.

"She has, yes," he replied, motioning for us to sit down in his little kitchen. "Coffee?" I shook my head once and sat down by the window. "I figured you had picked up on that. Isabella...and Alice for that matter, they can't lie to save their lives."

I sighed heavily. "What are they up to? Is Alice in on it?"

Jazz came over with his coffee and sat down across from me, and damn, he was still smirking. I knew what he was thinking, too. He was looking forward to the day he can punish Alice for things like this.

As for Bella...well, she'll be punished. Severely.

Lying was a hard limit for me, and she knew that.

"Isabella called me from Alice's house, I *think*," he told me. "She asked if I could help her or *them* come to Seattle sooner by helping her frame her parents."

You have got to be kidding me!

"Are you serious?" I asked incredulously.

He nodded before taking a sip of his coffee.

I couldn't believe it.

What was she *thinking*?!

Stupid question. Isabella was obviously not thinking at all.

"Frame them how?" I pressed.

"I honestly have no clue, Edward," he said. "I shut her down before she came around to the ifs, whys, and hows."

Jesus.

This was actually the first time I really viewed Bella as a much younger person, because this...this was insane. Insane, stupid, and way too much for her to handle without getting caught. God, I just could not *believe* her.

"She mentioned something about making her mother look bad, but I cut her off before she could continue," he went on. "I suppose they called me because of my profession." He shrugged. "And I know Alice was there because I heard her whispering stuff to Bella in the background."

They were *girls*.

Girls.

I knew this wasn't my Bella. She must have snapped in order to behave like this. Because I knew the girl I was in love with. She may be young, but she was smart as hell, not to mention...ah, screw it. She was perfect, but this...no, this was...I had no words for how idiotic this was.

"She loves you, Edward."

I huffed. "That doesn't excuse her."

"No, but it gives her a reason. She's just very eager to get back to you."

Rubbing my face tiredly, I let his words register and sink in. A part of me admitted that he was right, but couldn't she trust me to handle it?

Granted, I hadn't told her about my plans, but she could've asked. And I know I would've answered her. But the last thing she should have gone was...this. To make assumptions and plans—go behind my back... What a mess.

The fact was that I had no plans to follow any laws in my destruction, but I could handle this better than Bella. I had power and means, and of course experience. I knew how things worked. I had connections. She did not.

"She asked me not to tell you."

"I hope you didn't promise her that," I chuckled humorlessly.

"No, I just said that she would have to tell you. I left myself out of it."

All right then.

My head was starting to pound.

"Mind if I ask what you're planning?" he asked.

"Not at all." I shrugged, sighing. "I'm meeting Gianna Marin tonight for drinks. It's the only thing I can do in order to find out what her agenda is. I have my suspicions, but I want to hear it from her."

"And what do you suspect?"

"Well, your sister made it clear that Gianna wants me. So, I assume it has to do with my name and my company. I can obviously bring a lot into a relationship, and of course take her far. She's also the sole heir to Marcus' shares in Volturi. Add Cullen Arts to that..." I trailed off, knowing Jazz understood.

He did and nodded thoughtfully. "What's her hold on you now that you and Isabella have broken up officially?"

I frowned. "That's what I don't know yet. She has successfully managed to remove Bella...for now. She's using Bella's parents as the divider, seeing as they're threatening to sue the three photographers Bella worked with when she was still only seventeen."

Jasper scoffed, and I knew right away he was on the same page I was.

Frankly, I didn't care about those photographers. Let them deal with their own mess. They shouldn't have worked with a minor in the first place. But this was Bella we were talking about. The girl I would evidently do anything for, and I knew she felt guilty about her part in this.

"All right, so tonight with Gianna is basically to get information," he concluded.

"Pretty much." I nodded. "I need to get all the facts before I assume anything, and I have the feeling that Gianna isn't just messing around. I think she knows what she's doing."

"She must think she has one hell of a hold on you for this to work."

I nodded in thought, wondering what the hell that would be.

My company was secure. I had nothing to hide. Everything I owned was in my name and my name only.

"Are you going alone?" he asked.

I shook my head no. "No. Well, yes, but I will make sure my PI or one of his men are close enough to get the conversation on tape."

"Good thinking."

Yes, but will it be enough?

Only one way to find out.

Chapter 22

EPOV

"Back to the hotel, Max," I said, climbing into the car.

"Yes, sir."

As soon as he closed the door, my phone rang.

I need a fucking painkiller. Goddamn headache.

"Edward Cullen speaking," I barked out.

"Jenks here, Mr. Cullen. I have some good news, and I figured you'd like to hear about it right away."

After taking a deep breath to calm my ass down, I rubbed my temple and told him to go on.

He did.

"It appears Renee Swan is having an affair with their gardener, Phil Dwyer. I have photos."

Thank God...

Bella, I'm coming for you.

~IdC~

By the time I was back in my suite at the Fairmont, Jenks had already emailed the photos of Mrs. Swan having fun with a certain gardener.

They were quite graphic.

"I see you liked to be fucked, Mrs. Swan." I grimaced. "Let's see you get fucked over instead."

I was very aware that this was only temporary until I could come up with something better and more lasting. Blackmailing Bella's mother with

photos of her screwing her gardener was not only cliché, but also undependable. It was not a level I wished to stoop to, and there was no knowing how long it would work, but I was going to take whatever I could get now because I needed my girl back. Not just for me but also for her; it was evident she was acting irrationally due to our separation.

That was not me being conceited. It was me stating a fact. We needed each other.

The urge to destroy Gianna Marin and Bella's parents was not just tempting, but also a temptation growing far too strong. I needed to keep my head on straight. There was no room for error.

Laws would be broken, and the fact I didn't care about that just proved I truly understood my girl for acting out—I was as desperate as she was.

Despite my understanding her, though, I was still going to punish her. Granted, she was of legal age, but she was playing with fire here. She had no business trying to break laws, because she didn't understand what she was doing. Plus, she blatantly disrespected me by lying.

But first things first.

I wasn't going to call her; I wasn't going to let her know I was coming for her.

She'd find out tomorrow morning when I rang the doorbell in Forks.

But now...now I needed to prepare myself to meet Gianna.

Starting by reading the file Jenks sent me about her.

~IdC~

I nodded once to Jenks as he sat down by the table behind me.

No words were exchanged.

"Can I get you anything, sir?" a waitress asked, smiling and trying too hard.

"Yes, thank you," I sighed. "I'll have double Tullamore Dew, and my *company* will have a glass of white. Make hers non-alcoholic."

"Excuse me?" she asked, confused. "You want a glass of white wine without alcohol?"

I cocked an eyebrow. "Did I stutter?"

"No, no," she rushed out. "I'm sorry, sir—I just don't think we have non-alcoholic wine in stock."

"Then I suppose you have something to do now, no?" I responded dismissively.

Looking properly chastened, she scurried away.

The reason for not serving Gianna alcohol was simple, and though it was tempting to pour a bottle of vodka down her throat to make her less lucid and guarded, I wouldn't. I needed her coherent, and when I told her what I had to say, I wanted to know that I was being heard and understood.

I don't repeat myself.

"That's her, Mr. Cullen," Jenks mumbled quietly behind me.

Looking up toward the hostess, I saw my target.

Red dress. Revealing. A body that was too familiar with plastic surgery. A face with too much makeup, not to mention Botox. Black hair, long and straight.

From Jenks' file, I knew she was thirty-two years old, had a bachelor's degree in marketing, and her only employer was her father. That was not to say she'd worked for him since graduating college, because she hadn't. In fact, she spent five years after college gallivanting across Europe on Daddy's dime. Predictable, yes.

"Edward!" She beamed as the hostess showed her over.

Dutifully, I stood up and greeted her before I pushed her chair in.

I fought the urge to laugh when she settled for my handshake with a fucking pout.

"I ordered you a glass of wine," I told her, sitting down in my seat again.

I didn't ask if it was okay, because I was not here to please her.

I make the decisions.

"Oh, thank you—you're so kind," she gushed.

I found her repulsive.

Not even if she'd been a good person would I find her attractive. It just wasn't possible with her. Too much plastic, nothing natural, *nothing* that resembled what I liked. No Bella.

"White or red?" she asked lightly.

"White."

"Excellent, it's like you know me," she...well, she actually giggled.

Christ.

Instead of rolling my eyes, I took the opportunity to continue on her subject.

"But I don't," I stated simply. "You seem to know quite a bit about me, though."

Her fake smile fell for a second, but as the waitress returned with our drinks, she obviously took the time to get her act together. It made me curious. Did she know how informed I was? Had Rosalie told her I knew everything?

"Our chef at The Gregorian had the wine you were after, sir," the waitress told me, evidently pleased with her work. "And here's your Tullamore. Anything else I can do for you?"

"No, that's fine, thank you." I waved her off. "Just keep the drinks coming," I added when I noticed Gianna pushing together her fake breasts...not so subtly, either. "They will be needed if I'm going to survive this," I muttered under my breath.

"Certainly, sir." And with that, she left.

I sipped my drink slowly, whereas Gianna was eager to pretty much chug her wine. And before I could return to our topic, Gianna launched into mindless chatter about art and how successful my business was. I didn't exactly pay attention, and when I caught the few chuckles from Jenks, still sitting behind us, I had to refrain from snapping at him.

This woman was relentless and after the fifth time she had successfully steered the topic back to art, I understood that she most likely knew the depth of my knowledge of her actions. She was clearly nervous about how accepting I would or wouldn't be.

The drinks came. Over and over, and I wanted to laugh when she giggled how the wine went to her head. Instead I settled for a smirk.

By the time her fourth glass of wine arrived, I was done.

Enough is enough.

“Don’t we have something more important to discuss?” I asked, interrupting her rant about David Hockney and cubism—a subject about which she had no clue whatsoever.

It was evident that she had Googled art for my sake, something I found rather pathetic and a bit insulting. Because you couldn’t fake your knowledge when it came to art. Either you study it, love it, and know it...or you don’t.

Gianna didn’t, and that she thought she could fool me into believing her Wikipedia-based knowledge to be a genuine interest was just pissing me off.

“I’m sorry?” she chuckled uncomfortably.

I cocked an eyebrow and looked at her pointedly. “Skip the charade, Gianna. We both know that I came here already fully aware of what you’ve been up to.”

After a few seconds of trying to stare me down, she finally huffed and let her mask slip off.

“All right, yes. Rose told me that you know,” she said, rolling her eyes.

Oh, Rosalie, Rosalie, that was the last straw.

“So,” I sighed, “you and Rosalie blackmail Isabella Swan—a woman I’m not just involved with, but also love—and then you think I will drop her for...you?”

“Love!” She scoffed. “Rose told me all about that girl. She’s a child, for crying-”

"Age has nothing to do with this," I snapped, cutting her off. "I suggest you tell me why I'm even here, and you'd be best served to do it now."

I took a large sip of my drink, letting the liquid swirl in my mouth before it burned its way down my throat. It was the time it took me to calm down before I snapped her like a twig.

"Oh, Edward, why must I have a hold on you?" she asked, feigning sadness. "Can you not see how perfect we would be together? I'm sure you could see it easily if you'd just let that kid go. I mean, be real here, Edward. What could she possibly have that I don't?"

I coughed, in nothing but disbelief. Was she deranged?

"Clearly you don't know my Bella," I chuckled.

"I know plenty," she huffed.

I glared at her, feeling my temper flare.

"Tell me what you have up your sleeve," I said.

"What—are you saying my beauty isn't enough?" she goaded.

"Take it easy there, Gianna," I tsked. "We wouldn't want you to choke on that arrogance, especially not since your statement is so far from the truth."

Her eyes widened; I smirked. For a minute there, she looked quite offended.

And then she snapped, apparently done playing games.

Finally.

"I do have a hold on you, yes," she said crossly. "What I want is simple—"

Again, I cut her off. "I know *what* you want. You want me for what I have. My name, my company, my status. That's very clear. The only thing that's not clear is *why* I would ever even consider it."

"Your precious Isabella is one reason," she shot back. "And your mother is the second," she added smugly.

My eyes narrowed, and I was utterly confused.

My *mother*?

What in the world did my mother have to do with anything?

"Allow me to explain, Edward," Gianna said, smiling brightly...well, as much as her Botox injections would allow. "How would it look if the photos of your Isabella got out, hmm? And by that, I mean the photos of her as a minor. Would that really look good for Cullen Arts? Think about it. You, a thirty-seven-year-old man, and Isabella, an eighteen-year-old girl. Add underage photos to that and you have yourself a plummeting empire.

"And you know how people talk. Would they really believe that you didn't start your relationship with her until she was legal?"

I opened my mouth to argue, but Gianna continued before I could. "And before you start going on about witnesses and blah, blah, blah, think about what people care about. They don't listen to facts. They listen to the juicy gossip, and if it got out in the media that the powerful Edward Cullen was having a relationship with a minor, well...we both know how that would go."

I was fuming.

"You see how it adds up, don't you?" she asked sweetly. "Everyone of importance will believe the rumor, especially since Isabella is a nude model. Witnesses won't give you anything because it would be so easy to

twist and turn the facts a little to make people think that you two already knew each other—before this holiday. I mean...don't you have a mutual friend? Jazz Whitlock, is it?"

I sat silent, not showing her anything. But my mind, my mind was spinning fast as hell. Sure, she was right about all she said. My status and business would take a major hit in the community, and I was not talking about some prissy art society. At least not only there.

I was talking about the BDSM community too, where I was not only known, but respected and well-liked for my passion for erotic photography—how I displayed it, promoted it, and gave it the recognition many think it deserved. Because to me and many others, photography in this genre wasn't porn. Not even close.

This was why I had many friends in the BDSM community. Friends, coworkers, clients, customers, and associates. We shared a passion, and I was the one showcasing it.

But if Gianna spread this lie...it would raise many questions, and more often than not, people judged and ignored facts.

Gianna had a point.

Cullen Arts would suffer.

But.

Bella was more important than any of it.

However, she said she had more. "And my mother?" I gritted out through clenched teeth.

"Oh, I got lucky there," she said excitedly. "While my investigator tried and failed to dig up dirt about you, I stumbled upon some dirt

myself...about your mother's younger years," she cackled. "Who knew Esme Cullen of the prestigious Platt Foundation was so familiar with drugs? There's even a video!"

The last word echoed.

Video. Video. Video.

I knew the video.

My eyes shut tightly. Only for a second—to regain my self control. Fuck. I cursed internally. Over and over. My blood boiled. Fuck, fuck, *fuck*.

"That's ridiculous," I told her, unfortunately lying. "It's a lie."

Even to my own ears, I sounded literally unbelievable.

Not convincing enough.

How? How could she have known?

"Did you know that my father went to school with your mother?" Gianna asked curiously, bringing me out of my internal war.

And I had no idea.

"What the hell are you talking about?" I groaned in frustration.

I was livid, infuriated, pissed, murderous, and so goddamn tired.

It was her fake smile, the one she used when trying to put herself above me.

It wasn't going to work but, my God, I had my work cut out for me.

"They weren't close by any means, but yes, they both attended the same college in New York. And there was a party, Edward. A party my father attended. Guess who else was there, too?"

My mind started spinning again.

Yes, I knew of the party. I knew of the video. I knew all of it. I knew my mother never deserved it. I knew that my father hunted down every copy of that video.

Apparently, he missed one.

My mother. College. She studied arts and human behavior in the early seventies.

It would be unbelievably painful for my mother if this came out. It would break her heart, and she had worked hard in order to come to terms with her past.

"Technology is an exciting thing, Edward." She smiled. "And it was so new back then. My father was certainly impressed, and when he was offered a copy of the video...you know, as a reminder of one hell of a party, he simply couldn't resist. Making a home video of a frat party—so innocent, right?" My hands were balled into fists. "Only, it's not so innocent when people are snorting cocaine all over the place, now is it?"

"Fuck," I whispered under my breath, shaking my head.

"Let's just say that the next time Dad wants to tell me about his college days, I won't put up a fight, because who knows what treasures I might miss if I do!" she cackled. "Goodness, I'm glad my mother talked me into dinner that night. And I'm even happier that I found that tape with the label 'Frat party -'72!'" Then she flipped her hair over her shoulder and added, "The tape only caught my interest for real when Dad said I wasn't allowed to watch it."

Shit. Did...did that mean Marcus knew my mother was on the tape?
Or...the opposite—he had no idea?

My mother was hardly famous, per se, but her foundation was. Most people had heard of the Platt Foundation. Had Marcus, though? Did he try to...to protect the ones on the tape? And in that case, why the fuck didn't he destroy it? But...if he knew my mother was on it, and he knew it really was her...

This was too much for me to process right now.

And knowing Gianna, she wouldn't care about the fact that my mother was the fucking victim in this case.

You didn't see that on the video.

On the video you saw my mother high as a fucking kite.

You didn't see her bruises. You didn't see how she was forced into her addiction. You didn't see the man responsible, because...he was the one filming. You didn't see that she that she was three months pregnant with me.

Carlisle, my father for all intents and purposes, saved my mother. He took her away, away from college and New York. Brought her to Chicago. Got her help. Helped her get her life sorted. And later on he became her life and my father. He started out as her friend, the only one she opened up to, when they were studying together in New York.

He hated listening to her talk about her abusive boyfriend, but there was nothing he could do. My mother said she loved Edward Masen. But the day Carlisle found out about her pregnancy, he took her away without telling anyone. He'd had enough. He ended up saving her life.

Their first couple of years were difficult, and my mother struggled to stay clean, but it was much more than that. Because there was also me. I was there—the end result of her relationship with Edward Masen.

I was both a reminder and a blessing, and she named me after that sick bastard because she wanted to live with the reminder instead of hiding from it or forgetting it.

Edward after *him*...and Anthony after Carlisle.

Cullen because Carlisle was my father—it's the title he earned and had lived up to.

According to both my parents, my birth helped my mother, but that didn't mean she wanted to relive her past or, more correctly, be reminded of Edward Masen. She didn't need that video in her life again.

She was a free spirit again thanks to Carlisle.

It took years and years but they—we—stuck together, and I had a great relationship with both of them today, even if we didn't see each other often. So, to hear that Gianna has that fucking tape...it made my insides churn.

I downed my drink.

I sighed.

Well, Gianna's obviously lost her humanity, if she ever had any.

"Here's the thing, Edward," she said, serious now. "I have some unfinished business to tend to. This means time for you, because I want us to go public without anything in my way. So, as soon as I have gotten rid of my father, you're all mine."

My eyebrows shot up.

"Excuse me?" I all but yelled in disbelief.

Gianna just chuckled. "Well, I don't want it to be Cullen Arts and Volturi Inc. I want it to be Cullen Arts and Gianna Marin Modeling."

It clicked immediately.

I was stunned.

This woman was delusional.

"You're buying out your father," I stated.

That meant she had to go around Marcus. She had to force him out by going to the shareholders.

Still, Marcus owned fifty-one percent. How on earth would he ever agree?

"Yep. I know I can run that place much better than he ever could."

All right, this I can work with.

She was clearly not as smart as she thought.

Feeling myself regain control, I took a deep breath and gathered my thoughts. I knew now what I had to work with. A complete nutcase, but whatever. I'd take her down regardless.

"I'd say you have two weeks to fuck that girl out of your system," Gianna said flippantly. "By then I think I'm ready to be yours. And, Edward?" She leaned closer over the table. "Once you're mine, I won't have you cheating on me. I don't give a shit that we're not in love. For me, it's all about money, but if you did me dirty, it wouldn't look good." Standing up to leave, she gave me a smile. "But I don't know how you're going to find time to be with little Isabella now that her parents know everything about her. Oops, too bad."

I glared at her, internally pleased that she didn't know I had a hold on Bella's parents.

With another smile, Gianna was gone.

I waited.

When she had been gone for a solid ten minutes, Jenks took the seat across from me.

"Well, the recording could work well if you took it to her father."

I nodded, agreeing. That was definitely my plan. Marcus would find out about his daughter's plans, and if he signed the contract, I would have control over who worked at Volturi. In a heartbeat, I could have Gianna packing her stuff.

"I still want that tape, though," I muttered and ran a hand through my hair. "I need it."

"I figured you'd say that."

Another few minutes of silence passed, and then Jenks spoke again.

"What are your plans, sir? And what can I do?"

I sighed, thinking.

When push came to shove, Gianna had the upper hand by holding onto that tape. She knew it was invaluable to me.

"You can stop looking for things about Bella's parents for starters," I told him. "Gianna is top priority now, and I need that tape, Jenks. I need you to find it and give it to me. And expect there to be copies. I need them *all*. Find them."

I didn't know how far Gianna was willing to go, but I was afraid she'd take it too far if I pushed too hard.

"I'll triple your fee," I added just because I could.

"No need, sir," he said, but I cut him off with a shake of my head.

"I'll triple it. *Find the tapes.*"

With a nod, he brought out his phone and started making notes.

~IdC~

As soon as I was back in my hotel suite, I dialed the number for Tanya Denali.

"Well, well, well, if it isn't Edward," she answered, obviously seeing my name on her caller ID. "*I hope you're treating my girl right.*"

I let out a sound that sounded like a mixture between a chuckle and a huff.

"I don't recall Bella ever being yours," I said dryly, loosening my tie. "And I see you're still greeting friends so politely."

"*You want me to squeal in joy, huh?*"

I chuckled. "Always. Kidding aside, I need your help with Volturi."

"*Shoot,*" she replied. "*Anything to bring them down.*"

Yes, I knew I could count on her.

"Excellent." I grinned, sitting down in a chair. "I need you or Kate to call Marcus Marin; tell him that you've heard a rumor about me letting Denali go in favor of Volturi, and end by saying that you're going to call me to give me a better deal in order for me to continue with Denali."

"Sounds like you're rushing something there, Cullen," she tsked. "Men—always overeager."

I rolled my eyes even though she couldn't see me, but I couldn't help it. Tanya and Kate may be good friends of mine, but there was no denying that we have our differences.

Of course, we had a few things we shared too, mainly our love for pussy.

I sighed. "Just call him?"

"Sir! Yes, sir, Mr. Bossman! Right away, sir!"

She could also annoy the *hell* out of me.

But she was loyal, nice...at times...and fierce.

"I cannot believe you're forty, Tanya," I told her, unable to hide my amusement. "You act more like a child sometimes."

"I know! I can't believe I'm forty either! I look more like twenty-five."

Christ.

"Call Marin, will ya?"

"Yeah, I'll call him right away," she chuckled. "Anything else?"

"Nope. Just text me when it's done."

"Okay. Bye, Cullen," she sang.

I chuckled and said my goodbye, and then I hung up and headed for the bathroom. I was in need of a hot shower to wash away this interminable day. In truth, I needed my girl, but I couldn't have her until tomorrow, so a shower it was.

~IdC~

When I came out after my shower, I wasn't all that surprised when I saw my cell phone flash with a voice message from Marcus. He was as predictable as his vicious daughter.

His message? He was ready to sign the papers.

After I called him and set up a morning meeting with him and our lawyers, I called Bella for a quick goodnight, and then I headed to bed.

She was subdued, saying that she missed me.

I told her I loved her and that I had a surprise for her tomorrow.

Chapter 23

EPOV

When Max said that we were in Forks, it was nearing noon, and my day already felt long.

My breakfast meeting with Marcus went as expected; he signed the papers, and now I had the power to fire Gianna.

I didn't tell him about his precious daughter yet, but I had two weeks to work with before I needed to strike.

"The Swan residence, sir," Max announced, stepping out of the car.

I half expected it to be in a gated community.

It wasn't, but the neighborhood was certainly not for an average Joe, either.

"Thank you, Max," I responded politely as he held the door open. "This won't take long." I straightened my jacket and tie. "Keep the car warm."

"Yes, sir."

Max's car was larger today as ordered, and the seat behind the driver's and passenger's seat was more of a small bed. Bella was going to need it for recuperating.

Once I reached the door, I rang the doorbell.

Glancing down at my briefcase, I smiled as I adjusted my tie, knowing that if everything went as planned, Isabella wouldn't return here. Ever.

A housekeeper opened the door.

"Yes?"

I took one step forward. "I'm Edward Cullen, here to see Renee Swan."

"Um, sure, come on in," she said carefully, opening the door wider. "I'll call on her. I think she's out back in the garden."

Is that so?

I cocked an eyebrow but said nothing.

One might wonder how pretty a garden could really be. In December. In Washington.

That thought vanished quickly, though, because as soon as I stood in their foyer, Bella's scent washed over me.

It went against everything I saw around me.

I saw white, pristine, marble, and gold. I saw pretentious and overdone. I saw the opposite of my hacienda on Isla. But the scent wasn't the

opposite of Isla, because the scent was Bella's. Or part of it. Subtle. Vanilla, citrus, and something flowery. Fresh. Mine.

Speaking of...

I saw her then, coming down the stairs, wearing white cotton shorts and a dark blue...*hmm, I do believe that t-shirt belongs to me.*

"It looks better on you, little one," I murmured, lowering my briefcase to the floor.

With a gasp, her head snapped up, followed by her hand covering her mouth.

I smiled before I frowned.

She looked so tired—unwell.

"Edward," she breathed out shakily, walking toward me. "What—what are you doing here?"

Her eyes welled up; my fingers twitched, and I saw the hope in her eyes. She wanted me to come for her but was too afraid to assume.

"I'm here for you, baby girl," I whispered, reaching out to pull her to me. Grasping her chin gently between my thumb and index finger, I made her face me. She gulped with wide eyes, and I reached up to brush away the tear that fell. "You're coming with me today. You're done here in Forks."

More tears spilled over. "Really? You-you found something? Or..." She chewed on her lip before I released it. "Um...is it just temporary?"

"If I have it my way, you're not returning to Forks again," I told her softly, dipping down to kiss her jaw. "I found enough to make sure you're mine." She shivered—so did I—and I moved my lips closer to her mouth. "Is that what you want, little love?" I brushed my thumb over her left nipple.

Her response came instantly—both her vocal one, and the one her exquisite body gave me. Shivers ran through her; she trembled, fisted my jacket, and relaxed against me.

“More than anything,” she whimpered.

With a tug on her ponytail, her head tilted back, and I captured her mouth with mine.

“I’ve missed you,” she breathed out in between kisses. “So much...”

I groaned quietly, feeling my body heat up. “I’ve missed you, too,” I admitted easily. “I promise you’ll never have to leave my side again.”

She moaned at that, quickly deepening the kiss, and clung to me desperately.

Like I always wanted her to.

“Never,” she gasped. “I just want to be with you.”

Unfortunately, our reunion would have to wait until later.

A throat clearing interrupted us, and it was time to get this over with. So, I ended the kiss slowly, pecking her a few times before looking up at the woman Bella hadn’t heard enter. Her mother, I presumed. Not that they looked very much alike, but there was still something there. I also recognized her from the rather unflattering photos I had in my briefcase.

“Renee,” I said, and I felt Bella stiffen in my arms.

Thankfully she relaxed when I didn’t let her go.

“I suggest you get your hands off my daughter,” she seethed, walking toward us in a red satin robe. Not what I would call garden-wear, but perhaps that was just me. “Isabella, get over here—right now!”

Bella stayed with her face buried in my chest, and I cocked an eyebrow at Renee because my girl wasn't going anywhere.

The way she made my Bella feel uncomfortable was truly pissing me off, too. She had no right. No right to play concerned parent, and no right to make demands. I did, however.

"Bella isn't going anywhere—until I leave, and then she'll go with me," I stated simply. Then I smirked. "And I'll be happy to show you why."

Five minutes of bickering from Renee later, we found ourselves in their kitchen.

Bella stayed close to me, seemingly nervous about the whole thing. Renee stood on the other side of the kitchen island, silently fuming. To me, this was quite enjoyable, and had it not been for Bella's discomfort, I would've drawn it out. I would've made Renee squirm and sweat, but Bella was uncomfortable, not to mention eager to leave. So, I pulled out the manila envelope from my briefcase and threw it across the counter.

Renee glared at the envelope while Bella looked at it with curiosity.

"Next time you decide to blackmail your own daughter, I suggest you make sure you don't have any skeletons in your own closet," I said flatly. "Screwing the gardener? How predictable," I chuckled, enjoying the way Renee's expression turned into one of horror. "I wonder what your husband would say."

"Mom!" Bella gasped. "You're fucking Phil?! Holy shit, that's...ugh...that's disgusting." She shuddered, and I narrowed my eyes at her. "Wow, I can't really believe this. Phil? Really? Isn't he like...oh, I don't know...say, *married?*"

I smirked at my girl's fire, and though I did not enjoy her way of speaking at the moment because it was so far from the sweet Bella that I preferred,

I knew she had every right to get this out. Not only had her parents betrayed her, but they had betrayed her while being not so honorable themselves. They were, to be blunt, terrible parents, and they had this coming.

"Here's the deal, Renee," I told her as she opened the envelope. "If you press charges against the photographers...or sue them...I will make sure those rather intimate photos get out. And correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't your husband trying to go into politics?"

Judging by Renee's gasp, I knew I was right. Not that I hadn't known before. Jenks was very thorough, after all.

"Those pictures in public would be one hell of a welcoming for Charles' political debut, no?" I deadpanned.

Renee glared at us. "What is it you want?" she spat.

"Isabella," I said bluntly. "She leaves with me today, and the next time you see her is on her terms."

"No!" she snapped, and Bella stiffened next to me.

"Yes," I sighed. "I wasn't exactly asking a question. I was telling you how it will be."

"You have no right!" she yelled. "She's my daughter—I'm her *mother*, for crying out—"

"*That* is a title you have to earn," I seethed.

Everything went silent as Renee and I stared at each other, but I could see her mind spinning. She was out of options and she knew it, which was why I wasn't surprised when Renee turned to Bella...with a plea.

"Isabella, you cannot be serious with this," she begged. "You're leaving your home? Your school, your friends? Why? For this man?"

"Yes," Bella replied simply. "I'm leaving it all behind. I don't want any of this in my life."

"What about Alice?"

"Believe it or not, but she won't be a part of Forks much longer," Bella huffed. "We are both better off without this bullshit."

I cleared my throat, cocking an eyebrow at her. "Enough, baby," I murmured quietly.

She flushed and lowered her gaze, and fuck me if I didn't see a smile tug at the corners of her mouth.

I understood, though. I was pleasantly surprised but understood nonetheless. A natural submissive *needed* structure and boundaries, and Bella was very much a natural.

Renee's voice brought me back. "What if we compromise? What if you see...him...but that you live here at home. Please, Isabella."

"I don't compromise," I said flatly, answering for Bella.

"Neither do I!" Renee shot at me.

"No, you're right. In this case, you fold," I told her. Turning to Bella, I suggested, "Why don't you go and pack the belongings you wish to bring. If there's anything else, I'll be happy to send for it for you later."

"Yes, *Sir*," she whispered with a wicked glint in her eye. "I need to change clothes, anyway."

I chuckled at her sass, knowing she wouldn't have it for long.

I'll fuck it right out of her.

I chuckled again, now watching her sway her tight ass as she left the kitchen, and good God, I was going to have fun bringing my sweet girl back.

"Have you no shame?" I heard Renee ask. "She's eighteen."

No, really? I had no idea.

"I'm aware." I shook my head in amusement. "You're not the first one pointing it out, believe me."

"And what does that tell you?"

"Apart from Bella's age?" I laughed through my nose. Then I turned serious. "It tells me too many people are sticking their noses where they don't belong. No one will make Isabella as happy as I do, and no one will make me happier than she does. Our life—our business."

Renee scoffed but said nothing.

For a while.

"What the hell am I going to tell her father when he comes back from Seattle?"

"Not really my problem," I replied dryly. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll just go wait by the door." And with a smirk, I nodded at the photos on the counter. "Keep them as a souvenir; I have copies."

~IdC~

When Bella joined me downstairs ten minutes later, she was smiling beautifully.

"Eager to leave, little one?" I asked, also smiling. I took her bag and what I assumed was her portfolio with photos.

"To say the least." She beamed. "I don't have anything left here. Let's go home. Or...to Seattle at least."

I kissed the top of her head, thrilled about the fact that she longed for Isla, too.

"So, this is it, Isabella?" we heard Renee say, as she appeared in the foyer. "You're walking out. Just like that."

Bella huffed. "Maybe I wouldn't leave forever if you'd been good parents. Instead you two traveled the world without me. You returned to Italy—a place you know I love, and you never bothered to care how I felt. And this Christmas? You sent a fucking text. You didn't call or anything...well, until you accused me of being Edward's dirty secret."

"Good girl," I praised her quietly, glad she got that off her chest.

I knew very well how that had stung her, being left home from such an early age only to be close to forgotten.

"Have a good life, Renee," Bella finished. "Oh, and tell Dad to go fuck himself."

Christ.

I reeled it in. I wanted to spank her pert ass for the sassiness, but in this case I had no right.

We were leaving anyway. No reason to linger.

I opened the door, held it for Bella, and she passed immediately.

I followed, and that was that.

We were done with Forks.

"I suppose I'll finish high school online?" Bella asked hopefully.

Chuckling once, I nodded. "Yes, Isabella. You'll finish online." I could always throw some money around to make it possible.

She was truly beaming.

It made me happier than I ever thought possible.

"Hey, Max," she greeted my driver as he popped the trunk open.

"Good afternoon, Ms. Swan," Max responded politely.

I handed him Bella's things, and then I opened the door for her to get in.

I fought an animalistic growl as Bella bent over slightly to get into the car.

It didn't take more than a second to understand why she had wanted to change clothes before we left her parents' house, because now...now my girl was wearing a very short skirt, and she was going commando.

"Looks like you have plans, kitten," I sighed, getting into the car after her.

Truth be told, I was glad she seemed eager, because I needed her too much to play games. This would be hard and fast...the first time. So, I unzipped my pants after pressing the button to put up the divider between us and Max.

Bella said nothing as I pushed my dress pants and boxers down my hips.

"Get me hard," I commanded quietly, leaning back in my seat. Bella kneeled between my legs before she leaned forward to lick the length of my semi-erection. "You've missed my cock, baby girl?" I tucked a piece of hair behind her ear.

"So much," she whimpered before sucking me in.

I swelled in her mouth.

"Goddammit," I moaned. "Show me how much you've missed my cock."

A moment later, I was rock hard. I relaxed fully in my seat, letting her suck my cock while I just watched. And felt. Christ, how I felt her. The swirl of her tongue, the tight grip of her lips which had to make her jaw ache, the graze of her teeth...the way her throat constricted when she swallowed around me...

I pushed her head down, feeling her gag on me.

"Fuck, I've missed you, Isabella," I muttered, letting my head fall back.

"Yes, that's it. You suck my cock so damn good..."

I could smell her.

I could picture her arousal trickling down her smooth pussy lips.

A groan rumbled in my chest.

"I want your sweet juices on me, little one," I grunted. "I want you to suck them off my cock."

Moaning around me, she gathered wetness from her pussy with her hand before releasing my cock, only to cover it in her arousal. *Goddamn*. Then she sucked me in again with so much eagerness.

My head lolled back again, and I saw the trees fly by outside the window before I closed my eyes.

Harder.

I pushed her down again.

Closer.

More.

"Yeah," I moaned, feeling my orgasm approach. "I'm close. Now, be a good little girl and sit on my cock."

With that said, I helped her up onto my lap, traced two fingers along her soaked slit, making sure she was ready, and then...I pushed her down on me. Hard.

"Fuck!" I gasped, feeling her tight pussy clench around me.

There was no stopping it, no holding back. Every muscle in me tensed fiercely.

"Oh, Edward, yes!"

I came immediately, holding her in place as I filled her pussy with my cum.

Her pussy milked me, squeezed me so good, and I was left breathless and sated...for now.

She breathed heavily, peppering me with kisses. My jaw, my neck, my eyes, cheeks, forehead, and mouth, making me feel so fucking loved and worshipped. I had every intention of making her feel the same way. No one had ever made me feel the way Bella did. And though the thought might be unwelcome at this early stage of our relationship, it was there, nonetheless. One day, when I knew she was ready, I was going to marry her.

"You're perfection, baby girl," I breathed, cradling her face before I kissed her hard, passionately. "And I love you—so completely, Bella."

"I love you, too, Edward," she whimpered, grinding against me shamelessly. "God, these days without you..." She shook her head, hugging me tightly.

"I know, love," I whispered, caressing her hair. "It was the same for me."

I felt her nod in the crook of my neck.

She fit so perfectly in my arms.

I knew we had plenty to talk about, and I was going to share everything with her, but not now. These four hours before we were back in Seattle belonged to us. Without interruptions.

"I need you," she begged, fisting my hair. "So badly, Edward...please..."

I smiled and dropped kisses on her shoulder.

My hands worked her white blouse, and then I pulled it off of her.

Then her bra.

Lastly, I slid her up skirt, over her head, leaving her naked.

"Then I suppose you have to get me hard again, no?" I asked softly, dipping down to capture a nipple with my mouth.

I sucked on it hard.

She moaned and arched into me.

Fuck, her taste...

I couldn't wait to show her our penthouse, to break in every room, every surface, and...I hoped she wouldn't mind documenting it. Also, I couldn't wait to see her reaction to the furniture I had bought, namely the chair in our bedroom.

I groaned, feeling her tight pussy squeeze me.

"Oh, my naughty little kitten," I chuckled and pinched her nipples. "Doing your Kegels on my cock, are you?"

My cock was waking up quickly.

"Mmm..." She hummed, sucking on my neck. "I love your cock, Sir... So big and thick..."

My hips bucked upward in instinct.

"My little cock-slut," I whispered.

She clamped down on me, and I was ready for her again. So, I palmed her ass; her legs went around my waist, and I carried her across the small surface between my side and hers. Then I perched her ass on the edge, smirking at her when she moaned in anticipation.

"Look at that, little one," I muttered as my eyes focused on her needy little pussy. "Those juices are soaking everything."

Slowly, I pulled out of her and saw her wetness mixed with my cum. It trickled down her thighs, toward her ass, and down on the leather seat. *Fuck*. I moaned at the sight; I breathed it in. Breathed *us* in. *Oh, God*. Never enough. I slammed into her, and that was how I fucked her. Kneeling in between her legs, I pushed my cock in and out of her, feeling her squeeze me, hearing her moan for me, smelling our arousal...

"Oh, God, yesss! More, Edward... please!"

Harder, then. I pounded into her, circled her clit, kneaded her ass roughly, letting two fingers tease her tight rear entrance.

"Just a few more days," I promised. "Then I'm going to push my cock inside your tight ass."

"Fuck!" she groaned. "Yes, yes...I want it so badly..."

Perfection.

Deeper—I reached her sweet spot.

"You like that?" I moaned. "You want me to fuck your ass?"

"Yes!"

I stared down at her.

"So much that you'll let Jazz photograph it?" I asked huskily, leaning forward to kiss her perky tits.

Bella gasped, constricting around me fiercely, and stared at me with wide eyes. Wide eyes that darkened immediately. *Fuck, yeah.* I knew it. I knew she'd love it.

"Yes," she breathed, nodding furiously.

"My kinky little girl," I whispered softly, kissing her jaw. "Those pictures will be for you and me only."

I slowed down, wanting her to go insane.

Long, deep strokes.

"I want them in our bedroom," I moaned quietly. "I have so many plans for you, my love."

"Mmm... yes...*ungh*..." She whimpered. "*Anything*..."

Pushing my hips forward, I also pressed a hand down on her lower abdomen.

It had her crying out when I rubbed against her g-spot.

"Can't believe you're mine," I mumbled, feeling...so much. All of it. All of her. Us together. "Your body is so fucking exquisite."

She was a vision.

At my mercy.

I sped up, slamming into her again.

"All yours," she whined.

Hard and fast, I abused her tight pussy with my cock.

Over and over.

The sounds escaping us should belong to animals.

My muscles tensed.

I buried myself to the fucking hilt.

My thumb stroked her clit, her soaked, swollen clit.

She begged for me, moaned for me.

"Not yet," I grunted. "Do *not* come yet."

"Please!" she sobbed out.

"No."

I'd never get tired of the sight. The sight of my cock soaked in our arousal as I fucked her.

I grunted louder, feeling her pussy get tighter and tighter as she fought off her orgasm. And she fought it because I told her so. She obeyed me.

She doesn't obey always, though. She did lie.

The thought of planning the perfect punishment for my cock-slut had me panting in no time, and my orgasm approached fast. The back of my neck tingled. My abs tensed. My thighs shook. My fingers dug into her soft flesh.

“Please, please, please, please,” she chanted breathlessly.

My eyes closed tightly, my brows furrowed. Jaw tensed.

I was done.

“Let go,” I hissed.

The second she did, I followed. The way her pussy sucked me in was a feeling too powerful to fight, and we both exploded. Pleasure took over.

Fuck.

I breathed heavily, inhaling through my nose, smelling us in the car. I covered her spent body with mine, needing to feel her close.

“You okay, little one?” I whispered, burying my face in the crook of her neck.

I felt her nod. “Understatement,” she panted.

I felt her fingers in my hair.

A few moments later, I heard the telltale sounds of my sweet girl sleeping. Those soft sighs of hers—so adorable. With a quiet chuckle, I pulled out of her, cleaned her up, and positioned her more securely on the seat...or bed. And when I’d covered her in a blanket, I adjusted my clothes and sat down in my seat across from her.

Yes, rest while you can, kitten. Because soon I will need a taste of your delicious pussy.

But in the meantime, I made some calls. It was New Year's Eve, after all, and it was about time I took my sweet girl out properly.

After a talking to Jazz, I was pleasantly surprised to hear that he was on his way to Forks, too, apparently having planned an evening for Alice in Port Angeles.

I was happy for them.

Chapter 24

BPOV

"Time to wake up, baby girl."

Mmm, not yet.

I was in that comfortable state in between. The one where you were quite aware of your surroundings but still asleep enough to lose track of time as well as your train of thought.

"So, is my gorgeous little Bella going to spend New Year's in the limo then? Because I can cancel our plans and work instead."

Oh, look who decided to be funny.

I hummed, feeling his hand caress my stomach...my ribcage...up, up...to my breasts.

"I'm so comfortable right here," I mumbled sleepily, pouting a little.

I was aware enough to know that I was in the backseat of the car. Naked. I was also aware of the delicious ache between my legs. God, he had woken me up several times in the most exquisite ways, leaving me

satisfied, aching for more, tired, and sore, all at the same time. It was quite conflicting.

"I think you'll be a lot more comfortable in bed after I've given you a hot bath," he whispered, and oh, his lips...on my neck...mmm, and his hand kneading my breast. "And if you're a good girl, I might even let you suck my cock again."

Okay, I'm up.

After stretching my body, I sat up in the seat and yawned.

