Insecurities

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**Summary:** Suddenly I realized the family had it wrong. I had it wrong. Jasper was not attacking me and Edward was not protecting me. AU OOC Rated M to be safe - My first story - WINNER of two 'Everything's Bigger In Texas' Awards
"Ouch, paper cut!" I looked down at my finger and saw the crimson liquid welling up. Suddenly I could hear the terrifying sound of a growl coming from across the room before all hell broke loose.

I could feel myself flying backwards, pain ripping through my back and arm; hear a crash and the sound of glass breaking as my body was thrown through a table and to the floor. Several things happened simultaneously. I could feel Edward's breath on my neck. I could see the look of desperation on Jasper's face across the room, as Emmett and Rosalie tried to wrestle him away from me, and the temptation that my blood presented. The next thing I realized was that the family had it wrong. I had it wrong. Jasper wasn't attacking me and Edward wasn't protecting me.

They say that when you are faced with your own death that your life flashes before your eyes. I didn't see that. I guess I was right when I told Edward that my brain didn't work right. Time seemed to slow down. I saw the room as if I was separate from it. Like an unseen person standing in the corner.

There was Jasper, trying frantically to get to me through the maze of arms that were restraining him; Emmett and Rose trying to drag him from the house with the help of Carlisle. Esme and Alice looking on in horror and disappointment. Why was no one concerned with Edward and I?

Oh right, Edward always protected me. And to be fair it really did look like he was shielding me with his body. What they didn't see, was his teeth securely fastened to my throat as he slowly drained the life from my body.

"EDWARD NO!!!!" Jasper started screaming. I guess he realized that they weren't going to let him go, and this was the only way he would be able to bring attention to the situation. The family swung towards us in shock. Esme being the closest to us, blurred into action. She tried to grab at Edward, he released me only to spin and throw Esme across the room, where she hit the wall and almost went right through it.

"MINE!"

The roar that came out of his mouth was inhuman and nothing like the Edward that I knew and loved.

Emmett and Rose dropped Jasper and ran at Edward. He must have read their intent from their minds. Rose was faster so he grabbed her first and swung her into Emmett, hard enough that the two of them crashed through the living room window and out into the yard. By now Carlisle was advancing on us. Jasper grabbed him by the shoulder to hold him back. "No Carlisle, he's protecting his kill, look at him."

I could hear the growls rumbling up through Edward as he crouched over top of me. I felt something dripping on my chest and realized that it was my blood running from his mouth down his chin and dripping on to me. I should have felt sick but I could feel the fire starting to spread through my neck. I remembered it from the last time that I felt it when James had bitten me in Phoenix. Jasper must have been trying to calm Edward down because Edward started to speak.

"His venom was foul, tainting the sweetness of her blood. Now it is pure. Now it is mine. I have denied myself long enough. Sitting there day after day, smelling the bouquet that is her blood; listened to it as it pumped through her veins. She taunted me day after day with her blush. I had to keep it close to me. I had to make sure no one else got to drink it. Spending time with a human was a small price to pay to enjoy the sweetness of its blood." He was savage as he talked about me as if I was a thing; something to keep possession of, not someone that he professed to love.

"You don't mean that Edward. You are not yourself. You love Bella." Esme seemed to almost plead with Edward, trying to bring him back to himself.

"Edward you don't want to do this. You love Bella. You sucked the venom out of her last time and you were able to stop. You don't want to kill her now." I could hear Carlisle trying to reason with Edward, trying to bring him back to himself.

"Love a human?" He cocked his head to the side in confusion.

"I have had women by the thousands throw themselves at me and I never allowed them near me. I have had beautiful vampire women offer to share my bed and I have never taken them up on it. What would make you think that one small, plain girl would inspire me to love where all others failed. It has always been about her blood and the peace and quiet that her mind offered me. Don't you see? She is truly our prey. My prey. Predators take out the weak and the sick; her clumsiness is a clear indication that, even for a human, she is inferior. She needs to be culled." Edwards snarling words
hurt me more than the burn that was slowly spreading through my body.

I could see the effect that his words had on the family in the room. Carlisle looked like he was going to be sick if he had been able. Alice looked confused and horror struck holding up Esme, who looked ready to collapse from her heart break. She wanted to come to me and I watched her eyes dart back and forth between Edward and I.

Jasper, Jasper had the darkest look I had ever seen in his eyes. He looked every inch the warrior – expressionless, with eyes that promised a dark and merciless punishment for any that went against him. I suddenly felt overwhelmed with lethargy and saw Edward waiver on his feet and shake his head.

Again the room exploded into action. Emmett and Rosalie sailed through the window and collided with Edward. The three of them went tumbling across the room and landed with Edward snarling and thrashing, pinned to the floor, held down by Emmett's bulk and Rosalie's fury. Alice hurried over to help drag him out of the house.

As Rose wrestled with Edward she looked right at me, "It's not true" she said.

As the convulsions started to take over my body I looked up to see Jasper holding me to his chest.

"Carlisle, it's too late to suck the venom out. The change has already started." Jaspers face looked conflicted and guilty.

I could hear someone screaming and realized that it was me. It felt like someone had replaced my blood with molten lava. I tried to stop my screams knowing that it wouldn't do any good. He looked down at me and I felt the calm that he was trying to push on me.

Carlisle took my hand, "Bella, we can't stop it this time, but I am worried that not enough venom has been put in your system. If we don't push more the change will take way longer, and I don't want you to go through the pain for longer than necessary."

I tried to tell him that it was ok. That I understood. He would have to bite me again. I knew that he loved me like his own; you could see the pain written on his face at the thought that he would have to bite me, and continue the pain that his favored son had inflicted. I loved this kind and compassionate man even more. I could hear Esme sobbing over my head and felt her fingers smoothing back my hair.

My eyes connected again with Jasper and he raised my hand that was closest to his chest up to his mouth. I could see my arm shaking with the force of the tremors that were wracking my body. Jasper softly pressed a kiss into the palm of my hand, and then sunk his teeth into my wrist.

Quicker than Carlisle's cry of alarm, Jasper pushed his venom into my wrist and then sealed the wound with his tongue.

"Jasper!" Esme looked at him with worry and a trace of pride.

"We don't have time for this Esme; I have to push more into her system. We can talk later." I could hear the command in his voice as he shifted me in his arms and reached for my other wrist where he repeated the procedure. He then ripped open my shirt and bit me right over my heart.

"That's enough Son. You pushed an astonishing amount of venom into her system in a short amount of time. The change will happen quickly now."

I felt the prick of a needle as Carlisle injected something into me. "Morphine Bella. I am hoping that it will numb some of the burning."

I felt my jaw threatening to crack as my teeth were clamped together to try to hold back my screams. The agony was a thousand times worse than any injury I had ever received. Even when James had bitten me it hadn't prepared me to feel the flames running through my entire body. I could feel myself being lifted and carried. I looked up into Jasper's eyes for the last time before I closed my eyes and the pain took me.

A/N: If you like it, leave me some love. This is my first fan fic so please be gentle.
I looked at the girl lying on the bed in front of me. Her forehead showed beads of perspiration and every now and then part of her would twitch minutely. So subtle were the movements that only a vampire would have noticed them. I took comfort in the steady rise and fall of her chest and the steady pounding of her heart. I heard the man I am proud to call my father enter the room behind me.

"Why is she so quiet Carlisle? I have never seen someone go through the change without making a sound."

"I can only guess that it is because of the massive amount of morphine that I gave her. I had to give her way more than the recommended dose, so that it could move through her system faster than the venom sealed up her veins." He walked over to her and felt her forehead. "She is perspiring, but her temperature is dropping, and her skin is starting to harden. You did a great job pushing the venom in to her system Son. I am so proud of you."

I felt the pride and his love for me sweep over me in a tidal wave of warmth and I looked at my father. I finally felt as if I was paying back the kindness that he had shown me over the years. We had had to move on more than one occasion because of one of my slip-ups, and the shame I felt was made worse, because Carlisle and Esme had never stopped believing that I would get control of my monster. They never once waivered in their love for me.

I felt my father's curiosity growing as he started to speak. "Jasper, how were you able to do it? You of all of us have struggled the most, and yet the one thing that you should not have been able to do, you did without hesitation or a flicker of bloodlust. Your eyes are still the clear topaz of a vegetarian. This means that none of Bella's blood entered your system."

I thought about the events of the day and struggled to contain my rage. Those thoughts could be dealt with later.

"I'm not sure. All I thought about was the fact that Bella was in danger. I am not denying that I smelled her blood, or the fact that, as usual, it smelled delicious. And, yes my mouth did fill with venom. But after getting to know her better in the spring, and the time that we spent in the car, and later the hotel room, I realized that Bella is the most selfless person that I have ever had the privilege to meet. I felt her heart breaking with every word that Edward said."

Carlisle looked shocked at this. "She heard him?"

I sighed "Yes, she heard every word, and with her insecurities, she believed everything that he said instantly. Even when her gaze shifted to the others, she honestly felt that maybe he was right."

I shook my head. When would she believe that she was worth it? The words that I had said to her all those months ago were just as true now as they were then.

"Even though I could feel her acceptance of his cruelty, I also felt her love for everyone in the family. She was laying there bleeding with a monster poised to take her life, and yet all she felt as she looked at us was love. She was feeling sorry for all the pain that we seemed to be going through. That's why I was able to stop, and that's why I didn't let her blood enter my mouth. The few drops on my teeth were ambrosia, but I couldn't let her faith in us, her faith in me, down." I walked over and opened the window knowing the cool air would feel good against the heat of her skin if she was able to feel it.

"You know, in addition to her selflessness, she has your compassion and Esme's endless capacity to love." I chuckled a bit at this. "Really Carlisle she is the closest thing to a daughter that you and Esme could ever find. The perfect blend of the two of you."

I watched as he smoothed the damp hair back from her face and placed a cool cloth on her brow. "I really do wish she was my daughter. I guess now she really is. We need to make some plans. She is supposed to be home soon. Charlie is going to be worried about where she is. We also need to speak with Edward. I am having a hard time believing that he meant everything he said, but bloodlust cannot excuse some of the things he said. He was too composed." I felt his heartbreak as he struggled to reconcile the son he knew with the monster that we had all seen downstairs.

"We can discuss that elsewhere. I am not sure how much of this Bella can hear, and she's got enough to deal with right now, without adding the drama to it. She will have to make some decisions when she wakes up. We can leave her with Esme while you and I work out the other details." At my words Esme walked in with a basin of water and some fresh clothes.
I watched her smile tenderly at Bella and I could feel the overwhelming love that she felt for this small fragile girl.

"Alright boys, off you go while I get my daughter cleaned up, and ready to face the world. It will only upset her if she wakes up covered in her human blood, with torn and bloody clothes. Whatever you come up with for her disappearance had better be good, or we will have the wolves to deal with."

Damnation! I had forgotten about that infernal treaty. We were up a creek without a paddle now.

"I'll go and see about the situation outside, and then meet you in your study." I nodded to Carlisle as we separated at his study door and I continued downstairs.

I could hear my wife and siblings outback with Edward, still trying to reason with him. I knew that Esme and Carlisle could hear it as well, but they were both hoping that it was only the bloodlust talking. Yes, they were in denial but I couldn't blame them. The alternative was just too hard for their kind souls to take in at the moment.

As I walked onto the back porch, I could see that Emmett held Edward around the chest; his arms trapped by his sides. Rosalie was standing in front of him looking murderous, while dodging the occasional kick. Alice was talking to him, trying to bring him out of his bloodlust. I hadn't seen my perfectly controlled brother like this ever. In fact, he more closely resembled the newborns that I had trained all those years ago.

I put my hand on my wife's shoulder "Sweetheart, why don't you and Rose go and see if Esme needs any help with Bella. Emmett and I can keep trying here. We can meet in Carlisle's study in 10 minutes."

She looked up at me with huge sorrowful eyes. "I can't stand to see him like this Jazz. What's wrong with him?"

"Don't worry I'll calm him down. You need to start looking at ways to explain to Charlie that his daughter isn't ever coming home."

Immediately I could see the wheels turning behind her beautiful eyes. "Come on Rose we need to check on Bella and repair the front window. The house can't look like a fight has taken place or we could be borrowing trouble."

As Alice skipped up the stairs Rose turned to me. "Jasper, I never really hated Bella you know. I just always knew that she was too good for him."

I could feel the remorse for her treatment of Bella and her hatred of Edward warring with each other. "I know Rose. What you don't know, is that girl loves you as much as she loves Emmett or Alice. She has only ever felt sad whenever you ignored her. Just think, now you have forever to make it up to her."

I felt her determination as a small smile graced her lovely face. I knew that Bells had just earned another sister. Rose had mentally added her to the family, and now she would be one of the few beings lucky enough, to have Rosalie's unwavering loyalty.

There was a huge grin on Emmett's face when I turned back to the struggle that had continued behind me. Emmett had heard everything that was said, and I could feel how proud he was of Rose. I looked at Edward and I could feel myself slipping into old patterns. My military side was coming to the fore as I assessed the situation that was Edward. His eyes were intensely red indicating that he had taken more of Bella's blood than I knew. He was still straining against Emmett, but as Bella's human scent was very slowly dissipating his movements weren't as frantic.

I looked over his head "Doin' ok there Em?"

Emmett grinned back at me "Yup, I am loving the fact that even though he can read my mind, I still have him right where I want him. I may not beat him in a straight up wrestling match, but once I have him he can't beat the brute strength that is me."

I chuckled at his comments; Edward just threw off waves of frustration and fury.

Well if he wanted to act like a newborn, I would treat him like one. I obviously hadn't done this in awhile, but thanks to my vampire brain, I wouldn't ever forget how. I only wish there was a way to warn Emmett.

I threw a boatload of weakness and lethargy, mixed with a heapful of hopelessness, at Edward. And just like old times, it did the trick. Poor Emmett, I felt bad as he fell to the ground just like Edward, but really there was no other way.

I walked over to the two unconscious vampires and rolled Edward off of Emmett. He, being the heavier one, keeled over backwards taking Edward with him. I chuckled as I realized that Carlisle likely didn't know that a vampire could be rendered unconscious. You just couldn't do it through physical means.

Once Edward was far enough away from Emmett, I walked back over to him and touched him on the shoulder. I didn't want to overload him so I merely fed back the emotions and levels that he normally gave off.

"WHAT THE HELL!" He shot up off the ground completely back to normal.

"Language Emmett!" Floated from somewhere in the house. Esme having no idea what I had done to poor Emmett, was just chastising him as usual, and as usual,
"Sorry Mom!", came from Emmett's mouth.

He turned back to me with a look of disbelief on his face. He looked from me to Edward and back again.

"Did you? Is he? Man I swear I am never messing with you again!! I had no idea. Does Carlisle know that..?"

I laughed "Are you ever going to finish a question or are you just going to stand there sputtering."

Emmett looked at me in continued disbelief "Man you are one bad Mother. Am I ever glad that you are on my side!"

I could feel mischief starting to brew and I knew he wasn't done yet.

"Can we try that again later? That was too cool!!"

"Later Em, right now we have to deal with him first. I'm hoping that once he comes out of it, he will have snapped out of the bloodlust. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't."

Emmett looked over at Edward and shook his head. "How is Bells doing? Is she ok?"

I looked him in the eye, "Emmett the change was already happening and it was too late to stop it. Edward had taken too much blood in any case, she probably would have died."

I could feel my own guilt starting to eat at me. If only I had gotten to him in time I could have stopped him from hurting her at all.

"Jasper, man whatever it is that you have running through your head, you have nothing to feel guilty about."

Too late I realized I must have been projecting when he continued.

"I wanna say this now before things really hit the fan and I forget. Jasper, I'm sorry. I automatically jumped to the conclusion that you were attacking Bella, and I shouldn't have. I should have realized that you were only moving to protect her. At the very least, I should have given you the benefit of doubt." He looked so forlorn that I couldn't help but clap him on the shoulder

"Em, after all the slip-ups I have had, and the times we have had to move; you had every right to assume what you did. Besides if I had been attacking, you would have saved her life."

"Yeah but she got bit anyway, and you were the one trying to protect her. I should have realized that after killing James in the spring, you had a hold on your hunger. I mean there was blood all over that ballet studio, and you ran right through it to get to him. Even afterwards, I had to leave before you did, and Alice was no better. You have it under control man – I should have known. I'm sorry." He shook his head sadly.

I couldn't help it, I gave him a hug. It felt so good after all these years of struggling, to know that I had made some measurable progress. And for the second time that day, as my giant bear of a brother hugged me back, I felt how proud a member of my family was of me.

"Alright down to business. I was brusque as I pulled away. "We need to make some major decisions. Edward will have to wait. Can you take him to the baseball field? It's far enough away that there will be no humans around, if and when, he wakes up. We need to figure out how to make Bella's death believable to the humans and the Quileutes; not to mention her police chief father. We will need to pull off a miracle for this to work."

Emmett strode over to Edwards prone form and slung him into a fireman's carry."Any ideas on when he will wake up?"

I thought about this for a minute "Well it could be an hour or only a few minutes. And I'm not sure what frame of mind he will be in when he wakes up. You head to the field, and I'll send Rose to you after I speak to her. I have an idea on Bella's death that I need her input on. Don't let Rose kill him when he wakes up, no matter what he says."

Emmett laughed "Great I get all the easy jobs – contain my out of control mindreading brother, and my wife who wants to tear him apart and scatter the pieces. Sure no problem!"

I watched as he swiftly disappeared from sight and then turned to go in the house.

When I entered the living room, Alice and Rose were putting the finishing touches on the front window and all the debris had been cleaned up from the front yard. I was still thinking about the beginnings of my plan.

Alice looked up at me and simply said "I will call him right now and arrange the weekend at least – you know the man is putty in my hands."

As she flitted off to call Charlie Rose cocked an eyebrow at me.

"She's going to tell Charlie that the family is going to Seattle for the weekend. Edward just got an early acceptance to Julliard, but has to move there next week. So in celebration of her birthday, and the acceptance, and to allow the loving
couple a proper goodbye, we are all going to Seattle for the weekend. It's unfortunate that you, Emmett and I are still away at Dartmouth, and won't be able to make it." I said

Rosalie smiled at me "Yeah but at least we will be closer to Edward at Julliard and will be able to help him move in."

"Rose, I need you to go to the baseball field and help Emmett with Edward, but I need you to not break him into little pieces. If the rest of my plan is to work like I hope it does, he is going to have to make an appearance in town, so I need him in one piece and agreeable." I tried being nice first and sent her all of the calming waves that I could so that she would agree.

"Alright Jasper I'll do it, only because it will take both Emmett and I to contain him if he tries to escape. Can I thump him a good one if he does try?" she asked hopefully.

I laughed at my sister. We were truly very much alike, and she was one that I was happy to have at my back in a pinch. "Yeah but no pieces – ok? And take your cell phone so we can keep you informed of the plan."

I went up to check on Bella before going to see Carlisle. She was laying still motionless on the bed and Esme was with her. I gave her a small smile.

"Do you think she can hear me Jasper?" Esme asked softly.

I tried to remember my own change "She might be able to remember bits and pieces. It can't hurt to try. If anyone can bring her comfort it is you Mom." I bent down and kissed her on the cheek. I could feel so many things from her at the moment – love, pride, worry and hurt.

I turned my attention to Bella. From her I could feel massive amounts of pain, but when she had heard our voices, incredibly, I could still feel love.

"Talk to her Mom. Remind her of all the good things in her life. She can hear you." Esme turned back to Bella and started to talk. The sound of her voice followed me out into the hall as I went to meet Carlisle.

Alice was there already when I walked into the study. Carlisle was seated behind his desk looking decidedly stressed. I immediately started sending out waves of calm through the room, and they both looked at me with gratitude.

"Alice" She knew what I was asking

"Charlie was very impressed that Edward was talented enough to get into Julliard at such a young age. Carlisle and Esme must be so proud. So sad to see a couple in love separated by distance, but if the love is true, then the relationship will survive. I tell you Jasper, it was hard pretending to be so proud of my brother when he is such a jerk!"

I sighed "One thing at a time Alice. Are we cleared on the Seattle excuse?"

She smiled smugly "Yup! He bought it. She is not expected home until Monday night after she drops Edward off at the airport. Charlie was a bit worried about her truck making it back from Seattle, but is sure that it will be fine."

I puzzled this for a moment "The truck Alice?"

She looked at me like I was insane "Yes Jasper the truck. She has to take it to help Edward with all the luggage that won't fit in our small sporty vehicles, and she wanted to do something nice for her boyfriend, who is leaving her to pursue his dreams. Besides, we need the drunk driver to hit her truck for the death right?"

Ah my genius of a wife.

"Son? Can I ask what the plan is?" Carlisle looked on and I could feel that his patience was running out.

"My apologies Carlisle. You, Esme and Alice are going to come back from Seattle ahead of Bella. The three of you are going to meet Charlie for dinner in town, with Bella supposed to be following shortly behind. Carlisle, you are going to want to talk about how the distance is going to affect Bella and Edward, and things to do to keep their spirits high during the separation. While you are all waiting for Bella to arrive and join you for dinner, Charlie is going to get a call. Bella has been in a car accident. She was hit by a drunk driver and didn't survive."

Carlisle was nodding and Alice had slipped into a vision to see if this would in fact work.

"Alice I need two things from you. One, we are going to need a body that looks enough like Bella to pass as her after a horrific car crash. Two, the location of a drunk driver at that time in between here and Sea Tac airport."

I saw Carlisle grimace at the mention of a body.

"I'm sorry Carlisle, but we have to pacify the Quileutes so they don't think that we broke the treaty. There really is no other way." He nodded and I continued. "What is really going to happen, is Rose is going to dress like Bella and drive Edward to the airport where he is, by god, going to get on the plane and fly to New York. After that, I think he should head up to Alaska and stay with the Denali's for a bit. He could use a dose of Eleazar's good sense, and we know the girls will keep an eye on him."
Alice snickered as I continued. "Rose will then make a quick stop on the way back to pick up the battered body from Emmett. Timing will have to be perfect, so that Bella's truck with the body hits the drunk driver that Alice is going to find for me."

Carlisle thought about it and Alice was busy scanning the future. I wanted to know if this was going to work.

Carlisle was the first to speak "Well you have everyone accounted for since your Rose and Em are supposed to be at Dartmouth. Charlie will be with us, so he can shoot down any questions the wolves might raise. No better alibi than the chief of police. And I will have a talk with Edward and inform him that he is flying to New York on Monday. He will be on that plane. Otherwise it sounds good to me. Alice?"

She came out of her vision and smiled grimly. "Charlie and Renee will be heartbroken of course, but at least they will have closure. The authorities will not even question the body too closely, as the truck is hers, as well as ID on the body. And I think I have the answer to a body for her that everyone can agree on. There is a family in Newport Oregon that is burying their 17 year old daughter tomorrow. She looks enough like Bella to pass her. The girl also died in a car accident, so the injuries will be consistent and because the crash was bad, they're having a closed casket, eliminating the worry about facial features. This way both families get the closure they need and we only have to do a little grave robbing. I volunteer to do it seeing as it is partially my fault that this happened."

I was stunned. How was this Alice's fault?

Carlisle got there first though, "Alice honey this is in no way your fault. Edward's instincts took over. Even you can't predict that." He hugged her to his chest but I heard her without a problem.

"You don't understand Carlisle. I've gone back over all the visions that I have had of Bella and Edward, and I think I mistook the loving looks for possessive ones. I really did think that he loved her, but now that I am looking back, I am sure of it. He wanted to possess her. He wanted to have complete control, and I let him do it. I even helped him. I told him when it was okay to go to her house, who she was, who she was with. Everything! I thought he loved her and was only trying to protect her but—"

I couldn't take anymore she couldn't keep blaming herself, I cut her off

"Alice, sweetheart. You are not omnipotent. We do not expect you to know everything, and you have such a romantic heart that, of course your saw his possessiveness as love. We all did!! How many times did Esme say how good it was to see him so happy and in love? Emmett and I bugged him constantly about being so whipped, that he needed to spend nights sitting in a tree outside her window. Carlisle you felt the same way that Esme did, happy that he had finally found his mate."

Carlisle looked at Alice "You take too much responsibility on yourself Alice. We were all fooled. Besides we still have to talk to a rational Edward and find out what is really going on. Before you get too upset, let's see what he has to say."

He hugged her again and turned to me "Jasper I couldn't help but notice that you are not part of the plan. Can I assume that you are willing to take on the responsibility of a newborn Bella?"

"Can you think of anyone in the family better suited to the task? Besides, for all this to work, the family is going to have to continue living in Forks as normal for at least a few months to alleviate any lingering suspicion."

I saw Carlisle's eyes widen. "But how will we hide her in Forks?"

Alice's face fell "They are not staying in Forks are you Jasper?"

I looked down at my wife "No sweetheart, we're not. I think that I will take her up to our old place in Northern Ontario. The location is remote enough to avoid humans, there is plenty of game, and we haven’t been there since Emmett was changed. Rosalie and Emmett can join us as soon as the accident is staged. They're supposed to be at Dartmouth anyway. Three of us are more than enough to handle one newborn."

Alice's face went vacant as she searched the future for any problems. When she came back to herself she looked resigned. "He's right Carlisle, if we don't stay here for at least 4 months people will talk and their suspicions will give Charlie hope. If we stay, even the wolves will have no reason to think it was anything other than a tragic accident. But I am telling you right now Jasper Hale! I want daily webcams with Bella, so you had better make sure the satellite internet is working!"

I chuckled and patted her on the head "I will make sure of it. Any idea how long before Bella wakes up?"

She closed her eyes and quickly looked "She will wake up in just under 3 days, so you had better get packing mister. You need to get on the road so she will be quiet for the ride. If you hurry, you should get there just before she wakes up."