"Good nap?" he asked, smiling as he held up my blouse and skirt. "I hope I haven't worn my kitten out yet."

I shook my head, because hell no. I was up for more.

"I'll always need you," I said softly, meaning every word. After I had buttoned my blouse, I added, "I hope you were serious when you said that I never have to leave your side again, because..." I shook my head and pulled my skirt up my legs, wriggling my hips to get it into place as I thought of my next words. "I was so *fucking* miserable these few days without you. *Fucking* hated it."

The time I spent without him was full of boredom, insecurities, fights with my mom, longing, and...goddamn despair.

"I promise," he replied softly, brushing his knuckles over my cheek. "It's you and me now, and the only thing you need to worry about..." His expression changed. He was contemplative...and shit, stern. "We need to get that sass of yours under control, Isabella. The only time I want to hear foul language coming out of that sweet mouth is in bed. Am I making myself clear?"

Then there was the cocked eyebrow.

Shit.

I swallowed.

“Yes, Sir,” I whispered.

I hadn't even realized it, but he was right. I was different. I didn't like it one bit, and hopefully Edward would help me, because I hated this. I didn't like feeling anger. I didn't like feeling overjoyed about vengeance or payback, but that was what my few days without Edward had been full of. There had been too much hate, and it had turned me into an angry little bitch. Apparently with a bad mouth.

~IdC~

Edward had to take an emergency call that turned into some phone conference with his lawyers, so I took my bath alone. But it was perfect for me, because I needed to clear my head.

Just returning back to his suite where his scent lingered changed me, if only slightly. It was my mindset. I needed him close in order to stay true to myself—to be the one I truly *wanted* to be. So, as I washed every inch of my body with Edward's body wash, I tried hard to clear my system. It was all about us now. My parents were no more. They were out of my life, and I wasn't going to return to Forks.

Was I sad about my parents?

Not really, honestly. And I knew why, too. This wasn't exactly a sudden development. They had slowly but surely distanced themselves from me. They didn't care and, in turn, it would make it so much easier for me to move on. I didn't lose my parents today. I lost them when they started leaving me at home to travel on their own.

But Edward has me now, and he'll take care of me.

I was going to take care of him in return. For the rest of my life, or until he ordered me away, I would tend to him.

I smiled at the thought.

Already, I could feel myself feeling more...content...with myself, with my thoughts. Happier.

Many people would probably yell at me for being weak and so dependent. But I wasn't. I was just following what my body, mind, and soul desired.

I wasn't going to be some housewife without anything to fill her day, and I was not going to have a permanent spot by the pool while my husband worked or anything. The last person I wanted to be was my mother. Never. I wanted work to keep my husband happy, and myself happy, for that matter.

And...um.

Husband?

I shook my head. *Be gone, unwelcome thoughts.* That wasn't on Edward's mind. Not on my mind either. No. Uh-uh. Way too soon. It was not on my mind. *Shoo.* I was only eighteen.

And since when did you act your age?

Shut up.

Instead of thinking further about that, I focused on shaving my legs.

I should probably call Tanya, too. Because that was the thing. I still wanted to work—to model—and now that I have nothing to hide, I could work more.

After making sure all unwanted hair was removed, I showered, lathering up my body once more.

Squeaky clean, I stepped out, ready for a facial. My own would have to do for now, but I made a mental note to get an appointment at my spa.

~IdC~

When I was finished in the bathroom, I walked out into the bedroom, smiling when I saw Edward sitting on the edge of the bed with his phone at his ear...and boy, did he enjoy the view now. Perhaps because I walked out completely naked.

"Yes, that's correct," I heard him say to whoever he was on the phone with. But what I focused on was his finger, beckoning me to come to him. "And he agreed to five thousand?" I walked toward him, not stopping until I stood between his legs. "Excellent. Give him cash." He watched me with lustful eyes, but there was this reverence, too...like I was everything to him. "I'll give Scott a heads up." His hands caressed my skin. Softly yet firmly, and I heard him groan quietly. His mouth latched onto my hip. I slid my fingers through his hair. "Fuck," he whispered. His hand then reached my ass, and I dipped down and kissed him on his forehead. "All right. Thank you, Jenks. Anything else?" I massaged his scalp, making him hum. "Perfect—I'll talk to you tomorrow then." He hung up the phone and, before I knew it, I was straddling him.

"You're flawless, Bella," he murmured tenderly and cradled my face. "So unbelievably exquisite." He kissed me lovingly, swiping his tongue over my bottom lip. I opened up immediately, needing to feel him. And according to me, he was wearing way too much. "I love you, little one...so much."

"I love you, too," I whispered, kissing his jaw as I slid my hands up his chest to unbutton his shirt. "Let me make you feel good, sweetheart. Please."

He groaned quietly, lying back on the bed, giving me his permission.

I made quick work of his clothes, leaving his chest exposed. Then I unzipped his dress pants.

Once all his clothes were on the floor, I straddled him again and positioned his fat cock at my entrance before I sank down on him.

Goddamn.

The way he stretched me...

"Fuck, baby," he grunted, placing his hands on my thighs.

I rolled my hips, taking him in as far as I could, and focused solely on him. I worked him hard, so eager to please. After everything he did for us...all that work so that we could be together... *Harder*. He deserved the best.

"Oh, yes," I moaned, feeling his thumb on my clit. "Edward..." I just had to get his name out. "Fuck, Edward..." More, harder. I sank down on him forcefully, making us both groan when he reached that spot inside me.

I could smell myself, the way I soaked his cock.

Faster.

I rode him like there was no tomorrow, tensing my muscles around him.

"Goddammit, Isabella," he cursed, meeting my thrusts. "That's it." He added pressure to my clit. "Fuck me..."

I did. I fucked him eagerly, harder with each thrust.

Then he sat up. As he slammed me down on his cock, he sucked, nibbled, and kissed my breasts. His hunger spurred me on, and I was suddenly famished. My mouth was on him in a heartbeat, kissing and licking. My hands roamed greedily, almost digging into his flesh.

"Holy...fuck!" he cried out.

I swelled with pride.

My orgasm approached.

I cradled his face, kissing him hard, pushing my tongue into his mouth, tasting... I moaned in his mouth... He did, too.

"*More,*" I gasped.

"Always," he groaned, and then he picked me up. Breathing heavily, he carried me over to the nearest wall, and my back hit it with force as he slammed into me.

A painting hit the floor.

He took over.

He fucked me hard.

Pounding into me.

Oh, God.

Up against the wall.

So deeply.

"I'll never stop, kitten," he promised darkly. Thrust, grunt, gasp. "This pussy's mine to fuck forever." Thrust, grunt, gasp. "You won't be able to walk tomorrow."

Something, I didn't know what, but something else hit the floor.

He moved us.

He put me down on wobbly legs by the four-poster bed.

"Hold onto the post, Isabella," he told me gruffly, and I obeyed, knowing that he was in his element. This was going to be hard and fast. *Shit, shit, shit... oh, God.* My pussy clenched in anticipation.

Then he *shoved* his cock into me.

I choked, feeling ripples of pleasure and pain spread through my body.

Two fingers were pushed up my ass.

Pain. Pleasure. I felt him everywhere. His free hand—fingers digging into my flesh as he gripped my hips. Oh, God... A third finger. My legs shook. He snarled. Like an animal.

"Can you handle more, little one?" He bit my earlobe.

"Yes!" I choked out.

The feeling. That feeling. When you want to inhale but it doesn't work.

The bedpost creaked.

Edward chuckled huskily, breathlessly.

I was gone.

Incoherent.

Gasping for air.

Sweating.

So stretched.

Then he was gone, and out of instinct I cried out a "No!"

"Don't worry," he breathed out, picking me up. "I'm not done with you." He positioned me on the small desk. His eyes were...black. His jaw was tensed. His brow furrowed. His cock hard as steel, glistening with my arousal. And he slammed into me again. *Shit!* "Addictive, baby girl," he moaned. "Your body, Isabella... All mine... All *fucking* mine."

Through hooded eyes, I watched him.

I watched as he placed my legs against his chest, nearly folding me in half. He bent down, continuing to fuck me. Christ, he never stopped. Oh, God... I watched where we were joined, and he did, too.

My walls fluttered.

It hurt. I wanted more.

I held on for dear life, and he pushed his cock deep inside me, making the desk shake and move.

Something hit the floor. Maybe it was a lamp. I wasn't sure.

I closed my eyes, holding back. I wanted to come so badly.

But I knew.

I knew he loved telling me no.

"Please," I panted breathlessly.

"No," he grunted. "Not yet."

I knew it.

He swiveled his hips, grinding so deeply.

I was done for.

“Edward, Edward, Edward... Please!” I sobbed.

“My naughty cock-slut. Are you going to disobey me?” He muttered. “I guess that’s another thing I’ll have to punish you for.”

My eyes shot open.

Another thing?

My breath got stuck in my throat.

Too late.

I exploded around him.

I couldn’t hold it.

Wave upon wave of pleasure flooded my senses, and in the background I heard him say my name, but I was already gone. I came hard, so hard.

I couldn’t breathe.

Then, with a guttural groan, he came deep inside me.

Breathe, Bella! Breathe!

Shit.

I gulped.

My chest heaved, my ears rang, and it was like everything stopped.

Minutes passed as we regained our breath.

I reveled in the feeling of his hot breath on my chest, but I knew it wouldn't last. Because I remembered what he'd said. Another thing. *Another* thing he was going to punish me for. And I felt it in my gut. I felt it. It was something I had done, and I...oh, shit. It was something I did while we were apart. I was sure of it. Christ, did he know? Did he know about the phone call? Did Mr. Whit—did Jasper tell him?

Fuck me.

The guilt. The text messages.

He knew.

Slowly, he pulled out of me, and...the look he gave me was...it was... It was a pointed look. A smirk; there was seriousness, but there was also playfulness. *Yes, I'm in trouble.* Lastly, there was disappointment.

That was what killed me a little.

"I'm going to have fun with you, little one," he told me, helping me off the desk before he pulled his boxers on. "You can't lie, Isabella." He looked to me pointedly. "I knew there was something you hid from me the second the thought entered your mind—most likely. And when you didn't tell me, I made sure to have someone check in on you."

Ah, *shit.*

He took my hand and led me to the bathroom. "You need another shower, and while you do that, I'll tell you a little story about...you."

I ducked my head, hoping to hide my blush, and obeyed.

As I stepped under the spray, he started. I wished I could close the shower door, but Edward shook his head and that was that.

He talked. I showered. He watched. I blushed.

"Lying in any form is betrayal, Isabella. Hard limit for me."

Firm voice. Stern. Unyielding.

I avoided his eyes. Actually, I didn't look at him at all.

"And you lied to me more than once, yes?"

Rhetorical question. I kept my mouth shut and lathered my body.

"I see reason, Bella. You wanted to help. I know that, and I truly love you for having that desire. But that doesn't excuse you, because I told you I'd handle it. So, it gives you reason but not forgiveness."

Lathering my body here... Do not cry, Bella. Don't cry. Just focus on washing your body.

"You should have trusted me. It's as simple as that, because the truth is that I'm handling this very well. But instead of trusting me, you called Jasper. And by doing that... Christ, not only did you embarrass yourself, but you embarrassed *me*."

My eyes welled up.

Oh, God.

"Not to mention the fact that you asked Jasper to do something illegal."

My lip trembled; I bit down on it.

I only wanted to help. Yes, asking a photographer to fabricate something...it was wrong. Shit, it was something that Edward found anyway. He never needed my help. He found real shit instead of...ah, fuck it.

I messed up. Big time.

"I gave you the opportunity to come clean, too, Isabella. But did you?"

Don't like it when he uses my full name. Not now. It's because I've been bad.

Again, rhetorical question.

"No, you did not," he answered for me. "I have to say I'm disappointed. Very much so, and I hope you have something to say for yourself."

I do, but it's nothing you will say, "Oh, it's all okay then," to.

Truth was, I panicked.

I'd made the mistake of Googling Edward when I had arrived in Forks. Stupid, stupid teenager. But I still did it. And did you know that Edward Anthony Cullen was considered to be one of the most eligible bachelors in Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago? That was three cities! Three cities where Edward was desired by prissy, uppity bitches.

Bitches like Gianna Marin.

My insides were still churning just thinking about him meeting her.

Tomorrow, was it?

They were going to meet tomorrow, and I wondered, was there a sleeping pill that would allow me to sleep through tomorrow?

"You're being awfully quiet, little one."

Fuck.

"I have nothing to say for myself," I mumbled quietly. "I messed up. I'm sorry, and I'll take any punishment."

I heard him sigh, but I refused to look at him. Instead I closed my eyes and stepped under the spray fully.

“Oh, that will not do, Isabella. As I said a minute ago, you cannot lie to me, and yet you just did it. *Again.*”

Then there was a towel waiting for me, and I had no choice but to take it.

I was squeaky clean again, and it was apparently time to talk.

In the living room, he pulled me down onto his lap. We were in one of those plush chairs, and I was only wearing my towel.

He smelled like sex.

It was very distracting.

“Talk, Isabella.”

Firm voice.

I crumbled.

I cried.

I told him everything.

I felt weak and insecure. That was new for me.

EPOV

I wasn't sure if I was amused or appalled by what she told me.

Google? Really? Bella Googled me?

She was obviously insecure, which meant I had failed to show her that she had nothing to worry about.

"My sweet girl," I sighed. I held her closely while she cried against my neck. "I suppose we have to make a few things clear, because I will not have you this distraught. It's very disheartening to see."

I never thought of my Bella as insecure. Never. Actually, I still didn't think she was. Perhaps it was just a weak moment since we weren't together. I hoped so, because I doubted I had misread her. She was strong, beautiful, and *sure*. At least of herself, and if she had a weak moment in regards to my feelings about her, I'd just have to fix that.

"I'm sorry," she sniffled, "I don't know what came over me. I just..." She groaned in what I assumed was frustration. She left the crook of my neck, sitting up straighter on my lap, and wiped her eyes. "I just...*hated* being away from you, and...knowing that you're going to see that...*woman*."

It tugged painfully at me to hear her so devastated; it was something I was desperate to solve.

She needed to know everything.

"Listen to me now, love." I drew her closer to me. "First of all," I said, making sure I had her attention. "I've already met with Gianna."

She gasped. Eyes widening. Welling up.

"*Listen* to me," I reminded her softly. "I met with her—down in one of the restaurants here at the hotel. Everything went...*okay*." I grimaced slightly. "I will tell you all about it, and there are things that are..." I shook my head. Fuck, I was infuriated just thinking about that vile woman.

I sighed.

"Yes, she is holding something over me," I admitted. "*But* I will solve it all. And I will tell you all about it, like I said, but not tonight. Not on New Year's Eve, okay? Just...*please* trust me on this one."

She took deep breaths. Several of them.

I wiped away fresh tears when she blinked.

"I didn't tell you because I knew it was hard for you," I murmured.

She nodded minutely, still crying silently, so I went on.

She needed this. Hell, we *both* needed this talk.

"It's you and me." I touched her cheek. "I love you with all my heart, and though we may not have started this relationship under what people would call normal circumstances, I need you to know that I have every intention of doing this right. But more importantly, the way it's right for *us*."

I removed the towel from her hair and continued as I slid my hands through her long locks. "It's been two weeks, baby. Two weeks—it's not a lot, and yes, I fell for you so quickly, but I have no regrets. I never will because there's no doubt in me. But we do have a bumpy road ahead of us. And since it's only been two weeks, I can't just take for granted that you know my intentions, which I admit that I may have done."

I kissed her lips softly. "I guess we fell into our relationship so naturally that I never second-guessed myself." I realized that this was going to be my first "talk" ever. The whole concept of a relationship was new to me, and I had much to learn. But I was more than willing when it came to Isabella. Two weeks? Fuck it. *If you know, you know*. And I most certainly did. I wanted her—without a doubt—forever. "I won't ask you where you see us in five years, Bella, because we're so far from ordinary, but I suppose it *is* time we talk about this...or *us*."

Looking at my watch, I noticed it was almost seven PM.

"We have two hours until our reservation," I said. "Should I start?"

With a very timid nod, she breathed out an "Okay."

I nodded once in return, desperate to assure her. "I'm certain I want you forever," I told her, bluntly but softly. "I want you to obey my commands just as much as I wish to spoil you with romantic gestures." I leaned in, unable to help myself, and untied the towel around her. It left her front exposed to me. "I want our *arrangement*." I cupped her perfect tits and dipped down to kiss them. "I want to fuck you as I see fit," I groaned quietly, and my cock stirred. "I want that delicious little pussy of yours available to me wherever, whenever. It's mine. *You* are mine." She arched into me; her hands were in my hair, massaging, scratching. "And I want to make love to you. Because I'm not just insanely in love with your body, Bella...but also your heart, mind, and soul."

I pulled her closer to me, feeling her hot pussy come into contact with my erection.

She rubbed against me; I let her.

"I know we can find a balance, little one," I moaned against her soft breast. My tongue flicked a rosy nipple. "I know we can have the best of both worlds."

The things she did to my body were nothing short of maddening, and I was already struggling to keep myself in check. We needed to have this conversation, but it was quite difficult when I had her squirming on top of me, wanting more. Though, I only had myself to blame. I started it.

"And the future?" she breathed out before sucking my earlobe into her mouth. I shivered and tightened my hold on her, letting my hands slide to her ass. "What do you want for us in the future?"

I chuckled huskily, sucking on her nipple as I tried to come up with the best way to admit what I wanted.

A part of me wished to delay this, hide it. But I was adamant about honesty. Alas, I had to tell her. First, though, I'd give her the choice.

"Are you ready to hear what I want, little love?" I asked softly, reluctantly pulling back from her warmth. This included pushing her inviting body away from my hungry one.

Much to my cock's chagrin.

"It's only been two weeks," I reminded her gently as I *again* released her bottom lip from her teeth. She did that far too often. "And you're very young."

She looked down, thinking about it perhaps.

I wasn't sure she was ready to hear that I wanted her to be my wife one day.

"Um...maybe we can talk more when all this has blown over?" she asked timidly, referring to Gianna no doubt. "Cause...I suppose...um, I don't know..."

My eyebrows rose slowly, and I had to admit it was quite endearing to see her so timid and shy.

Then she huffed, seemingly annoyed with herself. "I just needed to know where we were, and I know that now. I know how you see us and—and that was what I needed. And I'm sorry for doubting you. I'm sorry for assuming..." She shook her head, once again fumbling with her words. "I... Shit, I should've just talked to you. I know that now. So...I'm sorry. And what you said about...us...that's what I want, too. I think we can find that balance."

The corners of my mouth twitched, because I found it utterly adorable seeing her so flustered. She was cute beyond words, but by this

admission, I hoped she didn't think she was getting out of her punishment.

As if reading my mind, she asked me nervously, "You're still going to punish me? I mean... Crap, I'm not getting out of this one, am I?"

I tilted my head to the side, enjoying her blush that spread to her chest.

"No, Isabella," I said, slowly shaking my head. "You're not getting out of it."

She flushed and nodded in understanding.

I knew very well that her two sides were in conflict with each other.

The submissive in her was screaming for this, for my commanding side, for my rules. That included chastisement when deserved. And *believe* me, the Dominant in me was *aching* for her remorse.

I was going to take so much pleasure in drawing it out of her.

Then there was the gentleman in me, the one in charge *tonight*. Because it was about time I started showing her how much I adored her. But yes, the gentleman in me only wanted to cherish her and spoil her rotten. However, if I did that—did only that—our two other sides would be left miserable.

"So...you're still mad at me?" she asked in a small voice.

I cocked an eyebrow. "Mad at you, Isabella? You blatantly lied to me several times, even when I gave you an out." I huffed, feeling my temper flare slightly. "Yes, you can say I'm mad at you. Unbelievably so."

Leaning forward, I cradled her face. "But I'm very in tune with myself, and right now I wish to take the love of my life out to dinner." I kissed her

softly, calming down. "It's New Year's Eve, and we're spending it together, having fun."

She smiled beautifully, eyes happy.

Fuck, how I love this girl.

"We'll deal with the punishment tomorrow." I smirked, thinking about what I had already planned.

She swallowed hard.

And whimpered.

Naughty girl.

Chapter 25

BPOV

After our talk, Edward told me that he was going to take a shower, and while he did that, I was to get dressed.

I asked, "In what?"

And he kissed me before telling me to open his closet.

So, I did.

That was where I was standing right now.

There were four boxes.

Three boxes from Valentino, and one rather large box from Tiffany.

Not kidding.

I didn't question it because this was what Edward wanted for me. "The best." Not that I wasn't familiar with fashion or designers, and my own clothes weren't very cheap, but they didn't come close to Valentino.

The few designer dresses I'd had in Forks, they were to be worn at fancy dinners, charity functions, and banquets. And they came rarely, seeing as my parents usually left me at home.

Digressing.

Edward wanted me to wear this, so I would.

For our first date.

After opening the boxes from Valentino, I laid it all out on the bed, and good God... *Beautiful*. Actually, that word felt inadequate. With a smile on my face, I noticed the innocence, too. Edward might not have hand-picked every item but it was quite clear that he had demands.



Everything was just so gorgeous. The dress, the shoes, the jewelry, the little satin clutch...

I noted that there wasn't a necklace, and I had to grin.

With my collar, I wouldn't need one, and nothing could be more beautiful than it.

Once I was dressed, I was desperate to seek out Edward.

So, I walked across the bedroom, not bothering to knock on the bathroom door. Instead I just opened it. Slowly. Peeking in.

Jesus fucking Christ.

I stood mesmerized in the doorway, just watching him. He had a towel wrapped around his hips, showing his muscular chest...and abs, oh God... He was glorious. All man. Built. Nothing about him was scrawny or skinny.

And he's shaving. In front of the mirror.

It didn't get sexier than that. Well, unless he dropped the towel.

He knew I was watching him, too. The smile tugging at the corners of his mouth was proof of that, but his focus stayed on his face. His jaw. Oh, his *jaw*. And cheeks—those cheekbones. Chin. Under his nose...*I think I'm soaked.*

Don't get me started on his ass. Ass dimples. Or thighs. Shit.

"Enjoying the view, little one?" he murmured.

He moved the razor along his jaw.

Ungh.

Yes, you could say I was enjoying the view. Or the show.

"Very," I managed to say. I walked over to him, and it was probably the clicking of my heels that made him turn his attention to me. Boy, did I enjoy his eyes widening. "You like?" I asked, smiling coyly.

His eyes roamed my body. Hungrily.

I swallowed.

"No, Isabella," he said quietly and lifted me up onto the counter. "I love." He stepped in between my legs. "You're..." He shook his head and closed his eyes. Then he opened them again. *Scorching*. "You're *indescribably* beautiful, love." He touched my cheek.

I felt lightheaded.

"Thank you," I whispered, flushing scarlet. "And thank you for...everything." I motioned to the dress, the jewelry...all of it. "It's a very lovely gift."

He winked. "My pleasure."

Without another word, I reached for the razor in his hand and took it slowly from him, raising an eyebrow in question.

A soft smile played on his lips as he stepped closer.

His hands slid up my bare legs, up and down, slowly, massaging.

I shaved him.

It was...sensual in a way. I couldn't understand it, but most things with us were sensual.

Shivers ran through me as his hands slipped under my dress.

I moved the razor next to his mouth.

Higher. Just a little bit more...

The air thickened.

His thumbs brushed my folds. Softly, leaving my flesh tingling.

I fought the urge to close my eyes. Wanted to but didn't. Instead I made another pass over his jaw with the razor.

"No panties, baby?" he murmured huskily. "Good girl."

I swallowed.

His eyes were on mine.

He leaned in slowly, eyes never leaving mine, and I moved the razor away from him, anticipating his amazing lips on mine.

"Good thing I didn't get you lingerie for tonight then," he whispered, and then his mouth covered mine. Slowly. Sensually. Lovingly. "Let's make that a rule, shall we?" he murmured, dropping soft kisses on my mouth. "If I don't pick out lingerie for you to wear, you go without. Understood?"

I whimpered. "Yes."

My hands slid up his muscular chest.

His hands kneaded my inner thighs, thumbs still brushing over my pussy.

"Excellent," he moaned quietly in my mouth. "It will be hard to keep my hands to myself tonight, especially when I know there's nothing in my way."

Which translates to: I *won't* keep my hands to myself.

I felt one of his thumbs circle my clit, and I was about to lose my fucking mind.

Slow torture.

He hummed, nibbling on my bottom lip. "I can't wait to finger-fuck that pretty little pussy of yours, kitten. Whenever, wherever I choose."

Oh, for the love of...

"But now," he sighed, pecking me a few times. "I need to get ready."

Fuck.

Backing away from me slightly, he wrapped his lips around the pad of his thumb to taste me, and fuck me if I didn't find that come-worthy.

Christ, I really am desperate.

~IdC~

I was trying not to gawk, but...

Edward Cullen in black dress pants, a white button-down, a black tie, and fancy shoes.

Enough said.

He looked good enough to eat.

At the moment, we were sitting in a romantic restaurant. Italian. Intimate. Beautiful setting. Private booths, which worked very well for Edward, because he was oh, so close. Dropping kisses on my temple, neck, and shoulder. Hand on my thigh. Very distracting.

I was so in love.

This night had been everything to me—so far. Not that we were very far into the night; the waitress had just taken our main courses away.

"Everything all right, little one?" he murmured, holding my hand up to brush his lips over my knuckles. Also distracting.

"It's perfect," I replied as a shiver ran through my body.

During dinner we had talked comfortably about everything and nothing. Topics we were both curious about were broached. I told him about my plans for the future, to which he promised his support and help. He wanted me to stay on my path since it was my passion. Modeling was something I loved, and Edward told me bluntly that I should do it for as long as I could. As long as he could be there for the sessions, of course, and I sure as hell didn't mind. Just the thought of having him close at all times, especially in an erotic setting...yeah. Enough said there, too.

We also talked about our childhoods, and Edward told me about growing up in Chicago with his parents—Carlisle and Esme—and though I sensed there was more to the story, he clearly adored his parents, especially his free-spirited mother. He also made it abundantly clear that some day soon he was taking me to meet them.

I was nervous to say the least.

I was also incredibly happy; he was thinking about our future—the one we'd share together.

That could only mean we were really serious, right?

Because all I wanted was a future with Edward.

"You're very quiet, baby," Edward told me softly then, and I looked up at him. His eyes were focused on the strand of my hair he twirled around his fingers. "Something in particular on your mind?"

His eyes met mine, and I smiled and went with the truth.

"You," I said simply. "And that I love you and everything you do for me...for us."

"I'll never stop," he murmured, dipping down to kiss me. "It's you and me, love. Yes?"

Warmth washed over me.

"For as long as you'll have me," I whispered against his lips.

"Always, Bella. Understand that, please," he implored.

~IdC~

I assumed we were having dessert at the restaurant, but I was wrong. Edward Cullen had much more planned, and shortly after dinner, Max took us to the next location.

On our way there, Edward finger-fucked me into oblivion.

~IdC~

"That's a lovely smile, Ms. Swan," Edward chuckled as he helped me out of the car. "I hope that means you're pleased with the location."

To say the least!

Cullen Three. We were standing right outside Cullen Three. And I could see inside.

Candles. Everywhere.

"It's beautiful, Edward," I replied, and I hoped he understood I was referring to both the gallery and the romantic setting. "It's so different."

It really was.

The floor was light. Wooden. Honey colored. But the walls were blood red, and the ceiling was black. "Wow..." Chandeliers. In black. Three large ones.

It was...sexy. As hell. Gothic, almost.

"It's a bit different from the regular white, yes," Edward said, tugging my hand.

He unlocked the door and led me inside, and when he flicked on the spotlights, my jaw dropped.

The photos on the walls were now lit up, and I saw...I saw...

Us.

Everywhere.

I swallowed.

Large photos in black and white filled the gallery, and they were all of us, but what I also noticed was that these were obviously our own copies. Because I could see our faces on a few of them. *Christ*. I walked closer toward one photo in particular. My breathing picked up. *Oh, damn*. It was *the* photo. The photo where he pushed into me for the first time.

In profile you saw everything.

His tight grip on my hips. My legs wrapped around him. His face contorted in pleasure. Head fallen back. His built body. The arch of my back. My head fallen back, too. Mouth open in shock and pain. *Jesus*. Only my ass and shoulder blades touched the whipping bench. I really arched. Wow. His muscles. Thighs. Biceps. Throat. My breasts. My arms above my head, hands clasped together.

I breathed heavier.

It was perfection.

I needed to write about this. It had been a while.

My body tingled.

I felt Edward behind me.

"You're looking a little flushed, kitten," he whispered. Before I knew it, he buried his face in my neck and pulled me back against his chest, sending shockwaves of lust through me. His large hands covered my hips, and he was so hard.

But before I lost my mind, before I succumbed, I had to speak my mind, because this...us, and...Jazz's work...it was nothing short of perfection, and we really shouldn't hide it.

"Edward," I panted, spinning around in his arms. I swallowed hard and looked up at him. *Before you lose it, Bella.* Right. "He has to show these photos," I told him, still breathing heavily. "These photos," I gestured around us, "are the ones. These are the ones Jazz should show."

Edward tilted his head slightly, frowning in confusion, and backed away from me.

"Not the ones where we're hidden," I clarified. "It has to be these."

He understood now, and he ran a hand through his hair as he thought about it. I knew he always had me on his mind. I was his priority, and he was determining if I was honest. But I was. I wanted this.

I also knew both Jazz and Edward wanted it. I just never really thought about it, because before I never had a choice. My face *had* to stay hidden, but there was no reason for that now.

"Are you positive?" he asked, brows furrowed, eyes reading me. "That's not why I showed you these tonight, Bella, and I don't want you to feel pressured."

"I'm not—I don't," I assured, shaking my head for emphasis. "I want this. There's no reason for hiding anymore, and I..." I looked around in the open gallery, seeing us everywhere. "These are...perfect."

He looked around us, too. Forehead creased. Lips pursed.

"I agree," he sighed, and I followed his gaze. He watched the photo where he stood behind me. The one where I stood...or kneeled...in the inspection pose. "They are perfection." Facing me, he continued. "It's up to you, little love. But I need you to be sure, and I need you to know that once your face is out there...it's out there. There's no going back."

"I don't *want* to go back," I said passionately, knowing he'd understand the double meaning. This was a new life for me, and I didn't want to "go back" to anything I'd had before—under any circumstances.

Thankfully, Edward realized I was serious, and he told me that he'd call Jazz tomorrow and tell him.

I thought we would pick up where we left off before the conversation, but shame on me for assuming. Instead, Edward led me to the back of the gallery where there was now a table for two. Candles all around. Soft music playing.

And dessert.

"Have a seat, Ms. Swan," he said, eyes twinkling with mirth.

Sit, I did. And he fed me tiramisu.

We talked more. It was comfortable and amazing, but...I thought he was going to do more there—maybe ravish me? We were in his gallery; there were erotic photographs of us *everywhere*, but he did nothing. Nothing like *that* anyway. He held me, kissed me, told me he loved me. Christ, he

brought me to tears when he said that I was the one he'd been waiting for all his life.

Edward Cullen was a romantic.

He basically took my breath away, but by being so sweet and perfect, he also turned me on.

Edward was the one who had awakened all these feelings in me; I wanted it all from him. The sweet, the rough, the gentleman, the Dom. So...when he did nothing to quench my...*thirst*, if you will...I was left rather frustrated and needy.

But if I thought my desire went unnoticed by Edward, I was sorely mistaken, because as we left the gallery, he threw me a very amused smirk and said, "I'll fuck your needy little pussy next time we're here. But we have one more place to go."

That was that.

He'll fuck my needy little pussy next time.

I was looking forward to that.

Then we were in the limo again, and Edward used his fingers on me once more...right until I was about to come. Then he stopped, licked his fingers, and said, "We're here, love."

"Here" turned out to be Kerry Park.

It was stunning, but I was too horny to function...so, I sorta forgot my place.

"But I need you." I pouted as we left the car. *Shit*. "And it's fucking freezing out here," I gasped, feeling the December cold hit me from every direction.

Edward wrapped a blanket around me, said nothing, and led me to one of the look-out spots where we gazed out on the Seattle skyline.

There were people all around us, but I paid them no attention as Edward had his arms around me, his chin resting on the top of my head, and my back pressed against his chest. Suddenly, it wasn't cold anymore. Far from it, and it hit me how ungrateful I had just acted. Because here he was, doing everything perfectly, showering me with his love, keeping me warm, showing me beautiful sights, and I was pouting for an orgasm. Yes, I felt stupid.

"I'm sorry," I murmured, turning in his arms before I looked up at him. "I shouldn't have said that. You've been amazing, and I..." I sighed, shaking my head as I gathered my thoughts. "I should be thanking you for everything you've done instead of acting-"

Edward cut me off by kissing me.

That works.

"Don't worry about it, baby girl," he chuckled, still kissing me. "As for showing gratitude, you've never lacked in that department." I relaxed in his arms, loving the feel of his soft, yet firm lips on mine. "And you being needy and desperate...I think we both know I love that about you." He tightened his hold on me. "Last but not least..." He pecked me once, and I saw his expression. Desire. Control. Power. That cocky smirk. "If you always followed my rules, I wouldn't have to punish you."

He was very amused.

I was not, because I just knew he added my curse to the pile of shit he was going to punish me for tomorrow.

Lovely.

My mind screamed at me, and a part wanted me to roll my eyes at the situation, but then there was my body.

And my body couldn't wait for tomorrow.

So, I said, "I love you."

"I love you, too," he said quietly before kissing me again.

He kissed me slowly. Lovingly again. His tongue stroked mine, tasting me, leaving me breathless. The love he showed me was powerful and consuming. It was altering me. Changing me. And I clung to him, desperate to convey everything. Everything. I wanted the same. All of it. Both worlds. The demands. The love. I shivered. My eyes welled up.

All of it. Forever.

"Bella," he groaned, deepening the kiss.

My head was swimming; my emotions were all over the place.

"I love you," I gasped. It was so much.

"More than anything," he admitted, dropping kisses on my jaw.

More than anything.

Then we heard it. Around us.

"Ten... Nine... Eight..."

He chuckled as I beamed.

"Seven... Six... Five..."

His eyes were so beautiful and full of promises. I hoped mine conveyed what his did—that I'd always love him.

"Four... Three... Two... One..."

I was certain he got it, because his features changed. Into understanding.

"HAPPY NEW YEAR!"

We were quiet.

He dipped down; I stood on my tiptoes.

We kissed gently at first, and I mirrored him, making sure there was nothing but love and devotion in the way I kissed him.

"Happy New Year, sweetheart," I whispered.

He exhaled and cupped my cheeks. "Happy New Year, love."

Chapter 26

BPOV

I was nervous.

First I thought he was going to punish me in his hotel suite, but I realized that was wrong when he told me we were leaving. So, I guessed he was taking me to his penthouse, but he then told me it wouldn't be ready for another few days.

Then he told me to be quiet.

I obeyed.

To pass time, I brought out my phone, still wanting to write about the heated moment we shared at the gallery last night.

Every moment of our first time captured in black and white

Our bodies becoming one, what an erotic sight

Your hands on my body, your voice in my ear

The Master of my body, love of my life, you I will never fear

When you speak, I listen, I will always hear

Thank you for last night, the perfect way to start a new year

I exhaled and posted the update.

"May I read it?" Edward asked.

Without a thought, I handed him my phone.

I studied him as he read my post—more than once, it seemed—and I prayed he liked it.

"Hmmm. You have quite a way with words, little one," he whispered, eyes still on the display. "Beautiful." He smiled softly and returned my phone, while I accepted his compliment with red cheeks. "Does Jazz know you write?"

I nodded and tucked away my phone. "He subscribes to the posts."

"I will make sure to do that, too." He gave my hand a quick squeeze. "I also think I need to speak with him about this." At my confused expression, he went on. "They're very suitable for our photos. Perhaps they could be added."

Oh.

"You really think they're good?" I asked nervously. "I don't want to ruin Jasper's work."

He chuckled and kissed my temple. "You wouldn't ruin a thing. Besides, as talented as Jazz is, he has admitted several times that he sometimes needs help thinking outside the box. He sees angles, shadows, and positions. Edits and additions that go beyond the basic aren't really his thing." I hummed in thought. "I will just make a suggestion—present my idea. It's entirely up to him."

I sat back in my seat, flying high on his praise.

Unfortunately, my state of bliss was short lived.

"We're here, sir," I heard Max announce, and I noticed how he left out the name of the location.

"Thank you, Max. We'll be ready in five hours."

Five hours?

Five hours?!

I gulped.

Edward held his hand out for me, and I took it.

"Do you trust me, little love?" he asked softly.

"Yes," I replied without hesitation as I looked around.

That was when I saw the sign on the building in front of which we'd stopped.

O-Factor.

I swallowed, remembering Mr. Wh—Jazz telling me about it.

It was an exclusive BDSM club.

Edward's words echoed, "*Do you trust me, little love?*"

And I did.

He knew I wasn't into heavy bondage or the receiving of pain. He knew my limits.

With a nod to myself, I squeezed his hand, silently telling him I was ready.

A big man opened the door for us, and Edward motioned for me to enter first, immediately reminding me of our status. We were not in a D/s relationship. Not fully anyway. That was not to say I would mind trying it out, but only in a place where I didn't feel at home. Home was comfort. Home was home. That was where I knew I could be myself at all times. But here...this is different.

Absentmindedly, I traced the Cullen crest on my collar.

Master.

Property.

I shivered.

"Baby, you don't have to bow your head in here," I heard him murmur.

I looked up, unaware that I *had* lowered my gaze.

Edward's half-smirk told me he knew already.

"There's a playroom in there under my name," he told me quietly as he studied me. "I rented it, and it's been set up for us as I ordered." Then he held up a bag. A bag that...oh, shit, I knew what was in there. Toys.

His eyes were smoldering. His jaw was set.

I swallowed. "Okay," I replied shakily, glancing around us.

The club was obviously closed. It was lunch time on January first. A new year.

"Ready to have some fun, kitten?" he asked, eyes full of promises.

"Sure," I chuckled nervously, looking down at my feet.

No good. Edward grasped my chin, making me face him, and with his head tilted, he asked, "You are aware of that your lover will not be inside that playroom, yes?"

Rhetorical question.

I didn't feel comfortable calling him by name during punishments, regardless. However, since we were here and all...

"May I call you Master?" I asked softly.

Slowly, he arched a brow.

I held his gaze.

"Hmm," he hummed, eyes darkening. "Looks like my little one wants to play for real."

I flushed.

"Very well," he said and released my chin. "This is what we'll do. Once we're inside that playroom, I'm your *Master*, Isabella."

His voice dripped with sex.

Speaking of dripping...

“But you will answer every question I ask. Understood? Not just direct ones.”

I nodded in understanding.

“Are you familiar with the color system—green, yellow, red?”

“Yes, Sir.” I nodded. “Green is safe, yellow is proceed with caution, and red is stop.”

“Excellent.” He kissed me on the forehead.

He didn’t speak more. With a hand on my lower back, he ushered me through the club area and down a hall.

At the end of the corridor, he stopped and opened a door.

“In you go, Isabella.”

Swallowing hard, I passed him and fought my instinct to look down at the floor. Instead I looked up, around, saw the room, took everything in. The black walls, the contraptions, the cross on the wall, the benches, and holy shit, was that a fucking-machine?

Boy, was I glad Edward wasn’t into this.

Then I felt him. Right behind me.

“Strip.”

Yes, Master!

Knowing that he enjoyed my body, I stripped slowly. But not too slowly. Jacket. Off. Shoes, too. Then I started unbuttoning my blouse-

Wait. He’s not behind me anymore.

Looking over my shoulder, I noticed that he was in the corner setting up his fucking iPod.

That stung.

It clicked, though. Rather fucking quickly, I understood. The bastard was already punishing me by ignoring me. Denial was his *deal*. There was no physical pain. Well, just stinging, but this...fuck, this was worse. Denial and ignorance were goddamn painful!

With an internal huff, I undressed quickly, tossing the clothes on the floor.

There, naked.

Happy? I sneered internally.

Minutes passed and nothing happened. I just stood there, in the middle of the playroom, naked. Annoyed. While he did what-the-fuck-ever by the docking station.

Sigh.

"You lied to me, Isabella."

Shit!

I startled.

My heart pounded.

Firm voice. No, strike that. Mad voice.

I swallowed my nerves as Edward came into view, standing in front of me.

No, strike that, too. Not Edward. Master. I better well get that right because there was nothing *Edwardian* about the way he was looking at me.

Wearing grey dress pants, a black, fitted pullover with the sleeves rolled up, he *should* look...Edwardian. But he didn't. Because his eyes, they were livid.

I looked down.

"No. *Face me,*" he gritted out.

With a shaky breath, I obeyed.

Then he pressed the button on a small remote, and the music came on. Or a voice.

Forgive her

For she knows not what she does

He smirked at me. "I happen to find Goth-metal quite fitting for the occasion."

I said nothing.

A cross upon her bedroom wall

From grace she will fall

An image burning in her mind

And between her thighs

He held my gaze. It was hard. Everything in me screamed. I wanted nothing more than to look down.

I flushed.

I squirmed under his hard stare.

He knew but refused to let me go.

A dying God-man full of pain

When will you come again?

Oh, God.

He stepped closer. Closer. Closer. Stopping right in front of me. My breasts touched his ribcage, and I looked up, feeling my body shiver and shiver as his body heat hit me.

"You fucked up," he whispered softly.

Arousal—gone.

My eyes welled up.

I fucked up. I fucked up. I fucked up. I embarrassed him.

Before him beg to serve or please

On your back or knees

He brushed his knuckles over my cheek, leaning in slowly, and whispered in my ear.

"Let's see how sorry you are for betraying me, shall we?"

I nodded, sniffled, and blinked back tears.

I knew this. Christ, he gave me the chance to confess to him. More than once, even! And I still ignored it.

There's no forgiveness for her sins

Prefers punishment?

Edward kissed the corner of my mouth, so softly, and then he backed away.

"Kneel."

I sank to my knees. No hesitation.

"Not too uncomfortable for your knees?"

"No, Master."

"Fuck," he whispered under his breath.

Would you suffer eternally

Or internally?

Ah

For her lust

She'll burn in hell

Her soul done medium well

I licked my lips as he unzipped his pants.

I needed it. I needed this. My chance to show him how sorry I was. My chance to convince him that I understood him, because I did. I knew that lying was unacceptable to him, yet I did it anyway. More than once.

Tuning everything out, I focused solely on Edward's pleasure. My Master's pleasure.