Carlisle looked from me to Alice "Ok then, Jasper you go pack. I will call Rose and Emmett and let them know the plan. This needs to happen perfectly. We have to make sure our family is safe, and that my new daughter can start her new life without worries."
I quickly turned and went to the room that I shared with Alice. I pulled out a suitcase and started going through our closet.

I heard Alice come into the room. "Jasper, I think it's time we told them."
I could hear voices talking quietly nearby. The fact that I was starting to be able to think around the pain scared me a bit. How long had I been burning? When would someone save me? How could I not be dead already? My body was completely trapped. I wanted to hold my burning body together; scream for someone to help me, or at least kill me; and beat at the flames that I could feel licking all over my charred body. I remembered someone saying something about morphine. Was that why I wasn't able to move?

Occasionally I could feel cold hands on my face and they felt so good that I wanted to beg for them to stay there. I could hear one voice in particular that sounded like the deep soothing sound of a perfectly played cello. I could feel it resonating somewhere deep inside, and it brought me a measure of peace. I tried to listen to the voices more closely. It was something else to concentrate on rather than the pain.

"You know, in addition to her selflessness she has your compassion, and Esme's endless capacity to love. Really Carlisle, she is the closest thing to a daughter that you and Esme could ever find. The perfect blend of the two of you."

I knew that voice. That was the voice that I could feel deep inside. I could feel some of my fear start to slip away. I could still feel all of the pain but that voice...Jasper's voice! I wasn't as frightened with him there.

"I really do wish she was my daughter. I guess now she really is. We need to make some plans. She is supposed to be home soon. Charlie is going to be worried about where she is. We also need to speak with Edward. I am having a hard time believing that he meant everything he said, but bloodlust cannot excuse the things he said. He was too composed."

Hearing that made everything rush back, and suddenly I wished that I could feel only the pain again. These words brought with them a pain that was purely emotional. Edward, my Edward, had said that he only wanted me for my blood. That I was weak and needed to be culled.

And Charlie!! My poor dad, he would go back to being lost without me. Who would make sure that he ate regular meals and that the house was clean? Who would be there for him when I wasn't? Coming to Forks made me realize how much he really needed me. Mom had Phil to look after her now. He wouldn't let her take up a hobby that would get her killed, and he always made sure to pay the bills on time, he would be there for her. But Charlie didn't have anyone except me.

Edward was right. A normal girl wouldn't have gotten involved with a vampire; she would have run screaming for the hills. There is something wrong with me. It seemed that the whole world was trying to reverse the mistake of my birth. Darwin theorized that only the strongest should survive. I'm so clumsy that I'm practically disabled; I am average and plain in every way and to top it all off, my first boyfriend is a vampire.

You would have thought, that the last one would have made me realize my fate. After all, it was only a few months ago that a vampire almost finished me off. And now my boyfriend, the love of my life, the same one who saved me; announces that he only kept me alive because he wanted my blood to be pure of another vampires venom, when he drained me himself.

I was a possession to be kept. A pet. I thought back on all the time that we had spent together. How when we walked, he always had a hand on me; making sure that if he wasn't with me, one of his family was. Picking me up for school in the morning and driving me back home, only to come back at night to watch me sleep. I had not made one decision on my own. Even my clothes were picked out for me. It was kind of creepy now that I thought about it. Since I had moved to Forks he had controlled almost every aspect of my life. The only thing that I had done on my own was the one trip to First Beach with Mike and the gang.

I thought about how ironic it was that Mike had said that the reason that he didn't want me to be with Edward, was because he looked at me like I was something to eat. At the time I had thought it was funny. Maybe I should have given Mike more credit. Besides, what had made me think that a creature as beautiful and perfect as Edward could ever truly be interested in me? The pain of Edward's many lies was almost as bad as the lava that had replaced my blood and was slowly burning me to death.

I could feel my clothes being removed and the sensation of cool cloths and hands on my skin. I could hear Esme talking to me, but I was hurting too badly to concentrate on what she was saying. I could feel the care that she was taking with my body and a thought occurred to me. Why would she take such good care of someone if she thought they were weak and insignificant? If I was unimportant they would have just killed me and been done with it. Esme cared for me enough to take care of me. To rid me of my bloody clothes, clean me up and re-dress me so I was comfortable. Well, as comfortable as I...
I started to really concentrate. I wanted to remember what was said and how everyone acted when Edward attacked me. I remembered trying to reason with Edward. Esme had pleaded with him and had wanted to come to me. Emmett had attacked his own brother. Alice had been horrified and Rosalie, Rosalie looked right at me, right into my eyes and had said it wasn't true. She may have been a bitch to me but she always spoke the truth. Most of the time what made her a bitch, was her telling the truth. They never would have had these reactions if I didn't truly matter to them on some level.

All this I remembered, but the one thing that stopped the pity party, was the look on Jasper's face when Edward had said that I needed to be culled. He had been furious. It was the same look that I had seen on his face right before he and Emmett ripped James apart. The look of fury that someone had dared to attack and hurt someone that was important to him. Then I remembered his words and the tender look on his face from the hotel room months ago. "You are worth it".

I decided right then and there that I was going to wait and see. I would see how everyone acted when I woke up to my new life, before I started believing the foul things that Edward had said. Now as long as Edward didn't come in to finish me off. As bad as the burning was, I knew it was necessary if I wanted to stay with the Cullens; if they would have me. I needed to finish the change so I could figure that out.

I heard Esme ask someone a question. Jasper. Jasper was back. He would keep me safe. I knew it had been him that had made Edward waiver on his feet long enough for Rosalie and Emmett to tackle him. He had held me afterward; and it had been him that had acted so swiftly, to push more venom into me, to make sure the change was a short as possible. The jury was still out on whether or not that was a good idea I thought wryly.

I felt nothing but comfort and love that he came in to check on me. I was pretty sure that I had not been left alone for even a moment since I had been bitten. That had to mean something right? I listened as Jasper told Esme that I could hear her. As he left the room she started reminding me about all of the fun times that I had shared with the family. Emmett's pranks, shopping with Alice and Esme, Carlisle making sure that my most recent accident wasn't serious. As I started remembering all of these things I realized that Jasper had always been there; sometimes participating, sometimes just watching; but always there. I had wanted to get to know him so badly, but Edward had always said that he was too dangerous, that he hadn't adjusted to the vegetarian diet yet.

As I thought about this it no longer seemed right. Jasper had never once tried to get any closer than I was comfortable with after being told these things. I spent days with him locked up in a hotel room and he never once made me feel like he wanted to bite me. He had run right past me through a pool of my blood to attack James. And it certainly wasn't Jasper that attacked today over the provocation of a single drop of blood. And the evidence that confirmed all the lies that Edward had fed me about Jasper, was his ability to bite me three times and I hadn't seen one drop of my blood on his mouth.

So if Edward lied so convincingly about that, what else had he lied about? Jasper would make sure I was safe until I could figure it out for myself.

Dear God, when was this pain going to end? My bones felt like they were being ground to dust and then set on fire! My skin was being skinned from me and then dipped in acid and my heart was still racing.

I could hear the sound of Esme's voice above me again. "Bella dear, there are a lot of human memories that you are going to want to remember. I want you to think very carefully on as many of your happiest memories as you can. Start from your childhood and work your way forward. Remember your birthdays with your mom. Renee loves you so much! Remember all the new hobbies that she tried. Your attempts at getting pets, walks in the park with your mom, friends you had at school in Phoenix. Remember how Renee acted when she first met Phil, summers with your dad here in Forks and later in California. Time you spent learning to cook with your Grandma Swan."

Bless Esme she not only remembered every little conversation that we had ever had about my family but brought up the ones that meant so much to me.

Listening to her voice, and remembering those times was a very welcome distraction from the pain. I was still horrified that I couldn't move or scream to try to relieve the stress. I still felt trapped in my shell of a body, but listening to Esme's voice, and thinking about my family was helping. I wanted to remember the fishing trips that I had taken with my dad. His best friend Billy down at La Push. I remembered playing with Jake and his sisters in the tide pools. Going to Phil's baseball games and laughing with my mom. Yes, these were all memories that I wanted to hold on to. So I did just what Esme said. I remembered every moment of my life the best I could. And I waited for Jasper to come back.

After what seemed like an eternity, I realized I was by myself. I couldn't hear Esme in the room. I tried to listen harder but I still couldn't hear anyone. I wanted to cry out, screams to see if someone would come running. I missed Esme's voice and her hands cooling my face. I wanted to hear Emmett's booming laugh or Carlisle's quiet assurances that I would be ok. I needed Jasper there, what if Edward came back? What if he had escaped them and was planning on killing me? I wouldn't be able to defend myself. The damn morphine had paralyzed me. I was stuck in hell, burning for god knows how long and there was no one here with me! Maybe they thought I was actually dead? No they couldn't. I could still hear my own hear struggling to beat even as what felt like pure acid pumped through my veins. If I could hear it then they sure as crap would have been able to.
A horrible though popped into my head, what if they had decided to leave me here after all? How was I going to survive on my own? I didn't want to kill anyone, how was I going to know how to hunt? I could feel the panic rising above the pain. I really didn't want to be alone. I didn't know what to do. There was nothing I could do.

I felt someone take my hand and smooth back my hair. Then I heard the voice that made everything right in my world.

"Shhhh it's alright Darlin'. We haven't left you. You and I are going to take a little trip. Just you and me ok?"

Jasper, I thought in relief. Jasper was still here. He hadn't left me. He said that they were all still here. I could feel his hands on my face and they felt like ice against the burning. I vaguely hear his voice coming from above me but with the knowledge that he was there the burning took over again and I could only hear fragments of what he was saying.

".... I'm not leavin' you. I will stay with you for as long as you need me ok?"

I felt my body being lifted in his cool arms and held against his body. The movement seemed to make the flames burn hotter and I was forever burning in the middle of them, held down by chains of morphine.

I drifted in the sea of pain for what seemed like an eternity. When would this be over? I could feel my brain getting bigger. I could now think of several things at the same time. I replayed all my memories over and over, each time they seemed to cement in a little farther and become clearer. Another part of my brain was occupied with processing new sounds and smells, it was weird. I could smell all these new things, but had no idea what they were. Things were also much louder and if I could have moved, I would have been jumping in fright quite often. Yet another part of my brain was fully occupied with the pain that was ever present. And finally I would listen for the sound of Jasper's voice. It was the one thing that kept me sane in the world of agony that I lived in.

From time to time I would feel him moving me from one place to another. Each time it increased the agony of the burn. Ever present beyond the burn and through the pain of being moved was a sweet comforting smell. Slowly, I realized that the shackles that had stopped me from being able to move were lessening. I knew I could move if I wanted to, but I also knew that if I did I would start screaming and not be able to stop. Some part of me thought of Jasper and the trip that he said we were on. If someone saw him carting a screaming girl around, it would cause him no end of trouble. So, I did my best to stay silent and still, and I think I managed it for the most part, but I wasn't sure. I felt myself being moved again. But for the first time the world didn't move around me. I guess we had reached our destination.

I could hear sounds around me so I knew Jasper was still with me. I wished he would talk to me. Tell me how much longer I had to endure this torture. As I felt the pain start to leave my hands and my feet, I would have felt relieved, but it seemed to push the flames in my chest higher. Just when I thought I couldn't possibly get worse, the hammering of my heart increased and the pain felt like someone was ripping a hole right through my chest. My poor heart was trying vainly to keep me alive. It was a losing battle. My back arched off the floor and for the first time a scream was ripped from my throat. And then it was over. My heart beat its last beat and fell silent as I slumped back onto the floor.

I lay quiet for a moment. I tried to process the smells and sounds around me but they were overwhelming. I was afraid to open my eyes. The one smell that I could pick out was the sweet comforting one that had been with me through most of my change, one that I had come to realize was Jasper. A sweet mix of summer sunshine, hay and honey all rolled into one. And then with my new hearing I listened to his voice.

"Bella Darlin', it's ok. Can you open your eyes for me Sweetheart?"

Slowly and carefully I opened my eyes to my new life.
I heard Alice come into the room.

"Jasper, I think it's time we told them."

I looked over at the amazing woman that I have called my wife for over 50 years. "How do we tell them something that we have never really talked about Alice?"

She cocked her head at me and made a face "Don't be silly Jasper we both know where we are. That is the great thing about being us, about being your best friend. We never really needed to talk about it."

I smiled a bit and silently admitted that it was true. With her knowledge of the future and my empathic abilities we always seemed to know exactly where we were and never really needed to have in depth conversations. "You're right Alice, but maybe before we talk to the family we should make sure that we are both aware of what is between us."

She huffed out a breath and came over to sit on the bed beside me. "You're right Jasper. Ok so, we found each other in Philadelphia and decided that we would look for the Cullens together."

I laughed at this "You mean that you ambushed me in that cruddy little diner and informed me that we were going to look for a coven of vampires who supposedly only drank the blood of animals. You do realize how crazy that made you sound right?" I laughed when she playfully smacked me on the shoulder

"Whatever Jasper, it's the same thing. Now during our travels we ended up being the best of friends." She got a serious look on her face "You know I was so lost when I met you. I never could figure out how to live in the moment; I see so many things that could happen in the future I forget about the present, and you just have a way of grounding me in the here and now. I really do love you Jazz. I have always known that you weren't my true mate. I know you know that I'm not yours either but I will never regret the years that we have spent together."

I looked down at the woman who had been my savior, my best friend and constant companion and knew I could never lose her. I lifted her into my lap and hugged her hard. "This is not goodbye sweetheart, you know that. I am only taking Bella to Ontario early. You guys will be there in a few months. Yes, our relationship has gone back to what it was meant to be and yes, the family may be a bit confused but all that matters is that you and I are ok. I will not lose my best friend, we have a special bond that time and distance cannot change."

Her voice came from my shoulder "I know that Jazz. It's past time to explain our relationship to the family; they always just assumed that we were soul mates like they are. How are we going to try to explain the complicated relationship that we have? They are not going to understand why we even bothered to get married."

I laughed "Just tell them that the perfect dress wouldn't have been in style by the time that you found your true mate and you wanted to wear it then." Yeah I got smacked again.

She looked at me in mock horror "Jasper Hale that was mean! I mean yes the dress was beautiful, and I looked fabulous in it, and your right it will never be in style again; but that is not the reason why we got married! I married my very best friend! Who better to spend a few decades with while you adjusted to being a vegetarian and I waited for my true mate?"

I chuckled "And that is exactly what we tell them sweetheart. Carlisle and Esme will not think any less of us and really it only matters to you and me anyways. Now I am assuming that we are going to have separate rooms in Ontario?" At her nod I continued "We haven't been there in so long for, other than a couple of nights that it will need some renovating and cleaning up. It will be a good way for Bella to learn how to control her strength. Do you see any problems that I need to be aware of?"

I watched as she searched the future. "Nothing that you won't be able to handle, although Bella's future is still a bit fuzzy. There are too many decisions that still have to be made before I should be able to see her clearly. But Esme is going to speak with Carlisle in a minute so now might be the best time to talk to them. Carlisle is not going to be too surprised so the conversation will go smoothly"

"Alright, let's go tell them about the change between us and finalize our plans."

The discussion with Carlisle and Esme went better than I expected. Esme wanted to know how long we had been living together and considering dissolving the marriage part of our relationship. She seemed surprised when we both answered at the same time "Two years."

Carlisle, as Alice had said, was not really all that surprised. "Well I guess I just didn't see enough of a passionate,
As expected they only wanted for us to be happy and it would not affect the family in the slightest. It left me free to be able to concentrate on Bella. Alice would have to explain to Rosalie and Emmett as they were both still at the baseball field with Edward and wouldn't be coming back until after I had left with Bella. I wasn't taking any chances with her safety by allowing him back in the house while she was so vulnerable.

Rose hadn't got her way as Edward was calm when he woke up. Carlisle shot me a look that said very clearly, that I had some explaining to do about being able to knock out a vampire. Something he had not known was possible. Emmett said that other than saying he was fine, Edward hadn't spoken a word and wouldn't answer any of their questions. Of course Rose probably wasn't asking so much as screaming and berating. If I wasn't so disgusted with him I might have felt bad for the ass. Alice said that he would stay there until Carlisle called him.

So Alice was off to steal a body. Rose and Emmett were babysitting until it was time for their part in the plan, Carlisle was booking Edward's flight to New York and arranging for our private plane to be readied at a small airport outside of Vancouver, Canada. The plan was for me to drive Bella and I across the border in Carlisle's Mercedes and then fly our jet from Abbotsford airport to Timmins Ontario, where my new truck would be waiting for our nine hour drive north. Esme was packing a few things for Bella and me, so I decided to check on her.

As I stepped into the room she was still laying there motionless but I noticed she was sending off waves of panic, fear and distress. The pain was still there but the panic worried me. As I delved deeper I felt an undertone of abandonment. I needed her to stay as calm as possible until we got across the border so I started sending her calming waves. She settled down a bit but was still sending me all the same feelings. I quickly went over to her side and realized that she probably thought she was alone. She wasn't far enough into the change to have developed the hearing to assure her that we were all still in the house. This was the first time that she had been left alone and she was scared.

I took her hand in mine and smoothed her hair back, tucking it behind an ear. "Shhh it's alright Darlin'. We haven't left you. You and I are going to take a little trip. Just you and me ok?"

As soon as she heard my voice I could feel her relief. I watched as a few tears escaped from one of her eyes and started to roll down her cheek. Before I realized what I was doing, I brushed my thumb across her cheek and gathered them in my fingers. It occurred to me that these would be the last real tears that she would ever shed.

I brought them to my mouth and tasted them. The sweetness was pure Bella. I knew I should feel guilty for stealing such a gift but couldn't bring myself to regret it. Her emotions had calmed down immensely and the physical pain from the burn was once again the most prominent thing that I felt from her. I could hear Esme coming down the hall and I assumed that she had finished packing our things.

"Bella Darlin', I am gonna lift you now and carry you to the car ok? I promise you, I won't be farther than 10 feet away at any time alright? You and me Darlin', I'm not leavin' you. I'll stay with you for as long as you need me ok?" I couldn't feel an emotional response so I guess the pain had her again.

I lifted her gently into my arms as Esme came in the room. "Is she alright?" I could feel the worry pouring off of Esme and knew that she had heard my words to Bella.

"Yeah, she's alright now. I guess you talking to her and touching her was more soothing than we knew. When I came in she was giving off flat panic and abandonment. I think she thought that we left her, as soon as I touched her and talked to her, she calmed right down. She'll be fine"

I watched as she kissed Bella's cheek. I could feel her utter sadness that her new daughter was being taken away from her even if it was necessary. "Hey Mom, I promise I will take good care of her. You can talk to her every day by webcam and you guys will be joining us soon enough." Her eyes clouded with tears that would never fall. I so rarely called her Mom that she knew what I was saying.

She gave me a sad sort of smile. "I know Jasper but it doesn't make it any easier to give her up. I have always been there for my children and it is killing me that I can't be there for this one. She is so special Jasper. She has spent her entire life looking after the people who were supposed to be nurturing and taking care of her. She has no idea what it means to have someone look after her. I have looked forward to being able to do that and now, when she needs me the most, I can't be there like a mother should be."

I kissed her forehead. "Mom, the sacrifice that you are making by letting her go is the best example of caring for her that you could ever display. You are putting her safety and the safety of the entire family ahead of your own wants and needs. She knows you love her and I'll be sure to remind her when she wakes up. You can tell her yourself as well. Bella is the most caring, compassionate and loving person; she'll know that it wasn't your choice to stay here but a necessity."

"I hope you're right Son. I am so very proud of you, you know that? The restraint and control that you demonstrated today was no different than Carlisle's. And now you are protecting the family with your beautifully thought out plan and your willingness to look after Bella." Her voice broke "I could not be more proud of you than if you were my own flesh and blood. You have conquered your demons my son and no one deserves it more than you."

She hugged me and held me to her; if I was able, I would have been crying. She compared me to Carlisle. Maybe I had
needed to get into our remote home. Pewter colored 2009 GMC Sierra 3500HD Diesel with a crew cab, 4 wheel drive

My new truck was right where it was supposed to be and, as promised, it was stocked with everything we would need to
stay the first few days on our own before Rose and Emmett joined us. The truck was gorgeous and everything I loved and

He looked at us carefully and I could see and feel the love that he had for all of us. "I have a passport for Bella that will do
until we can get her a more permanent one." It was a Canadian passport with the name Mary Evenson and a picture of
Bella inside. "I couldn't run the risk of having anything even remotely close to her real name. Alice said that the border
authorities will not think to question it or the fact that she is sleeping, seeing as you will be crossing the border so late.
Because you are both Canadian," He shot me a pointed look "they will think that you are a young couple returning home
after vacation and she fell asleep in the car."

I got it dad, dig out my Canadian passport, I thought mentally rolling my eyes. Sometimes I felt like Jason Bourne with all
the passports and Identities that I had laying around for just an emergency like this one.

"Take care of her son; we need her just as much as she needs us." He kissed her forehead and followed when I started
for the car.

"I put all your bags in the trunk and some pillows and blankets in the back seat for Bella." Esme fussed behind me.

I laid Bella in the back seat for now; I would transfer her to the front just before we got to the border so she looked like she
just fell asleep while we were driving.

"Emmett and Rose will join you as soon as possible. I will work on getting papers for a new identity for Bella and try to
have the basics preloaded in your truck for you when you get to Timmins. Call us when you get there safely and have Bella
call us when she feels up to it." Carlisle was just as torn about the separation as Esme and I felt bad, but this was the only
way.

I hugged them both. "Don't worry we'll see you soon and by the time you get there everything will be set up and ready. Just
think Mom, this time you won't have to do all the work; you can just move in and enjoy yourself."

"Jasper Hale, what an awful thing to say! You know how much I love getting the houses ready. Make sure you leave
something for me to do." She hugged me one last time. As I was getting in the driver's seat I could hear her murmuring to
Bella and kissing her goodbye. As I drove out of the driveway I could see her dry sobbing in Carlisle's arms in the rearview
mirror.

"Well Darlin' we are off on the first leg of our trip to your new life. I promised you I would be there for you and I will be.
You're doin' great." I talked to her quietly all the way north to Bellingham, about the people in the cars we were passing,
funny things that Emmett had done over the years and anything else that I could think of to reassure her that I was still here.
I avoided mentioning anything about Edward; she didn't need any more stress.

When we got to Bellingham I stopped for gas and moved her to the front seat. When I had propped her up with the pillows,
and she looked comfortable, I got our Passports ready for the border. Half an hour later and we were through the border
with no problems. The guards don't tend to ask too many questions at two in the morning. Another short drive later and we
were at the small airport and pulling into the hanger that housed our family's personal jet. Everything was ready and soon
we were in the air.

I loved to fly, the best thing I had done was get my pilots license, it made it much easier for us to get around in a pinch.
Bella had a harder time on the plane, as she had to be in the back and I was in the cockpit, but her panic wasn't as bad as
it had been in the house; I went back to check on her as often as I could. The flight gave me plenty of time to ponder how I
was going to deal with Bella.

I knew that waking up with just me being there might be tricky. To a human, my many scars were barely visible. To a
vampire, I was horribly disfigured and truly frightening. I knew from experience that the sight of them often sent newborns,
and often even older vampires, into an instinctive fight or flight reaction. If she chose flight I might not be able to catch her
on my own with her newborn speed and strength. If she chose to fight I had to try to subdue her, which might be difficult
without hurting her and damaging our relationship. I didn't want her to fear me, and I really didn't want to have to knock her
out, she had been through enough already. It would all depend on her frame of mind when she woke up.

I always tried to cover up my scars as much as possible, living with the family that I did; I knew that they made me stand
out even more against the back drop of the family's perfection. I knew they all accepted me scars and all, and embraced
me for the man that I am, but I still didn't want anyone seeing them more than they had too. Even Alice felt uncomfortable
when she saw them in their entirety. Yes we may all be monsters, but I was the only one that looked like one.

After two brief fuel stops we were landing in Timmins. I called Carlisle and let him know that we had arrived safely. He
filled me in on the progress of the plan. Alice had gotten the body and Emmett had it stashed in Port Angeles. The family
was in position in Seattle and Rose and Edward were set to head to the airport in a few hours. I didn't need my empathic
abilities to know that Carlisle's conversation with Edward had not gone well. At least he was following the plan, though it
might have been because Rose was ready to turn him to ashes.

My new truck was right where it was supposed to be and, as promised, it was stocked with everything we would need to
stay the first few days on our own before Rose and Emmett joined us. The truck was gorgeous and everything I loved and
needed to get into our remote home. Pewter colored 2009 GMC Sierra 3500HD Diesel with a crew cab, 4 wheel drive
the backdrop. I would take the other slightly smaller suite next to hers. There was very little furniture and no mattresses for

I took her to one of the corner suites so she would have a nice view of the lake by our house and the mountains that were

all our equipment was ready and fully functional.

I quickly unloaded the generator and hooked it up. We would run off of it until Bella was comfortable and I could make sure that we got to our new home before Bella's change was complete and we were running out of time.

I couldn't help it; I kept looking down at her face. I could see that her features had been affected by the venom. I found myself constantly running my fingers though her long mahogany hair and resting my palm lightly on her jaw with my fingers curled around the back of her neck. She seemed to enjoy the coolness that my hand provided; and if I was honest with myself, I was enjoying the softness of her skin and the feeling of her silky hair sliding through my fingers. I shook my head at these inappropriate thoughts. I wanted to study her changes closer but I had to concentrate on the road.

We made what should have been a nine hour drive in just under seven hours. Bella had started to make small sounds of pain from time to time and her small movements had become more noticeable. It was clear that the pain she was in was just as bad for her as it had been for the rest of us; God only knows how she was staying so quiet.

The roughness of the gravel road was clearly jarring her body and making it worse, I could only be grateful that she had been able to keep silent and still for the majority of our trip. It was the worst kind of torture to force this on her while she was already in agony but we had no other choice. We couldn't risk keeping her in Forks. All the humans that we had encountered while we were crossing Canada, simply thought she was sleeping. A few of them had expressed concern, but after feeding them a lie about motion sickness pills knocking her out, they would nod in understanding.

I could feel that Bella was much more alert as I drove the last 10km that was our driveway. It was the roughest part of our journey and I had to hold on to Bella tightly to keep her from bouncing around too much. Her moans of pain shot a bolt of agony through my still heart and I just wanted to get there so I could get her comfortable.

I looked carefully around and smelled the air as I was pulling up to the house. We had large meadows surrounding the house and our own lake about 800 yards from the back of the house. I wanted to make sure that no humans had decided to take up residence in our absence and that no vampires were in the area. I smelled nothing but clean fresh air and the wildlife that had wandered through recently.

Surprisingly, the house itself wasn't in too bad a shape. Of all of our houses, I liked this one the best. It was a large 2 storey log resort that was built on 800 acres, and surrounded by government land, to house fly-in hunters and fisherman. Someone had clearly suffered from delusions of grandeur to have built something so large and luxurious so far out in the wilderness, and it had quickly gone out of business, it was perfect for us.

It originally had 18 bedrooms but we had renovated it years ago so that it now had six master suites with adjoining bathrooms and sitting rooms, and of course large walk-in closets. There were also two smaller bedrooms that were large in their own right but did not have the private baths.

The front of the house was large and like all of our houses had tons of windows. Large decks wrapped around it, with the largest one at the back to take in the view of the lake. There was even a fire pit off the back deck for enjoying long summer evenings outside.

The house was a post and beam construction with a great room in the centre of the house that had two staircases to the second floor, one for each wing. The ceilings here were vaulted and reached up to encompass the second floor where landings with railings allowed the separate wings of the second floor to overlook the great room.

Right now, all the windows were covered by the same metal security shutters that we had at the house in Forks. In addition to the great room, the main floor had the kitchen, a large dining room, library, music room and a study as well as the two smaller bedrooms and a bathroom. The second floor held only the six master suites, three in each wing. The best thing about a log home was the soundproofing the logs provided. It made living with Emmett and Rosalie much more bearable even with our vampire hearing.

Finally was the basement that held the control room and equipment to run all of the heating and electrical systems, as well as a huge games room. The house was probably one of the greenest private residences in the world. The whole house was heated completely with geothermal energy. When the technology had first come to our attention, Esme decided to try it out at this house as it is so far off the grid. We normally needed to use large generators for heating as well as electricity. Now the geothermal energy heated the house and all our water; and we had installed solar panels and wind turbines to provide us with the electricity we needed, the house was now completely self sufficient.

I quickly unloaded the generator and hooked it up. We would run off of it until Bella was comfortable and I could make sure all our equipment was ready and fully functional.

I took her to one of the corner suites so she would have a nice view of the lake by our house and the mountains that were the backdrop. I would take the other slightly smaller suite next to hers. There was very little furniture and no mattresses for
I ran to the basement and punched in the code to roll the shutters off the windows. The worst thing for a newborn to feel was trapped. As I ran back to her side I could hear her heart hammering faster and faster in her chest as the venom rushed towards it. She would be waking up soon.

I took the opportunity to really study her. As a human she had been beautiful. As a vampire she was stunning. Her mahogany hair was thicker and had grown several inches, and would now fall to her waist. Her normally pale skin had been hardy by the venom and looked like the finest porcelain. Her eyebrows were high and arched and were a stark contrast to her pale skin; her cheekbones were high and fine and perfectly balanced her heart shaped face.

Her lips though, her lips were fuller with the lower one pouting slightly; they were a beautiful soft red as if she had just been thoroughly kissed. Her breasts and her hips had filled out but her waist had remained tiny giving her some very dangerous curves that would bring men to their knees. God knows I was sure appreciating them.

Woah Cowboy, she is going to be your sister, remember! I mentally scolded; I would have to keep reminding myself of that fact. Bella's scent had amazingly not really changed. Only the lure of her human blood was gone. She still smelled of a mouthwatering mix of strawberries and freesias and still drew me in like a magnet.

Suddenly her moans grew louder, as the thudding of her heart increased in pace, I backed away until I was across the room by the door; I didn't want her to feel crowded and get defensive. I was expecting it, but it still startled me when her back arched off the floor and she let out a bone chilling scream. It seemed to go on forever and, not for the first time, it made my poor dead heart twist to see this beautiful girl in so much pain. And then, just like that, it was over. Her heart beat for the very last time and fell silent as she slumped back to the floor.

I watched from across the room as I could see her mentally trying to come to grips with what had happened. I wondered how much she would remember. Some newborns couldn't remember anything; case in point was Alice. I really hoped that, that would not be the case as it would make things so much more difficult. Although part of me hoped the she wouldn't remember Edward at all. I would need to be ready for anything when I saw her reaction to my scars. I started to worry slightly when after a long few minutes she still hadn't moved. I didn't want to startle her but I needed to know if she was alright.

"Bella Darlin', it's ok. Can you open your eyes for me Sweetheart?" I saw her open her beautiful eyes and watched as she adjusted to the sharpness of her new eyesight. I could see her struggling slightly trying to take in everything at once. She sat up and looked startled at the swiftness of the action. Then the moment I was both anticipating and dreading happened. Her stunning crimson newborn eyes fixed on me and she drew in a sharp breath.

A/N: There is a link to the house on my profile. It is not exact but it will give you a better visual. Thanks to everyone that is on this journey with me. You are all amazing! I will try to get another chapter up in the next couple of days but I am leaving for vacation for 10 days and will have no internet access. Don't worry I am hoping to still get some writing done even if I have to write it out long hand. My husband told me I can't take my laptop. *pouts*
When I opened my eyes, all I could see were rainbows floating in the air. I realized it was sunlight coming through the dirty windows and reflecting off dust motes floating in the air. There were colors that I could recognize, and another that I had no name for. Even the simplest things were beautiful.

I thought about sitting up and before I had finished the thought, I was upright. Woah! Vampire speed would take some getting used to.

I was on the floor of, what looked like, a very large hotel suite in a very old and unused resort. The walls were almost all logs and there was a heavy layer of dust coating everything. Two of the walls in the large room were all windows and looked out over a beautiful lake.

A part of my mind recognized this as a possible escape route and urged me to run, something was after me; I needed to run. I dismissed this thought with difficulty, I had smelled Jasper in the room he would protect me. I turned to see where I knew he was standing. He was farther across the large room than I thought he would be, near the door but not blocking it. As my eyes rose to meet his I sucked in a large breath and my body instinctively tensed.

What I could see of Jasper's neck and parts of his jaw were covered in thick criss-crossing scars. I could see more on the few inches of skin around his wrists where his sleeves had ridden up his muscular arms.

Instantly I was furious. Who had done this to him? If Edward had done this, I was going to kill him! The instinct part of my brain was screaming at me to run away. This creature was dangerous, lethal, an imminent threat to my survival - **RUN**.

I shook my head and pushed it back, this was Jasper. He had proven that he was no threat to me and had saved me on two occasions. He could have killed me at any time during my change, and he had been nothing but protective, caring and gentle with me. It was his voice and touch that kept me sane; his gift that calmed me.

With my instincts still pleading with me to run, I consciously walked slowly across the room to him. My new body and instincts wouldn't let me approach such an intimidating creature with anything less than the utmost caution and submission. I had clasped my hands in front of me, and my head was slightly lowered. The anger and fear was still there, but it was being overridden with the desire to touch him. I wanted to touch the scars and remove the pain that they carried. I was also blown away by the sheer masculinity that he radiated. If Edward's beauty was in his angelic perfection, Jasper's was in his rugged and confident good looks; the scars enhancing his masculinity. Edward was a boy, Jasper was all man.

I had seen Jasper's body take on a wary stance, and I realized that he was nervous about my intentions. I hadn't said anything yet. I stopped just within reach and carefully raised my eyes to meet his.

"Jasper" I heard my new voice for the first time and it startled me. It was slightly lower and clearer, almost sultry and my hand went to my mouth. I tried again, "Jasper, who did this to you?" As I raised my hand towards him he stiffened minutely so I stopped short of touching the scars on his jaw. I felt my anger at the person responsible returning. "Did Edward do this? Did you fight him?"

He relaxed and looked at me with a slight frown. "No Bella, Edward didn't do this. I haven't seen him since shortly after Rose and Emmett dragged him from the house. These I got many, many years ago long before I met the Cullens. Why are you angry?"

I looked at him incredulously. "Because someone hurt you Jasper! You are a good man and I don't like to think of you being hurt."

"Bella, it happened a long time ago. One day I'll tell you my story but not today. Don't they scare you?" I considered his question.

"Part of me is scared by them but I am ignoring that part. You've saved me twice now. I have nothing to fear from you, you wouldn't hurt me." To say Jasper was floored was an understatement.

"How are you doin' it Bella? You have admitted that your instincts are scrammin' at you that I'm dangerous and yet you are just choosin' to ignore them? I have never in all my years met a newborn like you."

I backed away a step. My un-beating heart fell. I was not normal, a freak. I was ignoring my new vampire instincts. I was a fragile human and now I am an abnormal vampire. God, couldn't I do anything right?

"Bella stop." Jasper took a small step forward and slowly held out his hand.
I ignored my instincts and took it without hesitation. I felt a frisson of awareness shoot though my fingers and up my arm when we touched. Jasper's indrawn breath said he felt it too. My instincts went from screaming at me to whispering; he made me feel safer.

"Bella I didn't mean that as a bad thing, quite the contrary it gives me hope that your transition period will be very easy. It's a good thing I promise." I felt him push some reassurance and calm at me as he smiled. My fingers tightened slightly on his and I smiled up at him.

"Now first things first. You must be thirsty, we should go hunt." Now that he mentioned it my throat did feel really dry and burned slightly. "Are you awfully uncomfortable? I can get you one of Carlisle's special snack packs to tie you over if you like?"

I thought about it for a minute "No, I think I am ok Jasper. My throat doesn't hurt or burn or anything; at least not like I have ever heard it described." The look on Jasper's face said I was acting weird again.

"Bella, I think we had better go. I'll feel better after you have hunted and to be honest, with everythin' that has gone on, I'm feeling the need to hunt as well."

I looked at his eyes and realized they were darker than they should have been, definitely not the golden topaz that I had grown used to. "Oh Jasper of course! I'm sorry, let's go hunt."

He chuckled, "Same old Bella, puttin' someone else's needs above your own." He pulled on my hand and led me over to the window releasing me to open it.

I felt the urge to take it again but didn't want to cross a boundary or cling. This was my best friend's husband; I have no right to feel that way.

I watched as he stepped gracefully out the second story window and landed lightly on the ground. I looked down at him with more than a little nervousness and doubt; my instincts were back to yelling.

"Come on Bella. It is easier than you think. Your body will know what to do. Just step out and I swear if you look like you are gonna fall I'll catch you." He looked at me with complete faith.

I bit my bottom lip nervously. "You'll catch me if I fall?"

His expression flashed with an emotion I didn't understand. He placed his hand over his un-beating heart "I promise, I will always catch you if you fall Darlin'"

I could see the sincerity on his face. I took a deep unneeded breath and stepped out of the window. Time seemed to slow down as I watched the ground approaching slowly. I had plenty of time to gently place my foot on the grass and absorb the impact. "I did it!"

He laughed with me picking up my incredulity and excitement. "Yeah you did Darlin' and may I say, that was extremely graceful, even for a vampire."

For the first time I noticed a relaxed southern twang to his speech and melted a little. No Bella! He is Alice's husband! He does not make you melt, Edward does. I froze. Oh God Edward! Edward didn't really want you. My inner monologue was kind enough to remind me of things I would rather have forgotten.

Images started flashing through my mind; images of him standing over me with my blood dripping from his mouth, saying things that lanced pain through my chest and tore me in two. Edward never loved me, he wanted to possess me. Wanted to taunt himself with my human blood until he felt like draining me as a special dessert. He only wanted me as a pet to be controlled.

I felt my legs give out under me and before I could crumble to the ground Jasper caught me just like he promised. "What is it Bella? What's wrong? Breathe Darlin'"

I noticed my breath was coming in short ragged gasps. My eyes filled with tears that would never fall as I looked up at his face.

"Edward." It came out in an agonized whisper that he would have never have been able to hear had he not been a vampire.

I could feel terror and heartbreak rising and warring to become the dominant emotion; heartbreak over his betrayal, and terror that he would find me and finish me off now that I was not an easily controlled pet. With the temptation of my blood gone, I would be useless to him. He would find me, I needed to run!

Jasper cradled my face in his large hand and brought my head to his chest as he hugged me, now sitting in his lap. "Shhh sweetheart. It's ok. I won't let anything or anyone hurt you. We'll talk about this, and I'll help you through it, but first I would like to hunt. Will you do me the honor of coming with me? You don't have to eat if you don't want to but I would appreciate the company."
I felt him pushing my panic away. He was right, he would protect me. Edward wasn't here. I would stay close to Jasper; I would be safe with Jasper.

I felt myself calming down and starting to think rationally again. Jasper wanted to hunt; for the first time I was given a choice in what I wanted to do. He wasn't telling me or manipulating me into something, even if it was for my own good. He was actually allowing me to assess my own needs and make a decision for myself.

"Of course I'll come with you. You're right, we should hunt. I'm sorry I broke down."

He helped lift me to my feet. "Never apologize for your feelings, Bella. They're yours and yours alone to have. We can discuss the reasons behind them, but emotions are the purest form of honesty and should never be apologized for."

This quiet unassuming man was caring and profound; and I knew without a doubt why Alice loved him so. She was a very lucky woman.

I took a deep breath out of habit, "Come on Jasper, show me how to hunt" I plastered a shaky smile on my face and tried to lighten the mood with my voice.

He looked carefully at my face and I knew he was feeling out my emotions, this conversation was only being put on hold. He would bring it up later. He squeezed my hand satisfied with what he saw. And a smile started to spread across his handsome face.

"I won't have to teach you anything, you already know how to hunt. We just need to give you an appropriate target." He said this with complete confidence and I couldn't help but look at him with skepticism.

"I think you are forgetting who you are dealing with Jasper. It would not be a massive understatement to say that I never was any good at sports, and I'm pretty sure that hunting is a form of sport for vampires."

He laughed at my description "But that was the old Bella. Version 2.0 came with the updated graceful package or have you forgotten your last step out the second story window? You'll be able to do this. We'll start with a slow jog through the meadow and into the woods. I'll be beside you every step. I promised to catch you if you fell remember? I always keep my promises."

With that he gently took my hand and we slowly turned to the meadow. He slowly increased from a walk to a jog and before I knew it we were flying through the forest. Running was amazing!! I could see every leaf on every tree, hear tiny animals in the foliage and their hearts beating fast with fright as we passed; they knew that predators had entered the forest. These heartbeats barely registered other than to be catalogued as squirrels and other small rodents, not nearly temptation enough for me.

I now knew that my human fears of Edward running into a tree were truly ridiculous. This was more natural than breathing, it was as normal as the beating of my human heart had been; something that just happened without conscious thought. I loved it! For someone who had been so clumsy in my human life this was the feeling of ultimate accomplishment and freedom.

Too quickly, Jasper slowed us down and brought us slowly to a halt. He smiled at the expression of joy that I was sure was written all over my face and cocked an eyebrow at me "Believe me now?"

I laughed "Jasper that was amazing!!! Did you see me? I didn't even trip or stumble once! Can we do that again?"

My mood must have rubbed off on him because he started to laugh "Of course we can but first, can you tell me what you hear?"

I stilled instantly he had asked me to listen. Off in the distance I thought I could hear the heavy rhythmic thudding of the hearts of three animals. "I can hear three heartbeats, 900 yards to the north of us. But two sound different than the other one." I frowned as I tried to figure it out. The more I listened the more the itch and burn at the back of my throat seemed to bother me. Unconsciously my hand crept up to lightly press on it as if to try and relieve it.

Jasper noticed this of course. "Very good! Now that feelin' in your throat, is your thirst. You need to hunt for it to become bearable. Because we feed on animals it'll never fully go away but it'll make it tolerable. And as to the difference in the sounds of the heartbeats – you're hearin' a deer and what is probably her fawn, they're being stalked by a mountain lion."

I concentrated on the sounds knowing that I would be able to tell the difference on my own next time.

I could feel Jasper studying my face "Just let your body do what it wants to, Bella. Follow your instincts."

Before I knew it, I had slouched down into a sort of jogging crouch and was headed silently towards the animals; the sound of their hearts drawing me to them. When I was about 20 yards away I leapt up onto a tree branch and stopped to take in my prey. The smell of the deer was not very appetizing but the lion had my mouth filling with venom and my lips drawing back over my teeth. In a second I was on its back with my teeth sinking into its throat. Somewhere along the way I had snapped its neck. The feeling of the warm blood pulsing in my mouth and down my throat was bliss and put out the fire burning there.
I heard a small movement behind me and my body tensed and spun into a defensive posture; a deep snarl erupted from my mouth. I was coiled to spring at whatever it was that had snuck up on me. Before I could leap, it registered that Jasper was standing there, frozen with his hands up in a placating gesture.

I quickly dropped to my knees with my hands over my face and felt deeply ashamed. How could I almost attack Jasper like that after everything he had done for me? How much patience could one person have before they got tired of it and left? I felt myself being taken into his arms for the second time that day.

"Hey, don't you go thinkin' you did somethin' wrong cause you didn't. I know better than to approach a newborn when they are feeding. That was my mistake not yours. Your reaction was perfectly normal for a vampire of 10 years not just one an hour old. What amazes me is that you were able to stop from attacking me which would have been exactly what I deserved for bein' so stupid." He smoothed my hair back from my face and tucked it behind an ear.

"Jasper I almost attacked you! How could I do that? Why would I do that?"

He looked me in the eyes "Because it is instinctual for us to protect our kill. Even when our family hunts together the kills are individual. We don't approach too closely while one of us is feedin' because it'll set off that exact reaction. I just didn't give you enough room is all. Newborns require more space than a seasoned vampire. Well except for Rosalie but then we all know how she can be."

I chuckled at this. "So you are not mad at me?"

He smiled "No Darlin' I am actually very proud of you. You took that lion down like a pro, and look! You barely even spilled any. Your table manners are actually better than Emmett's but then again he likes to play with his food"

This sent me off in peals of laughter. I looked down at the soft yoga pants and long sleeved shirt that I was wearing. Sure enough there was a bit of blood spilled on the front and a jagged tear across the stomach of the shirt and hip of the pants. I frowned.

Jasper chuckled "Not to worry, Esme packed you some clothes and Rose and Emmett will be bringin' more. We destroy clothes all the time when we are hunting, comes with the territory. Do you want to hunt some more or would you like to go back?"

Again he was honestly giving me the choice. I liked it. "I feel like trying for something else and I know you haven't eaten yet so let's keep going."

He gestured to the forest "Lead on Darlin. Lets rustle up some grub!"

I laughed and took off running with Jasper on my heels.

Three hours later we were back at the house and I had discovered that I liked bear, but hated the taste of wolf.

Jasper had laughed at the look of disgust on my face as I had dropped the dead animal. "We all have our favorites. Mine just happens to be bobcat but I like wolf just fine. Carnivores taste better. Later I will let you taste deer, now that is an acquired taste!"

We had taken turns racing each other on the way back and I discovered that I was a lot faster than Jasper due to my newborn strength. He told me to enjoy it while it lasted because it would start to diminish in about a year.

We had just entered the meadow where the house was, and I finally got a good look at my new home. I loved it! It was so different than any place I had ever been before and I felt instantly at home. I could see that it needed some work. There were decorative shutters hanging broken from the windows. A tree had fallen through a portion of the metal roof and it would need to be repaired. There was a detached garage that looked like an animal had busted down the door, and the roof would also need to be replaced.

I could feel Jasper looking at me and I heard him say "God you are beautiful!"

I laughed and turned to him. "Sure Jasper! I'm beautiful! Wait till Rosalie gets here and then it will be back to plain old Bella. Are you sure you don't need to get your eyes checked?" I was joking but stopped laughing when I saw the look of shock on his face. "What's the matter Jasper? What's wrong?"

He swallowing "Bella I didn't say that out loud."

I just stared at him "What are you talking about, I heard you tell me I was beautiful." I insisted.

He got a calculating look on his face "No I thought it. I didn't say it. Can you read my mind Bella?"

I looked at him in disbelief. "Don't joke Jasper it's not funny! Of course I can't read your mind!" I was starting to feel panicky. I didn't want to be able to read minds. He could read minds and I didn't want to be like him.

"So you can't hear anything?" he asked

I looked right at him but he wasn't saying anything. "No Jasper I can't hear anything." I could see him thinking and I thought
to myself ’You are freaking me out here Jasper!’

Suddenly he gasped. ”Bella I heard you!” Ok now I was officially terrified. I was panicked! What was going on!!

”I heard you say ’You are freaking me out here Jasper’ but your lips didn't move”

My hand flew to my mouth at his words and I was starting to gasp when Jasper hit me with a heavy dose of calm. I felt the effects immediately and looked at him with gratitude as I thought ’Thanks!’

He smiled and I heard a response, ”You’re welcome.’

This time his lips didn't move. If he hadn't still been dishing out the calm I might have collapsed.

”Oh my god” it came out as a soft exclamation.

Jasper could see I was struggling and moved to stand in front of me and took my hands in his. ”It's ok Bella I think I have it figured out. You can hear things if they are thought right at you, so to speak. And you can apparently project thoughts if you think right at someone. It is similar to Edward's gift only with control and a great deal more privacy.”

I tried to process this. I really didn't want to have a gift, especially not one related to his. Jasper just stood there with my hands in his and gave me time to process. ”Well I guess I can't make it go away can I?”

He smiled ”No Darlin', just like humans we have to play with the cards we are dealt. This isn't a bad thing and most likely won't affect you all that much. Emmett may be annoying, but really, I'm not telepathic and he annoys the hell outta me all the time”

I appreciated his attempt to lift the mood. He was right.

”Come on girl, we got stuff to do and we can play with the limits of your gift while we do it. It will be fun. Just think of all the pranks we can plan for Emmett and we won't even have to leave the room!” That one got me.

I started to laugh. ”You're right Jazz. Thanks. I guess I do need to learn to 'play my cards' and there is no time like the present.”

I felt somewhat better, and we turned back to look at the house. I could see Jasper cataloguing the damage and making a mental list. I was relieved when I didn't hear anything coming from him. Jasper was right; someone had to be thinking directly at me.

He turned to look at me again ”No worries, we will have it cleaned up in no time. We'll start by cleanin' the inside tonight and tomorrow mornin' we can get started on cleanin' the damage to the outside.”

We went in the house and I turned to Jasper ”Is it ok if I change my clothes after we clean? I don't see the point in destroying two sets of nice clothes.”

He looked at me for a moment ”Darlin' you don't need to ask my permission, you are a big girl and are fully capable of makin' up your own mind.”

He was right, when had I started to feel the need to ask permission all the time? I never used to be like that. I made the decision to forego getting changed for the moment. My clothes may have been torn and bloodied with my dinner but cleaning the dirt and dust from the inside of the house would be just as messy.

Jasper quickly inspected the pump for the well, the well itself and the plumbing lines. Once he decided they were in good condition he turned the water on. I followed him around for awhile; I didn't like to be too far away from him. I didn't like the feelings that my instincts left me with; I got nervous and wary. Jasper sensed this of course so if I wasn't next to him he was constantly talking to me either out loud or through my new 'gift'.

I grabbed cleaning supplies from the back of the truck and brought them in the house. Jasper seemed surprised that I wasn't having any problems adjusting to my vampire strength, but I felt better after he said ”You were an extraordinary human; I should have known you would be an extraordinary vampire as well.”

If I could have blushed I would have.

After several hours of cleaning the inside at vampire speed, the house was spotless. We had been playing with my gift, and I could send and receive thoughts and images. It was actually pretty fun. I could also make the decision not to 'hear' what someone was sending me. I thought of it like an on/off switch and was very grateful to have it. I could feel that someone was trying to send something but I could choose to 'hear' it or not. Jasper decided that it was a very useful gift to have.

We agreed to disagree on that one.

We had moved the few pieces of furniture from storage and I was upstairs when I heard ’Bella, why don't you come out and sit by the lake with me’
I got the image of the house from across the lake he had to be on the other side to see it from that angle. Jasper was clearly having too much fun with my ability; he was easily a mile away so I guess he was testing the range.

I ran to where he was sitting "You know Jazz I might just keep the switch turned off so you don't forget how to speak out loud" I said as I sat beside him

Jasper found me curled up in front of the fireplace. I had brought some wood in and started a fire after having some fun

I chuckled "Well then it's a good thing that I now have eternity."

He squeezed my hand "Well we were goin' to have to leave right away as it was an early acceptance so, after the weekend in Seattle, you guys were supposed to use your truck to take him to the airport. After that you were to drive back to Forks in time to meet your Dad, Carlise, Esme and Alice for dinner at the Lodge. On your way there you were killed by a drunk driver. Your dad got the call while he was talkin' to my family around the dinner table. If everything went as planned Rose would have been disguised as you and would have dropped Edward at Sea-Tac where he did actually fly to New York. She and Emmett were to meet up in Port Angeles to grab the body that Alice found to stand in as you. With Alice's ability we knew where and when a drunk would take a curve too wide and force your truck off the road and down a cliff in between Port Angeles and Forks."

Jasper held me as I dry sobbed into his arms for what seemed like hours. I thought about my mom and Phil, and the phone call they had by now received. My heart broke for my dad and how he was now all alone. And I mourned the loss of my human life. Jasper didn't try to influence my emotions once, he just let me cry. I knew that it had to be hard for him to feel everything that I was feeling, but he never pulled away and he just pulled me tighter and rocked me if he felt me try to give him some distance.