I'll show him.

The song didn't exist. Neither did this room. I tuned it all out...as *Master* pulled his rock-hard cock out.

Ungh.

"Suck me hard, Isabella."

I licked him at first, eager to get him nice and wet. The bead of salty moisture at the tip settled on my tongue, causing my taste buds to explode.

Every sound he gave me made feel better.

I refused to disappoint.

Without teasing him any further, I took him as deep as I could. I also placed one hand on his ass, urging him to fuck my mouth as he pleased. My other hand cupped his balls, tugging slightly.

"Fuck yes," he moaned, threading his fingers through my hair. "That's it, *pet*. Suck me good."

Jesus!

He didn't hold back when he started thrusting. Long, hard strokes brought him down my throat, making me gag around him, but I kept going, unable to give in. The need was too great, and I realized that I was submitting to him fully. He owned every part of me. Right here, right now, I was under his command, and my body, mind, and soul loved it.

"I'm close, Isabella," he grunted.

This was about him.

Soon, he came in hot spurts down my throat.

"That's one," he panted as I licked him clean.

~IdC~

I saw nothing but felt everything.

One of the first things I noticed after I had sucked him off was his mood and how it changed. It was evident that he was in need of a quick release earlier, and now that I had given it to him, he was all about focus and determination. It was also much more arousing.

Tied to the St. Andrew Cross, I faced the wall.

My wrists and ankles were bound to the cross with the softest of silk.

No shackles would get near me. Edward didn't want that. He also blindfolded me. So, I stood there. Tied to the cross. Spread, naked, and waiting. Because he wasn't touching me, but that didn't mean I couldn't feel him.

I did.

I felt him behind me. His body heat. I heard his breathing.

No music this time.

My body was both relaxed and on high alert.

Waiting.

Then, ever so softly, I felt the pads of his fingers on my hips. Gently. Trailing up and down. Too softly. Barely there. Just ghosting. But my body responded as if he'd rammed his cock into me.

A drawn out shiver ran through me, leaving me in goose bumps and wanting so much more. This was just teasing. Again, I shivered, now feeling his fingers trace the curve of my ass. Still too softly. Too gently.

My breathing picked up and I fisted the ties restraining me.

"So responsive," he whispered.

I exhaled shakily.

His hands were warm when they cupped my ass. Kneading gently.

Please, more.

Then he was on his knees behind me, and it was an automatic response when I pushed my ass out for him. When his hands disappeared again, I felt his wet mouth instead. Wetly, sensually, excruciatingly slow, leaving a damp trail as he kissed my cheeks...down...down...oh...*ungh*...

I whimpered when I felt him exhale over my pussy.

My insides clenched in reflex.

"I can fucking smell you," he cooed, and I moaned. Loudly. His fingers...fuck. Two fingers tracing the length of my pussy. Still teasing. It was torture. "I can't wait to soak my cock in your arousal."

Agony.

Slowly, in a circular pattern, he moved the pad of his middle finger over my clit. Nothing else touched me. Just the tip of his finger.

I heard him breathe me in.

"Please," I begged, dropping my forehead to the wall.

He didn't reply. Just kept touching my clit, rubbing it with his long finger. He drew out the response from my body. Whether it was shivers or whimpers, moans or pleas. He drew them all out of me.

"Oh!" I gasped. Shit. Fuck. His mouth. Wet lips. There. Sucking on my clit. Oh, God. "More..." Please. But it didn't matter what I did. "Fuck..." When I moved closer, he moved, too. Never relenting. I hissed, "*Master*." One finger pushed inside me, slowly, too slowly. His nose grazed my pussy. He hummed, moaned, and exhaled hotly over my now soaked flesh.

Then he was gone. All of him.

I was left panting.

My pussy constricted around nothing.

"Push that tight ass up higher for me," he commanded quietly in a husky voice. Standing now, he leaned in close, nuzzling my neck. And he whispered, "Time for your spanking, *Isabella*."

God, the way my name rolled off his tongue... Goose flesh all over.

I obeyed, standing on my toes, arching my back, pushing out my ass. Then I felt his hands on my calves, up, up, rubbing, caressing. Kneading my thighs...*ungh*, I moaned. He teased me so.

"What an exquisite sight," he murmured, kneading my ass roughly. I almost choked on a moan. He also let a finger tease my back entrance every now and then. Every little thing he did sent my body into overdrive. "Are you ready, *pet*?"

"Yes, Master," I whined, in need of more.

"Don't forget to count them," he said. "If you miss one, I'll start over, and I won't stop until I've reached ten. Are we clear?"

"Yes, Master."

I steeled myself. I prepared myself for pain.

It didn't come.

Until it did.

"*One!*" I groaned loudly. Shock and pleasure coursed through me from the impact of his large hand. It wasn't the sting I expected. It was there, but

it wasn't what... Christ, I couldn't even think straight. Deep breaths... It was his finger that landed on my clit with precision.

Again, a loud smack rang out.

Again, his finger flicked my clit.

"Two!" I moaned.

I was shaking, panting.

Again. "Three!"

Again. "Foour!"

He chuckled darkly.

My pussy ached.

Then, harder than before, and *nowhere near* my pussy, he spanked me again.

"Fiiive!" I choked out.

My ass was red; I was sure of it. Both cheeks. Fuck, the sting.

"Such a lovely shade, Isabella," he growled quietly, rubbing his hand over the spot he'd just killed. "To see my mark on you..." He hummed. "Any idea how hard that makes me? Any idea how much my cock is leaking?"

Then again. Hard.

"SIX!" I almost screamed.

I gulped, feeling my eyes crave tears, but they didn't come. His finger...oh, right there. Rubbing my clit persistently. It was so conflicting. He doled out pain as much as he offered pleasure.

"Four more to go, pet," he said gruffly, followed by another smack.

"Gah!" I gasped. "Seven!"

The next one landed on my upper thigh.

"E-eight!" I cried out.

Followed by pleasure. Damn him. I couldn't- I stopped that thought as it dawned on me. This was it. This was what he was after—for me to be out of control, for me to go insane. Well, he was succeeding.

"Your pretty little pussy is aching for me, isn't it?" he murmured, pushing two fingers in and out of me slowly. "So wet, Isabella. So...fucking...wet."

I panted. Pulled at my restraints.

Two more, Bella. You can do this.

"And you taste so damn good, my little cock-slut," he cooed.

Tremors. Whimpers.

More. Please, more.

I was losing it.

Smack. Even harder.

"NINE!" I sobbed.

The last one followed instantly.

"T-ten," I forced out breathlessly.

I did it. Ten.

No time to react.

His hands covered my hips, and then he pushed his thick cock inside my pussy.

“Fuck!” he spat out.

I didn’t make a sound. I couldn’t. Sensory overload. It was his cock pulsing in my throbbing pussy, his hot body pressed against mine, his burning marks still making my ass sting...

He fucked me frantically. In and out. Pounding.

Animalistic.

He palmed my breasts, kneading them, rolling my nipples between his fingers, and his mouth...oh, his dirty mouth, telling me how tight my pussy was. He kissed my neck and shoulder wetly and hotly.

I wanted more, but I couldn’t take it.

I cried out, gasped, gulped, met his thrusts.

One second I was close to orgasm, the next I wasn’t.

He played me.

Before I could either plead for more or beg him to stop, he pulled out of me, and I thought I was going to cry. Because all of a sudden my body, every fiber of my being, was on the same page. I wanted more, *needed* more, but now I didn’t have it.

He grunted my name behind me, and I understood he was pumping himself, ready to come on my body, and the mere thought of his cum marking me had me needing more. Pleading for it. Pulling harder at my restraints. Desperation. Please. Touch me. Not that he did, and my thighs were parted by the cross, so it wasn’t like I could rub them together. Fuck. I begged. He chuckled.

“Where do you want my cum, Isabella?” he moaned loudly.

My mind raced. Where did I want it? What would pleasure him most? What would pleasure me? I was tied, and I could hear he was close. Fuck. No time to release me. Then I understood. It was a test.

“Wherever you want it, Master,” I whimpered. “Whatever pleases you.”

He moaned. “Good girl.” Then he came hard. On my lower back and ass, he came in long spurts.

Good girl. Good girl. Good girl.

“That’s two, pet.”

~IdC~

He laid me down on the king-sized bed across the room after he’d cleaned me off. There was soft kissing—no talking. He rubbed my ankles and wrists. Massaged my skin. Kissed every spot. Rubbed lotion. Always so attentive.

It struck me hard that, because where he thought of everything, I didn’t. Otherwise I wouldn’t be here. Not that you’d find me complaining about being here, but it would’ve been nice to have entered this playroom under different circumstances. Edward obviously knew a lot about all this; I was sure he could pleasure me beyond words with the toys. But that wasn’t the case. This was chastisement.

He’d told me about his experience, and though he’d never had a collared sub, or even had someone call him Master, he had played, experimented—dabbled a bit. So, yes, I was sure he could fuck me speechless and senseless in here. But he wouldn’t. At least not to the point where I got to climax.

Because I lied.

"I'm so sorry," I whispered, watching him as he rubbed my calves. He looked up at me with a half smile, eyes curious. So, I continued. "I know what I did wrong. I know it wasn't so much about my actions as it was about the lying itself."

He nodded once and returned his attention to my calves.

"I can't take it back," I mumbled remorsefully. "All I can do is to show you how sorry I am and promise you I won't ever lie to you again."

He gave me another nod but kept his eyes on my legs. However, I saw his mouth twitch. That little twitch made my body heat up. It obviously meant I did right by telling him this.

"Are you sore?" he asked quietly, now rubbing my thighs.

"No, Master," I breathed.

His hands traveled higher.

He didn't stop until his large hand slid over my pussy, cupping it, teasing my slit.

My eyes closed.

Slowly, he fingered me.

Sensually, he kissed my upper thigh. Open-mouthed.

But he stopped. Completely.

I wanted to cry.

"Get on all fours, pet."

With a whimper, I did as I was told and scrambled into position.

"Keep your eyes on the wall," he commanded when I tried to look over my shoulder. "I'm not done with that pert little ass of yours."

"Shit," I cried under my breath.

More spanking?

I heard him rummaging through a bag, and I instantly knew what he was up to, especially since he had me in this position. The problem now was my ability to restrain myself, because it was quite clear he was going to push an anal plug inside me. And I happened to love them. It turned me on beyond belief, at least the ones he'd used on me so far, and I took pleasure in it. So...how would I stop myself from climaxing?

I have no idea.

I felt the bed shift, quickly followed by his hands on my ass.

My eyes closed tightly.

My body tensed when I felt his fingers on my wet pussy.

"Relax, Isabella," he murmured.

I breathed shakily, trying to obey him, but it was hard. He was obviously going to tease me, deny me, and prep me. But I wasn't sure I was capable. I wasn't sure I could hold it in.

"After today you'll be ready to take my cock," he said huskily, and I heard him apply lube, most likely on the plug. "And I can't fucking wait, Isabella. I can't wait to push my cock inside your tight ass." He moaned and I whimpered when he pushed two slick fingers inside my ass. "Oh, my naughty girl, I can see your pussy constricting," he chuckled darkly. "You can't wait either, can you?"

"No, Master," I replied in a long moan.

It was exquisite torture. Two fingers in my ass and two fingers playing with my pussy.

I grasped at the covers.

My walls clamped down tightly around his two fingers, needing more. Fuck, always more.

When he pulled his fingers out, I knew what was to come. The cold material circled my back entrance. Slick. Cold. And slowly, he pushed the plug-

Fuck. Oh, God, this was a bigger one. Suddenly his words made sense. The words about my being ready for his cock after today.

I sucked in a quick breath.

It burned.

"Relax, little one," he whispered, followed by open-mouthed kisses on my spine. "Christ, I love your body." He kept pushing the plug, and finally he resumed his magic on my pussy. It was all I needed in order to relax. "Good girl," he whispered. "I love that your body is so fucking desperate for me."

Ungh.

"Especially your sweet pussy." I could practically hear his cocky smirk. "Isn't that right, Isabella? Aren't you aching for my cock?"

I choked on a gasp when he spanked my pussy at the same time as he filled my ass with the plug.

Again, it was too much. Pleasure and pain, balancing on the fucking edge, and I didn't know which was worse. He played me too well. He just knew my body. My limits.

"Answer me, pet!" he barked out.

He spanked my pussy again.

"Yes!" It was a breathless gasp. "Yes, Master!"

That earned me another chuckle, and he wasted no time. Slowly he fingered me, making me relax fully, and when I did, the pleasure took over. I shivered and moaned as he played with me. Even though I didn't look in his direction, I knew he was on his back. I knew his face was right there—under me. And I felt him. Oh, God, I felt him. Licking me, kissing me, twisting the plug, sucking on my clit... The last thing I wanted was to fail, but... Jesus, all that teasing. My flesh was too responsive, needy, and...I was getting closer. Not good. Not good at all.

My arms trembled, my knuckles were white from gripping the covers, and my muscles ached as I fought off the orgasm.

My bottom lip was firmly wedged between my teeth.

"You want to come, don't you?" he murmured...before taking my clit between his lips. "Mmm, so good, my pretty little pet."

"Oh, God," I whimpered, biting harder on my lip.

Then he pushed me down toward him, effectively burying his face in my pussy, and I throbbed, moaned, and panted for breath as his tongue delved deeper inside me.

"Please, please, please," I chanted breathlessly. "Please, Master."

So close.

So close.

“No.”

My stomach coiled.

He groaned, sending his hot breath over my flesh.

“I’m so fucking hard for you again, Isabella,” he moaned around my clit.

Then he was gone.

Again.

“No!” I sobbed. “Please! I’m so close, Edw—Master. Please, please, let me come!”

“NO!”

I hung my head in defeat.

No. No. No.

Because this is punishment, you fool. You won’t come.

“I want you on your back now,” he said.

Once more, I did as I was told, but I couldn’t contain my pout.

“Does the plug hurt, little one?” he asked softly, gazing down on me.

I shook my head, unable to respond verbally, because my eyes were trained on his erection...which he was stroking.

So thick. Hard. Big. Fat. Long.

God, I want it.

"Are you sure? And give me a proper answer this time, pet."

Damn.

"I'm sure, Master," I cried, blushing all over. "It stings—but it's not bad."

He smiled, seemingly satisfied with my answer. Then he came closer, not stopping until he was hovering over me. Nose touching nose, eyes penetrating. I licked my lips. He smirked. Cocky man.

"So beautiful," he whispered, caressing my cheek. "I'll have my sweet girl back in no time." I leaned into his hand automatically, loving the closeness. "Mm, yes. My good girl," he breathed out. "You've pleased me very well so far." He kissed me softly.

I swelled with pride.

He deepened our kiss, sliding his tongue against mine, and I welcomed him eagerly, especially when I felt his cock against my pussy. I showed him with my body how much I needed him. I showed him. I clung to him, kissed him hard, worshipped him, writhed underneath him, scraped my nails along his back, which made him hum and moan in my mouth.

"Fuck, Isabella." He breathed heavily. "Dangerous creature."

He kissed me again, hard, and dragged his erection along my slit, pressing the tip of himself down over my clit. He was driving me insane, and he knew it, too. Then oh, so slowly, he filled me.

"Please," I panted. He didn't move! Fuck, he was just...buried in me. Still. Unmoving. "Please, more. I need more."

"No, my little fucktoy," he murmured huskily. I gasped at his word. "You think I'm here to please you, hmm?"

For the love of...!

"I need my cock wet, little one," he chuckled. "And why use lubricant when you're soaked?"

I closed my eyes.

He fucked me slowly...

...before he pulled out of me and straddled my chest.

"We don't want to neglect your tits, now would we?" he cooed. "Push them together, Isabella. Hard."

Edward fucked my breasts while fingering me.

I begged. Plead.

Over and over.

"No," he grunted.

His thumb circled my clit while two fingers entered me.

Tears were welling up in frustration and need, but he didn't care.

As he shouldn't, a small voice hissed inside me.

True.

So, again I focused on Edward and his pleasure. I tongued the head of his cock whenever I could. I pressed my tits together harder, and I kept pleading for him, knowing he enjoyed that, too.

"That's it," he moaned, letting his head fall back. "So perfect...*fuck*..."

I felt good.

So good. The praise did that. I was good for him.

"Fuck, I'm close, Isabella," he groaned. "Just keep going..."

I did, and my tongue darted out as he thrust.

I tasted him. He leaked.

More.

He grunted.

I cried out in desperation when he removed his fingers from me, but all that was forgotten when he, with a loud guttural groan, came on my breasts and neck, but I wasn't done. I needed more of his praise, so I licked him, sucked on the head of his cock, milking him, suckling him. And it was worth it. The expression he gave me was one of utter satisfaction.

"That's three," he chuckled breathlessly before dismounting me. "And now we need to rest for a little while."

I barely managed to keep my pout away when he cleaned me up. I hummed happily when he fed me fruit, expensive chocolate, and water, though. That was just delicious.

But I didn't want a break.

"I don't need to rest," I mumbled as I snuggled closer to him.

And then I yawned.

Fuck.

"Yes, you do." He snickered. Damn his post-coital bliss. "As do I, because though I'm far from done with you, I'm not twenty anymore."

I fought the urge to roll my eyes.

Edward Cullen's libido was out of this world, and he knew it.

"Sleep, little one," he murmured, pulling the cover over us. "I'll wake you up in an hour or so."

And he did.

An hour or so later, he woke me up by pushing a vibrating dildo inside me.

Shortly after, he exchanged it for his cock, and he fucked me until he came inside me, groaning out, "And that's four."

Then he told me it was time to go.

There was no denying that I cried.

I was desperate.

He did forgive me, though, and he called me sweet girl again.

But he also said that next time I was allowed to come was when we had our photo session with Jazz.

That was several days away.

I'm going to be a good girl now.

Chapter 27

EPOV

"Kirk was almost too easy," Scott noted, nodding in thanks as the man arriving with our room service poured us coffee. "He will give you what you want for ten thousand."

Once our breakfast was served, here in the living room of my suite, I tipped the man before dismissing him.

"Pocket change," I said dismissively. "Give him cash once it's done. I don't want traces." I brought the cup to my lips. "I also don't want my name signed on anything that's not necessary."

"Certainly. Do you want me to call Jenks? He's already the middleman."

That sounded good to me. Gianna would probably guess that I was behind it all, but that mattered little when there was no evidence.

"Yes—let Jenks carry this out," I confirmed.

Joshua Scott, my lawyer, was a fierce man. One whom I could trust. Jason Jenks had proved to be the same, and I was glad I had those two working for me.

I looked up then, hearing my beautiful girl as she emerged from the bedroom.

"I thought I heard some voices," she said softly. She approached us with her yoga mat under her arm. "I was just going to take advantage of the gym before we leave tomorrow."

Ah, yes, tomorrow we were finally leaving the Fairmont for the new penthouse.

I smiled as I drank in the sight of her. Always so alluring.

Even in something as simple as black yoga pants and a white tank top, she looked sinfully beautiful, and it was no secret that I loved showing my girl off. This time by introducing her to my lawyer...who was already watching her approach.

Watch all you want, but she's mine.

"Good morning, little love," I murmured. "This is my lawyer—Joshua Scott. He just flew in for my meeting with Marcus tomorrow." Facing Scott, I continued. "Joshua, meet Isabella." I grinned. "My better half."

"Oh, and I don't know about *better*," Bella teased. With a sweet smile, she extended her hand to Scott. "Nice to meet you, Mr. Scott. Edward's told me about your plan. I hope it's all going well?"

I had told her, yes. The day before yesterday, I finally decided to push forward when it came to Gianna. Kirk—a doorman in her building—was easily bought; he had video footage from Gianna's less-than-innocent elevator rides. Countless men came and went in her life, and one man stuck out. Or, more correctly, a *boy* stuck out. Because after Jenks had investigated the men, he found out that a certain Eric was only fifteen years old. In other words, he wasn't legal in the state of Washington, and the camera in the elevator gave us what we needed.

Maybe he lied to her about his age—hell, she probably lied about her own age—but a judge wouldn't care.

A tape for a tape?

I wanted the tape of my mother, and Gianna would no doubt want the one I was in possession of.

The only thing we were waiting for now was for Kirk to destroy the original tape. Because I wanted to be the only one who had it, and he was willing to do it for ten grand. I didn't mind. I'd already given him five thousand for the tape in the first place, and I assumed he saw me as an ATM now. Again, I couldn't fault him for that. I just wanted this over with, and money sped things up.

Anyway, I told Bella everything once I had called Marcus and set up a meeting with him. Tomorrow, he was going to find out about his daughter's intentions. After that, I was going to fire her.

Bella now knew it all—from my parents' past to what Rosalie had done, spilling her guts despite promises to the contrary. Minor issue or major, I confided in my girl.

"Everything is going according to plan," Scott told Bella with a smirk. "I'd say this mess will be history in a few days."

I'm counting on that.

"Wow," Bella marveled, glancing over at me. "That soon?"

I smiled, motioning for her to come closer, which she did.

I just needed a touch. A kiss. An embrace. Something.

So, I took her hand and brushed my lips over her knuckles.

Sweet. Seductive.

"That soon, yes," I answered, pulling her onto my lap. "We have two things on Gianna right now: the tape Kirk has provided us with and the fact that I have the power to fire her from Volturi. And after my meeting with Marcus, I hope he will see her for *what* she is."

I sincerely doubted he would do something drastic such as cutting her off, but I at least held out hope that the truth would open his eyes. I didn't want him to fall for any of her charms. Not that I saw any, but her father probably did.

"So, when are you meeting Marcus tomorrow?" Bella chewed on her lip.

I arched a brow at her, and she smiled sheepishly, releasing her poor bottom lip. She really did that far too often.

“Scott and I are having lunch with him and his lawyer tomorrow at Palomino,” I told her, caressing her thigh absentmindedly. “And speaking of lunch, what time are you meeting Alice tomorrow?”

I wasn’t surprised when Alice had called Bella a couple of days ago, because Jazz had already filled me in, predicting that Alice would turn to Bella. And the reason was simple. As Jazz and Alice had gotten closer, slowly but surely, Jazz had taken the initiative to broach the subject of his lifestyle. He had every intention of introducing Alice to it. It didn’t matter how slowly, as long as it happened eventually, and he was starting off with small things. Talking and explaining, dating in a vanilla setting, basically being the boyfriend, but also making it clear to Alice that there were two sides of him—two sides which were equally strong.

So, when Jazz called and confided in me, I immediately told him to also confide in Bella, because she of all people would know how to handle Alice. Not just because they were friends, but also because my sweet girl had experience with the basics of BDSM.

“We have one o’clock reservations at Andaluca,” she replied. “And then we have an appointment at Vida Spa.”

I nodded and made a mental note to call both Andaluca and Vida to have the girls’ visits paid for. They were Isabella’s favorite restaurant and day spa, though I knew her own love for Vida wasn’t the only reason she wanted to go there.

She wanted to prepare Alice for Jazz, no doubt.

Actually, I should probably just make sure I give Bella her own credit card. I didn’t want her spending her own money. I was the provider now.

~IdC~

"Do you have the card I gave you, baby?" I asked, adjusting my tie in front of the mirror.

It was almost time to go. I had my meeting, and Isabella had her date with Alice.

She sent me a playful scowl in the mirror as she fastened the earrings I'd given her for New Year's. And I knew, of course, that the scowl wasn't only playful. She didn't hide that she was uncomfortable taking my credit card, but I made it abundantly clear to her that she was never to pay for anything. To me that was utterly preposterous.

It was non-negotiable.

Thankfully, she'd conceded, but not before she'd made it clear that my money was the last thing on her mind.

Like I didn't know that already.

"Yes, I have it," she grumbled.

"Good," I said simply. "Make use of it."

Another scowl.

So adorable.

I felt it in my heart whenever she...did anything, really. I was hopelessly in love with her, and I sighed, thinking...maybe, perhaps...or was it too soon? She was only eighteen, a voice shouted in my head. But she was different, another countered. *Christ*. After giving myself a hard look in the mirror, I manned up and decided to test the waters.

I didn't want her to feel pressured; I merely wanted her to know what I felt.

"Hey," I murmured, wrapping my fingers around her wrist. I pulled her to me, tilting her chin up and looked down at her. Almost...losing myself in her dark eyes. I cleared my throat. "That card." I pointed at her purse that was sitting on our bed. "It says Edward Cullen on it."

She furrowed her brows, watching me curiously. There was confusion, too, as to be expected.

I licked my lips, choosing my words.

"What if..." I hesitated, frowning. Fuck it. "What if it was your name on that card one day?"

"My—my name?" she mumbled, knitting her brows together more.

I nodded slowly, only once, and dipped down to kiss her temple.

"Your first name," I whispered against her skin. "And my last name."

Her breathing hitched, and for the first time in my adult life, I truly felt nervous about something. Incredibly so.

"One day," I repeated quietly, making things clear that I wasn't talking about tomorrow.

But I'm not thinking about years from now either.

True.

I was ready—there was no denying that. But I was thirty-seven years old. It was natural for me to be ready, even though I had never seen myself ever getting married. However, that was before Isabella Swan came into my life.

I heard her swallow hard before exhaling shakily.

My heart pounded so frantically against my ribcage, only proving how completely she owned me.

My chin dropped to my chest.

Then she softly nudged me away to look up at me, and my forehead creased as I saw her eyes brimming with tears. Safe to say, she understood the weight of my question, and it hit me hard. Fucking hell, I wasn't testing the damn waters. I was basically telling her that I wanted to marry her one day.

I didn't know if this was a genius move on my part or...an incredibly stupid one.

No take-backs, though, because I couldn't regret anything.

"I think-" She breathed, stopping herself. "No," she murmured, shaking her head while looking down, and...my heart sank. To the floor, it felt like. She didn't want that. She didn't want it. "I *know*...that I would love that."

Oh, for the love of God!

I didn't know if I wanted to laugh, cry, give her a fucking spanking, or kiss her stupid.

Perhaps all four.

"Bella," I choked out. She looked up, and I let out a shaky, breathy laugh. "You nearly gave me a heart attack with that no."

Because...*damn*.

Her eyes widened, realization dawning on her. "Oh, God!" she gasped, smacking herself on the forehead. I was still trying to calm down my poor

heart. "I'm sorry, sweetheart—I shouldn't have paused after saying no. Christ, I'm so sorry—"

I cut her off by kissing her stupid, deciding that was what I wanted to do most.

~IdC~

She hugged my bicep as we rode down the elevator.

We said nothing.

It wasn't necessary.

Our intentions were clear and out in the open.

It was in the same contented silence I walked her outside, leading her to Max, who was waiting for her.

He held the door to our Town Car open. "Good afternoon, Mr. Cullen, Ms. Swan."

"Hello, Max," I responded before pulling Bella close to me. Holding her chin up, I kissed her softly before murmuring against her lips, "I love you, little one."

"I love you, too." She fisted my tie.

Unfortunately, our kiss ended too soon, because Scott was here with his car.

"Call me later," I muttered, pecking her lips a few times. "And tell Alice I said hello."

"M'kay," she sighed softly. "Love you." She hummed, seeming reluctant to let me go.

It made me smile. Widely.

"You're so unbelievably cute, Ms. Swan." I brushed my thumb over her bottom lip. "Have fun today, all right?"

She sobered a little, leaning into my hand. "Good luck with the meeting," she whispered back, frowning. "I, uh...should I be worried?"

"No." I shook my head. "Everything will be fine. I'll see you tonight for dinner. I made reservations at the Gregorian for eight o'clock. That okay?"

"Very." She stood up on her toes to kiss me again. "Will you call me and let me know how it went?"

"Absolutely," I told her, kissing her one last time—again. "I love you so much, Bella."

"Love you, too," she whispered, clinging to me.

I knew then how important my "testing of the waters" had been.

We were both on the same page and had the same plans for our future.

With a sigh, I let her go and helped her into the car. Then I turned to Max.

"Once you've picked up Ms. Brandon, take her and Ms. Swan to Andaluca. After that I believe Vida Spa is on the list, and call me if anything goes wrong."

"Yes, sir."

BPOV

"Oh, my God," Alice whispered, getting into the car. She watched Max shutting the door behind her in...disbelief? Don't ask me why. This life wasn't exactly that foreign to us. Okay, I could admit that private drivers

were new, but...come on. Isla, private jets...? Surely, Alice was more than aware of her godfather's wealth.

"Hello to you, too," I chuckled, scooting over in the seat so she could sit down. "Pleasant trip to Seattle?"

In order to keep her trip a secret, Alice had taken the bus over. Mary and Jack kept track on Alice's car; they checked the mileage and everything. So, they believed she was in Port Angeles today, where her car sat parked.

"Ugh, the bus ride was long and disgusting," she said, grimacing before giving me a hug. "It's good to be out of Forks, though. I hate not seeing you everyday."

"I feel the same." I gave her a squeeze before letting go. "Any idea how long you're going to be able to keep this up?"

Alice had confessed to me that she was hopelessly in love with Jazz, and though the words had not been exchanged, she knew it was mutual. Being away from each other was hard on both of them. So, it obviously made me curious to hear what her plan was. Did she plan on graduating in Forks? Or was she planning to follow my lead and leave it all behind?

I knew what Jazz wanted, of course, but Alice had always been so strict about her plans for the future.

"Oh, I'm pretty much out," Alice sighed, bringing me back to the present. "For instance, I have no clue on how to explain my whereabouts when I get back home, and frankly, I'm not sure I care. I mean, it's not like I'll be back in Forks by dinner." She snorted.

Edward and I had both wondered about that, too. The part where she spent a whole day away from Forks. Because she had been clear on spending the entire day in Seattle with me, and that would send her back

to Forks in the middle of the night, if that was even possible. And how would she explain that?

"Could you elaborate, Alice?" I asked slowly, hoping she didn't expect me to understand her vague reply. "What do you mean you don't care?"

"About my parents," she huffed, rolling her eyes. And then she launched into her story. "I can't help it, Bella. Ever since I found out about you and Edward I've been thinking a lot, you know? And...Jesus, there are so many questions, especially about your relationship," she eyed me pointedly, "because I know it's not a normal one, but...I still know that you love each other, and I want that. I want it with Jasper, and I sorta thought if you and Edward could do it, then Jasper and I could do it." She sighed, unbuttoning the top button on her black coat. "I don't know," she muttered, slumping back in her seat a little. "But what I do know is that my parents won't ever agree to this. I remember how they reacted to you and Edward. Granted, Edward's seven years older than Jasper, but fuck, you're not my parents' daughter. They shouldn't care that much, should they? I mean, it's not like you're answering to them, and neither does Edward," she chuckled humorlessly. "Am I horrible for thinking how much easier this would be if I had uncaring parents?"

I understood her. "Because it would be easier to leave it behind?"

She nodded, smiling wistfully. "I want this, Bella. So badly, but...like I said, my parents won't ever agree."

I had no idea what to tell her. She was tied, knowing that she would have to choose, but...hmm.

"Maybe your parents will come around," I said pensively. "If you give them time, they might accept your relationship someday."

She shrugged, not seeming to believe me. I wasn't sure I believed it, either.

"Well," I said, hoping my next words would placate her. "You don't have to decide right away. You said you have questions. Ask them before you start thinking further. And I promise I will be honest, Alice. Ask away." I smiled.

Studying me for a beat, she appeared to think about my offer.

"You can ask anything," I implored gently. "It doesn't matter if it's about Jazz or about me and Edward. Edward and I are open and have nothing to hide, and Jazz actually asked me to be here for you if you had questions regarding him. Not that I wouldn't be here if he hadn't asked me, because I would. But know that I'm at liberty to answer any question about him, too."

She was still eyeing me hesitantly, but I could see that she was ready to burst.

"Okay," she sighed quietly. "Can I ask about your relationship with Edward?"

"Absolutely," I assured her.

This time she didn't hesitate as much to ask, but she still thought hard about how to phrase her question. It was obvious by the way she opened and closed her mouth, and I guessed it had a lot to do with Edward—a man she'd grown up with. He was basically an uncle of some sort.

"Is Edward a Dom?" she blurted out. "I mean...he told me he wasn't, but..."

"To an extent he is," I replied simply. "He makes many of the decisions in our relationship, but we still have a normal side...so to speak." I hesitated,

not really sure if I should bring it up, but...I decided to be blunt, honest, and not hide a thing. So, I continued. "There are rules I have to follow, but the thing with Edward and me is that we match perfectly. His rules keep me in line, and they make sure I stay the person I want to be—the person I feel most comfortable being."

"Rules?" she asked, chewing on her lip. "What kind of rules?"

I stifled a smile, deciding to ignore the one where Edward told me I wasn't allowed to on chew my lip.

"He doesn't like it when I'm brazen, impolite, or rude," I said. "Which nobody does, really, but with Edward..." I chuckled. "If I disrespect him, he punishes me."

Alice blushed furiously, letting out a small gasp, and I couldn't help but chuckle.

"Alice, to be blunt, he owns me," I elaborated. "But those are roles we play, much like a Dominant and a submissive. Only in our case, it's 24/7. It's who we are." I shrugged. "However, I'm not powerless," I said pointedly. "If anything, I hold all the power because, without my submission, he has nothing."

"So you like that he *owns* you?" she asked dubiously.

"Yep. It's what I want. He makes the decisions I have no interest in making, and he takes charge where I'd rather stay back. And then I take care of him in return. We both do actually," I elaborated a little. "Because we're both caregivers. He gives me what I want and need, and I do it in return for him."

"But is this what I would have with Jasper?"

I shook my head. "No. Not that I have asked Jazz what your rules would be, but Edward and I are pretty much in a league of our own." There was no other way to put it, because we were different. "Like I said, what Edward and I have goes on 24/7. We have created a balance we both love. It comes naturally—either his romantic side or his dominant side.

"Because he doesn't dominate me all the time," I told her, needing to get that out. "Edward cherishes my opinion, and what you will find out about Jazz that also applies to Edward, is that they put us first. Their first thought is about us."

She tilted her head, seeming to think about that.

So, I decided to leave the conversation about Edward and me and tell her about her and Jazz instead...or what I knew about his lifestyle, at least.

"That's one of the first things you'll notice, Alice: as soon as you submit to Jasper, you will become his first priority and major concern. He will treasure what you're offering."

I could practically see the wheels turning in her head.

"I'm not trying to paint a lovely picture," I added. "The minute Jazz is your Dom, he's in charge, and he won't make it easy on you." I winked. "But the relationship you will have as Master and pet...or whatever you will call each other, is a sexual one. You will have relationship time and play time," I explained. "That's where Edward and I are different, because our lines can seem blurry to others, but they work for us. For you and Jazz, however, there will be a distinct line. You will know when he's your Dom, and you will know when he's your equal."

"Mm, but that's just it," she said. "Does that mean you and Edward aren't equals?"

"No, we're not, because that's how we want it," I replied with ease. "Our love is equal, of course. And the power he has over me is as strong as the hold I have over him, but in our relationship he is in charge."

"Huh," was her reply.

I decided to let her process the things I'd told her. I didn't want to overwhelm her, and I knew she wasn't a natural submissive. This wouldn't come naturally to her, so Jazz was definitely right when stating that slow was the right pace for them. That was not to say Alice wouldn't enjoy their time in Jazz's playroom, because I was positive she would. She just had to let this sink in.

"But can you put your foot down?" she asked. "If you disagree with something, can you tell him off or something?"

Valid question. "Sure I can," I said. "Like I said, my opinion is important to Edward. As long as I'm respectful, I can tell him anything, anywhere, and anyhow. It's practically a rule," I chuckled, "and you will notice that, too. Because these kinds of relationship aren't just about craving honesty and openness, they're based on it. You *have* to speak your mind. Only in *your* case, you do it before you enter the playroom."

I grinned at her, seeing her blush again, but I also saw her excitement.

She definitely wanted to try.

Lastly I told her, "You will learn to ask Jazz all this, because he will need to know in order to be perfect for you."

She nodded slowly, again taking it all in.

I was glad she wasn't rejecting anything.

"Can I ask one more thing?" she asked quietly.

I pursed my lips, thinking about her hesitation. Hopefully, Jazz could wipe it away, because it wouldn't get her far.

"Anything," I said. "Really, Alice. Ask away. And same goes for Jazz. In fact, he will be thrilled if you turn to him, too, with this."

"I know. It's just hard..." She trailed off. "It's intimidating."

"It can be," I agreed, nodding. "But aren't you intimidated because it's unknown territory?"

"Yes?" she asked rather than stated, tilting her head in confusion.

"I'm just saying that you might not be so intimidated if you get all your questions answered."

"Jeez, Swan, you're sounding awfully all-knowing, you know," she laughed. "It's hard to see you this way. I mean, you were always confident, but...I don't know, you seem more... serene and...even more sure of yourself nowadays."

I smiled. It was true what she said. And Alice needed to know why I was...well, not a new person, but I *was* growing up—evolving—and Edward played a big role in this. He was the one shaping me, and I loved it.

"That's because I've found the place I want to be," I responded. "Or more importantly, the person I want to be *with*. Edward brings it out of me, and you'll be surprised how Jazz will alter you."

This, however, had a negative effect on Alice. "*Alter* me?"

"You balk at the idea now, but you won't for long," I said, softly but confidently. "And I'm not talking about your whole being becoming something entirely different. I'm just saying that Jasper's personality will

help you get into the right mindset once you enter his playroom, or whenever it's playtime. It will come automatically after a while."

"Huh," she uttered again, and then she was lost in thought once more.

I let her think about it.

But after a few minutes, she asked, "How do you know so much about this? I mean, really, Bella. You seem to know a lot for not being in a D/s relationship."

"I've studied the lifestyle." I shrugged. "Then there's modeling, and lastly there are the people I know in the BDSM community, mainly Jasper, but also Alec and a few other photographers. And Edward is experienced, too."

Again she was quiet for a while.

Looking out the window, I knew that we weren't far from the restaurant, so I turned to Alice one last time. And asked, "What was the original question you wanted to ask me? Do you remember?"

She sighed heavily, definitely hesitating this time. But in the end she asked, "Do you know how it would be for me and Jasper?"

Ah, now I understood why she hesitated. Clearly she knew this was a question meant for Jazz. Not me.

"As I'm sure you know, you won't get the correct answer from me," I told her with a grin. "In general, though, from what I know about the lifestyle, there will be a training period where you and Jazz get to know each other's limits and things like that. He needs to be able to read your body, your signs, so you will obviously talk a lot during this period, especially since you have no experience."

"But he won't just start? We'll talk first?"

"Yes, you will talk at length. Really."

That seemed to calm her down a little.

Good.

Then we both turned as we heard the divider slide down.

"Restaurant Andaluca, Ms. Swan," Max announced.

With a look that said "We'll talk more, and soon", I smiled at her, squeezed her hand, and stepped out of the car as Max held the door open. Alice followed, and the two of us adjusted our coats in the January cold.

"Thank you, Max," I said, facing him. "I'll call you when we're ready."

"Yes, Ms. Swan."

Turning back to the restaurant, Alice and I linked arms as we headed for the entrance. It hit me then how starving I was, and I couldn't wait to get something to eat.

Then we heard *her*. Behind us.

"Well, well, if it isn't Edward Cullen's little whore."

Because that was *just* what I needed today.

"What do we do?" Alice whispered.

I knew what I *wanted* to do. I knew what Rosalie *deserved*.

I sighed.

I also knew what Edward wouldn't allow me to do.

"What—is the whore too afraid to face me?" she cackled.

Sorry, Edward, but...

My arm still linked with Alice's, I spun us around so that we were both facing one Rosalie Hale.

Chapter 28

BPOV

She looked awful, I had to say. Tired. Dark circles under her eyes. Frizzy hair.

"Rosalie," I greeted curtly. "I'd say it was nice running into you, but I'm not supposed to lie."

"Oh, how witty," she goaded, taking a step toward us.

Alice bristled. "Rosalie, can't you just say what you have to say so we can get this over with?"

"That could take time," Rosalie snapped, looking at Alice with disdain.

"And though my brother could do so much better than you, you little bitch, my main problem is the high and mighty Cullen. *He's* the one making my life a living hell. So, just fuck off, Alice." She glared at me again, taking another step toward us. "Bella, do you have any idea what Edward's done to me?"

I did.

No more credit cards, no car, no luxury, and last but not least, she was forced to work in a soup kitchen three days a week. But hey, she had time since Jasper had forced her to quit her part-time job at Volturi.

"Correct me if I'm wrong, but didn't Jazz take away your credit cards and such?" I asked, arching a brow. "Edward didn't do that."

"His name is Jasper Hale," Rosalie seethed. "Not Jazz. Not Jazz Whitlock."

She didn't like her brother's profession, it seemed. Perhaps it wasn't fancy enough for her.

"Jazz would disagree, and with all due respect, I'd rather listen to him," I said calmly. "Now, was there anything else?"

Another step and she was practically in my face. "Yes, one more thing. How do you do it, Bella? How can you stand here and pretend you're all that when we all know you're nothing but a common gold digger, trying to fuck her way into Edward's wallet?"

I was fuming.

My hands balled into fists.

"You know shit, Rosalie!" Alice hissed. "You're just pissed nothing worked out the way you planned!"

"Is everything all right, Ms. Swan?"

I didn't know Max was still here.

He didn't matter, though, because all I saw was Rosalie. I'd fucking had it with her.

"For the love of God!" Rosalie cried out. "This is just priceless! And you must be good in bed, Bella, since Edward's giving you a private chauffeur and all! Yeah...just priceless!"

Her repulsive words rang in my ears.

I saw red.

And I acted on instinct when my hand came up. Hard as hell. With all my strength put into the blow.

Right across Rosalie's cheek.

The slap rang out loudly, and I wondered if I imagined the volume of it.

I realized that I was panting. Everything in me was surging, rushing. Adrenaline, I recognized. Holy fuck, that felt good. She deserved it. That and more, but...I was fucking above that bitch.

Alice's gasp brought me back to reality, and my eyes flickered between her, Rosalie, and Max. Max just looked shocked. Alice looked stunned, but I saw the smile tugging at the corners of her mouth. She was trying to conceal it. And then Rosalie. Wide eyes that were welling up, and shit...her cheek was red.

"I think this is our cue to leave," Alice breathed out.

It was then that I saw we had attracted quite a crowd.

Fuck.

Edward was going to be livid.

And just like that, I was myself again—protective and ready to do anything for my relationship with him. The last thing we needed was more bullshit in our life. So, with a determined nod to myself, I closed the distance between Rosalie and me, and I whispered in her ear. "Take this further, and I will make sure the soup kitchen seems like a luxury retreat. Am I making myself clear?"