Once my sobs had ceased and my breathing was back to normal he slowly let me draw back out of the comfort of his arms. "Why don't you go and take advantage of that big bathtub in your room? The water will be hot by now. You'll feel better once you have washed all the blood and dirt away and gotten into some nice clean clothes. We can talk more after, I'm sure you'll have more questions. We can call the family when you are feelin' up to it if you want to."

A bath sounded heavenly and I kissed his cheek and thought at him "Thanks Jazz. I don't know what I would do without you."

He gave me one of his soft smiles that made my insides melt "Darlin' you will never have to find out. You're stuck with me for as long as you'll have me"

I chuckled "Well then it's a good thing that I now have eternity."

I went to the house and up the stairs to what was now my room. The farther away I got from Jasper the louder my instincts got; they were back to urging me to run. I was back to being nervous and I didn't like it.

My room was more like a suite. I had felt guilty about taking such a large room until I saw the others and realized they all pretty much looked like this one. Mine was actually the mid-sized one of the three in this wing. I had noticed Jasper had put his things in the smaller one next to mine, which left the largest one vacant across the hall. My room was huge, with plenty of room for the king sized bed frame that was against the wall. There was room for a couple of dressers, and an antique armoire stood across from the foot of the bed against the wall, with doors to the private bathroom and huge walk-in closet on either side of it. In the corner of the room was space for a couple of large overstuffed chairs and coffee table that Jasper said would be purchased.

I grabbed some clean clothes from my closet and walked into the bathroom to run my bath. I took a quick shower to scrub off the grime and then sank gratefully into the heat of the now full tub. It was a deep old fashioned claw foot tub, and the heat of the water felt wonderful lapping against my cold skin. The room was very luxurious in a rustic sort of way. It had a long counter with double sinks and large mirrors, and beside the linen closet was a separate shower. I heard Jasper come back in while the bathtub was draining, and his shower start up. I hoped he was ok; he had been outside for a really long time. It was the first time that I had been really alone since my change and I hadn't worried about him leaving me. I guess I was learning to trust a little.

Jasper turned to look at me and took my hand in his. "What do you remember Bella?"

I interrupted "I don't remember Edward saying he was going to school in New York" I thought hard for a minute "Oh! It is part of the cover story! Sorry, please -- go on."

He squeezed my hand "Well Edward was goin' to have to leave right away as it was an early acceptance so, after the weekend in Seattle, you guys were supposed to use your truck to take him to the airport. After that you were to drive back to Forks in time to meet your Dad, Carlise, Esme and Alice for dinner at the Lodge. On your way there you were killed by a drunk driver. Your dad got the call while he was talkin' to my family around the dinner table. If everything went as planned Rose would have been disguised as you and would have dropped Edward at Sea-Tac where he did actually fly to New York. She and Emmett were to meet up in Port Angeles to grab the body that Alice found to stand in as you. With Alice's ability we knew where and when a drunk would take a curve too wide and force your truck off the road and down a cliff in between Port Angeles and Forks."

Jasper looked at me and I could see the sorrow on his face. "Well we told him that we were takin' you to Seattle for the weekend to celebrate your birthday and the fact that Edward got accepted to Juilliard in New York."

I interrupted "I don't remember Edward saying he was going to school in New York" I thought hard for a minute "Oh! It is part of the cover story! Sorry, please -- go on."

He squeezed my hand "Well Edward was takin' to have to leave right away as it was an early acceptance so, after the weekend in Seattle, you guys were supposed to use your truck to take him to the airport. After that you were to drive back to Forks in time to meet your Dad, Carlise, Esme and Alice for dinner at the Lodge. On your way there you were killed by a drunk driver. Your dad got the call while he was talkin' to my family around the dinner table. If everything went as planned Rose would have been disguised as you and would have dropped Edward at Sea-Tac where he did actually fly to New York. She and Emmett were to meet up in Port Angeles to grab the body that Alice found to stand in as you. With Alice's ability we knew where and when a drunk would take a curve too wide and force your truck off the road and down a cliff in between Port Angeles and Forks."

Jasper held me as I dry sobbed into his arms for what seemed like hours. I thought about my mom and Phil, and the phone call they had by now received. My heart broke for my dad and how he was now all alone. And I mourned the loss of my human life. Jasper didn't try to influence my emotions once, he just let me cry. I knew that it had to be hard for him to feel everything that I was feeling, but he never pulled away and he just pulled me tighter and rocked me if he felt me try to give him some distance.

Once my sobs had ceased and my breathing was back to normal he slowly let me draw back out of the comfort of his arms. "Why don't you go and take advantage of that big bathtub in your room? The water will be hot by now. You'll feel better once you have washed all the blood and dirt away and gotten into some nice clean clothes. We can talk more after, I'm sure you'll have more questions. We can call the family when you are feelin' up to it if you want to."

A bath sounded heavenly and I kissed his cheek and thought at him "Thanks Jazz I don't know what I would do without you."

He gave me one of his soft smiles that made my insides melt "Darlin' you will never have to find out. You're stuck with me for as long as you'll have me"

I chuckled "Well then it's a good thing that I now have eternity."

I went to the house and up the stairs to what was now my room. The farther away I got from Jasper the louder my instincts got; they were back to urging me to run. I was back to being nervous and I didn't like it.

My room was more like a suite. I had felt guilty about taking such a large room until I saw the others and realized they all pretty much looked like this one. Mine was actually the mid-sized one of the three in this wing. I had noticed Jasper had put his things in the smaller one next to mine, which left the largest one vacant across the hall. My room was huge, with plenty of room for the king sized bed frame that was against the wall. There was room for a couple of dressers, and an antique armoire stood across from the foot of the bed against the wall, with doors to the private bathroom and huge walk-in closet on either side of it. In the corner of the room was space for a couple of large overstuffed chairs and coffee table that Jasper said would be purchased.

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Jasper found me curled up in front of the fireplace. I had brought some wood in and started a fire after having some fun
with my newborn strength. Jasper laughed as I told him that I was snapping fairly large trees with my bare hands.

"I think I got a bit carried away cause there's a really big pile of firewood stacked under the back deck now."

He went to look and I heard his laughter echoing through the mostly empty house. "Do me a favor Darlin' and challenge Emmett to an arm wrestling match when he gets here. Make sure you wager somethin' good cause you are gonna school that boy!"

I laughed and looked at him in disbelief "No way, I can't beat Emmett!"

He cocked an eyebrow at me "Trust me; I wanna see him get beat by a little tiny girl so bad! You'll be able to do it - so make sure you make the stakes really big!"

I could feel his excitement. Maybe I would be able to get Emmett back for some of the tricks he had played on me. I was so looking forward to this!

"So Bella, are you feeling better?"

I looked at him and shrugged as the smile melted from my face. "I know I don't need to tell you how I am feeling but since you asked, I'm still very sad. I am going to miss my family. I wanted to be like you guys so badly but now I am faced with an eternity without Edward."

Jasper put his arms around me and pulled me into his lap. God his arms felt good! I was safe.

"Bella, what do you remember about the other night?"

I thought back and I could feel my emotions rising again and I began to play with my fingers. "I remember opening my presents and cutting my finger on the paper; then pain and Edwards teeth in my neck. I remember you were trying to get to me, trying to save me, but Rosalie and Emmett were hanging onto you. I guess they thought you were attacking me. Everyone was so focused on you that no one saw what he was doing until you yelled. Then I heard all the things he said. Did he really mean all that Jasper?" I hated how pathetic I sounded but I couldn't seem to help it. He hugged me harder.

"I've replayed every emotion that I've ever felt from him when he was around you. I figured out that, what I thought was love, was a twisted kind of devotion to the feeling of ownership that he felt towards you. The love I felt wasn't for you as a person but your human blood. I'm sorry Bella"

I guess I was just all cried out cause all I felt was numb. I could see Jasper looking at my face, I could see his lips moving but I didn't hear anything he said. Edward only loved me for my blood. My blood was gone and I was with the family. He would be coming after me he wouldn't want me in the way! I wanted to run but I was being held. I started to struggle - I had to get away!

Suddenly Jasper was in my head 'BELLA! Come back! Don't shut me out, please!'

He was shaking me slightly and I could feel his fear and concern mixed with a bit of desperation. My eyes focused on his and his relief was palpable.

My fear resurfaced "He wanted to kill me Jasper! He tried to drain me! What if he wants to finish me? He will be with the family and won't want me around! I'll have to leave to be safe. I don't want to be alone! What will happen to me? Where would I go?" I could feel panic setting in, I was terrified and borderline hysterical. I could hear the words tumbling out of my mouth so fast they were the vampire hum that I had never been able to hear before.

"No Bella! I will not let him hurt you! Listen to me! I used to be a Major in the army. I know more about fighting than most vampires walking around. You wanted to know about my scars; I got them fighting in a vampire war. I will tell you the whole story another time but bottom line; I can and will protect you! It's you and me Bella, and he will never hurt you again. Look at me – you and me! Ok?"

He was staring me down and at my nod, he pulled me back into his chest and held me as he continued "As for the family I can tell you that they are not very happy with him right now and he is being sent to live with friends for the time being. No one is very happy about the way he has treated you and he has certainly not lived up to the example set by Carlisle and Esme, and the life they have enabled us to have. No one is going to force you to leave the family. I haven't had a chance to have an in depth conversation with Carlisle yet, but trust me, he is very angry with Edward at the moment." His hand was stroking my hair gently and I began to relax into him. I felt the panic and terror receding under his calming touch.

"Esme wanted to be here with you so badly, they all did. For your safety and the safety of the family she, Carlisle and Alice have to stay in Forks for a few months before they can join us here. It's the only way. People would be suspicious if our family just up and moved the day after you died. We are supposed to have ties to the community. It just about killed Esme to watch me drive away with you knowing she won't be able to see you for so long; she was cryin' in the driveway when we left. Carlisle was almost as bad. They love you Bella and are missin' the heck out of you right now."

I wanted to see them. I needed to know that what he was saying was true. I needed to call them at least.

He continued, "In a few months they can say that Carlisle got a great job offer somewhere else and Forks just has too
many memories for them. Rose, Emmett and I are supposed to be away at Dartmouth so we aren't expected to be there. No one will even miss us when we don't attend your funeral because you were younger than us, and Edward will be too broken up over your death to be able to go."

Jasper chuckled darkly for a moment "Which may not be far from the truth, as apparently Rose was threatenin' to tear him apart and ship him to Alaska in boxes for what he did to you. Rosalie and Emmett should be here in the next few days, and are bringing a truck load of things for the house. Edward should be halfway to Alaska right now so he can't hurt you."

I was confused, I pulled away to look at him "But why would she be so mad Jasper? Rosalie has always hated me."

He looked conflicted as he tucked a piece of my hair back "You need to hear about how Rose was changed, and it is not my story to tell but trust me when I say that Edwards betrayal hit a little too close to home for my sister. She has never hated you, I know it doesn't seem that way but she doesn't. I think you will see a big change in Rose when she gets here. She wants to talk to you herself so give her a chance ok?"

I nodded "Of course. I only ever wanted to be her friend. She is so confident and bold. I always wanted to be more like her but whenever I was around I just felt so nervous. I mean why would she want to talk to me? I would like to get to know her better." I really needed some time to process. "Jasper, I am gonna go upstairs and lay down in my room for awhile ok? I know I can't sleep but it is really late and the habits of a lifetime are hard to break."

He smiled and kissed me on the forehead. "I will be around if you need me. If I'm not in the house I'll be just outside, well within yellin' distance. If you need me I'll come runnin' ok?"

I nodded and turned to go upstairs to my new room and lay on the pile of blankets I was calling a bed. I looked over at the piece of floor that I was calling a nightstand. I grabbed the cell phone that Jasper had given me earlier that day. It had all the family's numbers in it and I scrolled through and found the one I wanted. I needed my mom.
*Chapter 6*: Chapter 6

A/N: As usual Twilight and all its characters do not belong to me they belong to the talented Stephenie Meyer – thank you for allowing me to play in your world

OK you guys are amazing with all the reviews! This chapter is probably not what you were expecting but Jasper wouldn't leave me alone with his take on how things went after her change. And heaven knows I can't deny that sexy man anything! I promise the next chapter will give you more answers so bear with me.

This is my last update before my vacation. I leave in a few hours for places without internet access *gasp* Not to worry - I have supplies for writing longhand. The hubby still hasn't figured it out yet and thinks she has won. Poor boy, so delusional. I have chapter 7 almost done so it should be posted rather quickly when I get back. Until then friends!

Her stunning crimson newborn eyes fixed on me and she drew in a sharp breath. I watched as her body froze when her new vampire eyes took in my scars. I was ready for her to attack me when I felt conflicting waves of anger and fear coming from her and I was confused by her posture. Her instincts were telling her to run but she was angry. She had tensed up but had not dropped into a defensive posture of any kind. I saw her close her eyes and shake her head minutely. She started to walk towards me very slowly in what could only be described as a submissive posture, when she was within easy reach she stopped and spoke my name.

The sound of her voice was low and pleasing and could easily be described as sexy I felt a warmth in my chest in reaction to her voice and the submissive posture. The primitive part of me rejoiced that her first word as a vampire was my name. Mine! I mentally beat back my instincts and tried to focus on what she was saying.

"Jasper, who did this to you?" She reached out to touch me and my body automatically wanted to defend itself, decades of defending itself from unpredictable newborns had left its mark. I managed to only stiffen when I controlled the reaction. When she asked about the scars and thought Edward was responsible I relaxed a bit. I had never experienced a newborn like her. She was so controlled. She was managing to move at human speed and had not reacted to the enhanced vision and hearing with anything other than mild surprise. I gave her an extremely edited version of my past. There would be plenty of time to tell her of my sins later. I was not looking forward to her seeing me for the monster that I was and recollecting from me. If I was to help her, she needed to trust me. Maybe if she got to know me before she heard my story she would still be my friend afterwards. It was the most that I could hope for.

I wanted to know if the scars scared her, I was not prepared for her answer. "Part of me is scared by them and screaming at me to run but I am ignoring that part. You've saved me twice now. I have nothing to fear from you, you wouldn't hurt me." How the Hell was she ignoring her instincts?! She had risen only minutes ago! She was extraordinary and I told her so. It looked like she would be skipping the newborn phase altogether.

I saw her take a step back; I realized that I had said something wrong when I felt her emotions; the feelings of wrongdoing and worthlessness were choking me. "Bella stop" I explained what I meant and held my hand out to her, it was her choice to take it. Too many choices had been made for her already. Where ever possible, from now on, I would try to always give her a choice.

As she readily took my hand a felt a kind of charge where our hands connected and it flooded my body with warmth, not necessarily sexual, a connection. I could see she felt it too and in my long life I had never felt anything like this before. Her ever present fear retreated to the point where it was no longer a dominant emotion. I filed these revelations away for thinking about later right now I wanted to take her hunting, her throat would be on fire. I offered her one of Carlisle's snack packs to tie her over but again she was amazing and said she felt fine. Well she may not be thirsty but I sure was; it had been 4 days since I last hunted and that was only to take the edge off for her disaster of a birthday party. It had been over a week since I had hunted properly.

"Bella, I think we had better go. I will feel better after you have hunted, and to be honest, with everything that has gone on I am feeling the need to hunt as well." I watched her study my eyes and she finally reacted just like I predicted. In typical Bella fashion she was worried about me. I couldn't help but chuckle. When I led her over to the window and stepped out I knew she would be worried about the leap that for a human would have meant serious injury. "Come on Bella. It is easier than you think. Your body will know what to do. Just step out and I swear if you look like you are gonna fall I will catch you."

She nibbled on her lower lip and it was sexy as hell! God this woman might just be the death of me. I knew right then, that no matter what happened there would be no way in hell that I would ever be able to view her as my sister.

"You'll catch me if I fall?" She looked so vulnerable; my ass of a brother had really done a number on her self-worth and her fear was back in full force. She had no idea how much she meant to me or the rest of my family, I would never allow her to be hurt again.

I placed my hand over the heart that was in danger of falling for this scared and wounded woman "I promise, I will always catch you if you fall Darlin'"

She stepped off and was so excited when I told her she was graceful. She was practically bouncing and then, just like that, she cracked and grief and terror overwhelmed the happiness. I caught her just before she collapsed and she was having problems breathing. "What is it Bella? What's wrong? Breathe Darlin'" Even though it was unnecessary the action would...
She looked up at me, her face stark with fear, one name explained everything "Edward" I had known that she would have to face things eventually but I had hoped she could hunt first. What I wasn't prepared for was the depth of her fear. The terror that she was feeling overwhelmed her heartbeat and was even nudging my instincts to act. She was trying to control the instinct to run. I hoped that hunting would help her stabilize her emotions and give her the strength to start to heal. I don't think this precious woman knew exactly how broken she was.

"Shhh sweetheart. It's ok. I won't let anything or anyone hurt you. We'll talk about this, and I'll help you through it, but first I would like to hunt. Will you do me the honor of coming with me? You don't have to eat if you don't want to but I would appreciate the company." I pushed some calm on her and waited; I hoped such a normal and calm request would help her regain control.

She agreed to go hunting and I searched her emotions to make sure she was ready. I would have to get her to talk later, she had pushed her emotions away and I knew that unless we dealt with them, and her fears, that she would take so much longer for her heart to heal.

Watching her hunt was an amazing experience. She was such a natural. The first time she killed I had gotten too close. When she almost attacked me I got to hold her again while I explained vampire instincts; I reassured her that I wasn't mad and teased her back into a happy mood. I was actually pleased that for the first time she was ready to attack instead of running away. As much as I hated to watch her go through these mood swings I sure didn't mind having her in my arms. She fit in my lap perfectly with her head tucked into the notch in my shoulder, and I could run my fingers gently through her hair. On our way back we raced and talked about our favorite meals. I teased her about the look she had when she tasted wolf; I thought she was going to throw up and I swear, even though it was impossible, she looked green.

When we got to the house we stood surveying the damage and when I looked over at her I was struck by what I saw. The setting sun had broken though the cloud cover and highlighted her hair with rich red and gold undertones and the shimmer on her skin was subtle enough to make her seem to almost glow. And I could help but think 'God you are beautiful!'

She laughed off the compliment but I was stunned. I knew I had not spoken out loud, she heard my thought. She tried to deny it and as her panic rose I had to calm her down again, which also gave me a reason to hold her hands again. I pushed this line of thought away to concentrate on the bigger issue.

I quickly figured out that she could only hear when I wanted her to hear and she seemed to be the same. Her ability was so similar to Edwards I had to wonder if it had something to do with his venom, but then she had much more of my venom and didn't seem to be empathic. I had to talk to Carlisle, maybe he had some insight to offer. We went into the house and it made me sad that she felt the need to ask my permission for something as simple as changing clothes. Maybe it is a good thing that it is only the two of us here for awhile, she really needs to regain some confidence; having Rose and Emmett will help. With Rose firmly behind her and her ability to beat up on Emmett with her newborn strength I was hoping that she would bounce back quickly. And still her instinctual wariness was still there, constantly looking for a reason for her to flee. I really need to talk to Carlisle, I thought in frustration.

Bella's fear and wariness always seemed to escalate whenever I was out of her sight. I could feel my dead heart twist every time she flinched ready to run. Her instincts were telling her that some kind of attack was imminent and the only time she seemed comfortable was when she could see or hear me. This discovery gave me hope that when she heard everything about my past she would still see me for who I am now and be willing to be my friend like Alice is.

While we cleaned, we played with her ability. The military part of my brain needed to know the limits of her gift; while the part of me that was falling for this beautiful broken woman, did it solely to make her feel secure and lessen her fears. We discovered that she pretty much had an on/off switch and that she could send and receive both thoughts as well as images. She laughed so hard that she actually snorted when I tried sending her a mental picture of one of Emmett's many losses when he bet against Alice. This particular time she had forced him to walk through downtown Vermont in November wearing nothing but a bright pink ballerina leotard and frilly too too while asking everyone to dance. He was actually upset that no one would as he thought he looked pretty.

Once the house was pretty much clean, I asked her to sit under the stars by the lake with me. I was on the opposite side of the lake so I mentally projected. I wanted to see if she would be able to hear me as it was just over a mile to the house. She joined me quickly. It would have been romantic but I knew it was time for her to start talking about her memories and she would need to come to grips with her human death and the loss of her parents.

I held her while she sobbed in my arms and I felt my own heart breaking at her pain. I kept her in my arms long passed the time that her emotions told me that I could let her go. I knew it had been a long day and that she was as tired as it was possible for a vampire to be so I walked her to the house and suggested that she take a bath. It would be a good
Once I heard the water running for her bath, I went back to the far side of the lake to make my phone call. I would tell her about the call later. The phone only rang once before Esme picked up "Jasper! How is Bella? Is she alright? Do I need to come there?" She was talking so fast that even I had a hard time picking out what she was saying.

"Woah, easy there Mom! Calm down she is fine. We went hunting and cleaned the house up a bit already. She has amazing control for a newborn and is a natural at hunting. She got a lion, bear and a wolf her first time out. Although she really didn't care for the taste of wolf." I chuckled and I heard her relieved sigh.

"Oh I have been so worried. How is she otherwise?" I knew what she was asking and dreaded the upcoming conversation.

"I think it would be easier to talk to you and Carlisle at the same time and Alice if she is there." I said. I heard her walking towards what I assumed would be Carlisle's study and heard his voice come on the line. "Hello son, the three of us are here. It's good to hear from you."

I heard Alice's happy "Hi Jazz!" in the background, and knowing what would happen; I decided that I would call her personally again later. "Ok Jazz" was her response to my mental decision.

"Hello everyone. Obviously we got to the house safely and it is not as damaged as I would have expected. Bella finished her change about a half an hour after we got here. The trip was hard on her I think but she hardly made any noise the whole way. Let me tell you that Bella is a very unique newborn in that she already has almost complete control over her instincts and didn't have any issues at all with sensory overload or her strength. I know it's early days but I think she may just pretty much skip the newborn phase altogether." I had fallen into my military reporting mien as I heard their gasps and Alice's "I told you she would be great!" on the other end.

"And we discovered today that she is gifted as well." I heard their surprised exclamations as they processed this information.

Carlisle was, of course, the first to speak. "What is she able to do Son?"

"Well it appears that she has a variation on Edward's gift. She is telepathic and can project her own thoughts to others. The twist is that she seems to have an on/off switch and she can only read thoughts that others want her to hear. You sort of have to think right at her for her to hear you, although it's not as difficult as it sounds" I hoped that I had explained it properly.

"Is it just thoughts or is it images as well?" Carlisle was in full doctor mode and he sounded excited.

"Images as well. She got a kick out of Emmett's ballerina get up Ali." They all laughed at the memory. "Carlisle do you think it could have anything to do with Edward's venom being the one to change her?" I had to know.

There was silence as he thought "I don't know Son. Is she showing any indication of being empathic? You injected way more venom into her than Edward did. I suppose anything is possible."

Well there went that theory I thought "Not that I have noticed Carlisle, but she is only a day old so something else may show itself yet."

"How is she handling having a gift; especially now that you add in this particular gift?" If Carlisle was in doctor mode, Esme was definitely being a mother hen right now, concerned with her youngest chick

"She freaked out at first and I know it was because it's so close to what Edward can do. She was much better after she figured out that she can turn it off and choose not to listen. She seems to like images better for now and we are keeping it fun. I have the feeling that she will not be using it very often."

I wasn't surprised at Esme's next question though "Jasper, what about her mental well being. How is she doing really?" This is where I knew I needed to tread carefully because I didn't want to hurt her feelings.

"So far she is dealing with mood swings that are normal for a newborn and with only a little bit of help from me she seems to be able to get back to normal pretty quickly. The problem is that her normal is very damaged from Edward's near constant control over her for the past year. She has no self confidence, she asks for permission for the smallest of things and is terrified all the time. She is literally terrified if I am out of her sight or hearing. We haven't yet discussed what is scaring her so badly but that is coming soon." My empathic abilities didn't work over the phone but I could hear that they weren't taking this well.

"Edward basically brainwashed her into believing that she was in danger unless he was with her so I need to know what is causing her fear. I can't help her if I don't know the reasons for the emotions that I am picking up. Newborns run on basic instincts; fight or flight. So far she always seems to be on the edge of flight. Only when we were hunting did she go to fight me and that was in defense of her kill. I have a plan to help with her self confidence but I need your help." I could hear Esme's quiet cries from the other end of the phone and I knew she wanted to be here for Bella, the problem was I didn't see that helping.
feelin' better?"

"Just a little downtime for me, Rosalie. I know you want to breakdown in front of Rosalie or Emmett so we had to do this now. I decided to start off easy "So Bella, are you..."

knew what they were about but she needed to talk it out so we could work our way through them. I knew that she wouldn't

She was relaxed and happy but I knew that there would not be a better time to bring up her fears. I had a good feeling I

to watching him have his ass handed to him by his baby sister!"

excited when I told her she would be able to beat him. Emmett was really going to be in trouble and I was looking forward

logs with her new strength. It was the first opportunity to start getting her ready to challenge Emmett and she really got

When I came back downstairs I found Bella lounging by a fire that she had gotten started in the great room fireplace. I

Carlisle sounded tired "Alright Son, thanks for the call and we will talk to you tomorrow" I closed my phone and headed

Carlisle filled me in. "The plan itself went off without a problem. It was terrible to watch Charlie get the news. We went with

"Edward and I spoke but I will fill you in on that another time, for now suffice it to say, it looks like he did indeed mean what

They are going to have to rent a semi truck and trailer as Esme has given them a really large list. I would expect them to be 3 or 4 more days at the least but I am sure that they will call you when they get to Toronto. Let them know if there is anything specific that you need"

Rosalie and Emmett are on their way to you as we speak but will need to spend some time in Toronto gathering furniture and anything else we need for the house. They are going to rent a semi truck and trailer as Esme has given them a really large list. I would expect them to be 3 or 4 more days at the least but I am sure that they will call you when they get to Toronto. Let them know if there is anything specific that you need"

"Ok Carlisle, I have to get back to Bella but I am glad to hear that we seem to be in the clear. Keep me posted. I will have Bella call you all tomorrow, I am sure by then she will be ready and will need to hear your reassurances."

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knew what they were about but she needed to talk it out so we could work our way through them. I knew that she wouldn't

breakdown in front of Rosalie or Emmett so we had to do this now. I decided to start off easy "So Bella, are you feelin' better?"
I listened to her as she talked about her family and the new reality of being a vampire. It sounded like she didn't really regret it but that she was scared of the future. I knew that this wasn't what was causing her meltdowns though so I pressed her for more. I pulled her into my lap knowing that things were about to get painful for her and I could feel the terror lurking just below the surface. Then she asked me the one question that I had been dreading. She asked about Edward. "Did he really mean all that Jasper?"

She already knew the answer but was denying it. I wanted to lie to tell her that Edward was out of his mind with blood lust and didn't mean any of it but after talking to Carlisle I knew it wasn't possible. I regretted that it would be words from my mouth that would tear her world apart. "I have replayed every emotion that I have ever felt from him when he was around you. I figured out that, what I thought was love, was a twisted kind of devotion to the feeling of ownership that he felt towards you. The love I felt wasn't for you as a person but your human blood. I'm sorry Bella."

I was expecting her fear and terror, what I wasn't expecting was the absolute absence of emotion that I felt. She was a void, numb and as I looked at her and talked to her she wouldn't respond. What the Hell! She started to struggle and try to break away; I tried shaking her and I had started to yell, when that didn't work I tried projecting telepathically hoping she would hear that.

'BELLA! Come back! Don't shut me out, please!' Finally I got a response. She looked right at me and then the terror hit; if I hadn't already been on the floor the force of her fear would have dropped me. I managed to keep a hold of her.

I heard all her fears come tumbling out. I wasn't surprised to hear that she was afraid of Edward, his attack and subsequent revelations concerning his need to possess her had left deep emotional scars. What did surprise me was her fear of him coming back to kill her and her thoughts of being forced to leave the family. This explained the constant state of wariness that her instincts had her in she was ready for him to attack her at any moment. I was glad that I had already told Carlisle and Esme about her insecurities, they would be more prepared to deal with her fears when she called them.

I held her in my lap and talked to her for a long time. I told her about how upset Esme and Carlisle were when we left, some of the plans for the immediate future and reiterated my promise to keep her safe. The more I talked the more relaxed she became, I guess she was starting to trust me a little. She said that she was going up to her room. I knew she needed time to process everything that we had talked about as well as the huge change in direction her life had taken. I listened as she dialed her phone and when I heard Esme's voice on the other end I knew Bella was going to be fine. It might take awhile but with the help of the family she would heal.

I went back outside to the far side of the lake. I thought that I might build a gazebo out here as it was a great place for some privacy and a rest from her emotions without being too far from the house. I pulled my phone out of my pocket and dialed my best friend.

"So Jazzy, you are getting awfully cozy with my new sister." The phone hadn't even rung on her end and already I am getting teased.

"I don't know what you are talkin' about. Maybe you should consult your crystal ball again; I think it might be on the fritz." I threw in a heavy dose of fake concern. I knew that evil little pixie had been keeping things from me.

"Do not deny the powers of All Seeing Alice the Magnificent!" She and I shared a laugh and it felt good to release the tension that my conversation with Bella had created. She got serious and almost sad "I do see what you mean about her self confidence though Jazzy, and I hate seeing her so scared and sad. I do have a question though; did you just finish your conversation with Bella?"

I was puzzled by her question "Yeah, about 10 minutes ago, why?"

I could hear in the silence that she was thinking hard about something "I am having trouble seeing her and when I do, I think it is right before it happens. Usually my visions are about something that happens fairly far in advance but with her it is so close to the actual event that I might as well be watching it live."

This was disturbing "What do you mean 'when' you see her Alice?"

She was hesitant "Well the visions that I get of her are really fuzzy. I can make them out but it is like looking through a foggy window and like I said they do not give me a whole lot of time between the vision and the actual event. It's weird Jazz. Do you think it could be because she's a newborn?"

"Well newborns do act more on instinct but in Bella's case I don't think that would apply because she doesn't act on her instincts; she feels them but generally doesn't act. I wasn't kidding when I said she was the most controlled newborn I have ever seen. She's amazing Alice and wait till you see her in person! She was beautiful as a human but now she might just give Rose a run for her money."

Alice giggled "Oh Jazzy I am so happy for you!" Now I was confused "Huh? Happy for me why?"

"Cause you are falling for Bella of course!" She sounded so happy that she might burst and maybe a bit smug "Alice – is there something you have been keepin' from me?" She sighed, the same way she always does whenever someone questions her motives. I normally didn't because after all our time together I knew that the possible futures that she saw were largely dependent on people's decisions. If she told them her vision, they might make a decision to try and affect the
with the beast. I wouldn't and when she learned about my past she would know, I'm a monster – only in stories does the beauty fall in love. Bella and the most that I could hope for was that she would be my friend. Right now she needed me but eventually she...

I knew for sure, I would be there for Bella no matter how long it took. My head dropped into my hands, I was falling for the rest of the night thinking over everything that Alice had said and trying to figure out what she had left unsaid. One thing I knew the family relied heavily on Alice's visions but in this case it would have been really useful. I stayed by the lakeshore but Emmett and Carlisle were going hunting. Esme was going to come with us but she is still on the phone with Bella."

"Bye Jazzy." And she was gone. I had a lot to think about and the most disturbing was Alice's inability to see Bella clearly. It should have made it easier not harder; I always see our kind clearly. But you still haven't answered my question Jazz; you are falling for Bella aren't you?"

"Technically you didn't ask; but yes, I do have feelings for Bella. I have for awhile." My voice was quiet but she would hear it.

I thought back "Well I always thought she was beautiful in a quiet girl next door kind of way. Her emotions sitting in the cafeteria that first day were so amazing. She was so unlike all the other girls we had ever come across. Instead of preening at all the attention that she was getting she was deeply embarrassed and self effacing. She was also always so concerned about others, the way she worried over Charlie, was nice to everyone at school, and moving to Forks so her mom and Phil could spend time together."

"Edward brought her to the house and I was expecting her to be at least scared; she was meeting a house full of vampires for heaven's sake! But no; she was nervous but I could feel that she was seeking approval. When have we ever met a human, who not only wasn't deeply afraid of us, but one who wanted us to approve of her? She was so insecure and fragile; my first thought was to protect her even as her blood called to me."

"Then when we went to Phoenix she was more worried about the 7 of us going up against 3 nomads. When she got away from me at the airport and went to sacrifice herself for her mother and us, my admiration for her just skyrocketed; that had to be one of the bravest things I have ever seen in my long life. When I saw her laying there in a pool of her own blood it should have pushed me over the edge and made me attack her but all I could see was the monster that hurt her. Then watching the video and seeing her pleading for Edward and us not to avenge her trying to protect us. We all loved her for it Ali; how could we not?" God I sounded like a high school girl - pathetic

"She has always been special. I can't wait to get there, I miss her so much Jazz." I had known the separation would be hardest on Alice and Esme. Alice was used to spending everyday with Bella and Esme was so maternal that being separated from Bella as a newborn was upsetting. "I know sweetheart, I'm sure she will call you soon and once Rose and Emmett get here we will get the webcam set up right away."

"Go slow with her Jazz. You and I have been over for a long time. She has just had her heart broken, it will take time for her to get over Edward. He lied to her and controlled her for so long, she won't be able to believe that someone loves her for who she is; she is going to have to learn to trust again. Bella needs you and you need her more than you know. I have to go Jazz, Carlisle and I are going hunting. Esme was going to come with us but she is still on the phone with Bella." I knew that I would get no more out of Alice tonight. "Ok Ali, have a good time. I will talk to you again soon."

"Bye Jazz." And she was gone. I had a lot to think about and the most disturbing was Alice's inability to see Bella clearly. I knew the family relied heavily on Alice's visions but in this case it would have been really useful. I stayed by the lakeshore for the rest of the night thinking over everything that Alice had said and trying to figure out what she had left unsaid. One thing I knew for sure, I would be there for Bella no matter how long it took. My head dropped into my hands, I was falling for Bella and the most that I could hope for was that she would be my friend. Right now she needed me but eventually she wouldn't and when she learned about my past she would know, I'm a monster – only in stories does the beauty fall in love with the beast.
The phone rang only once "Hello dear, I miss you so much." Her voice was like a warm blanket and I felt wrapped in her love.

"Mom" my voice broke a bit, I wanted to cry. "I miss you too."

"Oh Honey, I so wish that I could be there with you right now. I wanted to watch you on your first hunt. Jasper says you don't care for wolf." She chuckled a bit "I can't say that I care for them myself."

"I thought that I would have trouble because; well because I wasn't the most graceful person. Jasper was really great though. He held my hand till I was comfortable and he is teaching me the difference in the heartbeats and smells. He's really very patient with me. " I felt my chest grow heavy with guilt. Esme must have heard something in my voice.

"What is it Dear. What's wrong?" I could hear the concern in her voice

"I attacked him." My voice broke on a sob and I buried my face in my hands

"Slow down. Tell me everything that happened. Step by step ok?" her voice was slow and gentle

I took a breath "I was hunting. I heart heartbeats and he told me what kind of animals I had heard. It was a couple of deer and a mountain lion. I went after the lion and it felt so good going down my throat, I wasn't finished. I heard a sound behind me and I couldn't help it" I was shaking now. My explanation had been very confusing but I hoped she would understand

"Oh Bella Honey! It's fine." Of course she would say it was fine. Jasper did too. I knew what I did was wrong. Talk about biting the hand that feeds you. I think I must have made some kind of noise because she realized that I didn't believe her

"Do you know; I did the same thing to Carlisle when he took me hunting for the first time?" She laughed lightly in remembrance. I was stunned. Esme? Beautiful, kind and gentle Esme attacked Carlisle?

"What?" It was a rude question but I was shocked

"Tell me Dear - did you manage to pin him or just knock him over?" She asked the question so calmly like she was discussing the weather

"Well…I …I didn't actually …I managed to stop before I jumped at him." I stuttered. Could vampires stutter? Apparently they could – I just had

"Pity. I would have loved to have seen Jasper knocked on his rear." She sounded regretful

"Esme!"

She chuckled "What? I would have! The men in this family are all the same. They are so concerned with protecting us women that they sometimes forget that we can be the threat." She sounded a bit frustrated "They have all been attacked by Rose at least once. That girl likes her space when she eats. Jasper literally tripped over her once while chasing down an elk. It was one of his first hunts with us. She threw him head first into a tree and then ate his elk. The poor boy had to go and chase down something else for dinner." I could hear the smile in her voice as she remembered

"He told me that it was fine; that it was part of what I am now but I thought that he was just being nice" I was feeling a bit relieved

"Honey, Jasper will always tell you the whole truth. And I promise you – so will I." She was calm and serious when she said this.

I wasn't used to a parental figure who actually acted like a parent. With Renee I had to be the mature responsible one. Charlie didn't really know how to be a parent and so he kind of left me to do my own thing. It was comforting to have someone to go to for advice who wouldn't judge me or expect me to have the answer already.

There were things that I wanted to know about but I was still scared to ask. "Mom, I'm scared"

"I know Honey that's normal. I was terrified after my change. All the sights were so crisp and the sounds were so loud. I can't tell you how many things I broke with my new strength." She sighed "But the worst part was hearing that Carlisle had a son. I have never told Carlisle this, but I was worried that when Edward came home he wouldn't approve of me. Carlisle made him first and wanted him as a companion; what would happen if he came back and didn't want me there? I was worried that I would have to leave. Oh I knew that Carlisle would never turn me out but, how could I stay somewhere where I wasn't wanted?"

She had been worried about the same thing I was "I don't want to be alone"
"You won't be. You are a part of the family, you always have been. We all love you. Carlisle is trying to figure out when we will be able to join you in Ontario. I wish it was soon but we need to make sure that no one sees your death as suspicious. I don't like having the family divided in two like it is, but there is no help for it." I listened to her words. She said the family was divided in two. But Edward was headed to Alaska.

"Mom, Edward" I didn't have to say anything more.

"I love my son. I will always love my son. But until he starts living up to the morals and ideals we have tried to teach him, he is no longer welcome in this family." Esme was borderline growling. "He has got to start taking responsibility for his actions. We failed him by making excuses for his poor behavior and manipulations and I have to live with that. But he will have to prove to that he is ready to be a part of this family again through responsible actions and mature decisions. When he starts acting like the mature person that he is and not like a spoiled child then he can come home." She was firm and I had no doubt that she and Carlisle had already discussed this at length.

"I...I'm so confused. I love him. I loved him. It feels like, like a hole in my chest where my heart used to be. And everything that I used to believe was true, isn't anymore. What happens now?" Trying to put my feelings into words was almost impossible and the pain in my chest was enough to take my breath away. "I was Edward's girlfriend. I thought he was my mate. He said he loved me. It was all a lie. And I was Renee and Charlie's daughter; now to the world that girl is dead. I don't know who I am now." I felt so lost.

"Now you have the opportunity to discover who Bella really is. Honey, your identity shouldn't be about who you associate with or who your parents are, but the life you live for yourself. Some of us choose to help others; some of us devote ourselves to learning or the arts. You get to find out who you are and what your path is. The beauty of this plan is that if you want to do something different, you have all the time in the world to do it. We will be here to support you all the way but the choices are yours." Her voice was calming and very confident. Like she had complete faith that I would be brilliant at whatever I tried; I had never felt so supported before and I really hoped I wouldn't let her down.

I had spent my entire life making sure that everyone around me was taken care of. I never realized that my parents were supposed to be doing that for me. That didn't make them bad parents; it just forced me to grow up faster than other kids my age. With my mom I had always had to be the mature one who reined in her flighty tendencies, paid the bills, cooked the meals and made arrangements. With my dad I was the woman of the house who cooked and cleaned and made sure he ate healthy meals.

Maybe that is what made spending time with the Cullens so appealing. Esme was the perfect example of a mom; she loved to fuss over her children and even cook for me. She was always ready with a kind word and loving hug and now great advice. Carlisle was her perfect mate and a strong father figure. I was extremely lucky to have them welcome me into their family for however long they would have me.

"So what do I do first?" I didn't know what was expected of me now.

"Well I may be your mom, but I don't make your decisions for you and neither does anyone else." Her voice was firm and matter of fact. "I would suggest that you take your time and learn about your new life before you start trying to plan anything. Sometimes things that we don't plan are the best things to happen to us. Just relax and take it one day at a time for now. We don't expect you to be anything other than happy Dear." I could feel some of my tension drain away at her words.

"But, I do expect you to at least kick Emmett's butt at arm wrestling when he gets there. That boy has been getting a swelled head lately! It will do him some good to have his baby sister beat him at something." She had a very devious sound to her voice.

I started to laugh. "Jasper told me the same thing. Does everyone in the family have it out for him?"

"Are you kidding? Of course we do, he is the family prankster! We are all depending on you to take him down a peg or two while you can. Beat him at anything and everything you can and make sure that when you make the bets that you get some payback for the rest of us. Preferably with video evidence!" We both laughed.

My smile faded. "Thanks Mom. For everything. I can't wait for you guys to get here but I understand your having to stay. Can you please keep an eye on Charlie for me? I miss him." I really did. And I wished there had been away for me to get some of my things before I left. I missed my books, my iPod, the pictures of my family, the cactus I brought from Phoenix, my laptop, so many small things that couldn't be replaced.

"Of course I will Dear. I have already started cooking and freezing some things for him to eat. I know he won't be thinking of eating right now. Don't worry we are looking after him for you." The reassurance in her voice made me feel better. Esme would enjoy fussing over Charlie.

"I should go find Jasper. He said he wanted to go hunting before we worked on the outside of the house in the morning. He said that I had to try deer it was a whole new experience." I rolled my eyes to myself.

"See if you can find a lynx, I think you will like them" I wished I could give her a hug. "Can I call you tomorrow?" I didn't want to be a bother.

"I would like nothing better. I want to hear all the details about how your day is going everyday if you want to call me. And to be a bother. See if you can find a lynx, I think you will like them." I wished I could give her a hug. "Can I call you tomorrow?" I didn't want to be a bother.
don't forget, I don't sleep so if you need anything at all no matter what time it is you call me. I will have my phone with me every minute. If it is just to talk or if you have something that is bothering you, it doesn't matter. Call me, ok?” she was insistent about it and I felt better

"Ok Mom I will. Thanks"

"I love you Bella. Call me tomorrow."

My voice broke "I love you too Mom.” I broke the connection and lay still. I could hear music coming from Jasper's room and felt the comfort that his presence brought me. Jasper was here for me, Esme loved me. I hugged the knowledge to myself and held onto it until the first streaks of dawn lightened the sky.

AN: Well I am back from vacation and the weather was miserable. The flight was 4 1/2 hours each way. This was a good thing for the story cause being trapped in a cabin and on a plane means that I had plenty of time to write. My vacation was also in Central Ontario so some of the things I describe in upcoming chapters is taken directly from my vacation. Unfortunately it may be a while before my next update as everything I wrote was done long hand in a notebook. Not only do I have to try to read my own handwriting but there will be extensive editing.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to write a review. I have gotten so many that it has become impossible to answer them all anymore. I figure that you all would rather read the story than get a response from me. "grins” I am excited about the direction that the story is headed and I hope you all love it as much as I do.
It was a couple of hours past daylight when I knocked on Bella's door. I heard a whispered "Come in Jasper" from the other side. I walked in and she was sitting in the centre of the room in a pool of sunshine, watching the rainbows dance on the ceiling from the sun hitting her new skin. I had felt her sadness from outside. She had been feeling it since the sun had come up; I had thought that after her talk with Esme last night she would have felt happier.

"What is it Bella?" I had to know

"I remember the first time I saw skin like this. Edward was trying to convince me that it was the skin of a killer. I guess I should have listened to him. I thought he was so beautiful." Her voice was so sad. "Am I so naïve Jasper?"

My voice was soft when I answered her "No Angel, you see us for who we aspire to be and it's the greatest gift I have ever been given. In my close to 150 years no one has ever looked at me as anything less than a monster and I am truly grateful; I know the rest of the family is as well." I could feel some of her melancholy lift. "Did you have a nice talk with Esme?"

She smiled softly and looked up at me "She said she loved me"

"Of course she does, you're part of the family. What else did she say?"

Bella chuckled quietly "She gave me free rein to beat up on Emmett as much as I can manage, as long as I have video proof." Her amusement was contagious and I laughed, glad she was no longer quite so sad.

I held out my hand and gave her a small courtly bow, laying on a thick southern accent "Miss Bella, it is a beautiful day outside. Could I possibly prevail upon you to join me for some breakfast?" Her laugh was enough to light up the whole house.

"Why , I would just be delighted!" Her fake southern accent wasn't too bad and she even added the eyelash batting and fluttering hand at her throat. It unexpectedly took me back to the days of my youth.

I smirked as she took my hand and I helped her to rise from the floor "Now where did you learn that?"

She swept regally out of the room in front of me "I have a deep appreciation for Gone with the Wind"

I rolled my eyes as I followed her "Figures!"

After our hunt we started to work on cleaning up the outside of the house. I had noticed that once we left the house her instincts had kicked in again and she was back to being wary and fearful. I hoped that when Emmett and Rosalie got here she would start to feel more comfortable and confident.

Bella's senses were extremely sharp and she was very observant of her surroundings. I found that I had to strain to catch sights and sounds that she caught easily. I figured that it had something to do with her instinctual awareness of her surroundings due to her fear. Only time would tell if she kept it past her newborn year.

While we worked I asked for her help with tasks that would help her with learning to control her strength, speed and fine motor skills. She had a blast anytime she got to demolish something. And really her mastery of these things was already almost perfect. It was her instincts that she was having the most trouble with. She was better closer to the house and I could feel that she felt the most at ease whenever she was with me. When she was out of sight of me her nervousness would spike so to keep her calm we would play with her gift.

After I had spoken to Carlisle and Esme I had called Rose and Emmett. We decided that due to the condition of the road north and our plan for Bella to regain her confidence, Rose and Emmett would only be bringing their own furniture. They would also be bringing computer equipment so Bella and I could pick out our furniture, clothes and other odds and ends online. A separate trip would be made to pick up whatever we ordered later. Even though they were small decisions I hoped that they would slowly help Bella regain her sense of self and personal pride.

We worked on the house until well into the afternoon. When we stopped for the day, Bella wandered off to sit by the lake to watch the wildlife and I retreated to my room to read. When it got dark I heard her come back into the house and I could feel that her instincts had her jumpy. Our eyesight was no different in the dark than it was in the daylight but Bella still had human habits and she felt more secure inside the house after dark.

I had joined her in the great room and we were reading some of the few books that were packed for us when we left Forks. I could see Bella staring at me from the corner of my eye and feel her curiosity. "What is it Bella?" She looked thoughtful and I put my book down to look at her

"When were you changed Jasper? You said that you were almost 150 years old, so I was curious."

I knew this conversation could lead to dangerous territory but she wanted to know and I couldn't deny her anything. "I was
changed in 1864 during the civil war in Galveston, Texas."

She smiled "So that is why you have the accent, although it's thicker now than I've ever heard it before"

"I'm free to be myself here. I felt comfortable to be more myself around her is what I really meant. I would've thought that Alice would've told you somethin' of my past already?" I knew Alice would never have told her everything but I had assumed something had come up.

"She and Edward both told me that everyone's individual story was their own to tell." She was very accepting and had never pried.

"And now you have your own story." I regretted the statement when I felt her sadness. I would have spoken again but I was interrupted by my phone ringing. It was Rosalie

"Hello Rose"

"Hello brother dear. How are things up north?" Her voice was cheerful

"Good actually, we went hunting again today and there is tons of game around. Things around the house should be pretty much cleaned up by the time you guys get here."

"We are going to be ready to head north much sooner than we thought actually." Before I could wonder she filled me in. "Esme and I talked and we really want to see the condition of the house before we start picking out all the furniture. There may be things we want changed. And I know how picky you are about what's going in your room so this way you will get to pick out all your new stuff." She started to laugh.

I figured that Rosalie knew there was a good chance that I was with Bella and that she would be listening. To make sure that Bella didn't think that we were catering to her, Rose would make out that I was a picky pain in the rear. For Bella I would make the sacrifice and act the part.

Rose continued "The smaller truck is limiting us. You said the road was really rough in places so the largest we're going to get is a 5 ton cube truck. It will be enough room for the furniture for our suite and then the mattresses for yours and Bella's rooms as well as some clothes to get you by. We can work out another plan when we get there and the four of us have a chance to sit down"

"You are bringin' all the necessary computer and satellite equipment too right?" I really wanted to make sure that we could get the web cam set up so Bella could feel better connected to the rest of the family.

Emmett chimed in the background in a high falsetto voice "This armoire is the perfect thing to complete my soul!"

His booming laugh almost drowned out Rosalie "Yes Princess, we are bringing everything necessary so that you can find everything you want."

Bella burst out laughing. I wasn't impressed at the way they were playing this up. It was for Bella, I reminded myself. The family knew I was no sissy. It was all for Bella. I looked at her in exasperation but I was also pleased at her joy. "Stop laughing" I commanded her

She made an effort but when she heard Emmett laughing at my sullen tone she lost it again.

Now Rosalie was trying to get it together "Shut up Em' he isn't quite that bad." She ruined it by giggling "Jasper put my new sister on the phone please."

Bella looked surprised at Rose's words but took the phone when I offered it.

"Hello Rosalie" I could feel her nervousness as this would be the first conversation that she had ever had with Rose

"Hey Bella. So is Jasper taking good care of you or is he boring you to death while he reads books on the civil war and grumbles about how inaccurate they are?" Rose's voice was teasing

I rolled my eyes while Bella giggled "Actually we have been working on the house." She smiled at me

"Well when we get there maybe you can help peel him away from his online shopping long enough for you to get yours done."

Bella looked confused "Get what done?"

Rosalie was confident "Shopping for your furniture and clothes of course"

I could feel a mix of emotions coming from Bella. Embarrassment, nervousness and shame were at the forefront with the usual fear hovering in the background. "Rosalie...I..." her voice broke off

I gently took the phone from her fingers "Rose, I will have Bella call you back. You can razz me about the furniture later."
She knew something was up but was cheerful when she spoke "Ok Jazz. Bye Bella!"

I hung up the phone and looked at Bella. She had walked away to stand at the window looking out into the darkness at the lake. She was sad as she twisted her fingers

"What is it Bella? What's wrong?" I sent her calming waves. Her eyes were tormented in the reflection of the glass

"I can't get any...How can I...?"

I took one of her hands and she looked at me with venomous tear filled eyes "Bella, darlin" I began

She shook her head and turned back to the darkness of the window with her arms clutched about her middle, emanating sadness and embarrassment. I sighed and opened my cell phone to dial it. This was one of the times that I wouldn't be able to ease her mind or make her feel better.

The phone was answered quickly "Bella needs to speak with you." I handed her the phone and kissed her forehead before leaving the house to sit on the back deck giving her the illusion of privacy.

AN: okay so I know it is short but we are gettin to some good stuff after this and while I am working on it I thought you might like something to tide you over. Thanks to everyone that has fallen for this story as much as I have. I appreciate you all taking the time to review and add me to your alerts.

I would also like to thank NCCHRIS for taking the time to recommend it on Jasper's Darlin's blog. I was truly honored as she writes some amazing stories. If you haven't read her stuff - you need to!!