Internally, I gave myself a pat on the back for embracing my inner Mr. Cullen.

It wasn't me. It wasn't a side of myself I enjoyed at all. But...this was needed. Christ, so needed.

Just as quietly, I added, "You of all people should know how far a credit card can take us, Rosalie, and since I'm Edward's little whore, I can tell you that I have the means to take your skanky ass down."

She was still wide-eyed when I moved away from her ear, but tears streamed down her face.

Was I wrong for taking pleasure in this?

I hope not.

"Do you understand, Rosalie?" I asked, smiling brightly.

Her eyes narrowed and though they were clouded with rage, fury, and hatred, she knew I had the upper hand. She knew she was cooked and done.

So, she nodded. Slowly.

Alice came to life and leaned in, also smiling brightly, and hot damn, she pinched Rosalie's cheeks. You know, like you do with a child. Yeah, Alice did that.

"Good girl," Alice whispered to Rosalie.

Laughter bubbled up as Max opened the car door for us again.

Once seated in the car, we broke down into hysterics.

"Oh, my God, Alice!" I laughed. "Good girl? Gah, you called her a good girl!"

"I know! But it fit!" she laughed back.

"You contributed perfectly," I giggled, wiping away tears of mirth.

Unfortunately, our giggle-fest ended when Max asked where we were going, and I was painfully aware that I had to talk to Edward.

"Uh, you can take us to Palamino, Max," I mumbled, bringing up my cell phone.

"Certainly, Miss."

Hi, sweetheart. Sorry to interrupt your meeting but I have something I need to tell you face to face. Can Alice and I just drop by for a minute? Love, Bella

"Do you think Edward will be mad?" Alice asked cautiously.

I bit my lip.

I hope he won't.

EPOV

When I received Bella's text, Marcus was still speechless after having heard the conversation between Gianna and me.

I frowned, reading the message a few times as I tried to understand. She wouldn't need to stop by here unless it was important, but...the way she phrased her words didn't exactly make me worried.

Of course you can. Should I be worried? – Edward

I took a sip from my wine while I waited for her reply.

Meantime, the table was silent, the tape recorder still placed in front of Marcus.

Judging by his expression when the tape played—or rather, when my mother was brought up in the discussion—it was clear that Marcus had no idea who Esme was. My guess was that he didn't want Gianna to watch the tape due to the nature of the tape. But no, he didn't know who my mother was. It was a coincidence.

Finally, my phone dinged again, and I read Bella's second text.

I don't think so, but I'm not sure if I messed up. I'll see you in a few minutes. Love, Bella

I narrowed my eyes and then pocketed my phone.

I'd just have to see what she had to say when she arrived.

"I—I don't know what to say," Marcus said, looking a little choked up. I couldn't blame him. He'd been betrayed by his own daughter. Actually, he hadn't yet, but that was her plan.

"You don't have to say anything," I told him, cutting into my steak. "I just hope you'll be more careful. Now that we're in business together, I'm obviously looking out for Volturi." I bullshitted. "Is there any way she could harm the company?"

I wanted to know. Seeing as I had no intention of actually working with Volturi—not when I worked so well with Denali—I was now trying to find a way out. The worst that could happen was cooperating with Volturi for twenty-four months—as the contract stated—but if I could find a way...

He shook his head, still stunned. His face was also lacking color. "Nothing short of killing me," he chuckled humorlessly. Catching my raised brow, he sobered. "No," he whispered. "She wouldn't."

I shrugged and exchanged a look with Scott.

Honestly, I had no idea how far Gianna was willing to go.

She was a complete fucking basket case, but I hoped Marcus was right. Because if she was heartless enough to murder her own father, I'd have a much larger problem to deal with. Since I was the one putting a stop to her reign of malice, she could very well come for revenge.

Marcus' lawyer was about to speak up, but I heard Isabella's voice filtering through the restaurant, so I held up a finger to halt him.

"He's expecting me," I heard her insist. Looking over my shoulder, I saw her arguing with the hostess.

Standing up, I made my way over to them.

"Mr. Cullen is in a very important meeting--"

"It's all right," I said, reaching them.

The hostess began to apologize profusely, but I cut her off. "No reason to apologize. I didn't tell you." Then, turning to my girl, I noticed the distress in her eyes. "What's wrong, baby girl?" I murmured, pulling her close.

She sighed heavily, resting her forehead on my chest, and I was nothing but confused and worried. Looking up, I saw Alice standing in the doorway wearing a nervous smile. That only confused me more, of course.

Something had obviously happened, and I needed to know.

"Hello, Alice," I said, arching a brow. "Mind filling me in?"

She wrung her hands awkwardly, walking over to Bella, and then with her shoulders slumped, she mumbled, "We ran into Rosalie outside Andaluca."

I sighed.

When it rains, it really pours.

"And?" I pressed, feeling Bella hug me harder.

"We got into a fight," Alice continued quietly, looking everywhere but at me. "And, uh..."

Bella took over, mumbling against my chest. "I sorta slapped her."

I coughed. Eyes widened.

Slapped her? *Slapped* her?

"Isabella, look at me," I told her softly.

A part of me was infuriated, both with Bella and Rosalie. I didn't want my Bella in fights. Christ, that was the last thing I wanted. I couldn't even imagine it, and that was no way to solve anything. I could expect this from Rosalie but from Bella? Good heavens, no. But...then there was the part of me that was undeniably proud. Sorry, but I couldn't help it. Bella deserved to have her say—very much so. And to think that Rosalie would get away with everything she'd done was a thought much more upsetting. However, worry came first, and I needed to make sure my Bella was fine.

"Are you mad?" she whispered, looking up at me.

For once she wasn't biting her lip.

I tried to withhold my smile as I tucked a piece of hair behind her ear.

"Yes, sweet girl," I chuckled quietly, caressing her cheek. "I'm quite upset, but I also understand, and if you tell me you're fine, I will let it slide."

Frowning, I added, "I want you to tell me all about it as soon as we get back to the suite, though."

Bella's expression showed nothing but relief.

"I swear I'm fine, I just...I, uh...I bitch-slapped her."

It was getting tremendously difficult to keep my amusement bottled up.

"She really pulled a number on Rosalie," Alice chimed in, now grinning widely. "You should've seen her, Edward. I swear, Bella's handprint is still on her cheek!"

"All right, all right," I said, pretending to cough in order to hide my chuckles. "That's enough, girls. How about the two of you go back to the suite and order in room service instead of going out."

It wasn't a question.

"Okay," Bella whispered, watching me as I inspected her hand.

"You're sure it doesn't hurt?" I murmured.

She shook her head. I kissed her palm.

Tilting her chin up, I dipped down and kissed her softly. "Make sure Max takes you back, and then I'll see you in a couple of hours, okay?"

"Sounds good," she murmured. "Love you."

"Love you, too, little one." After kissing her once more, I faced Alice. "And you're okay, too, Ali?"

"Fuck yes," she giggled. "Rosalie had it coming."

Internal sigh.

Bella smiled at me knowingly, and I leaned in and whispered to her. "Do her a favor and let her know what Jazz thinks about foul language, will ya, kitten?"

"Consider it done." She grinned cheekily. "But aren't we taking away Jasper's fun then?"

"Behave, Isabella," I threatened quietly in her ear. "I might change my mind about that spanking. Understood?"

"Yes, Sir," she exhaled shakily.

My cock swelled a little.

"Good girl," I muttered, backing away slightly before I decided to leave Scott alone and go with her. "Now, get back to the hotel. Both of you."

I was pleasantly surprised when Alice nodded dutifully and wiped the sass off her face. That face would only get her in trouble with Jazz. She might as well learn now.

After saying goodbye to the girls, I headed back to my table, eager as hell to get this over with.

"Was that your daughter?" Marcus's lawyer asked and jerked his chin in the direction of the exit. My eyebrows shot up. "Let me guess, her money ran out in the middle of her shopping spree so she came to Daddy for more." He snorted. Marcus, who had pieced together the truth about the girl I just saw and the girl I spoke of on the tape, looked mortified. "I feel your pain, Mr. Cullen. My ex-wife is raising our daughter to be just as spoiled."

I was momentarily stunned.

Not necessarily from the remark about Bella and my age difference, because I knew I could technically be her father, but...for the love of God, where were people's manners nowadays?

With my back to Marcus' lawyer, he evidently didn't see me kiss Bella earlier, and I wasn't sure if I was amused or ridiculously ticked off.

But after a moment I did know, because I was not ashamed to admit that our age difference was a turn-on for me.

I was amused.

"Yes," I said slowly, leaning back in my seat. I smirked. "She is rather spoiled." I chuckled. "But don't worry. I'll give her a good spanking later."

Scott laughed incredulously while Marcus' lawyer choked on his chicken.

I grinned. "Now, are we ready to move on?"

BPOV

"The food is here!" Alice called from the living room.

"Okay, just tell them to set it up by the window," I called back, stepping into a pair of white cotton shorts.

I had taken a shower to wash away my encounter with Rosalie. A snug dark blue t-shirt followed, and then I padded out barefoot to join Alice for our lunch. A very late lunch.

"This is a nice view," Alice commented, looking out the window.

I agreed, which was why I loved eating by the window.

"Is there anything else we can get you, Ms. Swan?" the waiter asked, now finished setting up our lunch.

"No, thank you." I smiled. "But let me walk you out." I hoped I had enough cash in my purse to tip him.

Luckily I did, and after handing him a twenty, I headed back to the living room.

"God, this is delicious," Alice moaned.

I chuckled and took my seat across from her, eagerly digging in. We had really gone overboard when we ordered from The Terrace. Fried calamari, Kobe beef sliders, pasta Alfredo, chicken parmesan...our table was full.

"We'll never be able to eat half of this," I giggled, popping a piece of chicken in my mouth. "Maybe Edward will want some later." Oh, good God, the chicken melted in my mouth. Heavenly. "By the way," I said as I reached for my sparkling water, "I ordered us some treatments after lunch."

Edward had pretty much demanded that I take advantage of the hotel's spa accommodations while we were here, and I figured since Vida Spa was out for today, I could introduce Alice to my world right here.

"Facial?" she asked, scrunching her face a little. "Bella, you've tried to get me to go with you to spas for years, and that hasn't worked, so why would it work now?"

It was true. During my past weekend trips to Seattle, I'd tried to coax her along, but I'd never succeeded. But this was different. This wasn't about waxing or plucking. Yet. No, this was about pampering.

It was also about learning.

I, for instance, would never spend hundreds of dollars on beauty products just because *everyone* said they worked wonders. That wasn't me. I knew what worked. And chemicals had nothing to do with it. It was about natural ingredients.

Alice needed to learn this. For Jazz's sake, sure, but mostly for her own sake.

"Because you have Jazz now," I answered simply. "First of all, I know you will love it once you've given it a try, and second of all, Jazz will appreciate it."

"I have Jazz now," she muttered, rolling her eyes as she shoved some pasta in her mouth. "Are you saying that he won't appreciate me for who I am?"

I grinned wickedly. "Oh, he will," I assured. "But don't you want him to lose his mind? Don't you want him to go absolutely insane over you? Don't you want him to drop his jaw?"

Because that was also what it was about.

I may not have been with Edward for long, and I had only gone to Vida once for a full treatment while we'd been together, but every time I did something with my body, he went insane. In a good way.

"What do you mean?" And now she was intrigued.

After chewing and swallowing the pasta in my mouth, I shrugged like it was no big deal. "I'm just saying that if you were to meet Jazz, and you show up relaxed, massaged, pampered, exfoliated, manicured and pedicured...*waxed*," I gave her a pointed look, "Jazz will, to be blunt, lose his shit."

"He will want to worship you," I continued, smiling when she did. "He will want to lick every inch of your body," I giggled. Alice blushed and looked down. "And he will savor everything you give him."

I had her there, and half an hour later we sat in plush chairs in the living room while two women were giving us pedicures. We also had peach seed and avocado masks on our faces. Alice was sold, munching on strawberries and blueberries.

Since I wanted to increase my intake of Vitamin B, I had ordered two bananas, too.

Oh, and there was champagne.

"Okay, you got me, Bella," she sighed contentedly. "What's next? Fill me in."

Oh, Alice, the plans I have for you.

I kinda wanted Jazz to bust a nut.

"Next is working out," I said. "It's not all about taking care of your skin. You have to take care of the rest, too."

"Mmhmm," she hummed, "but I'm not getting my sweet ass any-fucking-where near treadmills. Just FYI."

I chuckled quietly, making a mental note to talk to her about her language soon. Just as Edward had requested. But first: exercising.

"Don't worry, Alice." I grinned and started peeling a banana. "No heavy lifting either."

"So, what *do* you do then?"

I shrugged. "I try different things. Swimming, yoga, Pilates, aerobics... The list goes on, really."

"Okay, so that's exercising. What's next, 'cause I'm sure there's a shitload, right?" she chuckled drowsily, evidently really enjoying her pedicure.

"Ah, yes, there is one thing," I said, deciding to get this over with.

"Edward asked me to talk to you about your behavior."

"Wh..." She sat up straighter, peeling off the cucumber slices over her eyes. I had already discarded mine because they had lost their chill.

"What do you mean, my behavior?"

I chuckled at her horrified expression. "Oh, come on, Alice. You should know this. You've studied BDSM some since you found out about Jazz, haven't you?"

Alice and I both ignored the two women's gasps.

"Of course I have. But what's wrong with my behavior?"

"Your language," I replied bluntly. "Edward doesn't tolerate it, and Jazz will be even worse. He loathes bad behavior, and he won't hesitate to punish you if you're cocky."

"But...but...but..."

"No buts." I winked and then took a sip of my champagne. "There's no going around it. Stop cussing and be a good girl."

I was having fun with this, and maybe I could've been more graceful, but my words were still true. I'd never heard of a Dom who allowed his sub to use foul language and sass. Nope, she needed to drop that.

"What kind of punishment?" she whispered, wide-eyed. "I mean, how does Edward punish you?"

Whoa. I did not see that coming.

So forward all of a sudden, Alice.

Before I answered her question, I needed to know, though. "Can I ask how far you and Jazz have gone? Intimately, I mean. "

Even with her mask on, I could see the blush because it extended to her chest.

"Um...we've...ah... well, you see, um..." She fumbled with her words quietly.

I decided to just ask her flat out. "Alice, have you have sex yet?"

She squeaked. "No?" Was that a question? Then she sighed and slumped back in her chair. "No, we haven't," she mumbled. "I mean...we've done...stuff."

Stuff? I nodded for her to go on.

"Oral," she all but whispered. "Well, he went down on me on New Year's. I haven't reciprocated."

I ignored her discomfort, hoping she would learn to speak freely with me, because really, there was nothing to be ashamed of. "Okay," I said slowly. "In a vanilla setting, I presume."

"Yeah," she sighed. "He was really sweet, but I knew he was holding back, you know? And..." She hesitated for a minute. "Well...a part of me...fuck... A part of me wanted him to let go."

Sweet victory.

"That's good," I told her, smiling encouragingly. "That means you want more, doesn't it? You *want* him to dominate you, don't you?"

"Is that wrong?" she asked quietly, chewing on her lip.

"Not at all! That means you're more compatible, Alice. It means you're more perfect for him than you thought."

I couldn't wait to tell Edward this. Not to mention Jazz. Jazz would be ecstatic.

"But seriously," I giggled, "give the poor man a blowjob next time you see him."

"Slut!" she giggled back.

I feigned innocence. "What? You just-" I made a crude gesture with a banana. Then I cracked up. "He'll go bananas!"

But my laughter died in my throat when I caught a movement in the hallway.

Oh, fuck.

Edward was leaning against a wall, looking awfully amused.

I was so embarrassed!

"Hello, girls," he chuckled quietly, dropping his briefcase on a chair. The two women working on our feet didn't even look up. "Don't you look cute."

"Oh, hey, Edward," Alice chuckled nervously, probably wondering if he'd heard us earlier.

He definitely had.

"Alice," he greeted, smiling as he crouched next to my chair. "And you, kitten..." He leaned forward, sniffing my mask. "Making guacamole, are we?"

"Well, aren't you funny," I deadpanned.

"Mm, aren't I?" he murmured, eyes full of mirth. "I see you two are enjoying yourselves?" He leaned forward again, and I met him, kissing him softly, careful not to get my facemask on him.

"Very," I replied. "How did the meeting go?"

"As expected," he said and stood up again. "In a few days I will contact Gianna again."

I smiled, feeling proud of Edward. He always succeeded.

"I'm glad," I murmured. "Let me know if there's anything I can do."

"I will, baby." He nodded and then looked over his shoulder, toward the bedroom. "I think I'm going to take a shower to wash off the day." Facing me again, he told me pointedly, "And then you two have something to tell me, yes?"

I nodded. He wanted to know all about our encounter with Rosalie, of course.

~IdC~

An hour later, Alice and I sat in the living room, newly showered, wearing fluffy bathrobes, and we had just filled Edward in about everything that happened today.

He sat quietly with his elbows on his knees, just listening as we told him. Nodding occasionally. Otherwise nothing. Wait, there was one thing. When I told him about threatening Rosalie, I expected him to lash out, but he didn't. Nope. He tried to hide a laugh by coughing, much like he had done at Palamino.

"So...yeah...that's everything," Alice said.

I nodded when Edward looked at me for confirmation.

"All right," he sighed, scrubbing at his face. "Thank you, girls, for telling me." Then, turning to Alice, he asked her, "What is your plan, Ali? Do you want me to call Jazz? Or maybe I should book you a suite for the night. Going back to Forks now is out of the question. It's too late for that, and Jack would only give you problems if you returned now."

I glanced over at her, curious to see her reaction to an Edward she hadn't quite met before. Being stern and demanding was something he had

hidden from her before, but now was different. Everything was out in the open, and whether Alice liked it or not, Edward would be above her, too.

I was pleasantly surprised when she only shrugged. That was much better than giving attitude, that was for sure. "I don't know. Like I told Bella earlier, I didn't really plan the end of this, and I know Mom and Dad won't be happy."

"No, they will not," Edward chuckled quietly, shaking his head. "Well, I suggest you stay here at the hotel tonight then. But you should at least call Jack and Mary and let them know you're safe. Then...call Jazz. He will want to know."

"Can't I call him tomorrow, though?" Alice asked, grimacing. "I mean, he doesn't have to know right away, does he? And this thing with his sister...ugh, I don't wanna deal with that now."

"Might as well get it over with, Alice," Edward said firmly, standing up. "I'll go book a suite for you, and you will call your parents, as well as Jazz." And with a pointed look, he added, "He worries. That's why you should call him."

That was that.

Alice went to call her parents, Edward called the front desk, and I took the opportunity to book an appointment at the Fairmont's Health Spa for tomorrow morning. Since Alice was staying, I figured I could take advantage of that. Then, of course, there was the fact that I wanted to look good tomorrow for Edward. Tomorrow was the day we moved into the penthouse, after all.

Talk about anticipation.

In other words, I was horny as hell.

Chapter 29

BPOV

After my spa appointment with Alice—a *couple of hours she'll never forget*—we said goodbye. She was having lunch with Jazz before returning to Forks, and I had two questions. One, would she let Jazz know she got the full treatment at the hotel this morning? And two, how were her parents going to react when she got home?

I told her I was more than happy to be there for support when she decided to tell them about Jazz, and she smiled, silently telling me that she would call if she needed it.

As for Jazz finding out about Alice's activities this morning...well, we'd see later when we saw him for the shoot.

Yes, the photo shoot.

I was nervous about telling Alice, because I wanted her to know. For some reason it felt like she had a say, even though it was Jasper's profession; it was his job.

So, imagine my surprise when Alice hugged me downstairs and said, "Have fun at the shoot."

Jazz had evidently already told her, not to mention explained the details.

"Bella, your delivery is here," Edward called from the living room.

I smiled indulgently and tied the short satin robe around my waist before heading for the door.



Edward smirked when I passed him in the living room. He knew what the delivery was. However, his smirk faltered when he saw the white robe, barely covering my ass.

He couldn't approach, though, because he was in the middle of a phone conversation his lawyer.

As I opened the door, I heard Edward tell Scott to hold on.

I had a feeling my man was unable to keep himself from joining me.

"Uh... Delivery for M-Ms. Swan?" the man stuttered, blushing as he gawked.

He did nothing for me.

But the man approaching me from behind sure did, and he showed no shame when his hand snaked around my waist. Up my ribcage, up, up, up, stopping right below my breast. He pulled me flush to him. My back to his chest—hard.

My nipples started tightening.

“Being playful, kitten?” he whispered in my ear.

I shivered as his thumb brushed over my left nipple.

Fuck me.

“Um, d-delivery for Ms. S-Swan?” the man repeated. “I was told to bring it up here.”

“Thank you,” I said, quite breathily, and signed for the package before Edward slammed the door closed.

I yelped.

He pushed me up against the wall, hard as hell, breathing heavily in my ear, pressing the evidence of his arousal against my abdomen.

“My desperate little girl,” he murmured huskily, cupping both my breasts in his hands. “Are you begging for attention?”

Yes.

“No,” I breathed.

He pinched my nipples. Both of them. Hard. And growled, “Don’t lie!”

“Fuck!” I cried out. “Yes, yes...”

“Yes, what?” he whispered softly. “Yes, you’re begging for attention by dressing in this tiny little robe?”

"Yees!" I moaned wantonly.

His hand, down my stomach, down, down. Cupping my pussy.

I bucked against him.

It had been so long.

Please.

"So wet, little love," he cooed, dropping his forehead to my shoulder.

"Fuck," he muttered, and then he slid my thong aside. Two fingers, teasing my slit. I was so wet for him, having been denied for days. "My sweet girl, you'll come hard today."

Oh, *God...*

Two fingers were inside me before I could respond to his words.

But respond I did. I groaned loudly, loving his promise. Today. Yes, finally.

I will feel him again.

"You'll fuck me?" I whimpered, locking my arms around his neck. His fingers slid in and out of me with ease. Not enough. God, it wasn't enough. "Please, Edward...tell me..."

"I will fuck you so good," he whispered, kissing my shoulder. "I promise you will have my cock today. As much as you want."

Oh...the possibilities.

"But not yet." And then he was gone.

I was left there panting. My body tingled. Shivers ripped through me.

He was on the phone again.

While licking his fingers.

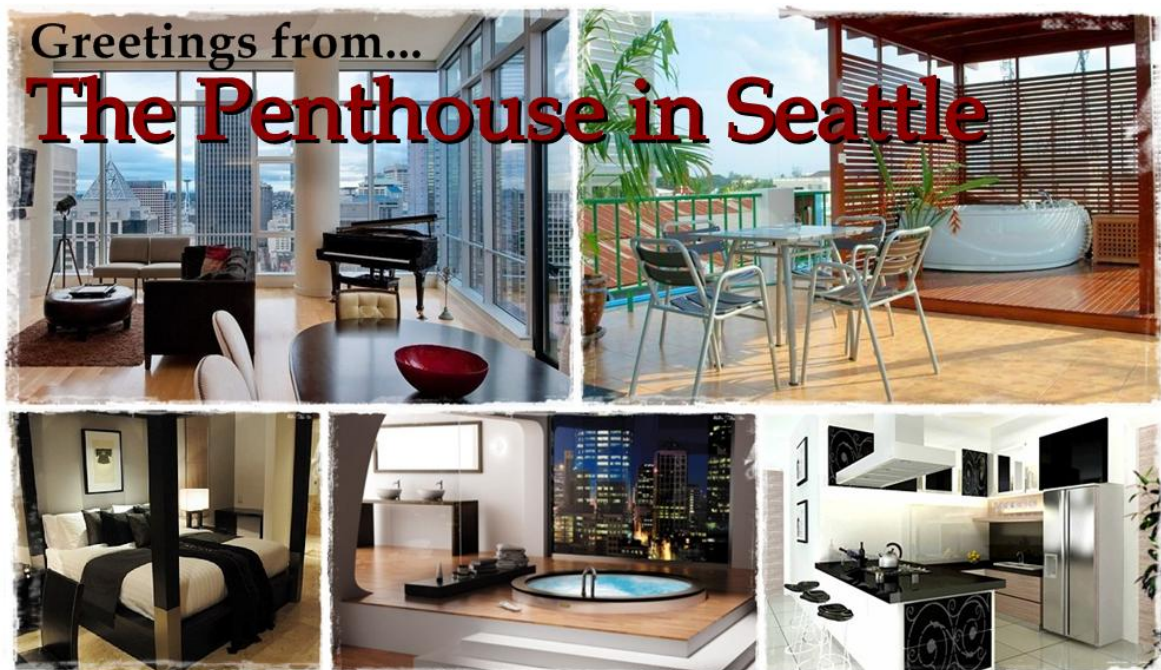
~IdC~

Two hours later, we were *home*.

He corrected me and said, "One of our homes. Besides...Isla's our real home, isn't it?"

I agreed wholeheartedly.

But this place was gorgeous, too. Clean, modern. But still warm. Not necessarily homey, but that was okay, because like Edward said, Isla was home.



The tour around the penthouse didn't take long, because Jazz was due to arrive at any moment, and we wanted to start right away.

"The kitchen's stocked if you're hungry," Edward said as we stood in the living room. "I'm going to take a shower before Jazz arrives. You'll be all right by yourself for a few minutes?"

I smiled, burying my face in his chest. "I'll be fine, sweetheart."

He hummed and kissed me on the forehead. "I love you, baby. So much."

"Mmm, love you, too."

~IdC~

I heard him but remained standing by the window in the living room.

I wondered what he was wearing for today's shoot.

I was wearing a white thong in see-through lace, my collar, and the satin robe from earlier. And one more thing. A pair of diamond earrings that Edward had given me before we checked out of the hotel. They were a part of the delivery. Simple solitaire studs. Magnificent.

The thong was another part of the delivery.

There were other outfits for me that I was to use throughout the day, of course. Edward wanted to see me in lots of things. Most items were innocent and white, but a few were dark and provocative—things I couldn't wait to try on.

Standing behind me suddenly, he moved my hair aside before leaning in. And his breaths, I felt them. Goose bumps appeared. Closer. His mouth. His lips ghosting over my neck. Then his words, his dirty words, as he tugged on my ponytail. They promised. In a whisper.

"I can't wait much longer, kitten." Hot whisper. Tongue swirling on my pulse point. I whimpered. He wasn't done. "Would you like to hear what I have planned, sweet girl?"

Yes, I do. Please tell me.

Show me.

Tell me.

Teach me.

"My cock," he growled quietly, nipping on my earlobe. "I'm going to push it deep inside of you." He reached around me to tweak my nipples, making them even harder. "But not your pussy this time, little one... Well, maybe I need your pussy first," he chuckled darkly. "It's addictive, after all."

A moan filled the air, and I realized it came from me.

"But it's time for me to fuck that tight ass, Isabella."

"Fuck," I breathed out, tilting back my head.

Lastly, he cooed softly, "I'm going to fill it so good, baby girl."

I was done for.

That's when the intercom rang.

Edward chuckled. "Looks like Jazz is here."

EPOV

I let everything go as I reached the intercom.

"Mr. Cullen? This is Mark from the lobby."

Fancy building. A simple doorbell wouldn't let you through.

"All right."

"A Mr. Whitlock is here for you, sir."

"Send him up."

I just...let it all go. The meetings I had set up, I let that go. Everything with Gianna, the opening of Cullen Eight in Rome, Jenks, my parents. Everything was gone. This was about Isabella and me. This was a day I desperately needed. Wanted. Had longed for.

So, by the time Jazz rang the doorbell, I only had today on my mind.

"Jazz, good to see you," I said, grinning as we shook hands. "Come on in."

"Thanks," he replied. "Everything good with you?"

"Absolutely. And you?"

He smirked as he removed his coat. "I think you know I'm fine, no?"

"I beg your pardon?" I chuckled in confusion, feeling Bella's arms snake around my waist. Lifting my arm, I motioned for her to step forward, which she did, and I held my arm around her shoulders. "Hello there," I murmured quietly, dipping down for a kiss.

She hummed into the kiss, pecking me a few times before turning to Jazz.

"I think Jazz is referring to his lunch with Alice today," she said, smiling mischievously as she went to hug him. "Good to see you again, Jazz," she said softly, stepping back to my side. "I take it your lunch went well?"

I was still confused, but Jazz and Bella weren't. No, they seemed to understand each other perfectly, and I found it a bit unnerving, but I knew Jazz was seconds from telling me.

"It did." He nodded firmly before facing me with a raised eyebrow. "It seems your Isabella wasted no time in showing Alice the day spa at your hotel."

Ah.

And so it dawned on me.

Of course I knew all about the girls and how they spent their morning, but Jasper's pointed look could only mean one thing. Bella told Alice all about what Jazz would most likely appreciate, and I had to say that, though I couldn't for the life of me think of Alice in a situation such as this one, I knew Bella would be good for her. But it was evident that Bella didn't beat around the bush, and I assumed they hadn't just gone down there this morning for massages.

"But you appreciated it, didn't you?" Bella asked him, smiling smugly as she placed a hand on my stomach. "I knew you would, Jazz."

Oh, she was triumphant now.

"A little heads up would've been nice, Isabella," he chuckled, shaking his head. "But yes, I appreciated it, and I appreciate what you're doing. Alice sure enjoyed rendering me speechless."

I snickered, watching in amusement how Bella's eyes nearly sparkled in her victory. It didn't take a genius to figure out that this had been her plan. She wanted Alice to know that, as women, they held the power before they gave their submission. My girl was smart, there was no denying that.

"Aaaw, but she needed to see that, Jazz," she said. "And look at it this way; now you know she will definitely continue going to a spa. Hopefully she'll come with me to Vida next time."

"Hmm, I suppose," Jazz conceded. "All right." He grinned and faced me now. "Shall we begin?"

"Sounds good." I was more than ready. "Bella, why don't you go to the living room for now. I'll talk to Jazz about today."

"Yes, Sir," she murmured before walking off.

~IdC~

Once I had gone through the shoot with Jazz, we started out in the living room where I wanted a few solo shots of my girl.

It was amazing to see her slip into her role as a model so easily. It came naturally, and I knew she was itching to return to work.

"Isabella, walk over to the piano," Jazz instructed quietly as he captured her every move. "Trace your fingers along the wood. Make it look like you're in thought, like you're waiting for someone, perhaps."

He was good.

In the meantime, I sat in a black leather chair, sipping my whiskey as I watched her hungrily. I knew Jazz took the occasional photo of me, too, but I paid him no attention. My eyes were glued to Bella. The way she moved...Christ.

I was hard for her already, and my sweet girl was aware.

The way she often cast me glances...and of course the bulge in my pants. She eyed it. Often, while biting that fucking bottom lip of hers.

The sight of her biting her lip was bordering on pornographic, and I fought a groan as she bent over the piano, watching me over her shoulder...all while chewing on her lip. Her eyes, so dark and full of desire. Cheeks slightly flushed.

Outside my slacks, I palmed my cock. Stroked it gently, rubbing my thumb over the tip.

“Can you crawl over to Edward, Isabella?”

She flushed; I smirked.

Come to me, little one. Crawl for me.

I took one last sip of my drink; then I put it down on the coffee table.

She moved closer to me. Slowly. Eyeing me hungrily.

“Remove the robe,” I whispered huskily.

Being the good little girl she was, she obeyed and kneeled before me.

I removed her robe.

Fuck, she’s heavenly.

“Stand up,” I commanded quietly.

Again she did as she was told, and she stood right in front of me, wearing nothing but the see-through thong I had ordered her to wear.

Leaning forward, I placed a soft kiss on her toned, yet soft stomach. My hands made their way up her legs and thighs, not stopping until I reached the lace of her thong.

I inhaled, grazing my nose along her hipbone. Down, down, down, until I planted a kiss over her pussy. A low groan escaped my lips as I felt the dampness. *Fuck.* My tongue darted out and I tasted her.

“Oh,” she whined.

"Hmm," I hummed, pressing down my tongue harder, but it wasn't enough. Fuck, I could never have enough of my sweet girl. Therefore, I hooked my fingers under her thong, pulling it down slowly. "Fuck, little one." Her bare pussy glistened with arousal for me. "So, so wet for me."

"Yes," she breathed.

Once she had stepped out of her thong, I tossed it to the side and leaned in once more. And I tasted. I licked her right away, flattening my tongue as I parted her slick lips with it. She was sweet, tangy, fresh, and all Bella. *Goddamn*. My fingers gripped her hips. I pulled her closer, burying my face in her tight pussy.

My tongue entered her.

"Edward!" she gasped.

Not yet.

I released her and dragged a hand over my face, wiping my mouth and chin.

She flushed. Again.

I throbbed.

"I want you on all fours." I pointed to the floor. "Between my legs, so I can feel you."

Jazz understood where I was going with this, and in my periphery, I saw him shuffle around, changing his position until he stood in front of us.

With Bella kneeling between my legs, I leaned down and whispered in her ear. "Look into the camera, Isabella."



I caressed her. My hands worked her. Her back, her thighs, her legs. Her sides, her ass...

"Does that feel good, sweet girl?" I teased her wet slit.

"So good," she whimpered.

Not yet.

I gave Jazz a look to take over again.

He nodded.

"Isabella, walk over to the piano again," he ordered.

She looked miserable for a second or two before she walked back to the piano. Now she was standing there completely naked. I wouldn't be able to wait for long. Not long at all.

Minutes passed as she posed, and I followed Jazz after while, needing to see what he captured.

I was rock solid.

It was too much. No way to hold back. Standing there with Jazz, hearing him work his camera, and Bella... Fuck, my sweet, sweet Bella. She was too delectable standing there by the grand piano. Bent over, throwing the camera a coy smile as she looked over her shoulder. She knew, without a doubt, how utter sensual and sexy she was, but she never came off as vain or conceited. She just was, and she knew. And she was all mine. Mine to take, mine to devour and love, mine to fuck.

That was the plan right now.

Walking toward her slowly, I unzipped my pants, smirking as she caught the movement. Ah, the blush. She knew what I needed. Right now. Without waiting. She wanted it, too.

As I reached her, I leaned in and trailed my hands up her spine, just lightly, making her shiver. My mouth ghosted over her neck. It was now.

"Hold on to the piano, sweet girl," I said softly. "I'm going to fuck you."

She gasped, followed by a whine, and then she pushed out her tight ass for me, making it easier for me to line up with my cock. And line up I did. Coating myself in her arousal. Christ. All mine. Her sweet pussy was all mine. I owned it.

I stood behind her, ignoring the quiet shuffling as Jazz moved around in the living room. She was my focus. Her naked body, her wet pussy...my cock...right there.

I was teasing her by pushing only the head of my cock inside her, and the grip she had on the edge of the black wood had to be painful.

She was out of control. It had been several days since her last orgasm. To say she was desperate would be an understatement.

Then, in a quick thrust, I was buried inside of her.

Bella cried out loudly.

“Goddamn,” I gritted out quietly, gripping her hips.

I pulsed inside of her. Fuck, she was hot, tight—so slick.

As fast as I had pushed inside, I pulled out, only to slam in again.

I fucked her hard and fast. Slightly upward, at the perfect angle, and it felt so unbelievably good. Fuck. More. My fingers dug into her soft flesh. I knew I was going to mark her. Only temporarily, for a day or two maybe. Her skin was flawless and I loved it that way, adored it, fuck, even protected it, but...to see my marks on her. *Christ*. I moaned, slamming into her harder.

“You like this, don’t you, little one?” I groaned, feeling her clamp down on me. “I know you do. You love it when I fuck you hard.”

“Oh, God, Edward!” she moaned. “Yes...yes...more... Fuck, I love it!”

“That’s it,” I grunted. “Tell me how much you love my cock.”

And she did. I continued delivering hard thrusts; she moaned and gasped about how she needed my cock, how much she loved it, and how thick it was, how long it was, how fucking fat it was.

What a power trip.

“Such a good girl,” I hissed, feeling my insides coil. “You’re my good girl, aren’t you?”

Wrapping her ponytail around my fist, I tugged her head back sharply, pulling her flush to my chest. I stilled inside of her. *Christ*. Her scent, I was so fucking close, and she enveloped me. Everything. Her pussy. I buried my face in her hair.

She needed more and wriggled her hips, but I wasn't done.

"Tell me, Isabella," I whispered in her ear, still fisting her hair. "Tell me you're my good girl."

"I am," she whimpered pleadingly, still needing more. "I'm your good girl."

Fuck!

An animalistic sound rumbled in my chest.

She was arched so beautifully, bent to give me all of her.

She was so small, tiny compared to me. My roughness to her supple softness.

Keeping my one hand in her hair, holding her in place, I let the other reach around her, up her side, her ribcage...up...until I cupped her left breast. Perfect. She was perfect. Light and perky, but still weighy in my hand. I groaned, rolling her nipple between my fingers. And her pussy, still wrapped tightly around my cock, hot, soaked, pulsing. The feel of her. Lastly, her scent...

Mouthwatering.

"You're so fucking perfect," I whispered, capturing her mouth with mine.

Slowly, teasingly, I started moving inside of her again. I released her hair but kept kissing her. *God-fucking-dammit!* I moaned loudly when she clenched down like a vise around me.

"You want to come, little one?" I moaned as my middle finger circled her clit. "God, you're so wet."

"Please, Edward," she begged breathlessly. "I need it...*please*..."

And you will have it, love.

I added pressure to her little clit, and I angled myself better to reach deeper, to reach *that* spot.

“Come all over my cock.” I nibbled on her earlobe. She cried out and tensed up. “Yes, that’s it, baby. Squeeze that sweet pussy.”

It didn’t take many seconds before she was convulsing and screaming my name.

~IdC~

Two hours and a few orgasms later, I finally had her in our bed.

She was satisfied and adorably post-coital.

And now I had her here. Her back to my chest, my lips on her neck, my fingers fucking her, and my cock hard, pressing against her lower back.

With lube and an anal plug, I teased her, stretched her, and with a vibrator pressed down on her clit, I had her begging for more. Even if she had climaxed several times since we’d begun today, this turned her on immensely.

“Are you ready, baby girl?” I murmured huskily in her ear.

She nodded and hummed, and I was glad to see her so relaxed. I had prepared her very well, never rushing, never skipping a step, and it paid off, too. To see her relaxed in my arms even when she knew it was going to hurt...it only confirmed that I had done well. I had her trust.

Slowly, I pulled out the plug. Then I poured a good amount of lube in my hand before coating my erection as well as her hole. Fuck. So tight.

After lining up my cock, I hooked my arm under her leg, pulling it up slightly for a better angle, and then I took deep breaths as I pushed slowly. She understood and held her leg up, making it easier for me to still pleasure her clit. Not that she would climax from this, but it would help with the pain.

I heard the camera.

I hissed in pleasure.

I watched as the head of my cock entered her, pushing past her ring muscle, and it was taking all my strength and restraint not to ram my cock inside of her. The thought was appealing, but it was never an option. This was different from taking her virginity. Very different, and if done wrong, it could hurt her.

"Relax, Bella," I groaned breathlessly. "You have to relax."

I both heard and fucking felt the deep breaths she took.

I pushed further inside of her.

I moaned. "You're doing so well."

Looking down, I watched as I pushed into her. It was an indescribable sight. I was taking the last piece. She was mine, and I was the only one to ever have taken her. I was also the last one. Fuck. Yes, that thought. I wasn't just her first, but her *last*. Just like she was my last.

"Ah, goddamn—so tight, Bella," I grunted, fully sheathed in her. Fucking hell, I could barely believe I fit. She pulsed around me, slick and hot, squeezing me so tightly.

"Are you okay?" I gritted out.

My entire body was tensed. I throbbed inside of her.

"It hurts, but...s'okay," she whimpered.

"I know it hurts, baby," I moaned quietly, slowly pulling out of her. Only an inch or two, before I pushed in again. "You take my cock so perfectly."

My next thrust was harder, and I groaned loudly, feeling my eyes close. I couldn't help it. I needed to feel. It was all I wanted to focus on; just feeling her tight ass around my cock. So, I did. I moved in her slowly but surely, never stopping. It was incredible. Like nothing I had ever felt before.

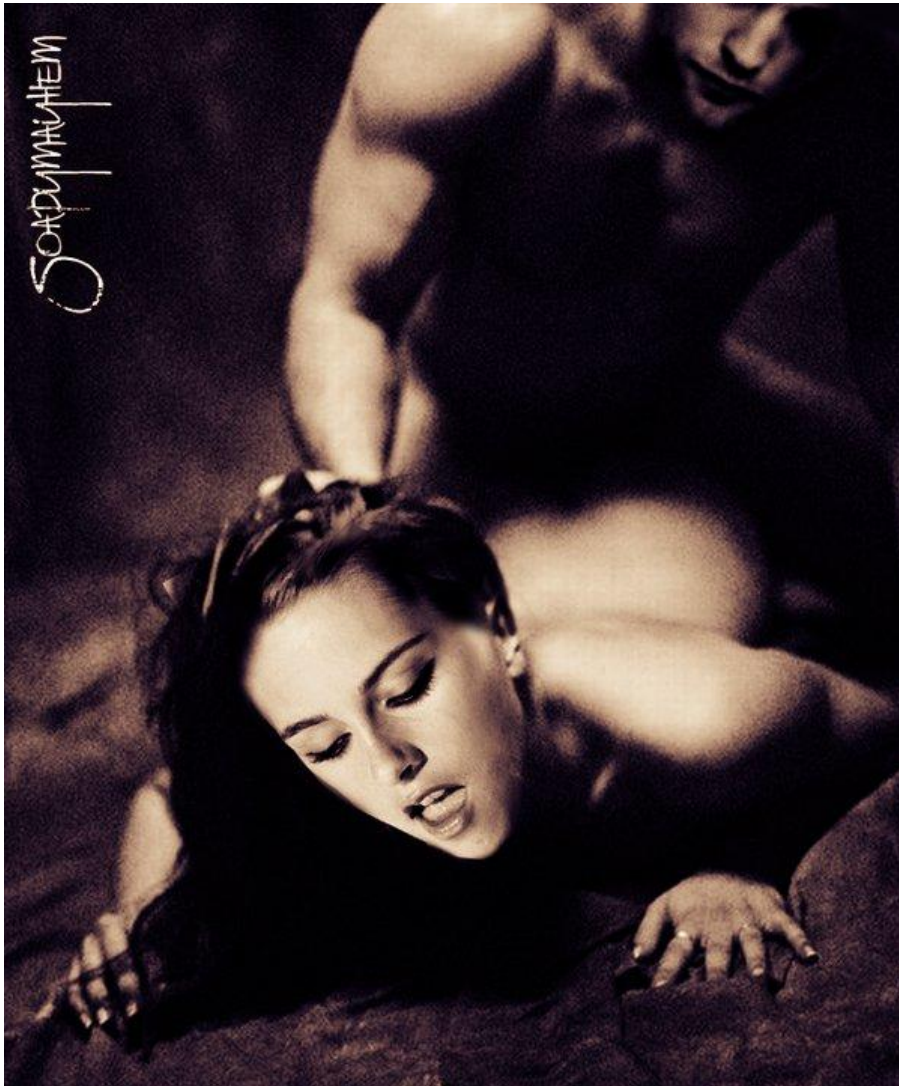
"So fucking good," I admitted, breathing heavily. "Feels so good."