Thanks again and I promise I will have another update soon.
He handed me the phone and kissed my forehead. I watched in confusion as he went outside.

When I put the phone to my ear I heard my new father's voice filled with concern. "Bella Dear, are you alright?"

In the background I heard Esme "Carlisle what's wrong with Bella? What's going on?" she was clearly worried

"Esme please, let me find out." His attention returned to me "Why did Jasper call me Bella? Are you alright?"

I didn't know where to start "Rosalie called; she and Emmett will be here in a couple of days. Rosalie wants me to shop for furniture and clothes off the internet"

Esme was excited "Oh! That will be so much fun! She knows some great stores that have their catalogues online."

Carlisle interrupted "Esme maybe you should let her finish."

She sounded chagrined "Of course, I'm sorry Bella."

I didn't know how to continue "I...How do I? I can't..." I was at a loss at how to explain. They had to know that I had nothing. How could I let them buy me a new life on top of everything that they have already done for me?

"Bella, I think I know what's wrong. First let me say that even before Alice and Jasper joined our family I was very, very wealthy. The hospitals that I worked for over the years have always paid well. I have also had close to 365 years to study human business trends so my investments have always done well." His voice was calming and I listened intently.

"Then Alice bounced into our lives. Having a future seeing pixie guarantee that all your financial decisions are extremely profitable, enables us to help a wider range of charities as well as funding research for cures to human diseases" It was just like Carlisle to give money away in addition to working long hours at the hospital "Even after the millions we give away we still have more money than even Alice is able to spend"

Esme laughed "No matter how hard she tries"

Carlisle chuckled before continuing "It has been my practice from the very beginning that when a new family member joins us I settle a sum of money on them to enable them to start their new life. Whether they choose to stay with the family or not the money is theirs to do with as they please" I tried to absorb this new information.

"Bella, I wish that we were there to have this conversation with you in person. I know Esme has already told you that we love you very much. You obviously won't be able to keep the Swan name; I would like to make you a Cullen if it's ok with you. We can never replace Charlie and Renee but we would like to have you as our daughter if you will have us."

I caught back a sob as I heard Esme's gentle voice "I told you Bella, we want you to stay with us. We love you."

My voice was strained "All I ever wanted was to be a part of your family. I would love to call you my parents."

I could clearly hear the smile in Carlisle's voice "Well then, Isabella Marie Cullen, if you could put Jasper back on the phone I need to clear up a few details so I can get started on your new identity."

I walked out to the deck. Jasper was leaning against the railing when I thought of another question "So it's ok for me to pick out some furniture?"

Carlisle chuckled "Whatever your heart desires, it's yours!"

"Thanks Dad" I loved how that sounded. I handed the phone to Jasper as he drew me to his side and put his arm around me. I was surprised but didn't hesitate to hug him back, taking the comfort that he so freely offered. I stayed tucked into his side while he talked with Carlisle. Thanks to my new hearing I could easily hear both sides of the conversation.

Jasper's tone was teasing "Congratulations! It's a girl!!" I playfully smacked his chest as Carlisle and Esme laughed. Esme sounded positively giddy and my heart swelled. Jasper felt it of course and kissed my forehead again.
Carlisle's voice was light "Son, I will be making the arrangements for all the new documentation for the family. Rosalie and Emmett are going to be using their married names of McCarty and I wanted to find out what name you wanted on yours. With Bella joining the family we will not be living in town for some time. Would you like to act your age for a change?" The last was said with amusement

"Well it would be nice not to be a high schooler for a change. I wanna go back to my roots Carlisle, make it Whitlock please and I will take my final age of 20 please." I was interested to learn even this little bit more about Jasper.

"Ok two new identities coming up. I will have Rose and Emmett bring the new documents and credit cards with them when they head your way."

The conversation ended with well wishes and goodbyes from both sides. Jasper was smiling down at me when he hung up the phone "Feel better Darlin?"

"Yes, thank you for calling them. I guess I thought after everything that happened they wouldn't want me. Not really. Had you talked to them about it already?"

He shook his head "I know how I feel about it and I knew that they would be talking to you sooner or later. Now seemed like the best time. This is just making official what they have felt for some time now."

I felt so much better knowing that not only did they want me to stay but that I was truly one of them. I looked up at him with a smile "So – Whitlock huh?"

The expression on his face changed. He looked pensive. "Bella, why don't we go back inside by the fire?"

I looked into his eyes concerned "What is it? Did I say something wrong?" I loved our new friendship and didn't want to do anything to upset it. He was my rock and I needed him.

He looked sad "I think it is time that you heard my story.

"You don't have too. If it hurts to tell me then I don't need to know." I could almost feel his pain. This kind, caring man should never have to suffer on my account.

We had moved inside and he sat farther away from me than he previously had. "You deserve to know the truth and I would rather that you heard it from me."

I could see how worried he was; whatever he had to tell me would be bad. "Jasper, I don't care what it is. You're my friend. You've saved me, protected me and been there for me. Nothing you have to tell me could ever change that."

He shook his head "You may not feel that way after you hear what I have to say, but you still need to hear it."

I went to move closer to him to offer some kind of comfort but he stopped me "No Bella. I would like nothin' more than to have you near me but I couldn't take it when you pull away afterward." He was so sure that I would hate or fear him after I heard his story. I sat back and waited.

"I lied about my age when I joined the Confederate Army in 1861. I couldn't wait to fight for the cause and prove I was a man. I was very charismatic and rose quickly through the ranks. Even though everyone thought I was older I was still the youngest Major in the army."

I listened as he told me about his meeting with Maria, training the newborns and fighting in the vampire wars, meeting Peter and fighting for territory. It sickened me to hear about the southern covens and the way they viewed humans as being no better than livestock to be controlled. I could see the remorse he felt over killing both humans and vampires alike. He was envious as he told me about allowing Peter to run away with his mate Charlotte. His sadness seemed to lift a bit when he spoke about Peter coming back for him and leaving the life of war and slaughter behind.

His happiness at the memory of meeting Alice was beautiful and made my heart clench. I had thought that I was a part of something special when I was with Edward. It killed me to think that what we had was all orchestrated by Edward to keep me as a pet. He didn't love me at all.

Jasper was looking at me. I realized that I had been lost in my thoughts and he probably couldn't get a read on my emotions. He looked at his lap with a tortured expression as I got to my feet. I moved over to him and I could see his surprise as I climbed into my favorite place in his lap. I wrapped my arms around him and thought about how proud I was for him.

"Bella?" The confusion in his voice was obvious.

"I knew you struggled with my human blood, now I know why it was so hard. You gave up the only food source and way of life you had ever known. You had the courage to walk away and make a whole new life for yourself." I looked up at him

He searched my face and I knew he was searching my emotions as well. "Did you hear what I told you Bella? I used to hunt humans. I have killed thousands of people and vampires. I am a murderer Bella." He was serious and he pulled me gently from his lap and stood by the windows.
He rubbed the back of his neck "You asked me how I got my scars. I got them killing newborns just like you. I have literally slaughtered thousands. If they weren't useful to us we killed them. Once we were done using them to fight for us we discarded them like garbage and it meant nothing to me to do it. I was a killing machine, an instrument of utter destruction and desecration. I am a monster, a demon! The Cullens may be vampires but I am a true demon." He was raving now, ripping open his inner wounds and laying them bare and bleeding in front of me. "I may have walked away from that life but I have killed since then. The family has had to move more than once because of one of my accidents" he practically spat the last word in disgust at his failure.

"If you are trying to make me hate and fear you, you are doing a crappy job of it." I was calm and a bit sad that he didn't believe in me more. "Jasper look at you. You are ripping your guts out in remorse for the things that you have done. Maria changed you and introduced you to this way of life. It was the only way you knew. When you heard from Peter that there was another way you left without a second thought. And still, killing humans to survive took its toll on your emotions and you forced yourself to go longer and longer between feedings to avoid the pain you felt."

I moved closer to him and let him feel my emotions of honesty and pride "Then you met Alice. She bounces into your life and tells you something completely crazy like being able to live off of animal blood and that you don't have to kill humans to survive. You changed again, not because you had too but because you wanted too. You grabbed at a new way to live with both hands. Of course it was a struggle. Tell me, how did you feel after each of your accidents?"

He looked at me with eyes full of remorse "I felt terrible. Someone had a son or mother that wouldn't be coming home. I felt that person's fear as I drained the life from their body and hated myself for it."

I moved to stand before him and smiled up at him "And that is why I am proud of you. You are a good man because you try everyday to be a better man than your past. You hate what you were and strive to overcome it. You saved me when I was human from a monster much worse than anything you used to be. James was told of a different way to live and he chose to hunt and torment humans anyway. You and the others saved me."

I swallowed reflexively, choking back tears that would never come. "You tried to save me when Edward bit me and you kept me safe when he would have finished me off. You are not a monster. Not anymore, you're my savior. You said it yourself Jas, I see you for the man you aspire to be."

He pulled me into his arms and crushed me to him. We stood like that for what seemed like forever. As he stroked my hair the tension eased from his body. Being in his arms was easy and comforting. I felt safe.

He reluctantly released me and kissed my forehead "Thank you Bella" his voice was uncharacteristically hoarse. The rest of the night was spent quietly reading. I would see him looking at me occasionally and I would smile at him content to just be in the moment.

As the sun came up I smiled at him and stood taking his hand. "I'm hungry. Hunt with me?"

His eyes were intense as he looked at me and smiled "Anything for you"

We spent the next two days hunting, fixing the house, clearing the property and talking. We talked about everything. Now that he had shared his past with me and realized that I accepted it, and the man he had chosen to become, he was more relaxed and carefree than I had ever seen him.

The morning came that Rosalie and Emmett were due to arrive and I was stressed. Jasper had to go to the main road in our 4x4 to meet them because the truck they were bringing would have a hard enough time getting that far and definitely wouldn't make it even part way of the 10 mile rough 4x4 road we called a driveway. In reality it was little better than a trail. My mind knew that Jasper would only be 10 miles or so from the house – no distance at all for one of us. My nerves were not convinced.

Jasper was having a hard time as well. I knew he was only reacting to my fear and seemed just as nervous as I was about leaving me alone. It would be the first time since my change. I wished that I could just go with him but I knew there was a slim chance that I may catch the scent of a human and I didn't want to risk it.

I was terrified but trying to hide it. I knew I was doing a terrible job because Jasper was sending me constant calming waves and kept a hold of my hand. He knew I still hated to be more than a few hundred yards from him. My instincts still had me very much on edge, it was annoying and mentally exhausting all at the same time. Being close to him made me feel safe and quieted my instincts that were telling me to be afraid all the time. It was weird when I was human, before I met Edward and the Cullens, bad things had happened to me all the time and I didn't live my life in fear. Then I met Edward and he slowly taught me that I was in danger unless I was with him but at the same time he controlled how I acted by telling me how dangerous he was to me. I started to hate Edward for teaching me to be this way. I didn't want to be this fearful and helpless.

I knew my near panic was only making it harder on Jasper so I pushed it as far back as I could and assured him I would be fine. I couldn't hang off of him forever. I would be fine, it was time for me to start letting go of my fears and stop relying on Jasper to make me feel safe. I was a vampire for crying out loud!
"Jasper, I will be fine. Really, go!" I gave him a quick hug and then fled to the lake. I loved to watch the birds coming and going on their migration south. The trees around the house and lake were the most vibrant colors of reds, golds and oranges mixing with the green of the pine trees. Squirrels and chipmunks were constantly busy preparing for winter. We had avoided hunting to close to the house so the occasional deer would come to the lake to drink.

I heard the truck start up and my already high anxiety level go up.

'Tell me what the birds are doing today' his mental voice was comforting and I sent him a steady stream of images of the lake and its inhabitants. His voice got fainter as he got farther away. I felt completely lost when I no longer felt the touch of his mind.

I got up and went to retrieve my book to read by the lake but I couldn't concentrate. I had an ever growing bad feeling and my instincts were going haywire. They had never been this bad before and I wasn't entirely sure it was just because Jasper was gone.

Jasper had been gone for about an hour when I smelled it. I don't know how I knew, but I knew I smelled vampire. Worse I smelled two unfamiliar vampires. My body had frozen and my eyes were scanning the area to the east. My eyes focused on a flash of flame red hair emerging from the tree line about 1000 yards to the east. Two figures were there, a man and a woman. They looked familiar but I couldn't place them. All I knew was that they terrified me. Their eyes were a brilliant crimson — they hunted humans. The woman hung back a bit on alert for danger. The man approached seemingly unconcerned and focused on me. I found myself crouched and slowly backing away. I could feel a growl coming from my throat but was powerless to stop it. I needed to get to the house.

"Bella, Bella, Bella. Are you here all by yourself?" His voice was low pitched and had a slight accent. His tone was taunting.

Again I felt like I should know who he was but I was too scared to focus "My family will be back soon." I wanted him to think that more than just Jasper was with me.

The man laughed and I heard the woman laugh from behind me. She had gotten in between me and the house while I was focused on the man. "Who are you? What do you want?" I wished my voice was stronger but I knew that I was in deep trouble. I started to back away trying to keep both of them in view.

"What do we want?" The woman's voice was taunting and her eyes looked like she was slightly crazy.

"We want you little Bella." Her laugh was cruel.

"My family will be back soon. They won't be happy if I am upset." I tried to make it sound like a threat but I wasn't sure how successful I was.

The man looked at me like I was a small child that had just said something ridiculous. "Don't be silly. How much could you possibly mean to them if they left you here unprotected?"

"They don't care what happens to you. You are only a newborn that they were forced to deal with." The woman's words cut me.

It wasn't true. Esme and Carlisle loved me. They made me a Cullen. "No. They love me and they won't be happy that you are here scaring me. Now what do you want?"

The woman's face twisted into a snarl. "Revenge! You were a worthless human and now you are worthless vampire. Vampires aren't afraid. Real vampires do not need to be protected. You are a burden on your coven and you will be the first to pay for their sins! I am doing them a favor." Her words had the venom welling up in my throat, I tried not to listen but her words struck me like physical blows.

"I am going to tear you apart, piece by piece." Venom was running down her chin from her mouth and her eyes were black with violence "First your fingers, then your feet, I will send your head to them, hide your body, and burn your limbs. You will spend the rest of eternity in agony and scattered across the earth. You will all know my pain!!!" she started to stalk toward me.

I choked out "no" my voice was small and I turned to run, my mind screaming 'JASPER!!!'

The male had moved to block my escape so I shifted direction and headed for the trees. A boulder landed right behind me and I realized that the female had thrown it. She had only missed because I was so fast. The male was almost on me, I turned and rolled on the ground sweeping his feet from him and as he fell to the ground I ran for the house. I made it to the corner when the woman caught up to me. She tackled me but I twisted out of her grasp and was on my feet with my back only steps away from the wall. They had successfully trapped me against the walls of the house.

I had my phone in my hand but the woman knocked it from my grasp and I watched as it shattered on a rock. I backed away defensively snarling as the man stalked forward. He had a sick smile on his face; he had enjoyed watching the woman scare me. The last thing I remember was his arm raised to strike with his teeth bared menacingly and dripping with venom.
Instinctively I dropped to my knees and covered my head with my arms.
I stood on the porch and looked at her in the doorway of the house. I was going out to the road to meet Rosalie and Emmett; they were driving the 5 ton cube truck to the road that led to our house. There was no way the truck would make it to the house so we were going to have to use the pick-up and make several trips. This meant that Bella would have to stay at the house; we couldn't run the risk of her picking up the scent of a human if they drove past on the road. She was nervous about being so far away from me and it was killing me to have to leave her alone, especially when she was so upset. I would only have to make the one trip and then either Rose or I could stay with her.

"Where's your phone?" She pulled it out of her pocket "I shouldn't be gone for longer than a couple of hours. You have my phone number if you want to talk to me."

"I know Jasper, I'll be fine. I promise I won't leave the yard. I can work on getting the gardens done for when Esme gets here." She gave me a watery smile and I knew she was trying to be brave. As great as she had been doing with learning about life as a vampire she was still having a really hard time dealing with her fears and the instincts that were telling her to run.

We had discovered that her telepathy had a sending range of about 2 miles but she could only reliably receive from about a mile and a half. "I'll 'talk' to you for as long as I can ok? Maybe your range has gotten better today?" I was trying to reassure her. From her feelings I knew that I wasn't being very successful.

"It's ok Jasper. I have to do this eventually right? Go. You have to meet Rosalie and Emmett and you're going to keep them waiting. Jasper, I'll be fine. Really, go!" she gave me a quick hug and before I could hold her she ghosted off to the lake. She had been going there a lot; I think she found it soothing. Her feelings were faint because of the distance but she seemed to be ok for now.

'Tell me what the birds are doing today' I got her to keep projecting the movements of the animals and birds for the full 2 miles of her range that I drove to the main road. It was going to be a long 8 more miles.

Our driveway was actually 10 miles of really rough 4x4 terrain which discouraged humans from wandering where they shouldn't. Unfortunately this meant I had to go much, much slower than I liked or wanted to. Smaller stuff could be flown by float plane directly to our lake but anything bigger had to be brought in this way. I mentally sighed; it was going to take twice as long coming back if we didn't want anything to get broken.

I had talked to Rose the day of Bella's funeral, they were already in Toronto and she and Emmett were shopping as fast as they could. Rose was even more eager to get to Bella when she heard how scared Bella was all the time. I knew Bella would feel better when Emmett got here, and her big bad brother was looking forward to quality time with his baby sister.

Bella I knew, was nervous about seeing Rose and Emmett. Part of her still thought that they would blame her for what happened. Esme and Alice talked to her everyday and she was feeling more secure in her relationships with them now that Carlisle and Esme had made her a Cullen, but with the rush over shopping she hadn't really had a chance to have a real conversation with Rosalie yet. She and Emmett had a talked briefly and already had plans to go bear hunting when he got here.

Bella's voice had faded from my head and now I had my phone in my breast pocket for easy answering. I thought about the day that I had told Bella about my past. I had been shocked at her easy acceptance and pride. I was sure she hadn't heard me. My own family had had a difficult time dealing with my violent past. Even Alice had acted differently for awhile after she heard the whole story. They had all treated me cautiously, rather like a large tiger that had wandered into the living room and they didn't know if it was hungry yet. Or a mental patient that may or may not be on their meds. I was considered to be potentially dangerous. It was because of this that I wore clothes that covered me up as much as possible while I was living with them. My scars were a harsh reminder that I was not like them.

It had gotten better over the years as they realized that I was stable and committed to living their lifestyle. When they saw my remorse over one of my accidents it had really changed things for the better. They were supportive and loving and I had finally become one of them. But Bella, she had heard my story and immediately accepted me. She was proud of me and came towards me instead of shrinking away like everyone else always had. Only with Peter and to a smaller extent Charlotte had I ever felt as comfortable, but they didn't understand my need to abstain from human blood.

Bella was different, she saw my heart not my scars and I would go to the ends of the earth for her. I needed her. I hoped she was ok at home. I was tense and worried and wanted to go back to her in the worst way. I had never felt a pull like this towards anyone before. I wondered if this was the way Carlisle felt towards those in the family that he had changed. I had never changed anyone before so I wasn't sure if it was because my venom ran through her veins or if it was because I was in love with her.
After a couple more miles my phone rang. I got it on the first ring. "Bella?"

I was met by Emmett's booming laugh "Tense much?"

My breath came out in a rush "Damn it Emmett what do you want?"

"Geez man calm down. We are out on the road waiting for you. What's got your panties in a bunch?" He wasn't laughing anymore.

"Bella isn't really ready to be by herself right now and I told her to call me if she got too scared - you're tyin up the line Em. I'll be there in a couple minutes" I hung up feeling bad for snapping at him but worried about Bella.

I go to the road and Emmett had managed to back the truck into the first part of the driveway and up to the large metal gate. As I pulled up, Rose was pacing behind it and Emmett was sitting on the bumper looking sheepish. I didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out he had done something to piss her off again. I chuckled and got out of the truck. "Hey Sis? What did the big lug do now?"

She ran to me and gave me a big hug "You know him, gotta prove that he is the next contender for Nascar in a cube truck on a bad gravel road! The door knob overshot the driveway and had to lock up the brakes." She turned back to him "You better not have scratched any of the furniture I bought or you will be staying in the other end of the house for a month!"

"Aww babe," he started to whine but she shot him a look that shut him up right quick.

She turned back to me "How is she?"

"Well she's gettin better, she hasn't called me but I really don't want to leave her for any longer than I have too. Her instincts are still tellin her that Edward's coming to kill her" I rubbed the back of my neck. She knew that Edward was in Alaska and I had even called to speak to Eleazar and confirmed it but she was a newborn and couldn't entirely shake her instincts yet.

"Let's just get the truck loaded, I'll feel better once I get back to her" Rose looked at me intently but didn't comment.

We had half the pick-up loaded when my cell rang. Just as I saw Alice's name on the display I was hit with a wave of fear that dropped me to my knees, my hands coming up to clap over my ears 'JASPER!' reverberating through my head. Bella!

I was already running as Rose answered my phone behind me. I knew something was wrong. I kept shouting in my head over and over 'I'm Coming! Bella, I'm coming!' I never got an answer only the terror and sometimes silent crying in my head. I pushed myself to run faster than I ever had before and cursed because it still wasn't fast enough.

The house came into view in a matter of minutes and I could hear someone yelling and my Bella was crying "No one is coming to save you, they left you! They don't care about you, you are an inconvenient accident. Let me in you bitch!!" What I saw set loose the monster that I had tried to chain for so long.

Laurent was standing a couple of feet away from Bella who was kneeling on the ground with her hands held tight over her head. Around her was a half bubble shimmering in light blue. Laurent was pounding on it trying to get in. Every time his fist hit it she would whimper and the shield would shimmer with the force of his blow. I barely registered the sounds of Rose and Emmett in the distance behind me. I launched myself at Laurent, deep growls erupting from my mouth. He wasn't prepared for my attack and I quickly had him by the throat.

"WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING?! Why are you here?!!" I could feel the venom running out of my mouth and I felt his fear and surprise. He hadn't expected me to be here. Emmett came up behind me as I saw Laurent's eyes flicker to the east. My eyes followed and I caught a flash of red in the distant tree line.

I tossed Laurent to Emmett "Hold him!" And I was off. I chased her trail for 10 minutes before I lost her scent in a river. Victoria! I snarled. That bitch could have easily swum upstream or down. I turned and ran back to the house. I had to get back to Bella.

When I got there Rose was crouched by Bella's shield and was trying to talk her out of it. I wanted to go to her but I had to get some answers from Laurent first. She would be safe with Rose. I looked at Laurent being held securely in Emmett's burley frame. "What do you two want with Bella?"

I could feel his fear in being confronted by three very powerful vampires. "Victoria, she is mad about James. She holds your coven responsible for his death and wants revenge. She thinks that by hurting the girl you will feel some of her pain. It was supposed to be a mate for a mate but now the girl isn't with Edward and she found out that he wasn't the one who killed James, you were. Now she just wants the girl dead in revenge." He was too scared to be lying and it made too much sense.

FUCK! I told Edward that we needed to hunt the female down after Phoenix! The fuckin' golden boy said she wouldn't do anything and now look what happened! I love Carlisle but what the fuck was he thinkin'; believing an inexperienced boy over me who had a hundred years of battle experience! "Where is she going? Where can I find her?" Some of my venom landed on his face as I yelled my questions at him

He cowered in Emmett's arms "I don't know! I only came with her because I owed her a favor. I've been staying with the Denali coven so I have met Edward and he told me where you were. I would not have hurt her!"
His deceit pissed me off "You were pounding on her shield! You were going to hand her over to Victoria!" I felt a hand on my shoulder and spun to see Rosalie.

"Jasper, you need to go to Bella. She won't let me in and she isn't getting any better. I don't know if she can even hear me." Her voice was sad "Emmett and I will take out the trash after I have a few words with him." The cold look in her eye and the now hard tone in her voice convinced me that she would indeed take care of Laurent and she would take great pleasure in getting as much information out of him as possible. I had heard what she had done to the men that had caused her human death and almost felt sorry for Laurent. After all, our bodies were capable of surviving much more damage than a human's.

I tried to get my monster under control as I listened to them dragging him off into the forest. If I went to Bella now I would only scare her more. I turned to where she was trapped up against the corner of the house.

When I saw her all my anger and rage melted away and I was focused entirely on her. She was physically safe under what I assumed was her shield but I had never seen anything like it before. It had to be her generating it. Distressed newborns tended to revert to the most basic instincts. In her case fleeing hadn't worked and another gift had shown itself and the instinct was to hide. I was worried about the amount of energy that it was taking her to keep the shield up.

I walked slowly towards her and got lower as I got closer. "Bella Darlin', it's me – Jasper. Angel, please you need to let me in." I stopped crouched right next to the shield but I was still almost 2 feet from the fragile woman who needed me. I tried sending her some calm but I couldn't be sure it would go through the shield. "Bella please" I stroked the solid dome lightly and saw it shiver. I tried to send her my pleas silently and hoped that she didn't have her switch turned off

'Bella, Angel he's gone. I'm sorry I left you. Please let me in. Please Darlin' let me hold you, it's okay now! I felt a response, her emotions changed a bit. She was still afraid but I could tell she heard me 'Bella. Bella - Darlin' I'm here. Please let me in, I need to know you're alright. Please Darlin' I continued to beg her silently.

I saw her head lift slightly and her eyes find me from behind her hair. 'Jasper?' her silent voice was wracked with fear and it twisted my dead heart.

I got down on my knees so we were on the same level 'Yeah Angel it's me. He's gone Darlin' Please let me in.' The blue shimmering wall between us fell and she was in my arms. I held her in my lap and rocked her as she dry sobbed. I crooned to her as I rocked her. My attention was drawn to the shield that had formed once again now enclosing the two of us. I could feel her relief that I had her but she was still too afraid to let down the shield. I wasn't sure how long we sat there and I didn't care.

I heard Rose and Emmett approaching and felt Bella tense in my arms again. "Guys hang back." They stopped where they stood. Rosalie had a look of agony on her face seeing Bella like this. Emmett sat down cross legged and put his face in his hands. Their emotions were severely muted from under the shield. I looked down at Bella's shaking form. She wasn't crying anymore but was listening intently. I realized she had never seen or smelled Emmett and Rosalie as a vampire so her instincts were telling her they were a threat. If it hadn't been for me holding her and her continued faith in me she would have bolted.

I lightly kissed her forehead and stroked her hair. 'Bella – can you look at me Darlin?'' Her head raised slowly and she looked carefully at me. 'Remember I told you Rose and Emmett were comin' today?' her eyes blinked once

"Darlin" she flinched at the sound of my voice so I switched back to projecting to her 'Bella they're here and they're very worried about you. Look over there darlin. Look how worried they both look. They need to know you're okay too.'

I felt her arms tighten around me and she pressed her cheek to my chest but she did look in the direction of Rosalie and Emmett. Rose gave her a watery smile and Emmett just looked back at her with distraught eyes.

'So sad' The voice was soft and timid in my mind but it was there.

'Can you smell them Bella? They smell like home right?' Human memories are closely tied to smell and I hoped that some of it carried over to her new life.

I saw her nostrils flare slightly 'Perfume' was all I got from her.

'Yes darlin that's right, Rosalie's perfume. They want to see you; can you let them in too?' Rose didn't wear perfume but her natural scent did smell like the most expensive human perfumes and apparently Bella remembered it.

'So sad. Feel it' Now I was surprised. I could feel them faintly through the shield, but could Bella? Was she empathic after all? Now was not really the time to figure this out. I could feel her fear receding slightly but I knew it wouldn't be enough for her to drop the shield.

I decided to try my voice again "Bella" She didn't flinch like last time, it was a good sign "Bella can Emmett come closer? He just wants to see you." She clutched my shirt in her hands but she looked at Emmett. "He can't get to you through the shield and I won't let him hurt you. He wouldn't hurt you."

Her emotions changed slightly again and I felt a tiny bit of recognition. I looked at Emmett with a warning in my eyes and saw it shiver. I tried to send her my pleas silently and hoped that she didn't have her switch turned off

"So sad. Feel it" Now I was surprised. I could feel them faintly through the shield, but could Bella? Was she empathic after all? Now was not really the time to figure this out. I could feel her fear receding slightly but I knew it wouldn't be enough for her to drop the shield.

I decided to try my voice again "Bella" She didn't flinch like last time, it was a good sign "Bella can Emmett come closer? He just wants to see you." She clutched my shirt in her hands but she looked at Emmett. "He can't get to you through the shield and I won't let him hurt you. He wouldn't hurt you."
nodded once. He knew to move very slowly. He came in sort of sideways in a half crawl. His eyes stayed down cast as he did so. For such a large man he looked amazingly unthreatening.

He stopped when he was a few feet away. "Hey little sis. I thought we were gonna go bear hunting? I'm really thirsty. I bet we could find a few good ones around here"

I could feel that she was listening and she had released the death grip on my shirt. I nodded again to Emmett. He continued in the same soft even voice he had been using but now he looked at her "Did you and Jasper scout out a cranky one for me? You know I like to wrestle with them first."

"Em" It was barely a whisper but it was the first audible sound that she had made

"Yeah little sis it's me, your big teddy bear of a brother. Have you got a hug for me?" He looked at her with big sad puppy dog eyes. That did it, her shield came down. She didn't leave the safety of my arms but her hand stretched timidly out to him.

He crawled the rest of the way to us and took her small hand in one of his large ones; with the other he gently tucked some of her hair behind her ear and looked at her for a long minute "Hey little one, what about Rosie? Can she come hunting too?" He asked very softly. I knew she heard him because her free hand tightened in my shirt again but she looked past Emmett to Rosalie.

She took another careful sniff of the air. I knew she was waging one hell of a battle with her instincts. The fear was still there and she was battling with it. The fact that she had only spoken one word, and even her silent communications had been limited to only a couple of words, told me how hard she was fighting against her instincts. The newborns I had trained so long ago were incapable of speech during battle and barely thought at all, turning entirely to their animalistic instincts. That is what makes newborns so dangerous and unpredictable. I knew it was her instincts that were causing her to be so cautious.

'Rosalie?' She said silently looking at me and I knew what she was asking

"Yeah Darlin it's Rosalie. She wants to help you too. What do ya think Angel? Can she help you?" She looked at Rose blinking. Her rational mind was trying hard to break through, she nodded once silently. Rosalie moved towards us very slowly when she reached Emmett she crouched down behind him.

"Hey Bella. Don't worry kiddo, I kicked his ass for you. He won't ever come near you again ok?" For a minute I thought that Rose had made a mistake. Bella froze. Then her fear changed to relief and she carefully left my arms to go past Emmett to Rosalie who embraced her. I could hear Rose murmuring to Bella quietly as she rocked her.

I ran my fingers through my hair in frustration. Damn it! I promised her that nothing would hurt her ever again! I failed her. And I hadn't been ready to let her go yet. I heard a cell phone vibrate. Bella jumped and was back in my lap before I could blink.

I hugged her to me as I saw Emmett give me an apologetic look. He mouthed "Carlisle" to me before wandering away and answering the phone.

Rosalie came over to me and Bella. "Bella, why don't you and Jasper go for a hunt while Emmett and I unload the truck? I got you a computer so we can set up the web-cam. Then you can talk to Esme and Alice when you get back. Carlisle got the satellite internet hooked up."

Bless Rose she may not ever show it but she has the biggest heart. I looked down at Bella's eyes and realized they were black with hunger. Her shield must have taken a lot out of her, that and the fear. Her hunger would be making it extremely hard for her to control her instincts and think rationally.

Bella looked up at me 'Please' was what she silently sent me. I stood up with her still in my arms, nodded to Rosalie once and set off into the forest.

I took her north where we normally went and I quickly smelled a herd of deer. She didn't much care for them but I knew right now that it wouldn't matter much. Once we were close enough I gently set her down and she took off after them. I followed at her minimum safe distance. I didn't want her to have to defend her kills but Victoria was still out there somewhere.

Bella took down 3 deer before she came back to herself. She looked up at me and I could feel her emotions leveling out. "Thank you Jasper."

I looked at her sadly "I failed you Angel. I promised that no one would hurt you ever again and not 3 days later you get attacked" I sank down to my knees "I'm so sorry"

I felt her hand on my cheek. When I looked up at her she sank to my level and crawled into her favorite spot in my lap, her head in the notch in my shoulder. "They didn't hurt me Jasper. Scared the heck out of me and would have hurt me but I ran. They got me cornered and I panicked. After that I don't really...I think...." She shook her head "Things aren't really clear but I know they couldn't get to me. The woman ran off and the other one was saying really scary things but," she leaned out to look at me "they didn't hurt me Jasper. You saved me. You kept your promise."
"I need to know Bella. Can you show me what happened?" I could feel her reluctance but if I was going to get to the bottom of this and hunt that flame haired whore down I would need to know. Suddenly my mind was flooded with images of the two vampires and the words that they had said. As Bella's panic had risen the images got more chaotic and when Laurent went to strike her they stopped altogether. The monster that was chained within me was snarling at the things she had shown me but I pushed the emotions deep to be dealt with later. I couldn't help it; I pulled her into me and hugged her.

She was shaking in my arms from the memory but was relatively calm. "Nothing they said was true. You are our family. We are keeping you because we love you not because we're obligated." She nodded and I felt her acceptance. She was alright. They hadn't physically hurt her. I hadn't failed her entirely. She started feeling some remorse and looked down at her puzzled "Angel, what could you possibly be thinking that you feel you need to be sorry for?"

"I'm sorry that I'm not stronger. I ran; I couldn't help it. I wanted to be a member of the family; one that didn't need to be protected all the time. I thought when I wasn't human anymore that I would be able to defend myself but I just ran." I had to stop her

"Angel, stop." I cupped her face in my hand and looked in her eyes "I'm glad you ran. If you hadn't they would have killed you and I wouldn't have gotten there in time to stop it. Do you know you projected to me 10 miles away? That's why I got back here in time. You did what I told you to and you called me. Although, I did tell you to use your cell phone." I said wryly

She smiled a little "The woman knocked it out of my hand and it smashed. I'm sorry Jasper."

I shook my head "We'll get you another one. You did great. I'm very proud of you. You are only 3 days old Bella, of course you need to be protected. You're learning quicker than any newborn I have ever met but you will still need to be protected for a while yet. I am honored to be the one protecting you."

"Who were they Jasper? I think I should know them." She had a puzzled look on her face and I could feel her frustration. "I was so scared as soon as I saw her red hair..."

"Do you remember going to Phoenix with Alice and I last spring?" I kept my voice soft

"Yes – we were running from someone" She spoke slowly and I knew she was searching her foggy human memories "It was a man. He wanted to hurt me, he wanted to hurt all of you." Her fear hadn't resurfaced thank God.

I didn't want to tell her more but I wasn't like Edward, I wouldn't selectively tell her things to keep her under control. "The woman is his mate and the man with her was part of their small coven. The man that chased us to Phoenix is long dead and the woman is angry that we killed him." Her fear came back but she had it under control now.

"Why me?" Here I would tell her the absolute truth

"Because hurtin you would hurt our entire family. We would all suffer if something happened to you Angel. You are the heart of our family and strikin at you is the easiest way for her to cause us the kind of pain she felt when she lost her mate."

I felt her fear fade away and the love that she felt for the family replace it.

"Let's go home Jasper. I want to see Rosalie and Emmett and I should call our parents and Alice, they'll be worried about us." She withdrew from my arms and took my hand. I got to my feet and looked down at her. "Are you alright to go back? We don't have to leave yet, we can hunt some more if you need it." I really wasn't ready to share her just yet

"I'm better, we can go again later if I need too." I cocked an eyebrow at her knowing that she didn't always tell me when she needed to hunt. She drew her finger in an X over her chest "Cross my heart! I promise I will say something. Besides, I'm sure that Emmett will want to go on our bear hunt."

I offered her my hand and we slowly jogged back to the house. When we got there Rose and Emmett had just finished unloading the truck. Bella slowed and fell slightly behind me, her nervousness returning. I stopped and turned to look in her eyes, both her hands in mine. "What is it? I can't help you if you don't tell me what you're thinkin' to cause the feelings."

She looked uncertain "I don't know. My instincts are warning me to be careful. I know who it is and I know they won't hurt me. I just feel better behind you Jasper and I hate it. I hate feeling scared all the time. I don't want to be afraid of my family."

I wrapped her in my arms sending her calming waves

"Angel you were just attacked by two other vampires. A male and a female. You were attacked on this property. Your instincts are tellin' you to be careful of going back into a dangerous environment." I took her chin in my palm and looked into her eyes "You were human when you knew Emmett. You have never really spoken to Rosalie at all. Once you meet them again now that you are changed and back in a rational frame of mind, your instincts will settle down."

She blinked a couple of times; a very endearing human trait that would make it easier for her to blend in when we went back to living among humans. "Really?"

I hugged her "Really. You probably don't remember when the nomads interrupted our baseball game. All of us were very cautious and grouped together. It is a very basic pack instinct when one predator meets another. Your instincts are tellin you to stand behind me because I am the more experienced of the two of us. And in this case I am very happy for you to follow your instincts. I told you, it is my honor to protect you."
She stood on her toes and kissed my cheek "Thanks Jasper. It's easier when I know what causes me to react the way I do."

"Ready?" I raised my eyebrows at her and waited.

She took a deep breath "I think so" She looked down at our joined hands "Don't let go?" She looked back at me chagrined.

I raised her hand to my lips and kissed it "I won't let go" ever if I could manage it. I finished carefully to myself. I pulled her behind me and led her slowly toward the house. Rose and Emmett were waiting patiently by the front porch.

I thought to Bella 'See Darlin? Even Rose has placed herself behind Emmett. Vampire behavior 101.' I heard her mental chuckle come through.

Emmett had a smile on his face and I didn't need to be an empath to know that he was relieved to see Bella doing so much better. "Hey little sister, you didn't bag any bears without me did you?"

Bella peaked out around my shoulder "Not today Em. Only deer, but I got 3" She said this with a hopeful little grin and I couldn't help smiling down at her

Emmett and Rosalie laughed. My chuckle joined with Bella's giggle and she cautiously stepped to my side still holding my hand but no longer gripping it. I could feel her nervousness melting away and knew she was feeling better. Emmett opened his arms to her and this time she went to him with no hesitation and he swung her around in a circle "Well little sister you and I are going to be turning some heads when we get back to civilization. You're beautiful Bella."

Bella would have blushed ten shades of red had she been able. "Thanks Rosalie."

"I set up the computer in your room first thing and the internet is set up. I didn't know where you wanted anything in your room." She looked uncertainly at Bella "If you show Emmett where you want the temporary desk he" her voice turned hard "will be happy to set to all up for you."

"awww – babe" Emmett looked pleadingly at his wife "it was an accident."

Rose crossed her arms over her chest "No Emmett it wasn't. I told you what would happen if you so much as scratched our furniture. Not only did you scratch it, you broke one of the new TVs!!"

I coughed to cover the chuckles bubbling up my throat. Emmett broke a TV and if I had to guess I would say that it was the TV that Rose had picked out for Bella's room. Given that Rose was hell bent on making Bella comfortable and seeing her as a new sister I knew Emmett wouldn't escape Rose's wrath on this one.

Poor Bella was looking back and forth between Emmett and Rose trying to figure out what was happening "It's okay Rosalie. I can do it. Emmett doesn't have to" Rose cut her off

"Bella, it's alright. Emmett decided to play Nascar Racer the Live Edition with the truck on the way here and damaged a bunch of the furniture. I called Esme," Emmett groaned when he heard this.

Rose scowled at him and continued "I called Esme and she is rather mad at him. Trust me, Emmett putting the furniture where it belongs will be the least he can do. When our mom gets to him he's going to be wishing he'd done more to make it up to her." Emmett had his head in his hands now but Rose wasn't quite finished "I am sure by now Alice is already planning something for him as well."

Bella actually laughed as Emmett ran for the truck and started down the road. He would be going to get the next load on his own. Rose started laughing as well just as Emmett rounded the corner.

"Jasper, I am going to use the computer to call Mom okay." There was only the slightest hint of a question to her voice. "You'll be here?" Now her nervousness was back

"Right here darlin – call or think for me and I will be there. Go ahead, Esme will need to see you're alright." I gave her a reassuring smile as she turned to go up the stairs and into the house.

She stopped and turned back "Rosalie, did you say the computer was in my room?"

Rose laughed "Yup! Alice gave me strict instructions; the computer was to be set up before anything else. I thought that you might like the illusion of privacy and put it in your room"

Bella chuckled "Thanks Rosalie"

"Bella" she stopped when Rose called to her again. "Family call me Rose"
Bella was filled with love and acceptance. She smiled and gave Rose a quick hug before she headed into the house.

I watched her go reluctantly. I knew it was important that she call the parents to soothe everyone's nerves. I knew she was safe now but my instincts were telling me to keep her close to me.

"She'll be fine Jasper. And she'll feel better once she talks to Esme and Carlisle. Not to mention Alice was frantic on the phone" Rose was right but it didn't make it any easier to watch her go. "How did you know she was in trouble?"

I went to sit on the porch steps before answering her. "I heard her scream for me in my head. Just my name but I knew somethin' was really wrong." I could hear Bella upstairs talking to our family. It was the only thing stopping me from rushing to her side. "I should have never left her here alone."

I felt her hand on my shoulder. Aside from Alice, of all of my family I was closest to Rose. "You had no way of knowing she would be attacked. You got here in time." Her voice was soft as she tipped my chin up so she could see my eyes. I knew that my face must look tortured "She's safe Jasper"

I let out a huge breath as she hugged me "Better?" she asked as she released me

I nodded and she smiled. Her emotions were refreshingly stable compared to Bella's - pride and love. Nothing else.

I took an unnecessary breath "What did you learn from Laurent?" My emotions and instincts were back under my control

Her gaze sharpened and her voice lowered "He said his only intent was to scare Bella. He admitted that Victoria's intent was a bit more savage"

I swore. I wished I had caught the bitch. Rosalie continued "They didn't know how many of the family would be here. It was only bad luck that they caught Bella alone."

"That won't be happenin' again" I snarled as Rosalie nodded in agreement.

"He had only spent a day or so with Edward. Enough to find out where we had gone and how to avoid Alice's visions."

I swore out loud. Edward's betrayal just kept on going.

"Jasper, to be fair, I don't think that Edward knew that by talking to Laurent he would be putting the family in danger. He thought that Laurent was now with the Denali's. Laurent and Irina have been close. I doubt Edward would have talked as freely as he did if it had been just anyone." I hoped Rosalie was right but it was not a mistake that I was willing to risk. From now on I would be viewing Edward as a potential threat.

"I have to call Carlisle. He needs to know everything so he can call Eleazar and deal with Edward." I tilted my head to the house, I could hear that Bella's conversation was coming to an end.

"I'll have Emmett take Bella hunting so we can speak with him" Rose's voice had dropped lower so it would not be heard in the house.

We went back in the house as I heard Bella making her way downstairs. Her eyes sought mine as I held out my hand to her. I needed to touch her, needed the reassurance that she was safe. Her emotions were back on the level and as soon as her small hand found mine her ever present fear disappeared.

'Feel better?' she nodded her head to my silent question.

Rose took in our silent exchange without comment. We all turned and Bella gripped my hand as we heard the truck coming closer to the house.

Rose smiled "That will be my lug of a husband." She went out to meet him and to supervise the unloading of the truck

I turned back to Bella "Did it take you long to convince them that you're alright?"

She smiled wryly "Less time than it will take me to convince you."

I squeezed her hands "Give me a chance to catch my breath"

She cocked an eyebrow "We don't breathe remember?"

I was still laughing when Emmett and Rosalie walked back in the house. We all laughed and caught up for the next few hours and before we knew it night had fallen. Rosalie and Emmett excused themselves to go and set up their suite. They had chosen the large one remaining in our wing of the house. This meant that Alice along with Carlisle and Esme would be in the other wing leaving one suite empty.

Bella and I read for a few hours. Poor Bella had her first experience with ignoring the sounds that constantly came from Rosalie and Emmett's rooms. So much for Emmett staying in the other end of the house for a month. Once the noises died down we retired to our rooms for the rest of the night.
Morning came and I made my way downstairs to watch the sunrise from the deck. As usual Bella joined me only minutes later. We sat close enough for our thighs to touch as we silently watched the sun come up.

"Little sister!!" Emmett's voice came singing out of the house followed quickly by his bouncing bulging frame. "I'm starving! Tell me you know where to find a grouchy bear around here!"

Bella laughed "I'm sure we can find one for you somewhere"

She turned to look at me expectantly. I took her hand "Why don't you and Emmett go this time. I should call and check in with Carlisle."

Her nervousness spiked "You're not coming?"

Emmett spoke quietly "Come on Bells, you and me will be back before you know it. I'll take care of you, promise."

Bella looked at Emmett and back at me, her grip on my hand almost painful. Her emotions were going haywire. Fear, reluctance and insecurity. The last one shook me. I took her other hand so that I was holding them both and she was turned to look at me. 'Angel, stop.'

'I'm scared' her mental voice was timid

'Yes you are, but you are also worried that I won't want to be around you anymore now that Rosalie and Emmett are here, aren't you?' I looked deeply into her eyes as we had our silent conversation

'I'm not your responsibility'

I pulled her into a hug. No she wasn't my responsibility, she was my life and I couldn't even tell her. 'Darlin it is killin me to watch you go with Emmett without me. My instincts want you close to me but it will be good for you to hunt with someone else.'

She pulled back to look at me as I continued 'And I need to talk to Carlisle about what happened. When you get back we'll sit by the lake together. I told you Bella; you and me. That hasn't changed just because we aren't alone in the house anymore.'

She smiled and nodded, her emotions back on the level.

Emmett sighed "You know that is still really, really annoying"

He frowned slightly "It's ok Bells, I can go by myself" he didn't want to upset his little sister by forcing her to leave the house after being scared so badly yesterday.

Bella left my side and I immediately felt the difference. She stood in front of Emmett and looked up at him. "Come on big bro, I need you to show me how to wrestle with a bear"

Emmett's smile was huge "See ya later Rosie!!" Bella managed to smile at me over her shoulder before Emmett dragged her off.

Rosalie spoke from her rooms upstairs "The computer is ready Jasper."

When I walked into their rooms I looked around. A beautiful cherry wood desk had been set up over by one of the windows and formed a small home office type space. In the corner framed by windows on both sides was a sitting area complete with a couch large enough to accommodate Emmett's large frame, an overstuffed chair with ottoman and a huge plasma screen TV with all Emmett's video games already set up. The huge California king sized bed was at the other side of the room facing the windows. They had included several dressers and an armoire all in the same cherry wood to match the bed frame and desk set.

Rose was sitting in the overstuffed chair with her hands folded in her lap; she was looking at me rather intently. "When Alice told me that you two were no longer together, I was surprised. You could've told me Jasper." She was feeling a bit hurt

"Alice and I's relationship is complicated. I love her. She was the first person besides Peter and Charlotte that I could truly trust. The last two years we've been no more than friends. It happened so gradually that there was no loss, no separation or hurt feelings. To be honest I'm not really sure why we ever went beyond friends in the first place." I paused "She's not my mate; she knew it and I knew it from the very beginning"

Rose held up her hand to stop me "I'm not judging you Jazz. In fact I understand now." I was confused and she read it on my face "You never looked at Alice the way you look at Bella" she was silent for a moment as she let her words sink in "It's the same way that Carlisle looks at Esme; the way Emmett looks at me. The two of you gravitate to one another; although Bella has no idea why yet. I'm happy for you Brother."

I sat down on the couch across from her and stared at my lap "She needs me Rose. No one has ever needed me before. I told her everything, all of the things that I'm not proud of in my past. I tried to make her see the monster but she just hugged
me and told me she was proud of me for the man that I am." I looked up at Rose "If I wasn't an empath I would never have believed it. She was honestly proud of me. No fear, no revulsion, she didn't even hate me for hunting humans. Her heart is so pure and her she is always giving off pure love. Right now it is overpowered by fear most of the time but it is always there in some small way."

I sighed "I know she is going through a lot right now, she still has to come to terms with Edward's betrayal, and heaven knows I don't deserve her but I won't ever leave her, not unless she tells me to go."

Rose smiled at me "You do deserve her Jazz. She will come to grips with things soon enough. I'm glad you realize she needs time; you're doing exactly the right thing. Just be there for her. The rest will sort itself out."

"Thanks Rose" she smiled and rose from her chair. She squeezed my shoulder as she passed me to go to the computer. A few minutes later Carlisle's image filled the screen

"How are you Jasper, Rosalie?" His concern was obvious

I looked at Rose and smiled slightly "We're fine Carlisle. Emmett and Bella have gone bear hunting"

He chuckled "Emmett just couldn't wait could he?" I shook my head in amusement before he continued "And Bella? She said she was fine but she wouldn't want to make us worry."

I thought about it "She's doing well considering. I had her show me what happened and they didn't physically hurt her. She's still nervous and didn't want to go hunting without me but we talked about it and she went happily with Em. Though I don't expect she will be gone long."

Rosalie and I filled him in on the events of the previous day. He was very interested in hearing about Bella's shield and how it worked. "She is turning out to be a very gifted vampire. We need to keep her from being noticed by the Volturi for as long as possible. Aro likes to collect the gifted for his guard."

When we told him about Edward's possible part in everything he was visibly disturbed and I knew his next call would be to Eleazar and Edward. Our killing Laurent may cause some problems seeing as Laurent and Irina had found their mates in each other but we were in the right. Victoria and Laurent attacked our family, we had every right to defend ourselves; but Irina could be a bit of a hot head.

The more time that I sat here the more agitated I seemed to get. I couldn't take it and got up to look out the window. Rosalie kept talking with Carlisle but I wasn't listening. I could feel her concern because of my strange behavior but my anxiety was coming from somewhere else.

I left the room and went out to the back deck, I tried to focus my attention to the North. I felt Rosalie join me "What is it Jasper?"

"Bella. She's upset and on her way back." I couldn't tell her how I knew, Bella was well outside my usual range and she wasn't sending me anything.

"Is she in trouble?" Rose's voice was calm and even

I was frustrated as I tried to figure it out "No, but she's upset"

Ten minutes later she and Emmett came into view. Now she was closer her emotions became clearer. Nothing had happened exactly but she had had difficulty with our separation. I opened my arms and she flowed into them. "Did you have a good time with Emmett?" I felt her inward wince and Emmett was emitting embarrassment, shame and a tiny bit of anger.

Rosalie knew something was up as well and she put her hands on her hips.

"He got too close' Bella's mental voice was timid

Immediately I knew what had happened and I started to laugh. "Emmett got beat up by his little sister. Got a little too close did you Em?"

Rosalie started laughing along with me as Emmett grumbled "I didn't get beat up" he was embarrassed so I knew Bella had actually attacked him.

"Let me guess, you tried to protect her from the bear?" Rose was gasping as she asked the question.

"Well she…I'm just used to her…I just wanted to watch" he finished lamely. As he was stuttering Bella started to giggle a bit into my chest.

"Tell me you jumped him Darlin" she pulled away looking sheepish but underneath I could feel that she was a bit smug.

"He snuck up and I leaped and had him pinned before I realized – I'm sorry Em" Her explanation was broken and confusing but Rose and I got the picture sending us into gales of laughter.
"Oh I would have paid to see that! My big bad bear of a husband got beat up by his tiny little sister!" Rosalie was clutching at her sides.