She whimpered but started to meet my thrusts, silently telling me she was okay.

So, I moved harder and faster, fucking her deeply as I fingered her slick pussy.

Leaning over her, I pressed my body on top of her.

My hand fisted her hair.



"You like this, sweet girl, don't you?" I grunted. My free hand slid under her body, pushing two fingers inside her again. "You like that my cock is in your ass while I finger-fuck your pretty little pussy."

"Oh, *God!*" she groaned. "Edward—oh, fuck!"

"Christ, you know how to please me," I moaned, feeling my orgasm approach. "All mine, baby. You're all mine."

I thrust hard, making her cry out. "Yes, Edwaaard!"

I wanted to fuck her harder, but...that would come soon enough.

"I'm close, kitten," I growled, almost slamming into her. "You want my cum inside that tight ass of yours?"

"Fuck," she gasped breathlessly. "Yes—yes... Yes!"

Too close. I was there.

My body tensed; I felt the tingling, the warmth, and with a final push of my hips, I began to spasm. It was all out of control, and it felt so...*fucking*...good. My eyes were closed tightly, my face buried in the crook of her neck. She clamped down on me, everywhere. Fuck, I felt it all. It was everywhere. It rushed, surged through me.

I spilled everything into her, leaving me completely drained and satisfied.

I hear the door click, signaling Jasper's departure as we had agreed upon, and then I just lay there. Catching my breath, still inside of her. My face still buried in her hair.

Jesus.

I breathed her in. I felt her, caressed what was mine.

I hummed. "Hmm, are you okay, love?"

"Yes," she mumbled, actually trying to squirm her way closer to me.

Moving off her slowly, as gently as I possibly could, I told her, "Time for me to take care of my little girl."

She smiled and snuggled into my embrace, completely limp as I carried her to the master bath.

I had already prepared the Jacuzzi for us, but before that, I brought us over to the shower where I cleaned us up.

When that was done, I picked her up again and walked toward the Jacuzzi.

"You're so sweet, you know," she murmured softly as I lowered her into the hot water.

I chuckled and kissed her forehead. "As are you, love."

As much as I loved what we had done today, this part of the experience was just as important. I needed to take care of her—make sure she was well.

"Does it hurt?" I asked quietly.

She grimaced and settled herself between my legs.

I was quick to wrap my arms around her.

"A little," she admitted. "But it's more a...discomfort. It's okay."

"Good," I said, relieved it wasn't worse. "I'd still like you to take the painkillers, though." Right next to us, I had prepared some snacks for us. Fruit dipped in chocolate, cheese and crackers, sodas and bottled water. And, like I mentioned, painkillers for Bella.

"Thank you." She gave me a smile over her shoulder and then reached over to take two pills. "Yep, you're definitely sweet."

She returned to me and kissed my lips softly.

"Don't tell anyone," I growled playfully against her cheek.

Me? Sweet? Perhaps with her, but I didn't do this to be sweet. Hardly. I did it because it was important, and I felt the need to make sure she was well taken care of.

Chapter 30

EPOV

“Did you have a pleasant time, Mr. Cullen?” Max asked.

I nodded. “Very much.”

Truthfully, ballet was definitely not my cup of tea, but Bella had wanted to go, and I was not one to deny her. So, I gave her the whole experience—the evening gown, the jewelry, the fancy dinner, the champagne, and the ballet.



She was like my little princess, which she’d actually told me she felt like.

I loved that.

“It was amazing,” Bella supplied dreamily. “And doesn’t Edward look handsome in his tux?”

Max smiled indulgently at her before smirking at me. “Sure, Ms. Swan.”

I rolled my eyes while Bella giggled.

"In you go, love." My hand tapped her ass. "We still have dessert to eat when we get home."

Once inside the car, doors closed and divider up, I loosened my bow tie.

"Can we have sex?" Bella asked sweetly.

I barked out a laugh, wondering if she was serious.

She was.

"Um." I cleared my throat. "Of course."

And she attacked. Quite literally. I let out an "oomph" when she crashed her body into mine, and I had no fucking idea she was this turned on. Or why.

"God, this tux!" She fisted the lapels of my jacket. "All night...Jesus...I can't even..."

The tux, huh?

I see.

Sensing her desperation, I lowered the divider and told Max, "Take the scenic route."

"Yes, sir." In the rearview mirror, I caught his knowing grin before he was out of sight, the divider drawn up again.

Bella was all over me as I worked my pants. "I gotta thank you properly for this, you know." She flashed her right ring finger—the one adorned with the Harry Winston ring I'd given her earlier.

I shook my head, amused. "You're very adorable tonight—so playful."

"No, no—I'm dead serious." She started to unbutton my shirt. "This evening has been... See? I can't even find the words."

"I'm glad you've enjoyed yourself," I chuckled and cupped her cheek. I could feel that she wanted me to be stricter right now, so I dropped a soft kiss on her lips before I relaxed in my seat. If she wanted me to take her, I was happy to.

"Get on your knees for me, kitten. I need your pouty lips wrapped around my cock."

Her eyes darkened with lust. "Yes, Sir," she breathed out, immediately scrambling into position in between my parted legs. "May I pull your cock out?" She licked her lips.

I groaned internally at the sound of her innocent voice.

"You may," I sighed contentedly. I caressed her cheek with my thumb as she released me from my boxers. Then I touched a little around her mouth, letting my thumb brush over her plump lips. So soft. "You like sucking my cock, don't you, sweet girl?"

"So much, Sir," she whimpered and stroked me. "I love it."

I moaned quietly as she got me harder and harder. She did it gently and teasingly, first with her little fingers, and then with light open-mouthed kisses. Her tongue darted out, making me nice and wet. Again I moaned, getting stiffer by the second.

"More, baby." I threaded my fingers through her silky hair and pushed her down on me. "Swallow around me," I groaned. "Let me feel your tight throat."

When she gagged on me, I swelled in her mouth.

"God, your mouth is perfect," I moaned.

My head tilted back against the headrest, and I squeezed my eyes shut. My hips moved, thrusting upward. I just felt. Her mouth on me, her hands on my thighs. As I fuck her hot little mouth.

With a harsh tug on her hair, she released me. Wide eyed, cheeks flushed. Desire.

"Enough," I breathed. "I need that pretty little pussy of yours now."

Letting go of her hair, I pumped my dick—wet with her saliva.

I watched her bunch up her beautiful gown.

"I want your back to me as you ride me," I told her. "And be a good little girl and ride me hard."

"Yes," she hissed as I grabbed her hips roughly, pulling her to my lap.

Then I pushed her down on my cock.

Fuck.

She bobbed up and down as if she hadn't had sex in years, as opposed to hours.

"So good," she mewled.

I groaned.

And then my phone rang.

"Ignore it," I said gruffly as Bella stiffened. "Keep riding me."

She did, and I moved one hand down her stomach, caressing her, down, down, kneading her thighs, teasing her. I knew where she wanted me.

"Tell me where you want me." I nipped at her neck. "Tell me where you want my hand."

She sunk down on me hard; I met her thrust.

So slick.

"On me...please touch me, Edward," she whimpered.

"Be specific," I commanded quietly, now kissing her shoulder. "I know where you want me. You want me to rub that needy clit, don't you?"

"Yes, please! Oh, fuck... *Please*, Edward!"

The phone rang again.

We ignored it.

"Give me your words, Isabella!"

She gasped as I tugged on her hair, making her fall back against my chest. I roughly kneaded her breast and thigh, ignoring the two places that would give her pleasure. I didn't touch her nipple; I didn't touch her wet pussy.

"*Please*," she begged. "I need your hand...please touch my pussy."

I loved hearing dirty words coming out of that sweet mouth of hers.

Slowly and lightly I slid my middle finger over her clit. Up and down as I stayed still inside of her.

"Want more, little one?" I whispered in her ear.

"Yes," she breathed, squirming in my lap. "Please, I need it."

"Then correct yourself," I said gruffly. "You want my hand on *your* pussy?"

My cock ached, screaming for release, but I loved playing with her. I loved being in charge. So, I stayed still.

She gasped, finally understanding. "No—I want your hand on the pussy that belongs to you, Edward."

I smiled into her neck.

I licked it. Tasted her.

I kissed my way up to her ear and whispered, "Good girl."

Then my phone rang. Again. And I had fucking had it.

"Whatever you do, do not stop—are we clear?" I reached for the phone in the inner pocket of my jacket. "Just keep that pussy fucking my cock, Isabella."

I was pissed, sexually frustrated beyond recognition, and whoever it was that was calling me was about to get an earful.

"Edward Cullen speaking," I barked out, reaching down to stroke Bella's clit harder. She deserved it for how hard she rode my cock. Fuck, it felt so damn good.

"Edward, what the fuck have you done?!"

I went blank for a second...before I chuckled breathlessly.

I supposed the news had reached Gianna.

"Is that Gianna?" Bella whispered.

I nodded. "Keep going."

This morning, Gianna was fired at Volturi—after I had stalled for days—and there was certainly no letter of recommendation for her. I was also in

agreement with Marcus; he was cutting Gianna off. I was actually surprised that he'd go that far, but I was pleased nonetheless.

She had nothing now. No job, n means, no inheritance, no nothing.

And if she came to me with that tape of my mother, I had a tape of my own to use as either leverage or payment.

I was willing to trade.

"Gianna, you better make this quick, because I have much better things to focus on." I grunted as Bella swiveled her hips. With that movement, she took me so deep into her soaked kitty. "I sincerely hope your question was rhetorical. But if you still want an answer, here it is..." I had to squeeze my eyes shut when Bella reached down and cupped my balls. "You're done."

I reached forward and started lavishing her exquisite neck with open-mouthed kisses. I licked, nibbled, and sucked. I kept pleasuring her pussy, too, stroking her soft, soaked lips.

"That's it, baby," I whispered softly into Bella's ear. "Just ride my thick cock."

Leaning back, I watched as she started fucking me again.

"I will not let you get away with this, Edward! I will fucking end you! Not to mention your mother!"

And that was not what I wanted to hear while I was buried balls-deep inside my sweet little girl.

"We've reached an impasse, Gianna," I groaned. "Fuck... You want your life back—I want that tape. But you should know that I have a tape of my own." I pinched Bella's clit, causing her to cry out in pleasure. "My lawyer

can send you the footage right away." I let out a breathless chuckle.
"Fucking a fifteen-year-old boy, Gianna. Serious. Shame on you."

"What the fuck are you doing? Are you—it sounds like..."

I laughed, but it got stuck in my throat when I felt Bella tighten around me, signaling that she was close.

It made me lose control.

I groaned. Loudly. My eyes closed. "So fucking good, Isabella. God, I can feel you, baby girl...so perfect and tight..."

"Oh my G- I can't—I can't believe- You're...and it's that Swan girl! I WILL DESTROY YOU, EDWARD CULLEN!"

I was close. Too close. All I could focus on was that slick pussy.

Moaning loudly, I threw the phone onto the floor, and then I rammed my cock into her.

I panted and panted.

"Come, Edward!" Bella cried out. "Please come in me!"

That did it.

Deep inside of her, I exploded. Hard, pulsing, and lasting. I came in streams and Bella followed right away, milking me as she rode out her own orgasm.

In the end, it felt like I had run a marathon.

"Jesus Christ," she gasped, collapsing against me.

I breathed heavily, holding my sweet girl close to me. I smiled against her neck as her hand snaked up, starting to play with the hair at the back of

my neck. She always did that, and it never failed to draw shivers from me.

“We’ll be home soon,” she noted quietly, looking out the window. “Want me to...?”

“No,” I whispered, tightening my hold on her. “I’m very happy to stay inside of you for a while longer.”

“Hmm, is that so?” she giggled.

I hummed and lazily cupped her tits.

~IdC~

“Do you think there will be trouble?” Bella asked hesitantly, looking up at me from her book. “With Gianna, I mean.”

I knew she hadn’t paid attention to her book for a while, so I had pretty much just waited for her to talk. We were on the couch in the living room, her head in my lap, and I could see she was deep in thought—had been for at least an hour now.

Setting my own book aside, I peered down at her gorgeous face and tucked a piece of hair behind her ear.

“It’ll be fine, kitten,” I murmured. After what happened in the car last night—when Gianna undoubtedly heard me fuck Isabella—I ordered Scott to send her the papers I had printed out along with a copy of the video of her and that kid.

With Gianna’s tape, she could only hurt my mother’s feelings. With the tape I had, Gianna could end up in prison.

I was confident that we had a ways to go before we were finally rid of Gianna Marin, but I thought we at least were past the worst of it.

There wasn't much she could do.

"How can you know?" she asked in a small voice.

I smiled softly, tracing my thumb over her bottom lip.

"Because the last thing Gianna wants is to ruin her own reputation," I said. When I met her, I remembered her telling me that money was everything. But I had a feeling it wasn't. After all, was power not the ultimate achievement? "She faces prison time if she proceeds with her threats."

She hummed, seemingly relaxing a little.

"So, what happens now?"

I chuckled quietly. While Bella had been lost in thought, I had actually done some thinking on my own. I had also made some arrangements when I was on the phone with my mother earlier.

"We're going to San Francisco the day after tomorrow," I informed her softly. Bella's eyes lit up. "Earlier when you were taking a bath, I spoke to my mother. We're going to visit."

Only a small part of me had been a little nervous about bringing Isabella to see my parents. Mostly due to her age, of course, but it wasn't going to stop me. Bella was it for me, and the only woman I had ever planned to bring home to my parents. But after speaking to my mother today, I was calm.

My parents were very much aware of my work, and they had been for many years. It was nothing I'd ever hidden. Besides, my mother wasn't exactly a conservative woman. She was free-spirited, quite foulmouthed at times, not to mention very understanding. She had even visited a few exhibits herself over the years, and though I had no desire to tell my

parents about Jazz's *Taking Purity*, it was nothing I intended to hide either. Omitting the details was another matter, but whatever.

I made no excuses for who I was. I never had, and starting now would be stupid.

"And you're sure they will be okay with me?" Bella asked quietly.

"Yes," I said truthfully. Then I told her about my call.

I had to smile as I remembered the conversation with my mother. We didn't speak often enough, and for the first time I felt like rectifying that.

"Cullen residence, this is Esme speaking."

I smiled into the phone. "Well hello, Mother."

"Edward!" she gasped. "Oh, it's been so long, honey!" Then she actually huffed. "Why don't you call more often, huh?"

"No excuse is good enough," I chuckled quietly. "How are you? Still enjoying San Francisco?"

"Absolutely. It's so much better than Chicago, although it's damn near freezing here this time of year. But enough about all that. How are you, son? Carlisle received your email. You're in Seattle?"

"I am, yes," I replied, nodding once even though she couldn't see me. "It's only temporary, though. We'll move back to the island shortly."

There. I said it.

Then I waited. And waited.

"We?" she asked quietly, and so full of hope. "What are you not telling me, Edward Anthony?! Spill! Are you finally settling down? I mean, your

father mentioned something about you spending New Year's with someone special...but...I wasn't sure... So, is she? Is she special?"

"Slow down, will ya?" I laughed softly. "Yes, Mother, she is very special to me." More than words could describe, really. "And before you accuse me of hiding her, don't bother." I smirked when she scoffed. "We haven't been together long at all, but we already know what we want."

"Oh, I'm so happy for you, Edward!" she gushed. "I had a feeling you'd settle down quickly as soon as you had found your love. And now I want to hear about her! Name, work, age, do you love her, does she love you? Etcetera, etcetera. So, talk."

"Persistent," I murmured. Then I cleared my throat. No time to waste. "Her name is Isabella Swan. Yes, I love her. Like I said, we already know what we want in life and it's each other. That's settled." I blew out a breath. "She's eighteen years old."

Silence.

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"So...she's an old soul?" she asked.

"Uh...yes?" I asked rather than stated, but I had to say I was surprised. That was what she chose to ask? Huh. "She is, yes, but...not in all aspects. We share many interests-"

My mother cut me off. "Quit rambling, son. I don't give a shit about age. You of all people should know that." She laughed. She fucking laughed. Only my mother, I thought to myself. "I know you, honey. I know you wouldn't settle for anything less than perfection. I have faith in you. Now...when do I get to meet her? Hmm? Hmm?"

For the love of...

"Actually, I was thinking we could visit you guys soon. In a few days."

"Ah," she giggled. Yes, giggled. "You mean before her last semester in high school begins."

I huffed. Rolled my eyes, too.

"Very funny," I grumbled. "But yeah," I cleared my throat, "that's correct. Though, she's going to graduate online."

"I know, honey. I was only teasing you," she chuckled. "I can't wait to meet the woman who can put up with you and your personality. You're my finicky little bugger."

Again I rolled my eyes, but I couldn't deny that I was relaxed and amused. My mother did know me very well, and she knew I was...different. At least in the aspect of making decisions. She knew I had a need to be in charge. So, in retrospect, perhaps Isabella's age didn't surprise her all that much.

"So..." I sighed. "You're both home in a few days?"

"But of course. Can't wait to see you both, son."

"Same here. It's been too long. I will let you know about the details later, okay?"

"Sounds good. Give Isabella my best. Love you," she sang.

I chuckled. "Love you, too, Mother. Bye."

Chapter 31

BPOV

"Stop fidgeting," Edward sighed, putting his hand over mine. "You have nothing to be nervous about."

So you keep saying.

I trusted Edward, but it didn't calm me down right this minute. Because now...now, we were on our way to his parents. It was reality now. A few days ago, I was perfectly calm after Edward had reassured me that his parents would accept me, but yes, it was entirely different now that we were actually *in* San Francisco. Or Sausalito, to be exact.

"Sorry," I mumbled, looking down at my lap.

The past couple of days had been all about work. Edward was preparing for the opening of Cullen Eight in Rome, and he was working hard to make sure we could go there at the end of the month.

With a heavy sigh, I turned to look out the window instead. It felt good to be back in California again. Even though it wasn't Isla, it was still much better than Seattle and Washington. But fuck! I was so damn nervous!

"Did I not just tell you to stop fidgeting?" Edward asked impatiently, and I looked over at him to see him pinching the bridge of his nose.

Immediately I felt bad. I knew how much stress he was under. It was too much, and the last thing he needed was me, fidgeting and squirming in my seat.

However, I was too nervous to just quit.

"I can't help that I'm nervous, Edward," I said defensively. "Too many people are against us, and it would be nice to at least have your parents

on our side. So excuse me for acting a bit off." Turning back to the window, I muttered, "I mean, what do you expect from me?"

Hell, except for Jazz and Alice, who did we have? Sure, Edward had a lot of people who respected him, basically treating him like a fucking god, especially for his work in the BDSM community. But who did I have?

Okay, so I had Edward, Jazz, Alice, Alec, Tanya, Kate...

That's actually quite a bunch.

Hmph.

Whatever.

I was too jittery to be rational at this moment.

"I expect you to behave like the good little girl you really are," he replied flatly. "I won't tolerate disobedience, Isabella. Do not test me." He gripped my chin, forcing me to look him in the eye. "I doubt you can handle another spanking right now. Am I wrong?"

I cringed at the memory of last night.

"No, Sir," I mumbled.

With a curt nod, he released me and returned to his laptop.

God, I had been stupid last night. In an effort to get his attention—even though I knew he was busy preparing for our trip—I had made the stupid mistake of making it sound like I was masturbating in the Jacuzzi. I wasn't, mind you, but I made it sound like it. I was moaning and whimpering loudly, knowing that Edward was in his office. And when he had come in, I was foolish to think he would join me in the tub.

He didn't join me. Instead he ordered me to kneel for him in the bedroom, naked, which I did. And then he spent the next half hour telling me what he had to deal with in order for us to be together. It wasn't to guilt-trip me. I knew that. But I made him feel the need to explain it to me, since I apparently didn't understand. Yeah, I was stupid. Not that he was done after informing me, because he wasn't. Next he had me positioned on all fours on our bed, and he spanked me. Hard. Ten slaps on each cheek, and then he fucked my ass. Actually, the sex was hardly qualified as punishment, especially since the stinging from his spanking helped with the pain of having his cock in my ass. I mean, I wasn't close to climaxing or anything, but it was still pleasurable as hell.

Fuck, now I'm horny.

And sorry.

Yes, I was sorry for acting like a spoiled brat. Because Edward did so much for us, and how did I repay him? Ugh.

I suck.

Well, my acting out had to stop now. I couldn't keep this going if I wanted Edward happy and satisfied.

"Mr. Cullen, we're here," the driver announced.

Remorseful, I decided to let these next few days set an example of how much I appreciated everything Edward did for us.

"Thank you, Chris," Edward replied politely, looking out the window.

I did the same, and I had to smile when I saw the beautiful house. Located by the water, big, white, large windows, straight lines. Two stories, a massive pool.

"Ready, Bella?" Edward asked quietly as Chris held the door open.

This was my chance to start showing him.

"Yes," I said with a nod, taking his hand. "And, Edward?" He looked at me in question. I squeezed his hand. "I'm really sorry for how I've acted. I've been selfish and foolish. I'm sorry, and I'll show you—I'll prove it."

His eyes softened.

I hoped he saw my sincerity.

"Don't worry about it, little one," he murmured, brushing his lips against my knuckles. "Apology accepted."

I knew he meant it, and he most likely thought this was over and done with now, but it wasn't for me. I hadn't even begun.

"Now, let me introduce my parents to my stunning girl, yes?" He smirked.

I pursed my lips to hide the smile. This man could always make me feel so damn loved, to which I often flushed scarlet. With a firm nod from me, he took the lead.

"Mrs. Cullen has arranged a guestroom for you, sir," Chris said once we were out of the car. "I will bring your bags up there."

"Thank you," Edward replied.

My hand in his, fingers threaded, and a soft kiss on the top of my head.

We walked toward the door.

But my mind lingered on *that*. That.

Mrs. Cullen.

Bella Cullen.

That will be me one day.

Eeeeeek! Internal squeal.

"I love you, Edward." I had to say it.

He hummed against the top of my head as he rang the doorbell. "Hmm, I love you too, kitten. More than words can describe."

As I heard the click-clacking of heels coming from the other side of the door, I quickly looked down at myself, checking my outfit, and I hoped it was okay. Edward liked it, so that was good. I kinda liked it myself.



"You look exquisite, my love," he whispered against my temple. "No reason to be nervous."

Right. Okay. He's right.

I took a deep breath and squeezed his hand.

Then the door opened.

Holy...something!

Woman, my height, megawatt smile. Talk about beaming!

“Edward! Isabella!”

Talk about squealing.

She was beautiful. For a second I doubted she was really Edward’s mother, but then I remembered that she had been very young when she’d had him. Still...she looked...young. Mid-forties instead of late fifties. Her hair was full and shiny, in a light brown color. Caramel. Her eyes were green, like Edward’s. The woman had dimples. Christ, she was stunning. And you could practically see her spirit. Much like Edward had told me. Dressed in white pants and an emerald green tunic, she was...one part hippie and one part fashionista.

“Mother,” I heard Edward chuckle before kissing her cheek. “Long time no see.”

“And it’s all your fault!” she admonished playfully, approaching *me*. Fuck, here we go. “Oh, Isabella, it’s so good to finally meet you.” She hugged me. Hard. I was...out of it. Stunned, speechless, you name it. “I’m so happy my boy is finally settling down.” Releasing me from the hug, she placed her hands on my shoulders, and looked at me intently. “Tell me, honey. How do you put up with him?”

I blinked.

Uh...

Say what?

"All right, we've had fun at my expense now," Edward huffed. But as I looked up at him, I saw how happy his eyes were. I saw the sexy crinkles in the corner of his eyes. "How about we step inside? It's freezing out here."

"Of course! Sweet baby Jesus, I'm just all over the place. Come on in here, you two."

I still hadn't uttered a single word.

"Let me take your coat, honey," she said as Edward ushered us inside. Wow, big foyer. Big, big foyer. White, pristine, almost empty. Except for a massive painting hanging on the wall where the staircase was. "Did you have a good flight?" she asked us both.

Our coats were gone. I was still quiet as a mouse.

"Very," Edward replied, rolling up the sleeves on his white button-down. "Feels good to be back in California."

I had to agree there, and I took his hand again.

"Now," he grinned, "can I introduce you two without your squealing, Mother?"

Mrs. Cullen cocked an eyebrow, and I totally saw where Edward had gotten it from. Damn, she could hold her own.

"Shush, you," she said, waving him off before she turned to me again. "But let's humor my son and introduce ourselves formally." She winked at me and grabbed my hand. "It's good to meet you, Isabella. I'm Esme, and don't you dare call me Mrs. Cullen. It makes me feel old."

Right.

I chuckled, although it came out all wrong. Squeaky shit.

"Very nice to meet you, too, Esme," I replied. "Edward's told me a lot about you."

She scoffed, rolling her eyes at Edward, and draped an arm around my shoulders, effectively shutting Edward out. "Don't believe a word of what he says, honey. He's full of it, that one. Now, come on, let me get us some drinks."

Without...much else, she led me away from Edward. Looking over my shoulder, I saw him stand there. With a smirk. Damn sexy smirking man.

"By the way, Edward," Esme called over her shoulder. "Your father is in his study. Meet us out on the terrace." She chuckled. "Hopefully the heaters work."

EPOV

I could hardly say I was surprised to see my mother whisk Bella away. Hell, I expected it, counted on it.

There were a few things I could have asked my mother not to bring up with Isabella, but I didn't. Perhaps because I wanted an answer to those questions, too, but couldn't bring myself to ask Bella.

No, at times I'm not so bold.

I was always very forward, but in this case I decided to sit back and get the answers from my mother, because I knew she was going to ask.

Every mother wants to know about marriage and children.

And I needed Bella's views on those subjects. Mainly children, seeing as we had already broached the topic of getting married one day. Still, I wanted details, her true feelings on the matters.

Once I was on the second floor, I headed straight for my father's study and knocked.

"Come in."

I couldn't help but snicker as I saw him behind his desk. It was obvious that he was in the middle of research, most likely for some medical study. There were charts, files, and textbooks all over the place.

"Are Edward and Isabella here yet, sweetheart?" he asked without looking up from a thick book.

"No, not yet," I deadpanned.

His head snapped up so fast that I was afraid he was going to break his damn neck.

"Edward!" He grinned, pushing his chair back. "I didn't hear you two come in."

We met in the middle of his study, shaking hands firmly, and adding that shoulder-squeeze for good measure.

"Can't say I'm surprised," I chuckled. "Even though Mother squealed like a schoolgirl when we arrived." He motioned for me to take a seat, so I did. "But a world war could begin without you noticing it, especially when you have work."

"Hmm, your mother says the same," he mused, taking his seat behind the desk. "Perhaps there's truth in what you say."

"Funny guy," I said dryly.

"Wiseass," he shot back in the same tone. Then he smiled. "Good to see you, son. You look...very happy."

"I am." I nodded, feeling my lips curve up. "You'll meet the reason soon."

"Are you sure she will survive you mother then?" he joked, quirking an eyebrow.

"I hope so," I chuckled. "Nah, Bella's a strong girl. She'll be fine. Even with Esme."

He smirked. "Good. Tell me about her. You mentioned in your email that it's been a bumpy ride."

I sighed. Bumpy would be an understatement.

Not that it mattered. Isabella was worth it all, and more.

"We've had a rough start, yes," I replied pensively, choosing my next words. "It's definitely worth it, and we noticed very quickly how compatible we are, but there are many forces working against us, unfortunately."

"Because of the age difference," he stated.

"Yes."

He grinned wryly. "Well, I can't say I wasn't surprised when I found out she was only eighteen, but Esme wasted no time giving her opinion on the matter. And even though she told me things about you I already knew, it helped to see it from your perspective. Now I can definitely see that you are compatible, as you said."

I nodded, taking his words in. I understood that my mother had reminded him of what kind of man I was and what traits I had. It was never something I hid, and perhaps it was because of my mother's personality that I never did. She was always accepting, not to mention open-minded. She had dragged my father along to several exhibits, and a few of them

had been here in San Francisco—where most art shows that I hosted were within the erotica genre. Father might not be a big fan of erotica, but they were both very much into art, and they saw the appeal and beauty in many things.

I suspected their upbringing in the sixties helped. I didn't exactly wish to know all the things they did in their youth.

If you know what I mean.

"But it's a romantic relationship you're in, yes?" he asked casually.

I nodded again. "Absolutely. Though, we both bring in our true personalities as well. We've found a balance that suits us perfectly."

"That's all that matters, son," he said, smiling. "Then I suspect you both fight to keep what you have and deal with obstacles together."

"That we do," I sighed, thinking about all the bullshit we'd dealt with in such a short time. "Unfortunately, we don't have Isabella's parents' support." I shook my head at the thought of them. Vile people, treating my sweet little girl that way. "Had it not been for Isabella seeing them for who they are, I would count on her to be sad. But she's a bright young woman. She knew from the start that staying with her parents wouldn't bring her happiness."

"So, she has no contact with her parents at all?" he asked.

"None," I replied, shaking my head. "They've always been very distant, leaving Isabella at home with a housekeeper—as they traveled the world. Then as Bella grew up, she learned to take care of herself. So, when I came into her life, she found it rather easy to leave it all behind."

I wasn't surprised to see my father's bitter expression. If there was something he loathed, it was bad parents. My grandparents on Carlisle's

side were always understanding of Esme and her past; they loved both her and me very much. They left me Isla, after all, not to mention they paid for my education. But my mother's parents were another matter. Well, they were dead now, but yes, they gave Carlisle a lot of grief after he took my mother away from New York. Grief he never deserved. Hell, if anyone deserved it, it was my biological father—the asshole who dragged my mother with him into his life of drugs and alcohol.

~IdC~

The next couple of days went by fast, and the four of us enjoyed some quality time together, sharing stories and, to my chagrin, photos from my younger years. But I supposed that was a part of the whole meeting-your-future-in-laws thing. Yes, future in-laws. If there was something I had noticed in Bella the past two days, it was her behavior.

She had a moment where she was extremely nervous; it was when I introduced Bella to my father, but once she realized that she had both their acceptance, she relaxed. She'd been very talkative, actually, and well...perfect. I wouldn't say she had matured overnight, but...it was like she'd made a decision or something. Like something had clicked in her mind.

Maybe because of my parents' open minds, maybe because of me, or maybe because of herself, but she definitely seemed to be more sure now. She spoke confidently and passionately about her love for Isla, me, and our future. This was a surprise for me, because I had no idea that she wanted to be involved in my company. So, to say I was thrilled to hear that would be the understatement of the year. I could definitely see it. My girl may be young, but she carried herself very well; she was smart, hard-working, goal-oriented, and passionate.

I could most certainly see her involved with Cullen Arts. And you couldn't exactly say she was inexperienced in the field. She knew the modeling

business, and she loved art. So, why not? A few classes online would be more than enough to get her started with me. I'd make it happen.

As for my parents... They thought she was lovely.

My mother was beaming like the sun, often casting me glances that pretty much said, "She couldn't own your heart more."

Which was very true.

So, yes, my parents were definitely Bella's future in-laws.

One day *soon*, I was going to ask her to be my wife.

Now I only wanted her opinion on children.

~IdC~

"Edward, sweetheart?"

I rolled over on my stomach, quite petulantly burying my face in my pillow.

Waking me up when I was on vacation was like breaking a law.

"You don't have to get up," she chuckled quietly. "I was just waking you up to tell you that Esme's taking me out to brunch in the city."

I hummed, feeling her fingers in my hair. I wanted more of it. I also wanted her to take care of my morning predicament. So, I rolled over on my back again, and the sheet didn't exactly hide anything. Then I saw her as I forced my eyes to open. Christ, she was beautiful. My cock agreed with a twitch. In a dark blue cardigan, snug on her tight body, and dark grey dress pants, she looked delectable. Modest and pretty—professional.

"I believe you have something to do before you leave," I yawned, scrubbing my hands over my face. "Be a good little girl and suck me off, baby."

"Hmm, I'd love to," she purred, bending over to kiss my chest. "But in that case, you have to go down and tell your mother that I'll be late."

"Fuck," I muttered.

I hadn't taken care of my own erections since Bella joined me in Seattle, and this...this was *awful*. No one could satisfy me like my Bella could, and now she was leaving for the day? Fucking disaster.

"What's it going to be?" she giggled, apparently thinking this was oh, so amusing.

I sighed, quite heavily, realizing I would have to take care of this on my own. But not yet. Later—in the shower. Damn her for being too delicious.

"You're very adorable this morning," she said, caressing my cheek. "Like a boy who just found out Santa's not real."

"Hmph," was my very mature reply.

I wasn't a morning person whenever I had a few days off work.

"I have to go, sweetheart," she murmured. "I'll be back in a few hours."

"All right," I grumbled. "Do you have your credit card?"

"Yes."

"Good. Give me a kiss, love."

"My pleasure," she whispered, smiling beautifully.

I would never tire of feeling her lips moving against mine. It didn't matter if it was soft, chaste, firm, long, sensual...as long as it was her.

"I love you, kitten," I murmured against her lips.

"Love you more, Edward."

Not possible.

"I'll text you, okay?" she said, breaking the kiss.

"Once every hour," I reminded her. Not that I needed to. Bella knew I was a worrier, and she never went long without checking in. "Have fun today."

"I will. Bye, sweetheart."

"See you later, little one."

I watched as she left the guestroom.

Then it was just me.

I didn't like it. I always wanted her close, especially when I was in bed.

Luckily, I was still tired, and it didn't take long until I was asleep again.

I woke up again a couple of hours later, and after begrudgingly taking care of myself in the shower, I dressed in a pair of black slacks and a dark green, fitted pullover. Then I spent a few moments checking emails before heading downstairs for a late breakfast.

"Good morning, son," my father greeted me, not looking up from his paper.

"Good morning," I responded politely, taking a seat across from him at the kitchen table. "I see you still have breakfast catered," I chuckled. The table was full of food, but instead of hiring a housekeeper, my parents

ordered food. Much like they had Chris, their driver, who wasn't really theirs. He worked for an agency where you could rent pretty much everything.

"You can blame your mother for that," he said, handing over the business section to me. "I want to hire someone, much like you have Carmen. But Esme refuses."

I nodded, thankful for Carmen. Isla wouldn't be Isla without her.

"I will still try, though," Carlisle sighed, flipping the pages. "Just this morning we had a problem with GS. Hopefully Esme will realize that we might as well hire our own driver."

I hummed in acknowledgement, knowing all about GS—short for Gem Services. It was the company my parents used for...well, anything, really. When my employees at the gallery in San Francisco had an event to plan, they turned to GS, too. You could rent furniture, kitchen supplies, party venues, and you could hire them to cater food, etc., etc. Oh, and private drivers, of course. Same went for other staff.

"What was wrong this morning?" I asked, checking two messages from Bella that had come in while I was asleep.

Then I scrolled down and saw a third text message—one from Jenks.

I'd gotten it four fucking hours ago.

We lost sight of her, sir. She was last spotted at Sea-Tac. We believe she has left Washington for California. I'm on the next flight. - Jenks

She—Gianna.

Fuck.

I blew out a breath.

This wasn't good.

Since I hadn't heard from her in over a week, I'd ordered Jenks to have her followed.

And now...Jenks should be here already, then.

"This morning? Oh, there was a mix-up, apparently. Another driver arrived, stating that Chris had called in sick. Then, twenty minutes later, Chris arrived, confused as hell."

I looked up at my father, frowning in confusion.

"Huh?" I uttered, not following. My mind was on Jenks' text.

"This morning, when Esme and Bella left for brunch in the city," he clarified. "Chris was supposed to pick them up, but another driver arrived, informing us that Chris had called in sick."

My brows furrowed.

"But then Chris arrived?" I questioned.

He nodded. "Yes, after your mother and Bella had left with the other driver. Bill was his name, I believe." He sighed, frowning before shrugging it off. "I didn't pay attention, really. The man showed us his ID from the GS." He shrugged again.

That didn't sit well with me.

"And Chris wasn't ill," I pressed.

"No. He was only delayed because of a flat tire. He fixed it and then came here, but by then, Esme and Bella were already off. He had no idea why Bill would tell us that Chris was sick."

Running a hand through my hair in frustration, I thought about the information. Something felt off, and I tried to figure it out. But I didn't know if I was overreacting. Perhaps I was reading too much into it just because I didn't like my sweet girl to be around strangers.

I decided to call Bella. *Better safe than sorry.*

I breathed out in relief when she picked up on the second ring.

"Hi, sweetheart."

"Hey, baby," I chuckled quietly, shaking my head at myself. I sure knew how to overreact. "How are things? Are you at brunch?" I checked my watch. It was noon, and I wasn't sure when she had woken me up this morning. Around ten? Nine?

"We're just leaving," Bella replied. *"Brunch was great. We're going to do some shopping now before heading back to Sausalito. Just a second, Edward. Thank you, Bill."*

I heard the rustling in the background, and it sounded like Bella and my mother got back into the car. Again I chuckled, because I could hear my mother's giggling. She only giggled after a couple of drinks, so I assumed she'd had a few glasses of champagne with brunch.

Due to her past, she only drank on special occasions, which I personally didn't understand. She didn't crave it at all, but she said she was afraid others would judge her if she had a glass of wine with dinner. That was just incredibly stupid to me, because not many knew of her past. And even if they did, they could go fuck themselves for all I cared. My mother was fiercely strong, but when it came to her past, she was insecure and vulnerable. Which was why I was working hard to get my hands on that fucking tape.

"Okay, I'm back," Bella chuckled. "We're on our way now. Holy- God, Edward, it's like a damn rollercoaster in San Francisco!"

I couldn't help but laugh. Even Carlisle heard Bella, and he laughed, too.

"All right, little one," I chuckled. "I'll leave you and my mother to the hills of San Francisco. I love you."

"Love you more, Edward. Always—wait, what? What do you mean the brakes don't work!?"

What?

I shook my head, focusing. "Bella?"

No answer.

"Bella!" I locked eyes with my father. "Bella, answer me. What did you mean about the brakes? Are you in the car right now?" Stupid question, I knew they were.

All I heard was static and—wait. "*E-Edward?*" Shaky voice. "*The brakes—oh, my God!*"

The line went dead.

I literally felt myself go pale.

My...my *Bella*.

Chapter 32

BPOV

"So...Bella."

There it was.

I could see it in her twinkling eyes, and had it not been for the fact that I pretty much loved the woman sitting across from me, I would've changed the topic, but I did love her. And she was the mother of the man I loved more than anything in the world, so...she could ask. I knew it; I had seen it.

This was the will-you-give-me-grandchildren-talk.

"So..." I echoed quietly, placing the napkin in my lap. I raised an eyebrow at her, amused. I expected I would blush, but I was in luck. For once.

Then the waiter arrived. *Thank you.*

Biting down on my lip, I realized there was a knot in my stomach, but I couldn't for the life of me figure out why. I mean, I was prepared. I knew why Esme asked me out this morning for brunch. It was so obvious. Sure, I was nervous. More than a little, in fact, but...I already knew what to say. Yes? Yes. So...why was the damn knot there? I already knew what I wanted...right? Yeah. I did.

After we had ordered our food, Esme didn't waste time.

"I'm pretty sure my son wants to marry you," she said. "He's completely taken with you."

There's the blush.

I sipped my water, needing to cure the sudden dryness.

"I'm completely taken, too," I replied. "And um..." How to say this right? "Edward has..." I chuckled nervously. "He's already told me about his feelings concerning marriage."

She beamed brighter than the sun.

"And what are your feelings?" she prompted.

I flushed. "I'm fully committed," I said, somewhat shyly. "I know he's the one." Jesus, was there any shade redder? I doubted it. "And if he asks me, I will say yes." *Without hesitation.*

"Not *if*, honey," she said, patting my hand. "*When*. It's only a matter of time."

Then I was beaming, too. I couldn't help it, but the thought of being married to Edward...Christ, I wanted it. Badly.

There was even one of those girly, dreamy sighs escaping me before I took another sip of my water.

Yes, I had it bad.

"And children?"

I choked. And coughed.

"Shit," I croaked, wiping my mouth with the napkin. "You couldn't have asked me once the water was back on the table?" I coughed and cleared my throat, throwing Esme a glare as she grinned at me.

She was having fun.

"No," I said. "No children for Edward and me." And there was that feeling again. I couldn't understand it. At all. I shook my head. "Edward doesn't want any, and...neither do I."

In truth, Edward hadn't outright told me he didn't want children, but he had, however, told me that he'd never seen children in his future.

So...yeah.

I frowned internally, wondering what the hell was wrong with me.

I shrugged it off, though, as the waiter arrived with our food.

"You know...you're much like my son," Esme mused. "You're both in denial."

My brows furrowed in confusion. "What do you mean?" I looked down as I cut into my chicken. "In denial about what?"

"Children, of course," she chuckled. "Edward's always said that children aren't for him, but I know he's wrong."

"Isn't that up to him?" I asked, grinning wryly. "I've never gotten the impression that he would want children."

She pursed her lips. "You'll see, honey. You'll see."

We left it at that, thankfully.

Instead we moved on to safer topics.

"How is Isla?" Esme asked. "I have to say I miss it. Carlisle and I used to visit every now and then, but we haven't been in..." She sighed. "A year? Christ, time flies."

I smiled. "Isla's beautiful—I love it there. I can't wait to move there permanently." I smiled wistfully before grinning. "And I miss Carmen."

"Oh, yes, Carmen. I love that woman dearly," Esme gushed. "She's only ten years older than I am, and still she comes off as a mother." She smiled fondly.

"And the bickering between her and Edward—they're too funny sometimes." I snickered. "She's always doting on him, and I swear he's the king of eye-rolls around her."

"I can imagine," she giggled. "He's the same with me. It doesn't matter if he's the almighty Edward Cullen," she puffed out her chest, "always in control of everything." We both laughed. "He'll always be my little boy."

"Much to his chagrin," I chuckled, holding up my glass.

"Very much to his chagrin, yes," she agreed.

We clinked out glasses together.

"Well, Carlisle and I will have to come out and visit soon," Esme said. By now, we were almost finished eating. "Now, how about some shopping before we return to Sausalito?"

"Sounds good." I smiled.

"Excellent. I will call Bill."

While she did that, I paid our check. It had taken some time to convince Esme, but after I'd showed her Edward's credit card, she knew very well that he would be mad if she paid. She knew her son. According to him, women didn't pay. For Christ's sake, he didn't even allow me to use my own credit card. It had to be his.

Anyway, soon we were out of the restaurant, and I smiled when I heard Edward's ringtone. When I spoke to him, he sounded worried for some reason, so I made a mental note to talk to him later.

Then he wasn't the only one worried.

Before I knew it, our driver was frantic, shouting about the brakes failing and that "this wasn't how it was supposed to happen". But what I focused on was the steep hill...

And Edward.

Because I saw. Frozen in horror, I saw the intersection down the hill. I saw the cable cars. I saw everything.

Until all I felt was pain.

EPOV

“Fuck.”

In any other situation, I would have been surprised to hear my father curse, but not now. Not when his wife could be in danger, not when he was speeding his way through traffic toward the city, and not when I had just told him where Bella and my mother were.

After my moment of shock and horror had worn off, I had filled my father in. Not five minutes passed before we left in his Mercedes. Well, my horror was still very much present, but I refused to think about it. I was a man who took action, and sitting around wouldn't give us answers. My father was the same. So, as he drove, I made the necessary calls to find out where the two most important women in my life could be. And I got the answer. After a call to Gem Services, I had the GPS coordinates to the driver's car. Therefore, we also knew what hospital they would be taken to in the event of an accident.

“Who are you calling now?” my father asked as I pressed seven on speed dial.

“My PI,” I muttered, holding the phone to my ear as I checked how fast we were going. “Speed up.”

He did.

“Jenks speaking.”

I took a breath. Then let it out. "Cullen here. When did you lose sight of Gianna?"

I ignored Carlisle's frown in confusion. At least for now.

"Um..."

"Answer me!" I demanded, feeling my temper flare. "There's no way you lost sight of her and sent me the text right away."

My knee was bouncing. I ran a hand through my hair.

I knew, deep in my bones, that Gianna was behind whatever this was.

Fuck. Bella. You better be okay, baby.

"W-well, no, sir," Jenks stuttered. "We tried to find her first."

I clenched my teeth, closed my eyes, pinched the bridge of my nose.

"When...Did. You. Lose. Her?" I gritted out.

"L-last night," he replied, and chills ran down my spine. "I'm in San Francisco right now."

I quickly did the math, counting the hours between her disappearance and Jenks' text; Gianna could be anywhere by now.

If Jenks had told me right away, this disaster could've been avoided, because there was no way I'd have let my Bella out of my sight if I'd known there was a chance Gianna was nearby.

My father's phone rang, and I already knew. I just knew what kind of call it would be.

My blood turned to ice.

“Find that bitch,” I hissed to Jenks. “And I will need you soon. Expect my call.” I blew out a breath. “And, Jenks? If you fail at this, I will end you.”

I hung up and turned to Carlisle as he picked up the call on his headset.

“Carlisle Cullen speaking.” He clenched his teeth. “I’m her husband.” He glanced at me before he sped up even more. “Got it.” I wasn’t prepared for the confirmation. I felt nauseous. “Tell me the extent of her injuries.” He quickly slipped into doctor-mode. “And tell me if there’s an Isabella Swan.”

I held my breath.

She had to be okay. She had to. There was no other option.

The last thing I cared about was the short amount of time we had been together. That girl was everything to me. Everything. I knew I wouldn’t be able to take it if she...

I swallowed hard.

“Need I remind you of who I am?” Carlisle snapped. I was thankful for his status in the medical field. Regardless of hospital in the Bay Area—as well as in Chicago, actually—everyone knew who my father was. “I...” He trailed off, once again glancing at me. “No, follow protocol, but I need to know. And now.”

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“Thank you.” He looked relieved, which relaxed me, too. “We’ll be there as soon as we can.” He snapped the phone shut, taking a breath before he explained to me. “There was a car accident.”

I sucked in a sharp breath.

The pain was indescribable.

"Esme's and Bella's conditions are stable. Bella's in surgery right now for a broken leg." I squeezed my eyes shut, praying that was the worst of her injuries. Christ... "We will know more soon. As for Esme-" He choked up, and I felt myself go pale all over again. "She's in surgery for broken ribs, a fractured collarbone, and a punctured lung. There was also head trauma." The last words came out in a whisper.

I exhaled shakily.

In my head, I repeated that their conditions were stable. It was all I had to go on. It was what kept me breathing.

Never before I had I felt so powerless.

"All I know about the accident is that they drove into a cable car," he croaked. "Luckily the cable car was headed in the same direction, and it was going fast enough to make the impact softer. Had it not been for that..." He shook his head.

I nodded, unable to speak.

I knew I wouldn't be able to relax fully until I could see Bella and my mother with my own eyes.

"Um, Edward," he said hesitantly. "Isabella's parents are still listed as emergency contacts. They have to call them."

I waved him off, not caring. I had no idea whether or not they would fly down here, but if they did one single thing to upset my girl, they would have hell to pay. As long as I was able to enter her room, I didn't care about much else.

Later, it didn't come as a surprise when her parents decided not to come.

~IdC~

Seven hours later, I was a little calmer, though still furious and shaken.

I also knew more.

Sitting in the chair next to Bella's hospital bed, I had nothing to do but wait for her to open her beautiful eyes. I needed to see them. I needed for her to wake up. I needed to hear her voice. Even if I knew she would recover, it killed me to see her in that bed. It didn't matter how lucky she was, according to the doctors. To me, she was harmed. A simple paper cut was enough to upset me when it came to Isabella.

Bella had gotten away with a fractured rib, a broken leg, a dislocated shoulder, a fractured wrist, and bruising. But as my eyes travelled over her small form, every bruise and cut, every fracture...I just wished I could take away the pain. Onto myself or...just simply away from her. She didn't deserve this, and it was my job to protect her, something I had failed miserably at.

I had underestimated Gianna as a threat.

And now both Bella and Esme were injured.

I checked my watch, knowing my mother was still in surgery. Apparently, she had hit her head against the car window as the car made impact with the back of the cable car. She had spent three hours in surgery as the doctors worked on the left side of her head. Then there was a fractured spleen, broken ribs, a crushed kneecap, broken collarbone, internal bleeding, and a punctured lung.

I was numb.

In shock.

Devastated.

Guilt-ridden.

Vengeful.

And furious.

The fury was directed at Gianna and the driver. The only reason I wished for him to be alive was so that he could give the police his statement, tying Gianna to the crime. *It had to be her*. She promised to destroy me, after all—something I hadn't taken seriously.

This was her doing—I was sure of it.

I chuckled darkly. The sinister grin on my face promised a world of pain.

I had already given Jenks unlimited resources.

My father had too, after I had told him.

It was after Bella's surgery that I told him about everything that Gianna had done.

He was livid.

This had been personal from the start, but this was...a whole other level of personal. She was causing physical harm to my family, literally threatening their lives. So no, I wasn't surprised when Carlisle just gave me his nod of go ahead.

Movement caught my eye, and I looked up to see my father enter the room. He looked relieved, thank God. I prayed that meant my mother's surgery had gone well.

"She's better now. They're taking her to her room," he said, answering my unspoken question. "Bella's not awake yet?"

I shook my head. "Not yet. The doctor said it could be another hour or two."

He nodded and checked Bella's chart in the folder at the foot of her bed.

"She'll be okay," he said, reading whatever her doctor had scribbled. "I'd say...with physical therapy, she'll be fully recovered within three months."

Her doctor had said the same, not that it mattered much. Three months was still three fucking months. Time she should spend being well and out of harm's way.

"I'm taking her home," I murmured, leaning forward on my knees. "As soon as possible. I don't want her here...or in Seattle for that matter."

"Sounds like a good plan, son," Carlisle sighed. "The island will do her good."

I nodded, never taking my eyes off of Bella.

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"The driver is in surgery again," he mentioned quietly. "They have to amputate his legs."

I didn't care. Actually, I was glad he was really hurt. I wouldn't need him to have legs to talk to the police.

But thank God Bella and my mother were in the backseat and not the front.

My phone rang, but after having expected Jenks to call, my brows furrowed when I saw it was an unknown number.

"Cullen," I answered.

"New phone." It was Jenks, which I mouthed to Carlisle. He understood. And I understood why Jenks was calling from a new number. *"She's still here,"* Jenks informed me, and this was what I had hoped for. *"I tracked her down—she used her credit card."* Since he didn't mention names, I was aware that the situation had taken a new turn. Jenks was willing to do pretty much anything—my reason for having him work for me. *"I'm following her right now, and I think she's on her way to the airport."*

"Pick her up—she does not leave this state," I replied simply. "Keep her someplace safe and wait for me to get back to you."

"Understood, sir."

I disconnected the call.

I stared at Bella's unmoving form.

The wheels turned in my head.

Jenks was here. He was following Gianna. Good. That was good.

"I'm just going to ask you once, son," I heard my father say. I knew what was coming. "Do you know what you're doing?"

"Yes," I answered immediately, eyes still glued to Isabella.

"And..." He cleared his throat and lowered his voice. "And what is that, exactly?"

Tilting my head in his direction, I gave him a pointed look.

I wasn't exactly going to spell it out.

But he got it. With a small dip of his chin—his eyes somber—he gave me his silent understanding.

A few minutes later, Carlisle left to be with my mother, and I sat where I'd been sitting for hours, just waiting for my Bella to wake up.

After a few moments, I stared at the clock on the wall.

Could I be back before Bella woke up?

Because I knew once she was up, I wouldn't be able to leave her sight. Possibly ever.

Running a hand through my hair, I brought out my phone and sent Jenks a text—to his new phone.

Where are you?

Jenks' reply was instant.

With the directions to a coffee shop where he'd meet me, I kissed Bella on the forehead, told her I loved her, and left.

Chapter 33

EPOV

"*Bella*," I moaned, still half-asleep. But not enough to question my surroundings, just my decisions. "What are you doing, little one?" Stupid question; I knew very well. Her little fingers were wrapped around my morning wood, and her mouth was oh, so close.

I scrubbed at my face, trying to clear my head from sleep.

"I need you, Edward," she whimpered, and then wrapped her pouty lips around the tip of my erection. "It's been almost three months."

I cursed internally.

I knew how long it had been. Christ, I had all but kept count on the fucking *hours*, but I still refused to fuck her until she was feeling better. Sure, she had sucked me off a few times, and I had licked her sweet pussy, but...*God*, I missed being inside of her. I craved it—longed for it. Was she ready, though? I didn't know. I wasn't sure.

"Fuck," I groaned as she sucked me into her hot little mouth. "You're not making this easy for me." She really wasn't. How the hell was I supposed to make a rational decision when she was deep-throating me? "Christ, Isabella." I propped myself up on my elbows to see her better. I was suddenly awake and alert. And Bella was of course naked. "You really miss my cock, don't you?" She sucked harder and cupped my balls, all while looking up at me with her seductive eyes.

"Yes," she whispered then sucked me down again.

I was so conflicted.

Once her casts had come off, she had worked persistently with a physical therapist—right here on Isla. I had flown the woman in to be here with Bella for weeks, and together they had worked a lot with water aerobics. Every day, she exercised. And the bruises were a distant memory. Aside from a few scars on her leg and ribcage, she was fine—externally.

Still, I hesitated.

"Please," she begged. She wore a pout as she crawled up my body, and my resolve was slipping. "I need you, sweetheart."

I clenched my jaw, feeling feathery light kisses on my chest.

"*Please.*" She ground her sweet pussy over my cock.

"Fuck," I grunted, surrendering. Sitting up, I flipped us over so that I was hovering over her. "So beautiful." Her hair was silky and shiny, covering

the pillow. I slid my hand between the soft locks. "Are you sure?" I locked eyes with her, and she wrapped her legs around my waist.

Instinctively, my hips bucked against her wetness.

"So sure," she breathed out.

I dropped my forehead to hers.

Her pussy coated the head of my cock with her arousal.

She nodded, eyes pleading. "Make love to me."

There was nothing I wanted more.

Slowly, in one stroke, I pushed into her.

My eyes closed, my face buried in the crook of her neck.

Fuck.

She was so hot.

"Oh God," she exhaled shakily.

Swiveling my hips, I sank deeper into her.

Our legs were tangled together. Her hands on my back and neck. Fingers digging in, urging and spurring. Oh, *God*. Slick and tight. I moved faster, needing it. I felt everything. I heard her.

Several minutes passed where we just focused on each other's bodies.

"I love you," I mumbled, dropping a kiss below her ear. "I love you so much, little one." I kissed her jaw. Nipped at it. She moaned as my thumb found her clit. "Everything, Bella. You're everything." A bit harder, I groaned. Hips met hips. "Fuck."

I moaned.

"You're everything, too," she whispered. "I love you, Edward." She lifted her hips, causing me to slide in. I kissed her everywhere. "I won't—I won't last."

I pressed my lips to hers. "Let me feel you. Don't hold back."

Threading our fingers together, I brought our joined hands above her head. Then I pushed deeply inside of her. Nose to nose, forehead to forehead. She was about to fall over that edge, and I knew I'd fall with her.

"So close," she panted.

I know, baby.

"Me too."

Adding pressure to the circles I made on her wet little clit, I finally brought her to climax.

She cried out, tensing around me. "Oh...oh...oh, Edward!"

I slammed into her.

My emotions were all over the place.

My insides coiled.

I stared at her, breathing heavily, as my own orgasm started surging through me.

Still lost in pleasure, she clawed at my back.

"Fuck," I spat out right before I exploded.

Deep inside of her, I came hard.

BPOV

"You sure you're okay, kitten?" he murmured against my temple.

Okay was an understatement.

"Perfect," I replied, smiling up at him.

The past two days had been...well, full of...*reconnecting*. And now were walking down the beach, eager to see Alice and Jazz again. So yeah, *okay* was the understatement of the year.

It had been almost three months since I'd last seen Alice. Three months where I had to focus on getting better, three months where I wished I could've been with my best friend. Because her past few months hadn't been easy.

Jack and Mary kicked her out when she announced her relationship with Jasper.

We spoke daily over the phone, and she wished she could've been there for me, too, but we were just unable to make it work. Jazz was busy, Edward was busy...

And, truth be told, I was also scared to leave Isla.

We didn't know where Gianna was, and I was terrified that she was going to find us. However, Edward was calm and told me he'd never fail to protect me again. To which I had actually yelled at the bastard. Failed? He hadn't fucking failed. He was amazing, so supportive, and strong. No, he definitely hadn't failed.

Anyway, I was scared until three weeks ago.

After more than two months of not having a clue where she was, she was suddenly found dead in San Diego.

She had been shot in the head, though the police said she'd been dead for much longer than three weeks.

I didn't really care. She was gone. And Edward had told me that a woman like that probably had many enemies; who knows who killed her, right?

The San Francisco police had already tied her to the "accident", because Bill—the driver—had confessed it all. Only, according to him, it hadn't gone as planned? Eh, whatever. He was awaiting trial now, but we didn't expect it to be drawn out. Bill had been in a financial pinch—he was desperate—and Gianna had promised him money. Yeah, he was stupid, too, and now he was willing to pay for it. He was going to plead guilty, and he had declined representation.

Edward handled all of that, stating that I needed to focus on school, my recovery, and moving on with my life.

"There's the boat," I heard Edward say. Looking up from the sand, I saw that Felix was currently unloading Jasper and Alice's bags.

Speaking of... "What was that thing you told Jazz to get from our penthouse in Seattle?"

I'd tried to rack my brain for whatever it could be, but I couldn't remember that I had forgotten something there, or...whatever. And now, as I looked at the dock through squinted eyes, I tried to see if there was an extra bag or something that I'd recognize.

"Curious?" He poked my side.

I giggled. "Yes. Can't you tell me?"

"You'll see soon enough," he chuckled and kissed my temple.

Harrumph.

~IdC~

"It's so good to see you again," I said tearfully, hugging Alice to me. She hugged me back with equal strength. "I'm glad we have these days together before we go."

Edward had postponed the opening of Cullen Eight as much as he could, but it couldn't be ignored anymore. So, he and I were flying to Rome in a few days, and then we had the gallery opening a week after that.

"God, you and me both," Alice chuckled through her tears. We hugged again.

"Come on." I wiped my cheeks. "Let's head inside. Carmen's waiting for you."

Edward and Jazz were speaking privately farther away, so we just sorta left them there.

It was time for some girl time.

~IdC~

"How's living with Jazz?" I asked, taking a sip from my cocoa.

After greeting Carmen, and her daughter and grandson—they were here visiting from Italy—we had bundled up with blankets out on the terrace. Quickly followed by hot chocolate and snacks—thanks to Carmen, of course.

Meanwhile, Edward and Jazz were in the study.

"It's so good," Alice sighed. "I don't know what I would've done without him, Bella."

"He loves you." It was so clear. They were just like Edward and me. "He'd do anything for you."

"I'd do anything for him, too," she whispered. "Telling my parents was nothing I had planned to do—well, not right then, but... Christ, I was just fed up with the way they talked about you and Edward." She shook her head. "I just blurted it out, you know? And they lost it. Started screaming and—blah. I'm so over it." She blew out a breath, and I squeezed her hand. "I'm finally happy."

I smiled.

~IdC~

"This is what you had brought from the penthouse?" I giggled, both amused and turned on.

It was a Tantra Chair.

And now it was in our bedroom here on Isla.

"Yep." He stood behind me. Hands on my hips. Mouth close to my ear. Heat. "And I can't wait to use it, little one."

Ungh.

"When?" I breathed, feeling his mouth latch onto my neck. "Oh..."

I felt him. Hard and ready behind my back.

"Now," he whispered, all while rubbing his cock against my ass. "Do you want me to fuck your pretty little pussy on that chair?"

Holy... "Yes," I whimpered.

Christ, he was insatiable. The past few days...all the fucking we had done.

His hands, they covered my breasts. Under the tank top. Kneading.

"And maybe your tight little ass?" he moaned quietly. "I think I need it. When we watched those photos last week from the penthouse shoot and I wasn't able to fuck you after we'd seen them all... Yes, I need it."

"Yesss," I hissed. His fingers...oh, pinching. "Please, Edward. *Anything.*"

But then he backed away.

"I would. Believe me, I would, kitten. But it's time for dinner now—Jazz and Alice are probably waiting downstairs already."

I whimpered. For a whole other reason.

"After dinner, baby girl. I promise."

~IdC~

"This was delicious, Carmen," Alice said. "*Grazie.*"

"*Prego, Chiacchierone,*" Carmen replied, smiling brightly as she served her tiramisu. "I'm so glad to have you back. You should come more often, yes." Pointed look in Jazz's direction. "Make sure she visit my Bellezza often."

"Yes, ma'am," Jazz chuckled, winking at Carmen.

I smiled, leaning against Edward as he put his arm around me.

Dinner on the patio was one of my favorite things. It was just so incredibly beautiful out here.

"Tired, baby?" he murmured, dropping a kiss in my hair.

I shook my head, looking up at him, so he'd see exactly what I had on my mind.

"Eat fast," he whispered.

I didn't think I'd ever eaten tiramisu that fast.

EPOV

"I want you on your back—over the high curve," I said, unbuttoning my slacks.

I couldn't get enough of her.

With hungry eyes, I watched as she walked over to the Tantra Chair, completely naked for me, and positioned herself as I had instructed.

"So fucking beautiful, kitten." I walked toward her. "Beautifully arched for me." I caressed her sides, watching as goose bumps broke out. "Mmm." I saw her glistening pussy. "Already wet for me." One finger parted her, making us moan. "I suppose this pretty little pussy wants some cock now, huh?"

"Only yours," she whimpered. "Please."

After stepping out of my pants, I got rid of my shirt, too.

My cock was hard.

"Good answer," I said gruffly as I stood in front of her. She was perfectly lined up for me. "Now, wrap your legs around me."

Placing her hands on the sides of the chair, she wrapped her legs around me and let her head fall back along the slope of the chair.



Then I shoved my cock deep inside her pussy

"Fuck," I cursed under my breath.

The angle, her position, made me reach more, fuck, so deep.

"Oh God, oh God," she gasped. "More...oh, please—more."

I gave it to her.

Over and over, in long strokes, I reached her deepest spots.

"You like this?" I grunted as I pushed in again. "Fuck, you're so tight this way."

"Yes." She was already shaking. "Yes...yesss... Edward...*ungh*..."

Wanting to delay her climax, I told her to get up, so that I could sit down in the dip of the chair.

Once in place, she hitched a leg over me and slowly sank down on my erection.

I watched it all.

And I controlled her by gripping her hips.

The view was amazing.

"Touch yourself for me, sweet girl," I moaned. "Touch your slick pussy."

Fuck.

What a sight.

Two of her fingers circled her clit as she fucked me slowly. Her head fell back. Her perky tits were right there, teasing me, so I leaned forward, capturing her right nipple between my teeth. *Fuck.* I pushed her down harder. She moaned loudly. And again. I knew she wanted to come.

"Let me taste," I hissed.

And when she stuck her two fingers into my mouth, I thought I was going to explode.

I sped up.

"Please, Edward," she panted. "May I come?"

After releasing her fingers, I told her to touch herself again, which she did gladly, and then... "Yes, Isabella. Come on my cock."

Watching and feeling my sweet girl as she orgasmed was never easy unless I planned on climaxing as well. But I had no such plans this time, so I gritted my teeth and held back while she rode out her orgasm on my throbbing erection.

"Stand up," I commanded breathlessly. I was already so close, but I needed this. "Get the lube, little one. I need to fuck that tight ass of yours."

Her eyes darkened, her cheeks flushed.

She wanted this.

My kinky little girl.

While she hurried over to the nightstand, I turned around and leaned back against the low curve instead.

"How do you want me?" she asked, blushing scarlet as she handed me the bottle.

I smiled.

"Same position, baby," I murmured. "Sit on my cock. But first, come here." I motioned for her to come closer, and again she hitched a leg over the chair. "What a lovely view," I whispered, dropping a kiss on her pussy while I poured lube into the palm of my hand. Then, all while teasing her pussy with my tongue and lips, I coated two fingers in the slippery lube before pushing them into her ass. "Christ, so tight," I groaned quietly. I worked her slowly, in and out, making sure she was used to the feeling before pushing in a third finger. Her breathing sped up, and I sucked her clit into my mouth, internally pleased because she stayed relaxed. "Such a good little girl you are, kitten," I moaned against her pussy. Faster, three fingers fucked her ass. She was ready. "Now." I breathed heavily. "Sink down on my cock."

I held my breath as I helped her lower herself onto me, but all the air left me in a sharp exhale when I entered her. She was unbelievably tight, and I knew I wouldn't last long at all. *God*. Ever so slowly, I pushed her down. Her eyes told me she was more than okay, so I didn't stop...until I was fully inside of her.

"Stay still, Isabella," I gritted out when she squirmed.

"But," she breathed out with a pout, "I want you to feel good, Edward." She leaned forward and kissed my lips softly. "Fuck my ass," she whispered. "Please...*Sir*."

Her words were nearly my undoing.

Sexy little hellcat.

"You little slut," I chuckled breathlessly. "Are you a dirty-talking vixen all of a sudden?"

Her smile was full mischief, but there was still an innocent blush gracing her cheeks.

She knew what that blush did to me.

"Let's see if you're all talk, kitten," I whispered. "Lean back, put your hands on my knees, and then *you* fuck *me*...while I tend to your delicious pussy."

She gasped as I pushed two fingers deep inside of her, curling them upward to find her g-spot.

She was frozen, with her mouth popped open and eyes tightly shut.

"Come on, baby," I moaned. "Show me how much you love my cock."

Slowly but surely she unfroze. Then she placed her hands on my knees and used them for leverage as she pushed herself off me, only to sink down again. In the meantime, I fought off my climax as I rubbed the pads of my fingers against her g-spot, which in turn made her tense and quiver around me.

"I love your ass," I groaned when she started fucking me harder. "Admit it, my slut—you love this, too." I knew she did. It turned her on like

nothing else. I felt it. Her pussy was soaked as I finger-fucked her deeply. "Say it, kitten... Say that you love my cock up your tight ass."

She tensed further.

Jesus. I was close. Fuck.

"Yes!" she cried out. "Oh fuck, Edward! Please...*please*..." Up and down, harder and faster. "Fuck—I love it...*fuck*... I'm close again!"

Our bodies were covered in a light sheen of sweat.

I moved my finger against her g-spot in a small circle, adding pressure.

A few drops of arousal trickled down my soaked fingers.

I couldn't hold back.

"Come, Isabella," I all but pleaded. "I'm there, baby...*fuck...now!*"

With one hand, I slammed her down on my cock before I exploded inside her.

My head fell back.

I felt her convulse and flutter around my fingers.

My muscles ached.

My cock throbbed as her ass milked me of cum.

"Oh God," she panted, finally down from her high. "Holy..." She collapsed against my chest.

Unable to do much of anything, I just held her to me, kissed her hair, and regained my breath.

"I love you," she whispered, kissing my neck softly.

I tightened my hold on her.

"I love you, too," I murmured. "Let's take a bath before we get to bed, baby."

Chapter 34

Translation

Mi fai godere così tanto = You feel so good.

Mannaggia, sei così bella = Damn, you're so beautiful.

Solo per te = Just because of you.

La tua fica è così calda e stretta = Your pussy is so warm and tight.

BPOV

As we boarded the plane that would take us from California to New York, it almost felt surreal. We were, at last, on our way to Rome.

I smiled to myself. Time had both dragged on slowly and flown so quickly. I mean, it was *April* now. That alone felt odd. It was *spring*. I had actually done a double take when I had seen the calendar in Edward's office on Isla. But it was understandable, I supposed. We had been so busy.

"What are you smiling about, love?" Edward murmured, pressing a kiss to my temple.

My smile widened as I looked up at him. He was so incredibly handsome.

"Nothing in particular," I replied. "I'm just happy."

The corners of his eyes crinkled as his own smile grew, which I just found sexy as hell.

“We have a few things to be happy about, don’t we?” he agreed quietly, leaning forward to brush his lips against mine. “And right now I’m unbelievably happy to have you to myself for a few hours.”

I chuckled. “Because you don’t have me to yourself often enough as it is?”

He kissed me soundly. “Never enough, my sweet girl.”

I agreed and deepened the kiss.

It was never enough, even though we spent every day together.

The only exception had been the last few days when we spent some much needed time with Jazz and Alice. And I was fucking thrilled when they—the night before they returned to Seattle—announced that they were moving to California.

Seattle didn’t hold any appeal for them anymore.

I could definitely understand that, and I was so happy that we’d have them closer soon.

But now...now we had a week in Italy, just Edward and me.

~IdC~

“Bella.”

No.

Kisses on my neck.

I was disoriented. And half-asleep.

Flying took it out of me. After landing in New York, we had to leave the luxury of Edward's jet, and now we were somewhere over the Atlantic. With people all around us. Yes, I had gotten quite used to Edward's lifestyle.

Sue me.

"You're waking me up," I mumbled sleepily, snuggling closer to him. "If you love me, you won't wake me up."

I felt cocooned and sleepy and cuddly. Wrapped up in Edward's embrace and blankets.

So, let me sleep.

"We're almost in London," he chuckled, still kissing my neck. "I promise you can go back to sleep for a while as soon as we've boarded the jet to Rome."

Hmph.

Wait. Huh. I'd been sleeping longer than I thought, then.

"We're almost there?" I asked groggily, sitting up slightly.

"Yes." He kissed my nose. "In an hour or so."

But...ugh!

"Then I can sleep for another hour," I grumbled, eager to get his arm around me again, but he just backed away with a soft laugh.

"Sorry, little one, but no," he chuckled. "I can't take more of your sleep talk."

Shit.

Yeah, I blushed.

Because I remembered my dream.

"Exactly," he said with a pointed look. He took my hand and placed it over his, oh...erection. "Look what you did with that moaning."

Ungh.

"Good thing I've hired a private jet to take us to Rome," he muttered.

I was suddenly very awake.

~IdC~

When I was little, I slept when I was tired. It was simple. My parents were there to handle everything around me. And I guessed that was why I couldn't remember ever suffering from jet lag.

Now was different.

I was barely aware of my surroundings when we finally arrived in Rome, and not just Rome, but Edward's apartment in Rome.

Of course he had his own apartment here.

Like...duh.

Anyway, it wasn't until three days later that I was getting back on track, and I was grateful for the relaxed time we'd spent together. There was no sightseeing. Neither of us was interested in that just yet. Instead we spent three lazy mornings in bed, all of which quickly morphed into three lazy afternoons. We ordered in, and we didn't leave the apartment until later at night. Then we would walk around the beautiful neighborhood, in the end settling on a restaurant for dinner. Apart from Edward taking a few

business calls and the two of us making a quick visit to Cullen Eight, we had just taken it easy.

As for Cullen Eight, the opening was tonight, and we were both excited to say the least.

We had visited the gallery yesterday—Edward wanted to make sure everything was good to go—and he had introduced me to Nydia, the gallery's hostess, as well as the other employees. And Edward speaking Italian? Yeah, panties effectively ruined. Sure, I had heard him speak Italian before, many times, but it was different when we were actually here.

With a shake of my head, I got rid of those thoughts before I ruined another pair. Not that I minded, but since Esme was waiting for me, I figured it was best to wait.

Speaking of Esme, she and Carlisle wanted to see their son's eighth gallery opening, so they had both flown in this morning; it felt really good to see them again. Especially with nothing bad hanging over our heads, such as trials or injuries.

"Baby, are you ready?" I heard Edward call. *"You have an annoying woman out here, eager to speak with you."*

I chuckled and finished applying the moisturizer I had bought today.

"Two minutes," I answered.

The day had been spent with Esme, because she said I needed a new dress for tonight. Apparently, the one I planned on wearing was gorgeous, but since Edward had already seen it, it was a no-no. So, after convincing Edward and Carlisle that we weren't going to get hurt in another car accident, she took me around Rome to find that "perfect dress". In the end, we found it at Dolce & Gabbana. Cost me a fortune, but I refused to

let Edward pay for a dress that expensive—something I was sure he'd argue with me about later, but whatever. Anyway, I was happy with my choice. It was black and short, layered in lace, and sexy. Edward would definitely approve.



"Okay," I sighed to myself. Hair partly up, loose curls, light makeup, knowing that Edward preferred to see me without. So, just a coat of mascara, some eyeliner and lip balm. "All done."

After putting on my black heels, I left the ensuite bathroom.

Waiting in the bedroom was...hummm, Edward in a tuxedo.

I was pretty sure time stopped.

I sure did. Stop, that is.

He stood there, in the middle of the room, one hand in his pocket, and one holding a box. A blue box.

"Well," he sighed, running a hand through his hair. "I see you've managed to render me speechless, kitten. Again."

Traitorous blush.

He walked toward me slowly, eyes hungry.

I shivered.

"I have no words," he said quietly, now standing in front of me. Maybe he didn't have words, but his eyes gave it all away. As did his hand as he reached out to trace the fabric around my cleavage. Suddenly my knees felt weak. "Maybe we should stay in." Voice full of desire. Fingers brushing over my breast. Cupping. *Yes, let's stay in.*

"Edward Anthony!" I heard from the other side of the door. *"I need to talk to Bella before we leave!"*

I raised an eyebrow at him; he chuckled...and backed away.

Pity.

"For you, little love," he said, presenting me with the box. How could he recover so quickly? I was still mush. "I hope you like it."

I blushed again, or maybe I never stopped, and accepted the box, lifting the lid with shaky fingers. If I knew something about Edward, it was that he never did anything half-assed. So, I shouldn't have been surprised when I saw the incredibly beautiful diamond bracelet inside the box. Diamonds...many of them.

"May I?"

I nodded dumbly, unable to speak.

Without thinking about it, I traced the diamonds on my collar, all while watching Edward as he clasped the bracelet onto my wrist, finishing with a soft kiss over the clasp.

"Too much," I whispered, finally finding my voice. The bracelet was heavy.

"Nonsense," he said dismissively. "Do you like it?"

My eyes told him how stupid he was for even asking.

"Good," he chuckled. "That's all that matters."

"Edward!"

"For the love of..." He sighed. His smile was rueful. "Let's go before my mother gives herself an ulcer."

I giggled. Yes, all girlishly, but I couldn't help it.

"Thank you," I murmured, linking my arm with his. "For the bracelet. It's too much, but I love it."

He kissed me on the forehead and told me once again that nothing was "too much", but I ignored that. Then we left the bedroom, only to run smack into Esme who was pacing outside in the hallway.

"Finally!" she exclaimed, glaring at her son. "Now move—I need to speak to Bella."

"So full of love, aren't you?" he said to her dryly, giving me a wink before he headed for the living room.

I turned to Esme in confusion, wondering what could be so important, especially since we had spent several hours together today. Surely she could've spoken to me then.

"Come here, honey," she said, showing me into the bedroom again.

"Okay," she grabbed my shoulders gently, "after the opening tonight, the plan is for Edward to take you out, yes?"

I blinked, still confused. "Um...yes?" What did that have anything to do with *anything*?

"I told him earlier how lovely it would be if the four of us could go out together, since Carlisle and I are flying back home tomorrow." I nodded for her to continue. "Well, imagine my surprise when he was firm with his no." Pointed look my way, but I didn't understand. At all. "Honey," she said softly, "have you and my son talked about the future yet?" Oh, for the love of God. I refrained from rolling my eyes. As much as I adored Esme, she had to stop with the baby-talk. I was already messed up as it was, and I didn't need her to make it worse. I hadn't told anyone, but the weeks I had spent with Carmen's two-year-old grandson...

Ugh, little Santino was just too cute for words. I adored him.

"I'm not speaking about children," she said as if she was reading my freaking mind. Her smile was motherly. "I'm talking about marriage."

"Huh?" I uttered stupidly.

She hesitated before speaking again. "Well, I guess...I wanted you to be prepared. I, um...want you to know that my son might...you know."

No, I don't. I don't "know".

Another pointed look. This time she grabbed my left hand and gave my ring finger a little squeeze.

Oh.

Oh.

Oh!

I sucked in a breath.

"Exactly," she said softly. "I just want to make sure that he doesn't scare you away." She let out a small chuckle. "Is he? I mean...is he moving too fast?"

"No!" I blurted out.

Bella Cullen. Isabella Cullen. I would be *married* to my Edward.

"You're smiling, Bella."

I was?

Oh.

Well, of course I am.

EPOV

When I told Bella that I had no words for her, I wasn't lying. And now, two hours later and well into the evening, I still couldn't tell her how amazing she looked. It wasn't just her dress, though, or her body for that matter. It was everything. How she carried herself, how easily she fit in, how she spoke, how genuinely interested she was when it came to the gallery, and how much her smile lit up the room.

She never left my side, even when I had to force myself to focus on what the artists were talking about. She even engaged in the conversation herself. I had to say I was impressed with her Italian. As were the others. My parents included.

"Edward, honey!"

Speak of the devil.

"There's no escaping her," I mumbled under my breath, looking over my shoulder to see my mother approaching with one of my employees. Bella just grinned at me. "Nydia, did I not tell you to hide from my mother?" I joked.

"You did, Mr. Cullen, yes," she chuckled. "But that proved to be impossible."

"Oh, you're both so funny," my mother deadpanned. "Anyway," she smiled again, "Nydia and I were just talking, and did you know that she's getting married?"

I cocked an eyebrow at my mother, silently telling her that I wasn't buying her bullshit.

I already knew that Nydia was getting married. She had met a man shortly after moving here from New York. I also knew that she was pregnant. But my mother didn't exactly bring her over just for Bella and me to congratulate her.

"I'm very aware, Mother," I said dryly.

"And that she's pregnant," she pressed.

I tightened my hold on Bella, hoping that she'd jump in before I had my own mother kicked out of the gallery. Though, Bella did no such thing, which I found odd, because I knew Bella shared my thoughts regarding marriage and children. We wanted the first but not the second.

At least, that was what I convinced myself.

Honestly, I wasn't doing a very good job at it, but I'd take that to the grave, I supposed.

There were other secrets I'd take to the grave, too. Another one wouldn't kill me.

"I know that, too," I sighed, keeping my frustration inside of me. "Now, why don't you go find Carlisle. I'm sure he's looking for you."

Thankfully, she took the not-so-subtle hint, and Nydia excused herself to go back to work.

"She's persistent, that one," Bella commented, smiling up at me.

"That she is," I chuckled. "Thanks for saving me, by the way." I shot her a playful glare.

Bella just shrugged.

Hmph.

Before I could press the matter, though, we were interrupted by one of the artists who was showing his work tonight, so our discussion ended before it even started, and our evening continued.

I was pleasantly surprised with the outcome. The gallery was packed with people, and the seven artists and photographers were busy with either customers or the few journalists who had been invited.

From me, they accepted my short, "I'm glad to have opened a gallery in Rome. It's been a dream of mine for long, and I have no doubt it will be a success."

~IdC~

Hours later, it was finally time to leave the gallery. I enjoyed the evening, I really did, and no one was happier than I about the success, but it was time to have some more alone time with Bella.

"So...where are you taking Bella, honey?" Mother asked me.

I wanted to push her into the waiting taxi but refrained.

"Well, it's rather late, so I was thinking we'd go to Vitello's," I responded, kissing her cheek. "I'll call you when we get back to the States. Have a safe flight tomorrow, and thank you for coming tonight."

I loved my mother dearly, but I had limits, and she had reached them all with the talk of Bella and my future.

"Don't be so grouchy," she said dismissively, moving in to hug Bella. "Call me later, Bella, and for the love of God, remove the stick he has up his ass."

I ran a hand through my hair, trying to keep the frustration bottled up for just a little while longer.

Bella laughed.

My mother grinned at me.

My father chuckled before he kissed Bella's cheek, shook my hand...and ushered Esme in to the cab.

Finally.

Finally alone.

We had three more days in Rome.

"Let's get something to eat, little love," I murmured, cupping her elbow. "I have a car waiting over there." She nodded and moved closer to me; I led her to the waiting car. "Did you have a good time tonight?"

"Very," she said passionately. She got into the car, and I followed. "You're amazing for pulling this off, you know. I mean, eight successful galleries?"

I grinned and pulled her close to me. Then I told the driver where to take us, and I wasn't surprised when I noticed my girl's eyes darken.

She had a thing for Italian.

"So transparent," I whispered, burying my face in the crook of her neck. She smelled amazing. My hand was ghosting up her thigh. "You like it when I speak Italian, don't you, little girl?"

She moaned when I cupped her pussy under her dress.

"Shhh, kitten," I commanded quietly, sliding my fingers under her lacy panties. I had picked them out for today; they were black lace. "You're going to be quiet." It wasn't a question. I wanted to get her off. I needed it, and no driver was going to stand in my way.

I gathered moisture from her slick entrance, slowly bringing it up to her clit. I kissed her neck sensually. My tongue tasted. With me leaning over her, she could bury her face against me, which she did. Muffled sounds, quiet whimpers, against my neck. I fucked her slowly and deeply with my fingers, driving myself insane in the process. I was sure I was addicted to her pussy.

"Mi fai godere così tanto," I whispered in her ear. *"Mannaggia, sei così bella."*

"Oh, *fuck,*" she mewled. I smiled against her collarbone.

She squirmed, silently telling me *more and faster*, but we had time. The ride to Vitello's took twenty minutes, and I had every intention on using that time well.

"Touch my cock, Isabella," I told her softly, and she obeyed right away.

She rubbed it outside my pants, from base to tip, then down to my balls and up again.

"You're so hard," she whimpered, the sound muffled by my neck.

I hissed and fingered her a bit harder, finding her g-spot with my middle finger, all while rubbing circles on her clit with my thumb.

"*Solo per te,*" I answered, gritting my teeth.

She clamped down around me and gasped. I chuckled huskily. Fuck, she was wet. Unable to resist, I pulled away my fingers just enough for me to taste her.

Again, I moaned. "*La tua fica è così calda e stretta.*"

"Oh God, Edward," she panted, clinging to me. "Please, please, please, please—don't tease me... I need—" She stopped abruptly when I slammed my two fingers back inside of her, and I swallowed her wanton moan with a hard kiss.

She was close, so close.

Unfortunately so was I, so I told her to stop running her little hand over my throbbing cock.

Then I continued with her, pleasuring her, whispering dirty words to her in both English and Italian. It didn't take long before she fell apart with a silent scream.

She looked unbelievably gorgeous right after coming down from her high. Face slightly flushed, eyes alive and bright, chest heaving, and body sensitive to my touch.

~IdC~

"Are you ready to go back to the apartment?" I asked. I was playing with a strand of her hair that had fallen down her shoulder.

After sharing a late dinner at Vitello's—the restaurant located in the same building as my apartment—I was eager to get her to bed. Though we both

wanted to be lazy during the first half of our stay, we had agreed that it was time to see some sights. Sure, I had already seen most of it, and it wasn't Bella's first time in Rome, either, but it was our first time here together. We'd be foolish to waste the time in bed. Besides, since my girl had nothing against public sex, I had a few plans. Fantasies that would finally come true, if you will.

Bella's voice brought me back.

"Um, you don't want dessert or anything?" she asked, chewing on her lip.

I tilted my head, released her lip with my thumb, and asked her, "Do *you* want dessert, love?"

I was in no rush by any means, but it was close to midnight. I figured she'd be tired.

"I guess not," she mumbled, looking down for a moment. "Actually, I'm feeling a bit off. Mind if we go to bed right away?"

"Of course not, baby," I said as worry flooded my senses. The sudden change in her didn't go unnoticed by me, and I wondered if she'd eaten something bad. A moment ago she seemed so happy and now she looked pale and unsettled.

Always the worrier, I paid for our dinner and ushered Bella home in a rush.

~IdC~

"Feeling better?" I asked, concerned.

She nodded timidly and snuggled closer. "Just tired," she mumbled. "Love you."

I frowned. "Love you too, Isabella."

Shortly after, almost too shortly after, Bella was asleep.

I wasn't. I was worried.

We were going home tomorrow, and the past two and a half days had been...weird. The first night, she blamed on the food for making her queasy, and she had excused herself to the bathroom. She stayed there for a solid twenty minutes. But it didn't stop there. The next day, after promising me that she felt better, we left the apartment for some sightseeing. And as the day went, her spirits lifted. She was happy and simply amazing. But after dinner that night, she told me she felt "off" again, and we headed back to the apartment. Only this time, she brought her phone with her into the ensuite bathroom.

Same thing happened today. Our day was wonderful and I hoped she was finally feeling better, but once again, after dinner, she wanted to go home and rest. And yes, she brought her phone with her. I had no idea for what, but I wasn't going to question anything if she was sick. Whatever it took.

Maybe she was talking to Alice. I didn't know, but that seemed plausible.

I backed off for now, but promised myself to talk to her if this continued once we were back in the States.

Chapter 35

BPOV

"Is it weird that I'm disappointed my parents haven't contacted me?" Alice asked, sighing heavily. I shook my head even though she couldn't see me. I understood her. My parents hadn't bothered to contact me, either. Not once. I didn't even know what my mother had told Dad. Renee obviously

held back since Edward had those pictures of her and Phil, but Dad didn't know that. So, what was his reason? What had Mom told him?

"That's not weird at all," I said quietly, placing the phone between my shoulder and cheek. "I can't really say I feel the same—maybe only a little—but...I dunno, I had more time to get used to it. I mean, they left me ages ago." I chuckled wryly. Walking over to the fridge, I grabbed a bottle of water before returning to my seat by the kitchen window. "But do you feel really bad about it? Do you miss them?"

She scoffed. *"No. I sure as hell don't. But I sorta thought they'd miss me by now. Does that make sense?"*

"I don't know," I replied honestly. "It is what it is."

"Yeah." She let out a little sigh. *"Anyway, I gotta go study. I'm so behind. I'm not even sure I'll manage to graduate before summer."*

"You'll be fine," I told her. She had a knack for worrying when she had no reason to.

Movement in my periphery made me look out the kitchen window. I had to stifle a very girly giggle when I saw Edward and Felix—both wearing board shorts, nothing else—arguing over something by pool, and it was funny because they were waving a few of Santino's inflatable pool toys around. It was intriguing enough for me to crack open the window.

I'd say I was surprised, but I wasn't. Ever since we returned home a few days ago, we had fallen into a new routine that surprisingly included the change between Edward and his employees. Before, it was only Carmen who got under Edward's skin. But now it was Felix and Demitri, too. The three men had become friends of some sort and had spent hours pretty much getting to know each other. I had no idea what had caused this, but I was happy nonetheless.

And now, as I listened to their “argument,” it became so clear that sometimes Edward, my mighty Edward Cullen, was still a boy. See, they were arguing whether or not it was possible to tie Santino’s inflatable raft to the speedboat. Edward thought Felix was insane for even thinking about it, and I had to say I agreed. Although, it would be fun to see Felix on Santino’s beloved bumblebee raft, hanging on for dear life as Edward drove the boat.

Just saying.

“BELLA!”

“Shit,” I breathed. I had completely forgotten that I had Alice on the phone. “You scared the crap out of me.” Damn, slow down, heart. “I’m sorry—I zoned out.”

“No, really?” she replied dryly. *“I’ve been trying to get your attention for the past half hour.”*

Wow, she could really exaggerate.

But I blamed Edward in black board shorts for zoning out.

Stupid, half naked man.

“I’m sorry,” I repeated sheepishly.

“Yeah, yeah,” she said dismissively. *“Now that I have your attention again: have you and Edward made your decision about Seattle yet?”*

I nodded even though she couldn’t see me. The opening of *Taking Purity* was in two weeks—in Seattle—and Edward and I had discussed a little when we’d go. Apparently, he had some meeting with Marcus Marin, so we decided to fly up two days early. That way, he could meet with Marcus, and I could have some girl time with Alice. It’d be a few more months ‘til

she and Jazz moved to San Francisco anyway, so I appreciated all the time I could have with her now.

"The opening is on a Saturday, right?"

"Yeah."

I smiled. "Then we'll fly up on the Thursday before."

"Great! We should go to Vida or something. And go shopping."

Alice had changed. Nowadays, she enjoyed going to a spa and making herself extra beautiful for Jazz.

"Sounds like a plan," I giggled.

After ending my call a few minutes later, I headed for the terrace where Edward and Felix were still arguing...or whatever I was supposed to call it.

"You're both ridiculous," I chuckled and plopped down on one of the loungers. "Both pushing forty, yet arguing like children."

Edward spun around, not seeing me until now, and actually smiled—quite sheepishly.

"Heard that, did you?"

I nodded with a grin.

Then his expression changed. "The hell? Pushing forty? Fuck that!"

"Ah, don't live in denial, boss," Felix laughed.

I snickered, cocking my head at Felix. "What he said."

Edward scowled. "I'm thirty-seven."

"Mmhmm, like I said, sweetheart. Pushing forty."

"You push forty when you're thirty-nine," he muttered, throwing Santino's toys back into the pool. "Besides, I have the body of a twenty-five year old."

Not arguing there.

Definitely not arguing there.

Ungh.

I rubbed my thighs together.

"Anyway, do we have a deal or not?" Felix asked. "Demetri will be back any minute now, you know."

Edward rolled his eyes at him, and I laughed again. I couldn't believe Felix was serious.

"You're not attaching Santino's raft to the speedboat," Edward said, shaking his head in amusement. "Get water skis instead."

"But where's the fun in that?" Felix argued.

It was weird—to see Edward like this.

Edward just laughed at him...before he dove into the pool.

Now, with nothing bad hanging over our heads, he was...younger. Happy and more carefree. Life was good.

And the sun was out. It was warm; you could feel the summer approaching.

"Can't believe you're gonna marry that man." Felix winked and took a seat next to me.

I huffed. "He has to propose first."

Esme told me it'd happen in Rome. Boy, was she wrong.

Romantic dinner after romantic dinner. I waited. God, I was at the edge of my seat, and then, every night, he said something along the lines of, "Ready to go back to the apartment, little one?"

And I'd get queasy and disappointed.

"He will," Felix said firmly. "If he knows what's good for him, he will."

I hope so.

"Bella," I heard Edward call. He was getting out of the pool; it was impossible not to stare. Hot damn, that body. "Have you spoken to Alice or Jazz yet?"

"Uh..." I shook my head to clear it. Alice, Jazz. Right. "Um, yeah, I just got off the phone with Alice."

Felix chuckled next to me, obviously noticing the state I was in.

I smiled and shrugged. It wasn't my fault, after all.

"Have they found a house yet?" Edward asked. He grabbed a towel and then walked over to me. After dropping a kiss on my forehead, he sat down on the lounge to my right, and I was still having a hard time focusing on anything that wasn't his toned body. He was getting slightly tanned, too. "Baby? Are you listening to me?"

Fucker.

I sighed, flustered. "Um, no. I mean, yes, I'm listening." Jesus. "But no, they haven't found a house yet. And Jazz doesn't wanna leave Washington until Alice has graduated."

"All right," he laughed through his nose. He was so on to me. "By the way, why are you looking so flushed?"

For the love of...!

"Okay, that's my cue!" Felix barked out in a laugh. "I'll see you two tomorrow."

And now I was confused, 'cause we had all eaten dinner together lately.

"Where's he going?" I asked.

"He's taking Tia to the mainland tonight," Edward explained, referring to Carmen's daughter. "Which is why he won't be here later." With a mischievous grin, he joined me on my lounge, pushing me back so he could hover over me. "Not that it would've mattered, because..." He kissed the corner of my mouth. "...I already have plans for you."

My hands made their way up his muscular arms.

His body covered mine.

"Oh, yeah?" I sighed softly, giving him access to my neck. "What plans?"

"Hmm, you'll see." He hummed and pressed his body harder against mine. When I felt his hard cock against my pussy, I couldn't help but moan. "But not now." No, I had a feeling I knew what he wanted now. "Right now I'd like to fuck my sweet little girl."

Yes, please and thank you.

~IdC~

"Carmen? Have you seen Edward?" I asked, entering the kitchen.

After our rather hot fuck on the patio, I had been in great need of a nap. So, I had rested while he tended to some work. Then when I woke up,

took a shower, got dressed in my usual Isla-wear—white cotton shorts with a matching tank top—and tried to find Edward. Tried and failed.

“Carmen,” I called again, a little louder. She had her back to me and was using the blender for...something. I couldn’t quite see.

This time she heard me, and she spun around before a wide smile took over her entire face. “Oh, Bellezza! You are awake!”

Um, yes?

“Uh, yeah. Have you seen Edward?” I asked, not understanding the megawatt smile on her face. “And where are Tia and Santino?”

I wanted to see the little sweetheart.

“Oh, Tia and Santino are on other side of Isla,” she replied dismissively. “I only have little to do here, then I take Santino when Felix and Tia go.”

Ah, right. Their date. Love is in the air, I guess.

“I can help you,” I offered hopefully. I’d never say no to my little bambino. I was in the process of teaching him English. It was fun. Very fun. The boy was all giggles. “We could-”

But Carmen cut me off. “No, no!” She shook her head. “You and Tesoro have plans, yes? Yes. Tesoro tell me, you know. You have plans for dinner.”

The hell?

“I forgot,” I said, frowning. “Carmen, are you okay? You seem a little...skittish.”

“Skittish?” she asked, furrowing her brow. “I do not know skittish.” Then she shook her head again. “No mind, Bellezza. Tesoro tell me you go to

the beach hut in..." She checked the time. "...half hour and thirteen minutes, *si*."

All...right?

I was confused as hell, but in the end I just shrugged to myself and gave Carmen a nod before I went back upstairs. If I was going to the beach hut, I would wear something else. The summer was getting closer but it wasn't *that* hot out. So, I picked out a pair of black pants and a light pink cardigan. And since I apparently had some time to kill, I checked my email, as well as my blog that I hadn't updated in weeks. It made me realize that I missed writing.

"I'll just write more then," I decided.

After all the time I'd spent with Edward—the photo shoots, the playroom in Seattle, the personal times...the *chair*...I knew it wouldn't be too hard to come up with a bunch of stuff to write.

Great, now I'm horny again.

I rolled my eyes at myself and checked my watch: *finally time*.

And on cue, my stomach rumbled.

I loved it when Edward and I escaped to the beach hut. It wasn't very often, but when it happened, it was always amazing.

"You are leaving now, *si*?" I heard Carmen ask as I passed the kitchen. She had the phone to her ear, so it wasn't until she eyed me in question that I was sure she was in fact speaking to me. I nodded to her. "*Si*, Bellezza's leaving now... Yes, Tesoro... She right here next to me now... *Si*, she can hear me." Okay, so I gathered she had Edward on the phone. "Oh! I see! I hang up now." And she did. "Cannot believe he cussed at

me," she muttered, shaking her head at the phone. "Foul mouth on that one. All *cazzo, cazzo, cazzo.*"

Yeah, I just stood there.

For a while.

"Okay," I said awkwardly. "I'm just gonna..." I rocked back and forth on my heels and jerked my thumb over my shoulder. "...go."

She beamed at me. "Have fun!"

She's weird.

I walked briskly, eager to have some alone time with Edward, and yes, food. I was suddenly starving. And even more so when I arrived at the secluded beach on the other side of the island.

As I approached the hut, I smiled to myself, remembering the first time Edward had showed me this. I remembered how easily I could picture his grandparents sitting on the small porch outside the hut, sharing a romantic dinner. And now it was something I had. Though, not on the porch. Edward and I usually opted to sit indoors, together on the couch with the coffee table filled with whatever Edward had had Carmen prepare for us. It made me curious about what we'd eat tonight.

What I found odd, though, was that Edward had pulled the curtains shut. There were windows going around the entire hut, but now I could only see dim lighting through the white fabric.

I could also see Edward's shadow; it looked like he was setting up dinner.

I knocked. Once. Twice.

"*Come in, baby,*" I heard him chuckle.

No, the walls weren't really thick, and I had no idea why I even knocked. I never did.

So, I opened the door, stepped inside, and smiled...very widely.

"How very romantic, Mr. Cullen," I said coyly.

There were beautiful oriental lilies in white and pink in several vases.

Candles, too.

And an Italian feast on the coffee table.

Though nothing could compare to the man standing in grey slacks and a black pullover with his sleeves rolled up. He always looked so damn delicious.

"I try," he said with a wink. *Ungh*. "Hungry?"

"Starving," I replied, and my eyes were already devouring the food he'd set up. *Mental note: thank Carmen later*. "Wow, she really went all out, didn't she?"

"That she did," he agreed, taking my hand. "Come on, let's dig in."

And dig in we did.

Together on the large, plush couch.

The problem was that Edward was too sexy. Seriously. The dinner was foreplay. The way he sensually fed me with slices of mozzarella or olives. Fingers pushing food slowly into my mouth. Lips wrapped around said fingers. Moans. Eyes closed. Labored breaths. Sips of wine. Open-mouthed kisses. His lips wrapping around his fork as he ate one of the two pasta dishes. Me sucking off his fingers after he'd fed me a piece of chicken. I was on his lap by now. Starved for more. Food and him, what a

lovely combination. More. I'd said it out loud, apparently, and soon he brought a fork with homemade ravioli on it. I opened my mouth; he watched closely. My lips, I licked them. I chewed; he closed in. I straddled him. He kissed my neck, my pulse point, as I swallowed. He groaned.

He was rock hard.

I rolled my hips over him.

"Suck," he whispered huskily, holding an olive between two fingers. I obeyed, sucking his fingers into my mouth, letting my tongue swirl around, all while I tasted the olive. It was delicious. All of it. "Fuck."

His eyes were so hungry.

But then he closed those hungry eyes and withdrew his fingers from my mouth.

"We have to stop, little one," he groaned as I rocked against his erection. I could hardly believe what I was hearing, and my jaw pretty much dropped in surprise. We were all alone; why the hell would we have to stop? "You're too sexy for your own good, sweet girl." He closed my mouth. "It's close to impossible for me *not* to continue right now."

"Then why stop?" I asked, quite breathlessly, but he had me all worked up now.

Pretty sure I pouted, too.

Yep, I did, because he watched my lips. Then he shook his head, as if to clear it, before he pushed me away slightly.

"Oh, Bella," he sighed. I grinned. Couldn't help it. I loved that I had the same effect on him. "Do you want more food?"

Ah, subject changed.

"No," I said, feeling a smile tug in the corners of my mouth. "Thank you, by the way," I added. "Dinner was delicious."

He knew I wasn't just talking about the food.

But he acted like I only referred to that.

"Good," he murmured, resting his forehead against mine. "Really good." I furrowed my brow. He seemed to be in thought, but before I could ask him about it, he spoke again. "You know I love you, right?"

I chewed on my lip. "Of course," I said quietly, studying him. "And you know I love you too, right?"

With eyes now closed, he nodded once and smiled. He looked serene.

My worry slipped away when I saw how content he was, but I was still curious. Something was up.

"Kiss me," he whispered.

Always, anytime.

Closing the last distance, I kissed him softly, just mouth on mouth. Once, twice, three times. My hands went up his chest, up and up, over his shoulders, into his hair. I kissed him again.

When his eyes flashed open, my breathing hitched. *Intensity.*

He licked his lips.

It was a whisper, lips ghosting over mine.

"Will you marry me, Isabella?"

I shivered.

Did I hear him correctly?

Yes, I did.

My eyes welled up; I couldn't control it.

He just...holy...and then...*God*, he... Yes, he just...

Jesus fucking Christ.

"Yes," I breathed out shakily. In a daze. Eyes locked. "Yes."

I wasn't at all prepared for the onslaught of emotions.

I thought I was prepared. I wasn't.

This felt...a *million* times better than I thought it would.

And one look on Edward's face told me that he felt pretty fucking ecstatic, too.

Serene, happy, relieved.

"Again," he whispered, eyes burning. "Say that again."

"Yes." One of his hands left my thigh. "Yes." My God, he just proposed to me. "Yes, Edward."

The smile on his face, the smile on my face, they weren't the same. Mine was wide, showing unbelievable joy. His was soft, showing bliss. But two sets of eyes were equally intense and watery. Okay, lie. I had tears streaming, he didn't. Holy shit. I couldn't even think straight, and before I knew it, there was a box. More tears, they streamed down my face.

This couldn't have been more perfect. The location, the time...everything.

I heard him open the box. Very reluctantly, I averted my eyes from his, and...oh my. The *ring*. Out of this world.



"Be mine forever, Bella," he whispered, taking the ring out. I breathed shakily. I sniffled. "As my wife." *Jesus Christ*. "And I'll be yours." My hand shook. Trembles. Shivers. "As your husband."

I whimpered.

He slid the ring onto my finger.

"Perfect fit." He kissed the finger, the ring. "You're perfect."

I was speechless.

The only thing I could do was *show* him.

So, I threw my arms around him and kissed him with all the passion I had surging through me.

Engaged.

"We're engaged," I blurted out, still kissing him like crazy. We were *engaged*. To be married.

"Fuck, yes," he groaned.

Hands everywhere.

Mouths everywhere.

Closer; I needed more and closer.

I whimpered, arching.

Then we were in a hurry.

He slid off my pants, and panties, tank top, and cardigan...leaving me exposed to him.

And I was on my back—on the couch.

Engaged.

I clenched my hand, feeling the gorgeous ring on my finger.

Kneeling in between my parted legs, he just watched me.

I squirmed and ached under his fiery gaze.

"You're so beautiful, Bella," he said reverently. "My future wife."

Yes. *God, yes.*

He dropped down and started kissing my chest; I felt the yearning, the building fire. Hands roaming persistently, never leaving my skin. Mouth. God. Tongue. He kissed me, tasted me. My collarbone, my chest, my neck, the valley between my breasts, my nipples. I moaned, my hands in his hair, pulling and twisting, making him groan against me. He sucked on my left nipple. Then, further down. He kissed my ribcage, my sides, dipped his tongue into my bellybutton. Again, I arched. His hands slid up and down my thighs, slowly and teasingly.

"Fuck, I love your taste, kitten," he groaned quietly, still tasting my skin. Hands caressing, now on my stomach. "Perfect," he whispered, kissing my belly. "The things you make me feel..." He gripped my hips. "The things I..." He exhaled hotly over my abdomen and then dropped his forehead to it. I whimpered. "The things you make me want, Bella...*fuck.*"

He shook his head.

I was too far gone to register anything but his touch.

"Please," I manage to rasp out.

My body was on fire.

More kisses. Hot and wet. Slowly, he crawled over my body, moving up toward my mouth again.

Suddenly I felt him; his pants were pushed down.

He kissed me, so hard.

I helped him with his shirt. Tossed it on the floor.

I pulled and twisted his hair harder, thrusting my tongue into his waiting mouth.

He groaned.

I felt him, lining up, yes, *oh...*

"So wet," he moaned, rubbing my clit.

There was no space between us.

"Yes," I cried when he slid his fat cock inside of me.

I was loud as he fucked me slowly and deeply. As he *loved* me.

"That's it, Isabella," he grunted, pushing in again. "Let me hear you."

Fuck. I breathed, or tried to.

He consumed me.

We were getting married.

Every thrust brought him deeper—and us closer.

I felt his desperation, and it mirrored my own.

I screwed my eyes shut as he ground his cock into me.

I pushed my breasts against him, making him moan in my mouth. Yesss. The coil, the tightening. My muscles. I tensed, I waited, I needed. So *deep*. Oh, *God*. Over and over again. Thrust. *Thrust*. Legs tangled together.

"Edward!" I gasped.

My eyes flew open.

His eyes were *smoldering*.

My nails dug into his shoulder blades.

That spot.

Again.

Again.

"Fuck, baby," he groaned loudly. "I can feel you, Bella... I feel your pussy pulsing around me." We moaned, he sped up, harder, he slammed into me, I gasped, I clung to him. "I'm so *fucking* close."

My toes curled.

I held my breath.

With a silent scream, I fell apart.

Ripples of pleasure rocked through my body, pulling and pushing. Shivers and explosions, heat and...and this...buzz. Surging. I still couldn't breathe. It continued. In the background I heard him, moaning and grunting. I felt him shudder violently through his own release. I was gone. Gone, just gone. Still tensing around him wildly.

Until I finally started panting.

I gulped for air.

I blinked.

"Shit," I gasped.

"*Jesus,*" he breathed, hovering over me, forehead against forehead.

I could only nod. Once. I was spent. Drained.

But there was one thing I had to do...or say.

"I love you," I panted. It felt like I would've imploded if I hadn't told him.

"I love you." One last time. "I love you."

He chuckled breathlessly, but it morphed into a quiet groan as he pulled out of me. I shuddered.

Thankfully, he collapsed next to me. It was a tight fit, with both of us next to each other on the couch, but I loved it. I loved him so close.

"I love you too, Bella," he murmured, kissing my temple. "That was..."

Exactly.

"It was," I agreed quietly, snuggling my way impossibly closer. He got the hint, and soon I had his arm around me and my head on his chest.

Chapter 36

BPOV

I felt ten feet tall when Edward offered me his hand to help me out of the limo.

It was just the look he gave me. He made me feel beautiful.



It was the end of May, and it was finally time for Jasper's opening of *Taking Purity*.

There was even some media here, and a few cameras flashed when Edward drew me close to him.

I was the "kid" who had landed the eligible Edward Cullen of Cullen Arts.

"Exquisite," he murmured. "Christ, you look stunning, little one."

"And you look good enough to eat in that tux." I sighed wistfully, and then I placed my left hand on his chest. No, no accident. I was giddy.

Take pictures of that.

"Ready to go inside?" He smirked, knowing that I was flashing my ring.

Sue me.

"Absolutely," I said, shivering as his hand slid down my back. "Is Jazz already here?"

The gallery was packed with people, and Edward had been here since it opened, but that was because he'd had work to do. And before that, he'd had a lunch meeting with Marcus.

Jazz and I, on the other hand, were supposed to be fashionably late.

"He is, yes." He nodded, ushering me inside. "He arrived twenty minutes ago and is giving interviews now."

As soon as we were in, I noticed the stares.

I also noticed what kind of crowd it was for the night. You only came in if you were invited. Obviously, many members of the BDSM community were here. For some reason, it made me lower my gaze. It was an automatic response.

Edward noticed. His hand on my hip held me close to him.

"Are you comfortable, baby?" he whispered in my ear.

I was more than comfortable.

"Yes, Sir."

"Fuck," he hissed under his breath.

It was the place, the time.

His fingers dug a little deeper into my flesh. I knew he loved this as much as I did.

I felt euphoric.

This was us. We adjusted ourselves according to the setting, and this was clearly not for Edward and Bella. *Ungh*. No, this was for Mr. Cullen and his little one.

I breathed deeply.

"Let me introduce you to some of my friends, sweet girl," he said huskily. His mouth was by my ear. "It's time for me to show everyone my most prized possession."

Jesus.

And then he did. He introduced me as his little Isabella to several of his friends and acquaintances, and for every appreciative look I received from a Dominant, Edward held me tighter and tighter. He was both possessive and eager to show me off. I loved it all. I loved when they complimented the photos of Edward and me, and I loved when they talked openly about me, as if I wasn't there.

"Well, well, well," I heard then. It was unmistakable. I hadn't heard his voice in so long.

Alec.

"Long time no see, Isabella," he said with a smirk.

"Good to see you again, Alec," I said politely, smiling. I remembered that he didn't like it when I called him Mr. Peters.

"Is Edward here taking care of you?" He grinned. Edward did, too. "I should've guessed that he was the lucky bastard who'd snatch you up. When Jazz told me about you two, I didn't believe him at first."

I could imagine. Back when I worked with Alec, he was approached by quite a few who wanted to know if I was looking for a Dom. I was never interested.

"I wasn't the only one *snatching*, my friend," Edward chuckled. "I never stood a chance."

"See? I can snatch, too," I teased.

Alec grinned wider. "Well, I'm happy for you both. And congratulations. I heard you got engaged. When's the big day?"

"December 19th," Edward replied. I couldn't wait. We wanted to get married sooner, but we thought it was perfect to get married around our one year anniversary. "Check the mail soon, Alec," he chuckled. "You've met Jazz's Alice, right?" Alec nodded. "Yes. Well, she's taken it upon herself to act as a wedding planner."

True. So true.

Alice and Esme both.

"Oh, I can see that," Alec laughed. "I've only met her once, but I saw immediately that she was a special one. I never thought I'd see Jasper whipped."

Their relationship was quite unique, definitely. They had entered a D/s relationship and, to my excitement, Alice loved it. However, they were

taking things slow, and whenever they didn't play, Alice had Jasper by the balls. But as long as they were happy...

"Anyway, I should let you mingle," Alec said. "Great turnout, by the way. The photos are exquisite."

"Thank you, sir, but it's all Jazz," I answered.

He shook his head. "Not all Jazz, Isabella. Your work is amazing as always. And who knew Edward here would turn out to be a model?" He chuckled heartily. "He's not half bad."

"Thanks, man," Edward replied dryly. Grin still in place, though.

~IdC~

The next couple of hours went by quickly.



(Manips by Lolypop82)

Starting at the beginning, Edward and I studied the photos from before I knew him. Then as we got closer and closer to the picture of him taking

me, I felt him standing behind me, hands roaming a little further than what was considered to be appropriate. In other words, he was driving me insane, and he knew it.

He whispered dirty words in my ear as we viewed the photos.

Things he wanted to do to me.

Things I wanted him to do to me.

Preferably yesterday.

But since Edward was a master of teasing, he stopped when we had looked at all the photos.

He put on a straight face as we were approached by more guests. He answered their questions about why we decided to have our faces shown, he chit-chatted and socialized, and... don't ask me how he was able. I wasn't. I was mush. I was needy and clingy. He loved that. He always did.

EPOV

"Enjoying yourselves?" I heard Jazz ask behind me.

"Very much," I said as Bella and I faced him. "Are you?"

Stupid question. I knew he was.

His show was a success, and had it not been for my putting a "sold" tag on the photo where I entered Bella for the first time, I would've been wrestling for it now. But that was mine. There was no chance in hell I'd let someone else bring that home. That was not to say the other photos weren't coveted, because they all were, hence Jazz's satisfied grin.

The only thing that could've made his night better was if Alice had been here, but we all knew she felt uncomfortable. After all, I was her godfather and Bella was her best friend.

"Understatement," he chuckled. Facing Bella, he added, "You look beautiful tonight, Isabella." That was another understatement. "I'm sorry I wasn't able to talk to you sooner."

"Don't apologize," Bella said, shaking her head. "It's your night. Enjoy it. You definitely deserve it."

It was Bella's night, too. When I suggested using Bella's erotic poems for the photos, Jasper agreed right away. So, each photo had text now. The words were almost transparent, brushed and shadowed, but you still saw them, and they were a perfect addiction to the line.

"I'd like to say it's *our* night," he corrected. "Without the two of you, this wouldn't be the outcome."

A journalist approached us then—again—and since publicity was important, we couldn't exactly turn her away.

"Mr. Whitlock, Mr. Cullen, Ms. Swan, I'm Leah Clearwater from *Seattle Art Forum*. Mind if I ask you a couple of questions?" she asked politely, recorder ready in hand.

I looked at Bella for her answer and wasn't surprised when she didn't shy away. She was proud of her occupation, as she should be.

"Go ahead," Jazz said with a nod.

I noticed that a few of the people around us stopped to listen, much like they had done during the other interviews.

"Thank you," she replied. "I was wondering whose idea this was. Mr. Whitlock, you were working with Ms. Swan before, am I correct?"

"Yes, that's correct," Jazz affirmed. "Isabella and I started working together in early November last year, which resulted in the photos where she is alone. Then we spent the holidays on Edward's island where the project grew."

Bella and I exchanged looks, because it was clear that Jazz was confident, but modest. It had been his idea from start, and though we may have worked hard together, the credit belonged to him.

"Jazz approached me with the idea," I told the journalist. "Isabella and I didn't hesitate."

"I see. And you and Ms. Swan were new in your relationship then?"

"Yes." I nodded once. "That's how we met; she was a family friend, joining us for Christmas."

"Love at first sight?" she wondered, smiling at Bella.

And how was that relevant when it came to *Taking Purity*?

"Um, close to it," Bella chuckled. "It was definitely instant attraction." She shrugged. "We matched and saw no reason to hold ourselves back."

"Not even your age difference?"

I pursed my lips. That question was just amusing nowadays.

"I'd say it's part of the appeal," Bella said, softly and politely, but still bluntly. Like me, she never felt like we had anything to hide. "Our differences are what make us click."

I squeezed her hip, definitely agreeing with her.

"Which shows in the photos," the journalist commented, thankfully leading us back on track. "But no matter how much you—as you said—*click*, it's quite controversial." She turned to Jazz again. "Were you ever worried how the photos, not to mention the line's name, would be received? *Taking Purity* says it all, doesn't it?"

I grinned at the mirth in Jazz's eyes. "And that would be?" he asked, arching a brow.

The journalist hadn't expected the tables to be turned on her.

I doubted she knew what *Taking Purity* was about.

But to save the woman from embarrassment, Jazz continued. "It's not about a man claiming a girl's virginity. Not even close. And as you can see in the photos, Isabella was always in focus. The photos are about her. A girl becoming a woman, and my documentation of it."

"Does a girl have to have sex in order to become a woman?"

Good question, but Jazz had the answer. There was no way a journalist—who now appeared to be quite opposed—would get the best of him. Jazz and I were hardly feminists in the sense this woman seemed to be, and I highly doubted we shared her views on gender roles, so I had an idea that this interview was about to turn into something entirely different, yet relevant to *Taking Purity*.

"Depends how you see it," Jazz replied simply. "But when you speak of a woman's body, I'd say sex is a part of becoming a woman, and same goes for boys becoming men. Definitely not all of it, but I see it as a rite of passage, much like puberty. And I'm not objectifying; like I said, it's the same for men as it is for women. This is *my* opinion, however, and we're all entitled to them, yes?"

"But it *is* objectifying," the journalist argued. "You have a much older man, clearly stalking his prey. And he *takes* her. The man—you, Mr. Cullen," she looked at me, "are the predator. You come off as strong and confident while the innocent girl stands helpless and weak."

I smirked. "I would never say that Isabella is weak, nor is she helpless. She owns me just as much as I own her, but you're right when it comes to my staking a claim."

"And how do you justify that?"

"Why do I have to justify anything?" I asked curiously. "As you can see—at least I hope you can—this line of photos is BDSM-related. It's not about right or wrong. It's not even about how you're supposed to view society, or anything like it. It's simply a way of living. Some enjoy it, some even need it, and some don't." I paused. "If a woman *wants* to be dominated, is that wrong?"

"No, of course not," she replied defensively.

"And if a man wants to dominate a woman, is that wrong?"

And now she was uncomfortable.

Quite hypocritical. Because it was easy to see that she was judging dominant males for their urges, even if there were woman in need of them. The poor, poor women she pitied.

"Not all women want to be independent," I added flatly. "And same goes for some men, because if you're questioning the lifestyle, I hope you know that it isn't only about men dominating women. It's an individual dominating another, regardless of gender."

She narrowed her eyes...first at me, then at Jasper, and we could all see her trying to come up with arguments, but she wouldn't find them here. And that was because we didn't see anything to argue about.

"But what are your thoughts, Ms. Swan?" She turned to Bella, who had been quiet so far. I knew why; because she shared Jasper and my view on this. "Don't you see how degrading it is for you to stand bound or kneeling before a man? Or are you not allowed to speak now?"

My eyebrows shot up.

Jazz and I both chuckled incredulously at the woman. She had no idea who she was talking to. If anything, Bella would be the one to rip her to shreds, not Jazz or me.

I knew my kitten, and she was very opinionated.

"The reason I haven't spoken is because I agree with my fiancé—and Mr. Whitlock for that matter," Bella said calmly. Damn, that felt good. Fiancé. "Why speak? Just for the sake of it? Just to prove that I'm not defenseless? As a woman, do I have to prove myself?" She tilted her head slightly. I saw the fire in her eyes. "First of all, by asking me if I'm not allowed to speak, you make assumptions that aren't only incorrect, but that are insulting. Second of all, I don't think you realize the power the submissive has."

"Care to explain?" Clearwater gritted out.

Bella was struggling to remain polite. "If I don't want to kneel, I won't. No one is forcing me. So, do I see it as degrading? That'd be a no. It's what I want. I don't want to be above Mr. Cullen. I want him to have that role. Being a submissive is just who I am—I can't change that. Nor do I think it's wrong."

"To be blunt, you want to kneel for Mr. Cullen."

Bella looked up at me, pleading with her eyes. She didn't want to be polite anymore. I nodded to her, silently allowing her to speak freely.

"If that pleases him," she told the woman sweetly. Jazz stifled a laugh. "If he wants me to bend over, right here and now, I will." *Jesus*, Bella. Sassy kitten. "But what I want you to know is that I *give* him my submission, and he knows my limits. He doesn't take it. Sure, we could've called it *Giving Purity*, but that's not how Mr. Whitlock, Mr. Cullen, or I see it. Because we don't *want* to. And as Mr. Cullen said, it's not about what's wrong or right. It's just how we want to live, and we wish to do so without judgment."

That was it.

The journalist nodded stiffly and thanked us for the interview before she left.

"I wonder what she'll write in her article," Jazz mused.

Bella grinned. "Well, that was fun."

"Sassy you," I murmured, dropping a kiss in her hair.

She just shrugged and buried her face against my chest.

"Tired?" I asked softly, rubbing my hand on her lower back.

"A little," she responded.

"Before you leave, I have an engagement present for you," Jazz told us with a grin. "I have it in the back." He gestured for us to follow him, which we did quite dumbly.

Once we reached the little office in the back of the gallery, Jazz ushered us inside. Then he headed over to the couch.

I smiled curiously, seeing a photo frame. And when Jazz turned it over and I saw what photo it was, I blinked slowly as a memory assaulted me.

In black and white, Bella and me. It was the moment before our first photo shoot had begun. Bella had just entered the playroom/studio. I was cradling her face in the photo, which was a close-up. It was exquisite, but what I saw most was our eyes.

Flashback

Her eyes were out of this world. Beautiful. Big, endlessly deep, shining, dark coffee brown.

"You look stunning," I whispered, watching as my hand cradled her soft cheek.

She closed her eyes and turned slightly toward my hand, and again there was that odd constricting in my chest. I saw the small smile that played on her pouty lips—it meant a lot. She looked truly comfortable in this setting, which made me feel indescribably good.

The sound of a click burst our bubble, and we both looked up to see a smirking Jazz, standing by the bed, holding a camera.

"Ready to begin?"

End Flashback

Already...back then, it was so clear that I adored Bella.

And the name Jazz had printed out on the black photo frame was perfect.

Devotion

"You remember I took this?" Jazz murmured.

I nodded, eyes still focused on the photo.

"That's incredible," Bella whispered.

She saw it, too—the significance.

"I figured it'd make a good present," he said. "You were in deep from the beginning."

Evidently.

Not that I needed visual proof to know it, but this confirmed how mutual it was...just days after we'd met.

Christ.

"Thank you," I said, furrowing my brow. It felt inadequate. "Really, Jazz. Thank you."

But of course, he just waved it off like it was no big deal.

"My pleasure," he said...as Bella tackled him in a hug. At least the seriousness of the moment was swept away by *that*, and Jazz and I chuckled at her.

"Come on, baby girl." I snickered. "Let's get you back to the penthouse."

She smiled sheepishly, thanking Jazz once more, and after deciding to meet up in San Francisco in a few weeks, we said goodbye to him.

~IdC~

"Hey, I forgot to ask," Bella said, opening the fridge. She was too cute. Still wearing her fancy makeup and jewelry from tonight, but the purple dress had been exchanged for baby pink pajama bottoms in flannel and a white tank top. Even her hair was up in its elaborate mess of curls and twists. "How did the meeting with Marcus go?"

It went as expected.

After Gianna's death, Marcus was understandably devastated. His passion for Volturi had faded a little, and it wasn't difficult to buy myself free from the contract we'd signed months ago.

I also expected him to ask if I knew something about Gianna's disappearance and demise.

I said no and expressed my condolences. As much as I hated her, I told him, I couldn't exactly wish the life out of someone. At that, Marcus sighed and nodded in understanding.

The police had nothing.

"It went well," I said, nodding in thanks when she handed me a bottle of water. "I told him I was leaving Seattle—permanently—and offered a large sum of money to get out of the deal." Sitting down by the small kitchen island, I removed my already-loosened bowtie and took off the cufflinks. "Gianna's death has made him care less about his company—he didn't put up a fight."

Bella twisted the cap off her water bottle and sat down across from me. She looked pensive. "I'm kinda curious how it all went down." Then she shrugged a little. "But I guess we'll never know what really happened to her, huh?"

I didn't reply.

Jenks, my father, and I were the only ones who knew the truth.

I intended to keep it that way.

I got what I wanted.

A certain tape had finally been found and destroyed; birds tended to sing when they were staring into the barrel of a gun. But there would be no more "singing" about this. Ever again.

"Let's go to bed, little one," I told her, smiling.

Chapter 37

EPOV

December

"Nervous?" Jazz asked, leaning back in the chair.

I cracked a half smile and took a sip from my whiskey.

Shook my head. "Anxious? Yes. Nervous? No."

At least I wasn't nervous *yet*.

I'd been waiting for December to arrive ever since I proposed to Bella, and now it was here. Along with December came people. People as in guests. Isla was packed with wedding guests, but it was quiet now; just Jazz, Alec, and I were awake.

The night before my wedding.

I never thought I'd be one to get married. Not before Bella.

"Cold feet?" Alec chuckled.

No, I didn't really answer that idiotic question.

Cold feet were the last thing I had to worry about. For both Bella and me. We were solid—simple as that. The past seven months had just proved that over and over again.

We had fallen into a routine we both loved, and there was hardly any work to it. When I had to go away on business, Bella joined me since she studied online.

After she had graduated from high school, I was curious about her plans. I remembered how she had told me that college wasn't for her and that she was happy being a model for as long as possible. But once she did graduate, I could see a change in her. She was becoming more and more involved with my work, and one night she admitted that she wanted to study art. She wasn't looking for a degree or anything. She simply wanted knowledge and experience, and since I had already told her that I was there for her, she didn't feel the need to work toward a fancy degree. She knew I would offer her a job, and she worked hard.

When she began her classes this fall, I could see a little glimpse of myself in her. I saw her passion for what she studied. I also saw determination, because she didn't enjoy all of it, but knew it would be beneficial to her. So, she went the same route I once did; only, I studied much longer to get those damn degrees. Art and business—one subject I loved and one I didn't. Bella turned out to be the same. The online class she was taking in business was not for her, but if she wanted to be more involved with Cullen Arts, she knew the knowledge would come in handy. All in all, she studied business, cultural anthropology, and art history. She was passionate about it from the start, and I could often find her in my study where I had my books.

I had asked her a few times if she didn't miss modeling, and she admitted that she did but only a little. After thinking about it a lot, she said she had prioritized her studies, but saw no reason why she couldn't do both. So,

when there was time, she accepted one of the many offers Tanya had. They were weekend gigs and didn't occupy much of her time. And since we both loved travelling, it was easy to just fly out for a weekend.

Like I said, we had a balance, and we loved our routine. When I travelled, she came with me and brought her school work with her, and when she had a modeling job, I went with her.

It was all very perfect, except for that...nagging...feeling in the back of my mind. Every so often it reminded me that I had to at least talk to Bella about children.

Did I want children?

I sighed.

I sipped my whiskey.

I dragged a hand over my face.

Yes. A part of me wanted children—or a child, at least—and that part of me grew everyday. I knew I had to talk to Bella about it, even if it resulted in a resounding no from her.

I swore to myself to take it to the grave, but I couldn't.

"You still haven't talked to Isabella, have you?" I heard Jazz say. A light accusation with narrowed eyes. Someone was perceptive. I had told Jazz about my newfound desire to have children. And he knew I hesitated to bring it up with Bella. But was that so weird? My beautiful soon-to-be-wife may be all woman, but she was only nineteen years old.

I was thirty-eight, and by the time Bella was ready...maybe I would be forty-five. Who knew? And that wasn't appealing to me.

"No, I haven't," I admitted.

I never meant to speak to Jazz about it, but after he had blurted out that he and Alice were going to try, I pretty much laid it out there. I wasn't surprised when he announced that they were going to start a family. That had always been Alice, and I knew this was their way of having it all. Alice definitely resented her mother for pushing her away, but Mary had still been an idol of some sort, which resulted in Alice's wish to be a stay-at-home wife...or mother. And Jazz...well, I had a feeling he was much like me. Before Alice, he hadn't thought about family. It didn't exist. And then Alice and Bella waltzed in and fucked us both up. In the best ways.

"You might be surprised," Jazz commented after filling Alec in about my situation. "She's all over Tia's son."

I nodded pensively. That was true, but it didn't mean Bella wanted children of her own.

I'd thought for a moment that she did this summer. It was shortly after my thirty-eighth birthday; my parents were visiting, along with Jazz and Alice, and I had overheard snippets of a conversation between Isabella and Alice. The topic was children and I could hear longing in Alice's voice. But when it came to Bella, I wasn't sure. One minute she was gushing over Santino and sighing dreamily, but then the next minute she clammed up and changed the subject.

"What's stopping you from talking it out with Isabella?" Alec wondered as he fiddled with his phone. "Why not just let her know, and...that's that?"

That was easy to answer. "I'm afraid she'll agree to something just because I want it."

Jazz grimaced a little, obviously disagreeing with me. "She's stronger than that, Edward."

"I agree." I nodded. "But she also wants to please me. Much like I want to give her everything she desires, she wants to give me everything *I* desire."

Alec's phone buzzed as he spoke. "Well, if you don't talk shit out, it'll cause a rift." He grinned at whatever he read on his phone; I figured he was messaging with his wife, who couldn't be here for the wedding. "Talk to her, Cullen. I'm gonna head to bed. Apparently, there's a wedding tomorrow." Always the funny guy. "Gotta look good, you know."

I sank down in my chair, letting my head fall back.

"And you think," I checked my watch, "five hours of sleep is going to make you look good?"

He reminded me a little of Emmett, only twenty years older. I was actually happy to see that Emmett had been able to come. It was Alice who had told me that there was no reason not to invite him. He hadn't done anything wrong, after all—like his parents had—which was very true. And since he was living on the West Coast now, attending UCLA, he didn't hesitate to come here for tomorrow. He even had a plus-one with him.

Thankfully not Rosalie. No, I was glad that she was out of our lives. She lived in Arizona now where she went to college.

"Tell Isabella that you want kiddos," Alec said firmly with a slap on my shoulder. Then he went upstairs.

Upstairs where many of our closest guests were sleeping.

Including my Bella.

We weren't exactly the traditional couple, and there was no separation for tonight. She belonged in my bed, with me, and that was final. We had my parents in another room, Alice and Jazz in theirs, Emmett and his date in

his room, and Alec in the last available one. But then we had the staff houses on the other side of the island, where we had Tanya and Kate, Carmen, Tia and Santino, Felix and Demetri, Scott and his date, as well as a few other friends. Last but not least, a few close acquaintances stayed the night in my apartment in Fort Bragg.

Full house to say the least.

And tomorrow was going to be insane. Christ, the caterers and servers were arriving in the morning, and with Carmen and my mother as their supervisors, I knew I was going to stay away from the house for as long as I could.

I wished I could squeeze in a moment with Bella, maybe take her to the beach hut, but I knew that was a no-go. Alice had given me a very long and very detailed rambling about what Bella was going to go through tomorrow to look—and I quote—absolutely flawless and radiant.

Like she wasn't flawless already.

"Edward," Jazz said, and I turned to him; he nodded at something behind me. "I'll leave you two to talk."

What?

"Thank you," I heard *Bella* say. Looking over my shoulder, I saw her walk over, wearing the white cotton shorts and white tank top I adored on her. "See you tomorrow, Jazz." She smiled, he kissed her cheek, and I was still a little out of it.

"I thought you were asleep, baby," I murmured, gesturing for her to sit on my lap. I put my whiskey glass down. She joined me quickly and snuggled close to my chest. "Hmm, you smell good." I kissed her hair.

"Something woke me up," she whispered.

"And what was that?" I asked, dropping a kiss on her forehead.

"Alec," she replied quietly, and before I knew it, she pulled her phone out of the waistband of her shorts. "He texted me."

I frowned.

She showed me the text.

Living room. Listen in, Isabella. You can thank me later – Alec, the Meddler.

My eyes widened as I connected the dots.

"That sneaky fucker," I muttered under my breath.

To my utter surprise, Bella was beaming. And she giggled, "Or maybe a helpful fucker."

I swallowed and looked her in the eye, trying to figure out if she had listened in or not. Because if she had...well, then she'd know about...what I wanted.

"Helpful?" I asked quietly.

She nodded and rested her forehead against mine.

"Very helpful," she whispered. Eyes soft but still intense. "Edward," she breathed. "I want that, too. I know we can find the perfect balance."

I blinked.

"Maybe not tomorrow and maybe not a bunch of them," she smiled, and her fingers were in my hair, "but I don't want to wait forever either, and..." She shrugged; I had to remind myself to breathe. "I don't know...maybe one or two?"

One...or...?

I licked my lips.

One or two?

One or two what?

Children? *Jesus*. Or one or two years before we started trying?

I had no idea but... Goddamn, I felt warm. She wanted children? With me. Christ, *yes. Anything.*

I could barely form a coherent sentence.

I cleared my throat. "One or two what?"

Her smile was shy. "One or two children."

Blinking slowly, I let it all sink in.

Relief.

Completion.

Love.

"This is where you say something," she chuckled nervously.

But I couldn't form a single word.

This woman had no idea that she'd just made me the luckiest man to walk this earth.

What I could do, though, was show her. So, I did. I cradled her face and kissed her passionately, pouring myself into every touch and kiss.

"Yes," I finally managed to say as she straddled me. "*God yes, Isabella.*"

Thankfully she understood me perfectly.

And for the next hour, I allowed myself to be ridiculously sappy and very...un-me...as I showed her how much I loved her. How much she completed me. How much I needed her.

In the dimly lit living room, right there in the plush chair, I showed her.

She showed me, too.

If there was one thing we knew, it was to read each other's bodies.

"Edward," she moaned softly, sinking down on me.

It was a slow burn.

Intense, sensual, and passionate.

I pulsed inside of her.

"I love you, Bella," I groaned quietly, lavishing her tits with open-mouthed kisses. My hands roamed her sides, her hips, her breasts, her ass. I met her movements with thrusts of my own. "Fuck," I breathed out in a shudder. She was hot and wet around me. Her finger nails dug into my shoulder blades. I grunted, thrusting harder. "Closer, baby."

She kissed me hard.

My eyes rolled back for a second.

I pushed her down on my cock, making her gasp as I sucked her tongue into my mouth.

Breathing labored.

She squeezed her eyes shut.

I couldn't love her more.

"Tomorrow," I moaned. "Fuck, I can't wait."

I felt her tense fiercely.

"Oh God, Edward—yesss..."

I sucked in a breath, feeling my orgasm approach.

But I needed to feel her first.

I cupped her tits, kneaded them, sucked and licked, loving the way she arched against me. And her pussy...fuck...drenched and constricting. I slid one hand down, I rubbed her clit, I whispered to her, I sucked on her neck... Closer... She was there.

"Edwa—" Her gasp was cut off as she climaxed hard.

I followed.

BPOV



The day was long. It was all about hair and makeup. And Alice annoyed the hell out of me. Good thing I was too happy to lash out at her.

Whenever she was close to earning herself a nice bitch-slap, I thought back on last night when Edward and I realized that we wanted the same thing. After that, I was able to be in the same room as Alice again.

And when I was in my dress, I was calm. Serene.

Nervous, yes. But confident and eager.

"Twenty minutes left," Esme said thickly.

The woman had been an emotional mess all day.

I was getting there now. To that emotional state, that is.

I breathed. Deeply.

We were getting married on the patio, instead of on the private beach that we had chosen first. It was December, meaning it was too windy and cold on the beach. Instead we had covered the pool with a see-through floor, and a massive tent enclosed the pool area. Twinkle lights and candles everywhere. Our closest friends. Alice was my maid of honor. Jazz was Edward's best man.

Jesus. Breathe, Bella.

"Are you okay?" Alice asked softly as she handed me my shoes.

I nodded, unable to speak.

"You look so beautiful," she whispered.

Still unable to speak, I smiled. I loved my dress. Knee-length, white with a tight bodice, embellished and perfect for a winter wedding.

Christ, I can't cry now.

"Don't cry, Alice," I begged. "You're gonna make me cry, too."

"Easier said than done." And then she threw her arms around me. I hugged her back. So hard. We had come a long way since last year. Now we had so much. The men we loved and adored to obey. Men we knew would do anything for us. We had homes where we felt safe and comforted. We knew what our futures held.

"I love you," I breathed out.

She sniffled and held me at arm's length. "Love you, too."

She was gorgeous in her short beige dress, and I smiled as my eyes zeroed in on the platinum choker around her neck. Like Edward, Jazz didn't spare any expense when it came to the woman he loved. They had it all, just like Edward and I. They had found their balance, too.

"We did good, huh?" I chuckled through my tears.

"We sure did," she replied with a firm nod. "Let's get you married, sister." She winked. "And then when you come back from your honeymoon, it's time to focus on my wedding."

And cue more tears.

Fucking hell.

But it was impossible to keep them inside of me. I was just so incredibly happy for us. No, we didn't have our parents, but we had something so much better: each other and our fiancés. We were family, through and through. Blood had nothing to do with it.

"Yours is going to be a spectacle." I snickered, smiling in thanks when Esme handed me a tissue. "How many wedding planners do you have now?"

"Funny, funny," she huffed playfully.

All right, I was exaggerating a little, but Alice and Jazz's wedding in eight months was going to be a lot bigger. Edward and I were aiming for simple. A simple ceremony and only our nearest and dearest in the attendance. But Alice and Jasper were going all out. Big church wedding with everyone they knew.

"Ten minutes, ladies," Esme murmured. "I'm going to find Carlisle."

Holy... Ten minutes.

"Ready?" Alice asked, and a new set of tears filled her eyes.

I breathed. I nodded. We made sure my makeup was perfect...again. Which it was.

The clock on the wall told me it was twenty past five. Yes, ten minutes.

"Deep breaths," she said, breathing with me.

And a few minutes later, Esme returned with a beaming Carlisle, who was going to walk me down the aisle.

"You're stunning, Bella," he said softly, kissing my cheek. "My son is a lucky man."

I'm the lucky one.

"How is he?" I asked.

"Edward? He's..." He chuckled lightly, shaking his head. "He's pacing." He smirked. "Jasper and Alec have him in the office downstairs, and he's...yeah, pacing."

Okay, I could definitely see that.

"He's eager to marry you," he whispered.

And I blushed.

.

.

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Then it was time.

Down the stairs. My arm was linked with Carlisle's.

I heard the song begin—the song Alice had hunted down and deemed perfect.

"I Belong To You" by Eros Ramazzotti and Anastacia. I agreed with her. It was perfect. It wasn't the focus, the song, but you still heard the quiet notes.

Deep breaths, deep breaths...as we stepped out on the patio.

Dimly lit. Twinkle lights and candles. Flowers—roses and lilies.

The guests stood up as we reached aisle.

...I hear your voice and all

The darkness disappears...

With one last watery smile shared, Alice walked.

I kept my eyes on her back.

Carlisle kissed the top of my head.

...Every time I look

Into your eyes

You make me love you...

Then it was our turn. Slowly but deliberately, Carlisle and I walked down the aisle.

On the see-through floor that covered the pool.

...Questo inverno finirà

I do truly love you

Fuori e dentro me

How you make me love you

Con le sue difficoltà

I do truly love you...

And I saw him.

My breathing hitched.

Eyes welled up.

...I belong to you

You belong to me

Forever...

Just the two of us, standing before the minister.

Our eyes were locked.

It was love, admiration, adoration, devotion, reverence.

"Beautiful," he whispered with a soft expression.

I smiled through my tears.

The minister spoke, but I didn't really listen.

Or maybe I did, but...

I don't know.

But then I did. Listen, that is.

Because this was it.

"Edward Anthony Cullen, will you have this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife, to love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, and forsaking all others, keep you only unto her, for so long as you both shall live?"

Edward squeezed my hand. *That smile...*

"I will."

Oh, God.

"And Isabella Marie Swan, will you have this man to be your lawfully wedded husband, to love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, and forsaking all others, keep you only unto him, for so long as you both shall live?"

I took a deep breath.

"I will." *I'm yours.*

Then there was a tissue in my hand, thanks to Alice.

It was needed.

Sweet Jesus, I was all over the place.

"Repeat after me," the minister said to Edward.

And then he did. He repeated the vows that would bind us together forever.

I was lost in him.

"I, Edward Anthony Cullen, take you, Isabella Marie Swan, to be my lawfully wedded wife...to have and to hold, for better for worse...for richer for poorer...to love and to cherish...from this day forward."

Simple vows, spoken by so many others before us, but...they still hit home. Everything inside of me was alive. Fluttering and making me shiver.

And after taking another deep breath, I vowed to my Edward.

"I, Isabella Marie Swan, take you, Edward Anthony Cullen, to be my lawfully wedded husband...to have and to hold, for better for worse...for richer for poorer...to love, cherish and obey, from this day forward."

I made the decision to bring back "obey" into the age old vow.

Edward's eyes darkened.

A beaming Alice handed me his's ring, just as Jazz gave Edward my ring.

Again, Edward followed the minister's instructions.

He slid the wedding ring onto my finger.



"With this ring, I thee wed," he murmured, and...the *wink*.

My turn.

It had never been in my nature to be possessive, but...good *God*, the feelings rushing through me when I slid the wedding band onto his finger...it was *surreal*.

"With this ring, I thee wed," I whispered thickly.

His eyes glistened.

"I love you," I mouthed, because I had to. I didn't care that the minister was speaking. I just had to get that out.

"...I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss."

Married!

He was there, my *husband*, cradling my face, and that smile was there, too.

"I love you too, Mrs. Cullen." It was a whisper right before he captured my lips with his. "My beautiful wife."

Mrs. Cullen.

Bella Cullen.

I whimpered.

The kiss was full of passion and promises.

Unfortunately we had to break the kiss, but our eyes stayed locked as we turned to our guests as husband and wife.

I heard the cheers, the applause, I saw the flashes of cameras in my periphery, and I heard the music begin again.

"Shall we?" he murmured, kissing my knuckles.

I smiled up at him. "We shall."

'Cause there was party with our name on it.

~IdC~

The night was full of laughter and sappy moments that made Edward and my wedding perfect.

We ate.

And ate.

The food was amazing and everywhere. Another Italian feast. A buffet. And since I had barely eaten anything today, I sure took advantage. Hell, we all did. This very much included Emmett, who was sitting two seats away from me, with his new girlfriend, Angela. He was loud, she was quiet, but for some reason they completed each other.

It was easy to see how quickly that dimpled muscle man had fallen for his girl. Even Edward commented on how Angela seemed to ground Emmett. It was nice to see, especially since I knew that he shared my upbringing.

Shitty parents weren't in attendance, thankfully. Like I said, the night was perfect.

If only Esme could quit crying.

Not kidding.

"She's at it again," I whispered to Edward, who sat next to the mentioned woman in tears.

"I'm ignoring her," Edward whispered back, resting his arm on the back of my chair. "Can you imagine how she'll react when we tell her about children?"

A laugh escaped me.

He was right.

We had agreed to keep our plans to ourselves, opting to tell friends and family when the day came and I was pregnant. No reason to tell people now. But it was clear that the day we told Esme would be an emotional one.

"When that day comes, we'll fly far away and tell her over the phone," I joked.

Hopefully that day will come soon.

Like I had told Edward, not tomorrow or the day after, but...I didn't want to wait forever either.

"Deal," Edward replied with a wink.

And our night continued.

We enjoyed it all, savored it all. Toasting, dancing, mingling, eating cake and...laughing at Edward as he and Emmett shoved Carmen's struffoli down their throats... Opening gifts, more dancing and kissing...

I tried to convince Edward to tell me where we were going for our honeymoon...again...but the man wouldn't budge.

Not even an hour before we were leaving would he tell me.

Our bags were packed, and we escaped to our bedroom to change into more comfortable clothes, while the party continued downstairs. I refused to give up. I wanted to know. I was more than a little curious, and even contemplated opening the bag that Alice had packed for me. But I didn't.

"Please," I said again—with a pout—as I slid my shoes off.

"Nope," he chuckled and walked over to our closet. "You'll find out when we reach the airport."

Ugh.

The airport. Well, that was far away, because we were flying out of San Francisco, and that was three hours away from Fort Bragg. Don't ask me why we were flying out of San Francisco, because we never did. Edward's jet was right outside Fort Bragg. On the tiny airfield outside town.

With a huff, I stripped out of my dress. Then I walked over to the bed where I had laid out the black skirt and dark red cardigan Alice had approved for me. Well, actually it was Edward who had approved it. But Alice told me. Yes, she knew where Edward was taking me.

"You told Alice," I muttered, still unable to believe it. "And Jazz knows, too."

But not me.

"Mmhmm," he hummed, barely paying attention to me as he picked out a pair of black chinos and a dark grey pullover. "Alec, Tanya, Kate, and my parents know, too."

I gaped at him. Or his back, because he wasn't facing me.

"Oh, and Carmen," he added. "And Felix. And Demitri... Tia... Pretty sure I told Emmett after dinner, too."

Son of a...!

"So, pretty much...*all* of them?" I asked in disbelief.

"Many of them, yes," he told me. He walked to his side of the bed with the clothes he'd chosen. Then there was the eyebrow cocked at me. "Do you have a problem with that, little one?"

His eyes were hungry as they roamed my body.

Hmph.

Yes, I have a problem.

"No," I replied sarcastically, rolling my eyes for good measure.

He cleared his throat before he spoke again. "Isabella, I'd rather see you behave on our wedding night. I don't *want* to punish you, but I *will* if you act out. Are we clear?"

"Shhh-" *it*.

I think I just ruined my panties.

And because I was a horny mess, I had to push. "How would you punish me?" I asked coyly, walking around the bed. Still only wearing a white strapless lace bra with a matching thong. "Would you bend me over and give me a *spanking*?"

He stared at me with a blank expression.

A flat expression, which told me that I wasn't fooling him.

He knew I wanted something now.

I could never hide it.

He knew me.

Fuck.

"*Kneel*," he gritted out.

Holy fuck.

I lowered my gaze to the floor automatically and obeyed, kneeling before him.

What had I gotten myself into?

"My sassy little slut," he whispered. I heard him unzip his pants. "Maybe we should just put that mouth to better use."

That wasn't a punishment.

So, what was?

As if reading my mind, Edward answered. "Remember the time we spent in the playroom in Seattle?"

Fuck. Yes, I remembered.

It was pleasure without release.

"Answer me!" he demanded.

I gulped. "I remember, Sir."

Why, oh *why* would I do this stupid shit tonight of all nights?

My wedding night!

"I'm not sure you remember," he said dryly. "If you did, you wouldn't misbehave like a little brat." His pants were pushed down, pooling around his feet. Boxers, too. "So, here's what we're going to do."

He took one step, and if I looked up, I'd be right there. In reach.

"You're going to suck me off, Isabella. Right now. Then we're going to go on our honeymoon." He fisted my hair...and yanked it back. I gasped at the sting. "And when we come back, we're going to revisit that playroom in Seattle."

That was a promise.

His eyes were dark, stern, feral.

"Am I making myself clear, Isabella?"

"Yes, Sir," I whimpered.

He nodded once. Just a dip of his chin.

And said, "Now, be a good little girl and suck my cock."

I could have it all.

I *had* it all.

I had my husband, my lover, and my owner.

So, I obeyed and sucked him into my mouth.

Because I was his wife, his lover, and his property.

My tongue swirled around the head of his cock. Teeth grazed lightly. I massaged his balls. He thrust down my throat, making me gag around him. In return, I was rewarded by loud moans. I was the one who always satisfied him. Only me.

I sucked harder.

"Goddamn, baby girl," he grunted. "That's it..." He held me fast. My nose touched his pubic bone. I swallowed around him. I squeezed my eyes shut. "Fuck, my sweet little cocksucker."

I pleased him.

He took, I gave.

"Close, baby," he groaned.

Without restraint, he fucked my mouth.

My hands on his thighs.

Then he came.

"Fuck...*fuck*—so good, Bella... *Jesus*..."

I was a good girl and swallowed everything he gave me.

Licked him clean.

I lived for it.

It wasn't how I expected to spend the first part of my wedding night.

It was better.

"Is my good girl back now?" he asked breathlessly, tilting my chin up.

"Yes, Sir," I replied.

We weren't going to change.

Epilogue

6 years later...

EPOV

"I cannot believe this—look at him," Carmen muttered and shook her head at William. "He's worse than you, Tesoro."

I snickered.

It was true, though.

William was worse than I was when it came to flying. He lived for it. So, when I'd told Bella that I had to go to Cullen Three in Seattle for a photography viewing, William immediately demanded that he would be going with me. I didn't exactly refuse him. And I had Carmen traveling with me, too. That helped.

"We gots to hurry, Daddy," William groaned. He was trying to make me walk faster by tugging on my hand. "The plane fly soon!"

"Easy there, buddy," I chuckled. "We have another hour before we board."

He harrumphed.

Impatient little man.

Another trait he might have gotten from me.

"Come here, *piccolo tesoro*," Carmen said, picking him up. "Let's sit down for a moment, *si?*"

Sea-Tac was busy this morning. Many flying home over the holidays.

"I'm just going to give Bella a call," I told them. "And, Carmen?" She looked up at me from her seat, though her focus was still on the pouting William in her lap. "Don't give him more candy. Bella will have my head."

She just laughed.

I didn't. Because Bella was never pissed at Carmen.

With a sigh, I walked a few feet away, so that I could call Bella without having William shouting out for her...or Chelsea for that matter.

Christ, I missed them. Even if it had only been three days without them.

"Cullen Four, this is Isabella Cullen speaking—how may I help?"

I smiled.

"Hello there, Isabella," I said smoothly.

"Edward!" she gasped. *"God, I miss you, sweetheart. Are you on your way back?"*

"We sure are," I murmured, looking over at Carmen and William. "We're at Sea-Tac."

"So, William's all over the place?" she guessed. I could practically hear the smile in her voice.

"Pretty much," I chuckled. "No, he's okay. Eager to see you and Chelsea. As am I. Is she there by any chance?" I asked hopefully.

"No, sorry," she said softly. *"Alice and Jazz took her, Braden, and Lily to Central Park for hot chocolate."*

I frowned but tried to make sure my worry didn't seep through as I spoke. "Isn't it too cold?" When William and I had left New York three days ago, there had been total chaos, and our flight had nearly been cancelled due to a snow storm. "See, this wouldn't happen if you worked on the West Coast, kitten."

"You and your aversion to cold weather," she giggled. "You know, winter is supposed to be cold. And it's Christmas, sweetheart. Ever heard of a white Christmas?" Oh, she was all teasing, that one. *"It's about time we experienced one."*

"I grew up in Chicago, sweet girl. I think I know cold," I deadpanned, but I was unable to withhold the smile. The image of watching my children play in the snow wasn't unpleasant. At all. For heaven's sake, now I couldn't wait. "As long as she's bundled up properly."

"You do know that your parents are here, right?"

She was right.

My mother would never let Chelsea out without fifteen layers of warmth.

"Point taken," I chuckled. "All right. I'll let you get back to work. Tell Chelsea I love her."

"I will, and give Will a kiss from me." I heard the smile again. "Love you, Edward. So much."

"Love you more, baby. I'll see you soon."

After hanging up the phone, I returned to Carmen and William, smiling when he bounced over to my lap.

"You talk to Mommy, Daddy?"

"Yep," I said, resting my forehead against his. I loved how much he looked like Bella. The only thing he got from me was eye color and impatience. "You ready to celebrate Christmas?"

His eyes lit up. "Yes!"

Well, what child wouldn't be?

And I had to agree with Bella on this year's location. Since she was still working on her project in New York, we had decided to spend the holidays there, and before I knew it, our family decided to do the same. My parents flew out yesterday, though Esme had spent most of her fall there, since she was involved with Bella's project. We also had Jazz and Alice there with their five-year-old Lily and two-year-old Braden.

I had to smirk at the memory of Alice pregnant at her wedding. *That* sure wasn't in her plans, and she was quite put out when she realized she wouldn't be wearing her fancy designer dress. But it all worked out, and just a month after the wedding, their daughter was born.

And then, a few weeks later, I thought I was going to have a heart attack when Bella told me she was pregnant. Christ, I never expected to feel that much. Granted, I knew I was going to be ecstatic. I had been waiting for it, after all. But it was...overwhelming. And it gave me my son. William Anthony Cullen.

The day I held my son for the first time... Jesus, it was indescribable.

Little did I know that I would feel that all over again just a few months later.

"Tired?" I murmured as he snuggled closer to me. He nodded sleepily, and that was just fine by me. Hopefully he could get some sleep on the plane.

"Is Chelly with Mommy?" he mumbled against my neck.

“Yes,” I smiled and kissed his dark brown hair, “and Nana and Grampa, too.”

I felt his smile against my skin.

“I’m going to call Tia,” Carmen said lightly. “I’ll be back in a moment.”

I nodded in acknowledgement.

She rarely left Isla, but this year she accepted our invitation to spend Christmas with us in New York, stating that she wanted Tia and Felix to spend that time alone—with Santino and their one-year-old twins. Tia and Santino had only been in America to visit, but that had changed when Tia met Felix.

In actuality, though, I knew Carmen needed to relax. The twins weren’t easy on her. The fact that she had herself to blame was another matter. She spoiled them all. Including Chelsea, William, Braden, and Lily.

I had no idea how many times Jazz thanked God for not living too close to Carmen. Even though San Francisco was only three hours away from Isla, and they visited often, Braden and Lily were spoiled as it was.

Unfortunately, he couldn’t blame anyone for that, because the man who was once defined by his lifestyle—being a Dom and only a Dom—was now completely whipped when it came to his children.

I wasn’t much better.

It took some time to get used to, but I quickly realized that Chelsea and William had me wrapped around their fingers.

And it had stayed that way.

The only thing I could comfort myself with was that Bella and I never changed when it came to our relationship. We were equals when it came

to our children, of course, but the times we travelled without Chelsea and William, we could relax and be ourselves. Not that we left them often, but we had a few days out of the month where we had obligations that took us away from the two.

Then, of course, we had our bedroom.

That was still our place.

And Bella was right. We did find the perfect balance. Just like we always had.

Had there been tough times? Obviously. But we took it all in stride and worked hard.

The first year after William was born was the most difficult one. Bella studied and worked as much as she could, even while taking care of two children. With my help, of course, but unfortunately I still had to travel a lot. Luckily, I could bring my Chelsea with me often.

"Time to board, Tesoro." Carmen's voice brought me back. I nodded to her, picking William up gently, and then we walked through the VIP lounge.

I was eager to reach my wife and daughter.

~IdC~

As soon as we were seated in first class, I went through my routine. William sat in the window seat; I had his bag of toys and snacks ready for when he woke up, and I had my laptop and next year's schedule. We had six months left before Bella moved her office to Cullen Five in San Francisco. Six months of flying across the country. Six months of working from New York more than Isla. And eight months until Chelsea started kindergarten in Fort Bragg.

We couldn't wait.

Flying could be tedious, but it also gave me time to work.

"Daddy?"

"Yeah, buddy?" I hummed, pulling up my laptop. Once we were airborne, I'd power it up. "I thought you were asleep." I looked down at him and smiled as he yawned and pulled his blanket up to his chin.

"Where's my bed?" he mumbled.

I chuckled quietly. "We're not on the jet, Will. Remember that Emmett borrowed it?"

It had been Bella and my wedding gift to Emmett and Angela when they got married over Thanksgiving. Since Angela was in graduate school, they couldn't go on their honeymoon until now, so Bella and I had sent them to Mexico for Christmas, and the jet was a part of it.

"Oh," he replied, furrowing his brow. Then he noticed that there were actually people around us. "No bed here?"

"No." I snickered. "But I'm sure you'll survive."

Thankfully it was time for liftoff, which distracted William.

"We flying now, Daddy!" he exclaimed with his face glued to the window.

I, again, thanked every higher power for blessing me with two children who loved to travel.

We knew it was time to settle down, though. Especially since Chelsea would turn five soon, but we were actually looking forward to it now. This was why Bella had chosen Cullen Four in New York for her project. She

wanted to experience working there before we retreated back to the West Coast.

After next summer, we would live on Isla permanently, and we would both work from home, though we'd still have to travel a couple of times a month. Me to...well, I'd go everywhere for work, and Bella to San Francisco.

This fall had been her busiest so far, and I couldn't have been prouder. She had blossomed, truly, and now played a big part at Cullen Arts. It started with studies and following me around, but hard work soon brought her to Cullen Five in San Francisco where she and my mother started working together. At the time, she was pregnant with William and couldn't work too often since we lived on Isla, so we ended up buying a house in San Francisco, which meant less travelling for her. It was through my mother's foundation that they used Cullen Five for an art show that would raise money for shelters and free health clinics. Two photographers had worked for two years putting their show together, and when they had approached the Platt Foundation, my mother was sold. As was Bella.

The photos were all done in sepia tones and showed children, foster homes, and old group homes. Each photo held a story. Literally. Printed in black. If the photo was of a group home, the story was about said group home; it gave the viewer knowledge about how horribly many of these children lived. Same went for the seventy-four photographs that were of children. Children of all ages. Each photo held their story.

In the end, our entire family was involved. Carlisle left his job and started a free health clinic, my mother travelled around the country to host charity events, and Bella brought the art show to Cullen Two in Chicago, Cullen One in LA, and Cullen Three in Seattle. She was passionate, to say the least, and I was in awe of her hard work. She loved it.

However, I was also worried. She pushed herself to the limit, and every night when we went to bed, I could see that her heart was in it a little too much. If I hadn't travelled with her, I wouldn't have noticed it, but I *was* travelling with her. Granted, I didn't spend my days with her in the galleries, because I had work of my own, so it wasn't until we reached our hotel suite each night, or our apartment, that I saw how stressed out she was. And since she was pregnant, I was even more worried.

That was when she told me about one of the photos. I had seen them all, of course, and instantly knew which one she was talking about when she mentioned one name.

Chelsea.

Bella told me that one of the photographers, along with three sets of foster parents, had brought a few of the children in, back when the photos were displayed in San Francisco. They had all been running around in the gallery, excitedly checking out their photos.

My wife admitted that she had fallen in love with little Chelsea. Since then, she had followed Chelsea's case.

I remembered feeling weary and...well, rather stunned. We were in Chicago at the time, so there wasn't much I could do about anything. But her words followed me. Every day as I worked, I thought back on what Bella had told me. It was clear that she wasn't getting over her feelings, and in the meantime, I didn't know what to think. I wasn't involved the way she was.

So, a couple of months later, when it was time to leave Chicago, I didn't follow Bella home to Isla.

I headed straight to San Francisco.

Two days later, I had read Chelsea's file.

I felt the knot in my stomach. The knot that reminded me over and over that I had so much in common with this little girl. Her father had been abusive. He'd been a drunk and a fucking drug addict. In the end he beat his nine-months pregnant girlfriend to death before he shot himself in the head—a shot that alerted the neighbors and soon made them dial 911. It was a miracle that they managed to save Chelsea.

My biological father may not have killed Esme, but who knew what would've happened if Carlisle hadn't stepped in?

The information brought me to Sausalito and my parents' home. They had copies of every photo from the art show, and I remember studying Chelsea's photo for hours.

I tried to guess her eye color and hair color—since the photo was in sepia.

I tried to figure out what the hell I was doing.

Then again, deep inside of me, I knew I had already made the decision.

"Here's a photo of her and Bella from when Chelsea visited the gallery," my mother had said, once I admitted to them why I was in Sausalito in the first place. "I'm glad she finally opened up to you about Chelsea. She's a lovely little girl."

That picture was now in my wallet.

Dark blue eyes, round and incredibly expressive, and dark brown, curly hair. A toothy grin that lit up a room.

No wonder my wife fell in love with her.

Another two days later I met her, and I fell in love, too.

Three months after William was born, we finally brought Chelsea Grace home with us.

The adoption process was long. Tiring. But so worth it.

~IdC~

"I wanna walk, Daddy," William said, squirming as I carried him from baggage claim.

"Nope," I said. "And you know why."

Damn runner, that one.

"Caaaaarmeeen," he whined.

"Nice try, Will," I chuckled, tickling him a bit. "But Carmen won't save you."

"Listen to your daddy," Carmen said, although I could see that all she wanted was to say yes to the boy. She always did. "And soon you will see Chelsea again."

Ah yes. He sure adored his big sister.

"I'm tired," Will mumbled, dropping his forehead to my shoulder. Tired? Like I didn't know that already. "And hungry, Daddy."

"I know, baby," I murmured. "We're gonna get something to eat as soon as we get to the apartment."

"What're we gonna eat?" Then he lifted his head. "Can we eat Anthony's? Please? *Please?*"

"Sure," I chuckled at him and kissed his forehead. "We can eat Anthony's. Just don't tell Chelsea."

And now he was smug.

"What are Anthony's?" Carmen asked curiously.

"Special for Daddy and me!" William exclaimed proudly. "*Only* me and Daddy. And Chelly mad 'cause she don't have special food with Enzo."

But Will didn't know that Enzo had named a dessert after Chelsea.

All boys were competitive—mine was no exception.

"There's an Italian restaurant in our neighborhood," I explained to Carmen. "I take William there when we want to get away from the girls," I winked at Will, "And Enzo, the owner, he named a pizza after us."

"Ah," she said, now understanding.

"And I'm Anthony and Daddy's Anthony," Will informed her.

Carmen nodded like it was new information to her.

"Ooh, Bellezza!" she gasped then, and I quickly followed her gaze until I saw her.

Standing there in the baggage claim with my Chelsea.

"Mommy!" Will called out.

My feet carried me faster; I only saw them.

We were supposed to take a cab, but...

"Now *this* is a lovely surprise," I said, smiling widely at my girls. Squatting down, I let William go to Bella as Chelsea threw her arms around me.

"Hello, Miss Chelsea."

"Hi, Daddy!" she giggled. "I missed you."

I chuckled and positioned her on my hip as I stood up. "I missed you too, little angel. So much."

I smiled, pulling my Bella closer, and it didn't matter that we had two children clinging to us. Nothing was going to stop me from having her close.

"God, I missed you, baby," I murmured, cupping her neck. I kissed her softly. Again and again. "Three days felt like three weeks."

"I agree." She hummed against my mouth. "Which was why Chels and I decided to meet you here."

"Love you," I mumbled, pecking her one last time. "And thank you for coming to the airport."

"Anytime, sweetheart."

~IdC~

"We'll be back in two hours," I told my mother as I handed over a sleeping Will to her. "Just call if there's a problem."

I didn't really like leaving my children. We'd only been back in New York for two days, and so far we had spent most of the time with my parents, Carmen, Jazz and Alice, and their kids. In other words: we'd spent the majority of our two days at my parents' penthouse at Sutton Place. But it was Christmas, so I understood that alone-time would come later.

Luckily, though, I wasn't going to be gone for long today. It was Christmas Eve and dinner was three hours away. But first I had to go down to Cullen Four to discuss Bella's project.

"Hmm? Did you say something, dear?"

I sighed, not surprised. Whenever my parents babysat Will and Chelsea, it was like Bella and I didn't exist.

The day Bella and I told them about the pregnancy, my mother fainted.

Not joking.

Instead of answering her, I squatted down in front of Chelsea. "Be good to Nana and Grampa, okay?" She nodded with that everlasting smile of hers. Said smile owned me. "Good. A kiss."

"Hurry back, Daddy," she told me sternly before she pecked me. "And bring Mommy with you."

I mirrored her stern expression. "I promise, Miss Chelsea. I promise."

That earned me the giggles.

"All right, baby," I chuckled, standing up. "I'll see you soon. Love you."

"Love you, too!"

~IdC~

Thirty minutes later, our driver parked outside of the gallery. I hurried once I left the car, eager to get out of the fucking snow. Bella was right. Cold weather wasn't my thing.

"Fucking Christ," I muttered under my breath as I entered the gallery.

I looked up, noticing Bella with her back to me as she stood in front of a white wall. There were movers, like she had mentioned, that were currently hanging up massive frames that were a part of the project.

"Sorry, we're closed for the holidays," she said, slightly over her shoulder, but she still didn't take her eyes off the frames. Then she spoke to the movers. "A little more to the left."

I just watched her for a moment.

She was in one of her many elements.

There was no way I was ready to interrupt.

Dressed in a black pencil skirt, dark red heels with a snug, matching button-down, she came off as fierce and extremely independent. And it wasn't until I was near that you'd notice her true nature. She loved this. She loved being in charge of her own project, and her employees adored her. She was fire and passion. Yet, I knew that once those heels came off and she was home, she was my sweet girl all over again.

This was a persona of some sort, but it was needed if you were in charge.

I loved it all.

I found it sexy as hell to see her this way, because I knew I was the only one with the power to bring her to her knees. Literally.

"I said we're closed," she called again.

I smirked and placed my coat on the stool behind the counter.

"Even for the owner?" I asked, walking toward her. She spun around, and...ah, the blush. Gaze lowered.

There's my girl.

"Sorry," she said sheepishly, meeting me in the middle of the gallery. "I thought you were coming after lunch." I pursed my lips, and she checked her watch. "Oh...wow, time flies."

"So it would seem," I chuckled, dipping down to kiss her. She returned the kiss with equal passion, and fuck, my body reacted. *Jesus*. I stroked her tongue with mine. She was defenseless. "Mmm, I think it's time to stop, sweet girl," I muttered, slowing the kiss down. "I don't have that much restraint."

She knew that.

I had fucked her in every gallery she had worked in.

Including this one.

It wouldn't take much for me to tell the movers to leave.

"Damn it," she whimpered, chewing on her lip as she backed away. She stopped chewing on her lip when I shot her a look to quit, though. Good girl. "Okay..." She took a deep breath. Then smiled. "Can I show you around? We're hanging up the final pieces now."

"Of course," I said, pushing up the sleeves on my shirt. I was curious, to say the least. It had been her project for the past five months, and I had only seen snippets so far. She had free rein, because I trusted her, and after she had told me her idea, I knew it would be another success.

The project was called *For The Future*, and the artists weren't really artists. They were children, all living with foster families here in New York. The goal was to raise money for community centers, which was why my mother was involved again. The two photographers who led us to Chelsea were also involved, and their job was to document the project.

"Okay, let's start at the beginning," Bella said, gesturing for us to move back toward the door. "We have thirteen pieces, and I was thinking about having an auction instead of putting a price tag on them."

I nodded thoughtfully, eyes on the first frame. The piece was massive, holding photographs and drawings, all created by children between the ages of six and thirteen. Sadly, most of these children would never find new parents. Parents wanted infants, toddlers, not pre-teens and teenagers.

"I think that's smart," I agreed, going through different marketing ideas in my head. Each frame had a theme. This one was obviously "Love." There were pictures and drawings of hearts, hand-holding, and affection.

Everything was in black, white, and shades of grey. But the frame was dark red. "What have they used for the drawings?" I asked curiously.

"Watercolors, oil paint, and charcoal," she answered.

"And how many children are involved?"

"Thirteen. Eight boys and five girls."

I nodded again, and we moved onto the next frame.

They were all perfectly put together, and thanks to the theme each frame had, it didn't look too cluttered.

The gallery, which was rectangular with white walls and a black concrete floor, was the perfect size for this project. It wasn't too full. You wouldn't get distracted by anything, and you'd be able to take your time walking around to view the thirteen frames.

When we reached the northern wall where the movers had just finished with the final frames, I was rather stunned.

Those three frames, in red, white, and blue, all held photos of the children as they painted, drew, and photographed. The photos varied in size; some were tiny, just a couple of inches...hmm...

They were all connected.

One frame had the word "For" and the second had "The," and the last one had "Future." They belonged together in my opinion.

"Will these be up for auction, too?" I asked. It was clear that these three frames were taken and put together by Liam and Maggie—the two photographers. "Or just the ones created by the children."

"Um, no. These are gifts," she said, pointing at the three frames. "Maggie and Liam gave them to Esme's foundation for the money she's already donated."

I smirked.

"My mother doesn't waste time."

She was a giver, there was no denying that.

"So...what do you think?" she asked quietly. "Any ideas for PR?"

I stared at the photos pensively. "We want to attract larger companies for this. They have the funds, and pieces like these, in this size, often end up in lobbies and reception areas."

"So, they can show off how much they're helping the less fortunate," Bella filled in dryly. "With one of these hanging on their walls, people will think they're heroes."

True.

"They won't be appreciated," she added. "The art will only work as proof of the company's donation."

"You're right," I said bluntly. It was sad but true. "However, it's the money we're after. They have the money that is needed to make the improvements."

"Yeah, I know," she sighed. "It's a win-win, right?" She smiled ruefully.

I pulled her to my chest, understanding her, but it was for the greater good. Bella would rather see the frames going off to owners who would appreciate them for what they were. Art made by children. Hell, she'd probably want to see these in the British Museum or the Guggenheim. But

Bella was a woman who treated one of Will's many cluttered drawings as if it were a Monet or Picasso.

One of the many reasons I loved my wife.

She was all heart.

"Mrs. Cullen, we're all ready to go," I heard one of the men say behind us.

"Oh, okay," Bella replied, turning to face them. "Thank you for coming in today, even though it's Christmas Eve." She smiled gratefully. "I'll see you again on the 28th, then?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Once the three movers had left, I decided it was time to get this out of the way so I could celebrate Christmas with my wife and family.

"Marketing," I said, getting us back on track. "Have you decided on a date?"

"Yes," she nodded, "I was thinking March 2nd." She motioned for us to go to the counter, and I followed, knowing that she had the gallery's calendar there. "We need at least two months to market it properly, right?"

"Give or take a week or two." I nodded.

"Right... Well, in February, there is one opening, but it's right after Mina Rivera's exhibit," she said pointedly.

I chuckled and nodded in understanding. Rivera was a very talented painter. However, she only painted nudes, and I saw Bella's point.

Displaying art made by children right after Rivera's exhibit wasn't exactly appropriate.

"So..." She sighed, flipping the pages in her calendar. "I called Kate's brother, Caius Aro, and asked him if he could show his work from National Geographic in February instead. He said yes right away since his work is already finished. So, March 2nd, then and three weeks from that date."

"Sounds good," I said, pulling out my Blackberry. I added the information, also making a note to call the photographer I usually used for PR here on the East Coast. I paid him well, and he was always on standby for me.

"When's the next show here?"

"January 11th."

"Good. That will give the photographer plenty of time to take shots in here before we move these to storage."

"Shit, I haven't booked that."

I waved her off. "Cullen Four has a permanent space in Jersey. These frames will be safe there until the opening."

"Oh, okay." She breathed out in relief, smiling at me. "I guess I just have to book transport then, right?"

She knew this. She knew her job. She had come far.

"Correct," I said with a grin. "I'd say you're ready to take over Cullen Five, baby girl."

Again with the blush. Always so humble. "I couldn't have done it without you, Edward," she said sincerely. "You've taught me so much."

"You've worked hard," I countered.

The damn woman never took credit.

"Fine," she said with a tightlipped smile. "Before we go to Carlisle and Esme's, can I, uh...show you something?"

"Sure," I told her, a little confused. Because right now she seemed to be hesitant, apprehensive...

Without another word, she led me back to the frame with "Dreams" as the theme.

The frame was light blue. The photos and drawings represented the things the children dreamed of. Things they wanted and wished for. I knew this one would go high. It was no surprise when I saw that most of the images were of family. In many different ways. There was one child who had drawn herself between two adults, and they were all holding hands.

"This photo." Bella pointed at a photo in the upper left corner. "What's your opinion of it?"

I furrowed my brow, wondering where she was going with this. But I did as I was told and studied it in order to give her my thoughts.

I honestly didn't know what to think. The photo was a blurry without focus on *anything*. It was almost completely white. Only the corners were a little grey.

Bella noticed my expression.

"He took a photo of the sun," she said quietly. I sighed, hearing the sadness in her voice. "And I, uh...I asked him when I was there last week, why he took a picture of the sun."

I kissed the top of her head.

I knew my wife.

"He said he wanted things in his life that made him warm."

Jesus. "I'm sorry, little one," I murmured in her hair. I hugged her to me. Then a little harder. "How old is he?"

"He just turned eleven." She buried her face in my chest.

"His name?"

"Tristan."

I dropped kiss after kiss in her hair.

"His parents didn't want him anymore. Drugs were more important," she whispered. I gritted my teeth. "They abandoned him when he was six years old."

I blew out a breath.

To say I loathed bad parents would be the understatement of the year.

"You fell in love," I stated softly.

She nodded minutely.

"I want to meet him," I whispered.

When she looked up at me, I brushed her tears away with my thumbs.

I kissed her on the forehead. "Who knew I could love you even more than I already did?"

She sniffled, eyes full of hope. "You mean...you'd consider...?"

I smiled, chuckled a little, too. "I think I'd more than consider, kitten."

She once fell in love with Chelsea.

I followed quickly.

I had no doubt it would be the same this time.

The End

Thank you
for reading!

~Cara