"Whatever! Lucky shot!" Emmett stalked off to his room to pout.

I could feel concern and regret coming from Bella "Is he mad at me?"

Rose answered "No Bells. He will play his video games for a few hours and then he will start thinking about ways to get you back. Be ready, he'll be pestering you with challenges for everything from arm wrestling to video games. He won't rest until he beats you at something." She winked at Bella "Well I am off to console him as only I can, but well done sister! Next time let me watch!"

As Rose left Bella turned to me "He really isn't mad?"

I chuckled "No Angel. He's used to being the strongest in the family. His ego has just taken a blow. Once he remembers that your strength is a limited time deal he'll see it as a challenge and be back for more." I could feel her relief and happiness "Did you get enough to eat?"

She smiled up at me "Yup! I got a moose on the way out. They're pretty tasty but bear is still my favorite so far." She was almost glowing with happiness and contentment and I basked in the feelings, I couldn't feel any fear. The emotions of others were exhausting and to feel such pure happiness was bliss. And it was Bella. I loved seeing her like this; I never wanted to feel her fear again.

We went for a slow walk around the lake and it was a few hours before we made it back to the house. I turned to Bella "Do you mind if I ask Rosalie to join me for a quick hunt?" I didn't want her to think that I was trying to ditch her.

She smiled but her nervousness came back a bit "No, I can play video games with Em while you're gone. If he's talking to me that is."

"I won't be gone long. When I get back we can start shopping for furniture if you like."

I could feel her pleasure and she smiled "That sounds fun Mr. Whitlock" It had been so long since I had heard my name that it startled me. I loved the sound of it coming from her mouth.

"It's a date Miss Cullen" her emotions surged at the sound of her new name. She gave me a quick hug before turning to go upstairs to see if Emmett would let her play. I knew he would, he was totally wrapped around Bella's little finger.

Rose quickly joined me and the two of us ran off into the darkening forest. Rose grinned at me "So you two have a date huh?"

I groaned and went looking for my meal as Rose's delighted laughter rang out behind me.
It had been six weeks since Rosalie and Emmett had joined us in Ontario. I had been nervous about living with Rosalie. Emmett had always liked me and treated me like an amusing little sister; but my previous experience with Rosalie had been limited to icy silences and hostile glares.

I remembered our first real conversation a couple of days after their arrival and the attack by Victoria and Laurent.

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Jasper and Emmett had left to go hunting earlier. It was only the second time that Jasper had left me since the attack 2 days ago. I was nervous when he wasn't there so I was trying to distract myself with his borrowed iPod and a book. So far it was sort of working, but I knew that soon my anxiety would start to get worse.

I heard a knock on my door "Come in" I was surprised to see it was Rosalie. She had been very nice to me so far and had even asked me to call her Rose like the rest of the family but I was still nervous around her.

"Can I talk to you?" Her voice was sweet and almost hesitant.

I offered her a smile "Sure Rose, please come in. Pull up a piece of floor" I had looked at furniture online but I had yet to buy any so my room was pretty bare.

She sank gracefully to the floor in front of me and seemed strangely nervous. "Bella, I want to apologize to you for the way I treated you while you were human."

I was surprised. I didn't think Rosalie apologized for anything. "It's ok Rose, you were worried about me becoming Edward's dinner and the family having to leave. Looks like you were entirely right. I'm sorry that things happened the way they did and that the family is all split up on my account."

She was shaking her head "No Bella. The biggest reason that I didn't want you around was because of Edward himself. I know better than anyone how selfish and spoiled he is; I never thought he was good enough for you."

If I was surprised at the apology, this floored me "I think you need to explain that one to me Rose."

"From the minute our family saw you we all saw your goodness. You put everyone else first and your own wants and needs last. You looked at a coven of vampires and saw a family of people. I've lived with Edward for over 50 years and I knew he wouldn't appreciate you for the gift that you are; wasn't capable of putting you first like you deserve. I tried to frighten you away rather than talk to you about it. I'm sorry Bella." She was looking at me very seriously with eyes full of remorse.

"Edward has always been a spoiled child and he's always gotten away with bad behavior; I can't think of a time that he hasn't gotten his way. Then I had to watch as he dictated your life, took away your self esteem, instilled a sense of fear and made promises that I knew he had no intention of keeping. I acted the only way that I thought would drive you away."

I tried to see everything from her point of view. Looking back all the times that Edward had talked me into doing something for my own safety, or assured me that I was good enough for him. It all seemed like some strange reverse psychology bullshit. "So you never hated me for being human? I thought that you hated me because I wasn't good enough to be with your family."

She chuckled "Far from it. I never chose this life Bella. I was violently gang raped and left for dead in the street by my rich fiancé and a bunch of his friends. If Carlisle hadn't found me I would've been 6 feet under." My heart twisted at the thought of this beautiful proud and strong woman being brutalized by the man she loved.

"I'll never eat my favorite foods again, walk freely in the sun or have children. I wanted nothing more than to be a mother like my best friend Vera." I could see her slipping into her human memories "She had the most beautiful little boy. He had dark hair with soft brown curls and deep chocolate brown eyes that melted my heart." She came back to herself and looked at me. "That is why I fell in love with Emmett when he had been mauled by a bear as a human. His eyes gave me the courage to take him to Carlisle even though I was covered in his blood. And I got the same feeling when I looked into your human eyes. Only you were vibrantly alive and willing to throw it all away on a spoiled boy who wanted to keep you like a pet. You were too good for that."

"And now?" I had to know where I stood with her.

"And now, you had to find out like I did that the man you loved only saw you as a possession that he could use and discard. I never wanted this life for you but now that you are living it I am proud to call you my sister and I will help you any way I can." I hugged her and we held on for a long time.
I wanted to cry, Carlisle and Esme were my parents, Alice and Emmett were the best siblings ever but it would have been uncomfortable if Rose had disliked me. Now all I could do was hug her. I had lost so much but I had gained a new family and a new life. We spent the rest of the night shopping online for new furniture and decoration for my rooms. She made it really fun and I didn't feel the anxiety from Jasper's absence quite so sharply.

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Now it was 6 weeks later and I was terrified all over again. Jasper was leaving. I told myself that it was only for a few days, I wouldn't be alone. Rose was staying with me. Jasper and Emmett had to go to Toronto to pick up all the new furniture; they were also grabbing paint and additional repair supplies. Jasper had to arrange for larger supplies to be flown in by helicopter to enlarge the garage as well as replace one of the solar panels that provided some of our electricity. There was a long list of things that needed to be done and all of them required that he and Emmett make the trip south. It had been a mild fall so far but Alice said that we only had a couple more weeks of good weather before the snow hit and it would be impossible to get anywhere by truck. Jasper couldn't put it off any longer and neither could I.

"I have to go" He was holding both my hands and looking into my eyes in a last ditch effort to keep me calm.

'I know Jas, it's ok. I'll be fine' my silent voice was not any calmer than my verbal one would have been.

'Work on your telepathy with Rose. It'll probably much easier without me here' he teased trying to make me feel better.

I chuckled. We had found out that it was much harder for me to mentally communicate with anyone but Jasper. Carlisle thought that it had something to do with my shield and the bond that I shared with Jasper due to his venom. When I tried to 'talk' to Rose or Emmett poor Jasper heard me mentally screaming.

We had been working with my shield as well. It appeared that it was always around me but only became solid when I was under physical attack. We thought that it was the reason why Alice had such a hard time seeing me. Effectively I had two shields, one that blocked mental invasion which is why Edward was never able to read my mind and the other that blocked physical violence. Using my gifts was easier with Jasper because of the venom we shared.

'Just go Jas, drawing it out will only make this harder. I have to learn not to rely on you so much. It's already easier when you go hunting without me, this won't be any different' I could see Rosalie waiting for me. We planned to go hunting together so I wouldn't have to watch Jasper leave.

'Besides, the family will be here soon enough and Alice will want her husband back' I quickly kissed him on the cheek

'Bye Jasper, be safe' I grabbed Rose's hand and together we ran into the forest before he could say anything. I flipped my mental switch to off. Hearing him say goodbye would have been too hard.

Four hours later found me sitting on a rock overlooking one of the many small lakes in the area around our property. I knew Jasper was gone. The connection we shared told me this hours ago.

Rosalie had looked at me funny when I had broken off from chasing a moose to look back towards the house. She had walked carefully over to me "Are you ok Bella?"

I nodded "Jasper's gone." My voice had been small even to me

She had put a hand on my arm and given me a steady look "He'll be back."

I had taken a deep breath "I know"

Now I was left with my thoughts and a feeling of loss. I missed Jasper already and he had only just left. I remembered how I felt whenever Edward had left me to go hunting with his family. I had missed him terribly and I had been at a loss for things to do; but I had never felt as if a piece of me was missing like I did now. I shook my head; I heard Rosalie coming closer and got to my feet so we could head back to the house.

Two days later Rose and I were sitting in the great room working with my telepathy. We did it at night because of my instincts. Poor Rose had discovered that I was almost a basket case after dark. It was better when I was inside – kinda. Rose stopped and gave me a strange look "Drop it"

I looked at her like her head had fallen off "Drop what?"

"Your mental shield. I think that is why you can't hear me and I can barely hear you." Her logic made sense. The problem was I had no idea how to even begin to try. I mean according to Carlisle I had this ability when I was human.

She could see that I was struggling "Try thinking of it like a band around your head. Visualize it expanding and thinning out until there is room for you to push it down your body like you're taking it off."

It was worth a try. It was weird I could actually feel it when I closed my eyes. I started to push it down but could only get it as far as my chest 'God I miss Jasper' was my first thought. This would be so much easier if he was here.

Rose gasped "I heard you" her voice was full of wonder
My concentration broke and the band snapped back up.

"It's weird, your mental voice is the same as your verbal one. If I hadn't been watching your lips I wouldn't have known
that you hadn't spoken out loud." Her voice was incredulous

I smiled "It's progress though right?"

We decided that we had made enough progress on that and we were left without a purpose. We had watched TV and I
had played enough video games while Emmett was here. Because the house was so bare, we had run out of things to do.
I had something in mind but was hesitant to bring it up. "Rose,"

She looked up and smiled "You thought of something to do!" It should have been a question but it came out an excited
statement.

"Well I..." I took an un-needed breath "I want to learn how to dance." It came out in a huge rush

She jumped up and started bouncing – weird I always thought the bouncing was only an Alice thing "Oh Bella!! This will be
so much fun!"

We didn't have a stereo system but with our hearing it was easy to turn on Jasper's iPod and hear everything through the
ear buds easily. I was excited to find that my new grace as a vampire included great coordination and rhythm. We danced
the rest of the night away.

We had made fabulous progress on Esme's new flower gardens and two nights later we were sitting in the great room
playing with my telepathy and waiting for the boys to make their nightly check in call. Rose was trying to make me laugh by
sending me pictures of some of the more ridiculous things that Emmett had done over the years. She was finding it harder
and harder to do the longer Jasper was gone.

I snatched the phone up as soon as it rang "Jasper?"

"Yeah Angel it's me. How are you? Are you okay?" his voice sounded stressed and concerned

"Yeah, I'm okay. When are you coming home?" I hated sounding so needy

I could almost see him rubbing the back of his neck "We should be finished up by tomorrow or the next day, then we'll be
headed home." He sighed "I'm goin' as fast as I can Angel. We really are ahead of schedule. Believe me I wanna be
home right now. What did you and Rose do today?"

I filled him in on the gardening and dance lessons and how much fun it was. His voice had a deeper sound to it than
normal "I can't wait to see what you have learned. Will you honor me with a dance when I get home darlin'?"

If I had had a heart it would have been racing "I'd love that" my voice was quiet

"How is the telepathy goin'?"

I huffed in frustration "Apparently my instincts still have the upper hand. If I lower my mental shield my physical one goes up
but at least I can think through that one."

His voice was calm "I'm glad for that, your instincts will keep you safe while I'm not there with you."

I was about to blurt out something unwise when I heard Emmett in the background "I wanna talk to my Rosie! Stop
hogging the phone." He was being impatient as usual. Jasper and I said our quiet goodbyes and I handed the phone to
Rose.

She went upstairs with it so she wouldn't embarrass me with their conversation. I sat thinking. I was jealous of the
relationships that were all around me. Carlisle and Esme were two pieces of a whole; one wasn't complete without the
other. Rose and Emmett may be an NC-17 sideshow at times but they too were obviously soul mates. And then there was
Alice and Jasper. He talked to her everyday and I had seen them have complete conversations without ever saying a word
when I was human. I talked to Alice almost every day and it was obvious that she missed him terribly. I wondered if I was
doomed to spend my now endless life alone.

Rosalie found me curled up in a ball on the floor. She held me for the rest of the night without saying a word.

I was grateful that Rosalie kept me very busy for the next two days. We hunted and explored the woods, cleared more of
the low brush around the immediate woods and worked on the flower beds. We did it all at human speed to occupy our
time. I kept my nightly phone calls with Jasper to small talk. I could hear the frustration in his voice when I would cut the call
short using Rosalie as an excuse in one way or another. I refused to let him know how much I missed and needed him. I
had to stand on my own two feet. He was Alice's husband and I had no right to be so dependant on him. Besides, if I didn't
condition myself now it would hurt that much more when he and Alice were back in the same house together and he
wouldn't have time for me.

Two more days had passed and Rose had heard from Emmett that they would be home by morning. Rose and I were
watching the sun go down over the lake. As usual my nerves were building the lower the sun sank; I wasn't sure why but they seemed worse tonight than they had been all week.

"Alright little sister, spill. What's with you? Vampires as a rule don't fidget unless they mean to." Her eyes were narrowed in suspicion.

I looked at her feeling conflicted "I don't know" I thought about some of the ideas that I had been wondering about since Jasper had left. Rosalie and I had gotten really close over the last two months. I still talked to Alice all the time but she was more of a really fun best friend where Rosalie was the big sister who you looked up to and went to for advice. You talked to her about stuff that you couldn't even talk to your mom about. "Can I ask you a question Rose?"

She smiled "Of course."

I took a breath "Do you have a bond with Carlisle?"

She looked puzzled at the question "Like what kind of bond?"

"Like can you feel him, kind of like a humming at the back of your mind." I tried to describe the feeling that I had with Jasper

She looked thoughtful "No, but then neither of us is gifted either." She looked serious "What is it Bella? Describe it."

I tried to think. "I feel calmer when Jasper is near but he says he isn't influencing my emotions. It doesn't feel like he is either. And now he had been gone so long – my instincts aren't riding me any harder than usual really, in fact I think it's getting easier to control them but; I still feel like there is a string pulling on my chest when he isn't here."

She was looking intently at me so I continued "Like right now, I know he's anxious but I don't know why. He's way too far away for either of us to project. I guess I just wondered if you had something similar to that with Carlisle"

"No. No, not with Carlisle. I have felt the same pull though. I can't feel the emotions like you're describing but I have the same pull towards Emmett." Her voice was soft, gentle "Do you know that for vampires, finding our mate is instinctual? Some of us may choose to spend time with another for companionship but when we find our true mate we are drawn to them physically and emotionally and the bond is unbreakable."

I was worried now, she couldn't mean what I thought she did "But I can't feel that way about Jasper." My breath was getting short "Jasper is Alice's mate" I would have said more but my next breath brought my head snapping around to the east and my body into a defensive crouch. "ROSE" her name came out in a hiss

She was on her feet and looking where I was "What is it? What do you smell?" She wasn't questioning me; she had figured out while we were hunting that my senses were extremely sharp.

"Vampire" my one word had her growling and crouched in front of me.

"Stay behind me Bella" she put her hand back and I grasped it as a strange figure came cautiously out of the trees. He was still 1000 yards away when Rose spoke again "Call them"

I slipped the phone from her pocket while she stayed focused on the stranger. Jasper picked up before the phone could ring on my end.

"Bella?!" his voice was strained

"Jasper" I couldn't speak for a minute. I was wrestling with my instincts. They were screaming at me to run but I wouldn't leave Rose.

"Bella what is it? I can feel… I..." he was puzzled and panic stricken but I couldn't have said how I knew that

"Where?" the one word was all I could get out

"We're just North of Timmins on the gravel road; about 7 hours away. What's goin on Angel? Where's Rose?" I could hear the panic in his voice and I wanted to tell him but my fear had closed my throat. My physical shield had gone up around Rose and I. I slipped the phone into Rosalie's palm.

I watched the stranger as he came to a stop about 600 yards away. He had his hands up in front of him and his eyes carefully on the ground only looking at us out of his peripheral vision. I hadn't been listening to Rose and Jasper's conversation but I knew when she told him because I felt faint wave of fury that wasn't mine and a loud curse.

"I'm coming! Emmett let me out!" the phone cut off on their arguing.

My attention sharpened when the man slowly lowered himself to sit on the ground still not directly looking at us. He looked like any other backpacker I had ever seen. He was probably about 6 feet tall with brown hair tied back in a low pony tail. He was fairly clean in a pair of jeans and white linen shirt with a wool ¾ length coat. He was barefoot but I could see the boots that he sometimes wore hanging from his backpack; Doc Martens. His hands were still in the air when he spoke "I mean you and the young one no harm. My name is Garrett."
Rosalie's voice was even "We have no way of knowing that. What do you want?"

Rose tensed further when his eyes flickered to hers and back down again. They were red. He spoke again "I see your eyes are golden. Tell me, have I found the coven of Carlisle Cullen?"

Rosalie spoke carefully "He's our father; what's it to you?"

"I come bearing a warning for" his voice was uncertain "your father?" he continued when Rose nodded without further explanation. "We met many years ago when he first came to these shores from England. Carlisle Cullen is a good man. I came across a woman in my travels and she spoke of revenge on the coven of Carlisle Cullen. She said things that could not be true of the good doctor I had known so long ago. Please I only come out of concern for my old friend. Please call him if you wish"

He remained seated completely unthreateningly as Rosalie passed me the phone to dial Carlisle. She stayed focused on the stranger. Carlisle picked up on the first ring "Hello Rosalie." His voice was happy and carefree

"Dad" my voice cracked and failed me again

"Bella? What's wrong?" his voice was alarmed and I pressed the phone into Rose's waiting palm.

Rosalie quickly explained the situation. The distress was evident in her voice and I was losing my grip on my own control. I slid the rest of the way to the ground and clutched my legs to my chest. I could hear Carlisle "Rosalie please, calm down. Yes I know Garrett. He was changed in 1776 during the start of the War of Independence. He and I became great friends, he's a good man. I last saw him a couple of years before you joined our family."

Rose relaxed a fraction "So we trust him?" She was still suspicious

"Yes, I can't see him meaning you any harm and we should be grateful for any warning he has to issue. It must be serious for him to seek me out." Carlisle's voice was even and calm

I was shaking, my eyes were glued to the stranger. He was still sitting in the field, he hadn't moved or looked at me but that could change at any minute. He could come after us. Rose was looking at me and I vaguely heard Carlisle's next question "And Bella?"

Rose was kneeling beside me petting my hair "She has us under her shield. Jasper's running back and I don't think I'll be able to get her to drop it until he gets here. I'll have Jasper call you."

Her voice was concerned as she hung up. I wanted to trust them. I wanted to drop my shield, but the man was sitting right there. 600 yards was no distance at all for one of us and Carlisle hadn't had contact with him in decades. It was just me and Rosalie, I wanted Jasper.

"Bella it's okay honey. He isn't like the others. I won't let him hurt you." She continued to pet my hair

"When did she get hurt?" His voice was gentle but I still flinched and put my head on my knees. I couldn't look at him anymore

"Two months ago, she was only 2 days old when she was attacked. Two vampires caught her here alone when my brother came to the road to meet us. They would have killed her if it hadn't been for her shield." She answered him but I could feel that she was still focused on me. I wished that she would go back to watching the stranger. She should be watching him!

I wanted to trust her so badly. I wanted to drop my shield but if I was wrong, if she was wrong we would be dead. 'I'm sorry' Her eyes widened slightly so I knew she heard me "It's okay Bella. If this makes you feel safe then we'll stay here as long as you want."

My head came up and I looked into the trees 'Jasper' I could feel him getting closer. My eyes looked to the south; if he was running he wouldn't be coming up the driveway.

Rose saw my attention and spoke to Garrett "You had better look as submissive as possible if you want to survive. My brother will be here really soon and he isn't going to be happy. We're all a bit on edge at the moment"

"Completely understandable" was all he said as he stretched out to lay on his back to look at the stars. Rosalie even gave him a strange look as he casually put his arms behind his head.

My attention snapped to the tree line and a gap in the trees to the south. Seconds later Jasper walked out of the forest and into the clearing pausing to survey the scene. He was here. We would be safe. He had lost his shirt somewhere and this was the first time that I had seen his scars in their entirety. His forearms and biceps were criss-crossed with crescent shaped bite scars forming a grotesque kind of lace. The farther my eyes wandered up his chest the thicker the scars got. His collar bone, shoulders and lower neck were so scarred the skin resembled the scars left behind after a human was badly burned, looking almost melted.

But I barely saw any of it. I was mesmerized by the bare expanse of his chest which gave way to chiseled abs and the
sculpted V of his hips framed by the casual drape of his jeans. His arms were well developed with perfectly defined biceps and thickly muscled forearms. I watched the muscles ripple with every step and wanted so badly to be encased in his arms and surrounded by his strength.

Garrett had visibly tensed once he caught sight of Jasper but he hadn't moved as he spoke "See to the women. What I have to say will keep until you are able to calm the young one down." His voice was friendly and strangely old fashioned.

Jasper stared at him intently for a long moment and then nodded. He moved towards us on the deck where we were still under my shield; he shared a look with Rosalie. As he kneeled down to my level Rosalie stood to watch our visitor.

Our eyes met 'Angel' his mental voice was a balm to my ragged nerves. As I moved to go to the safety of his arms my shield flashed and extended to encase the three of us. He held me close and I took in his scent of summer sunshine, hay and honey as my cheek rested against his bare chest. I could feel him breathing in my hair like I could feel his relief that we were safe. 'Angel are you okay?'

I nodded 'He hasn't gotten any closer. Dad said it was okay. Rose said...but I couldn't. What if he...he could have…'

He smoothed down my hair 'Shhh darlin. You're safe. I'm proud of you. You kept Rosalie safe; you did the right thing. You're safe that's all that matters to me.' I was still shaking. He rested his forehead on mine so he could look in my eyes 'Shhh, I'm here now'

I began to calm down. He hadn't helped me, only held me, letting me take the time that I needed to regain control on my own. Then he asked me something that I didn't expect 'Can you let me out so I can talk to him? You and Rose stay in here okay?'

I shook my head emphatically and felt the panic coming back 'NO! No if you don't think it's safe then stay here. Don't leave.'

He helped me to stand and pulled me back into his chest "Rosalie"

She knew what he was asking and she repeated her conversation with Garrett and then the conversation with Carlisle. When she was done he pulled me back slightly so that he was staring into my eyes 'Angel, can you show me what happened?' I sent him images of what had happened from the time that I first caught the scent. Thanks to my new vampire brain my recall was perfect.

'See Angel? It's safe, now you stay here with Rosalie and let me out so I can talk to him.' He kissed my forehead after I reluctantly nodded. He stepped away and my shield flashed up between us. He gave me one more long look before he turned back to walk out and meet our visitor.

A/N: OK so how much do I love you to give you a half naked Major! I have the next couple of chapters well under way but I want to make sure that they are perfect before posting. Be patient, it'll be worth it.
It killed me to turn away from Bella. She was still scared but I had to deal with the stranger that claimed to have a warning for Carlisle.

I had felt Bella's fear only moments before my phone rang. I had been arguing with myself that there was no way I could feel her from this distance. I had my phone in my hand trying to talk myself out of calling her, when it rang. Hearing her voice so small and terrified had set my inner demon snarling. When Emmett started arguing about whether or not he was coming with me I simply jumped from the still moving truck and started to run.

The closer I got to the house the clearer I could feel her. I could even catch the occasional thought; something had shifted, she had been trying to reason with herself, trying to talk herself into taking down her shield. This made me growl and push myself to run faster.

The seven hour trip had only taken me a little over an hour running. As I got closer to the house I had shed my shirt. Bella accepted me in spite of my violent and brutal past. I knew that the sight of my scars would terrify the intruder long before I got close. The scars were a very visual warning not to fuck with me.

Now as I stepped off the deck and towards the supposed friend of Carlisle I took careful stock of his emotions. My scars had had the desired effect, the man was exuding fear despite his relaxed appearance. There was also an undercurrent of awe – strange. He was smart he hadn't moved except to cock his head to better be able to see me. With his emotions I knew it must be taking everything he had to be laying there in such a vulnerable position but after 230 years he would know better than to provoke someone who carried scars like mine.

I stopped when I was only 100 yards away from him and the close proximity only increased his fear but still he remained where he was. "You can stand – slowly"

He very slowly got to his feet, making sure to do nothing that might startle me into action. Once he was on his feet in a less vulnerable position some of his fear receded "I apologize for frightening your family. It was not my intention. I have great respect for Carlisle and only wished to speak with him, in my haste I fear that I may have made a bad impression."

His emotions showed his honesty and remorse "From what I've heard you did everything you could to ease the situation. My sister tells me that you have a warning for us."

Before he could speak I heard Emmett emerge from the forest. He like me, stopped to survey the situation before going to stand protectively in front of Rosalie and Bella. He was looking as fierce as I had ever seen him with his huge arms crossed over his broad chest. I could feel Bella relax further and I was grateful that Emmett had followed me.

Garrett forcibly swallowed as he took in Emmett's immense frame. "I was roaming around Champaign, Illinois when I crossed paths with a female vampire. She was trying to find others to join her in taking revenge on a coven of deviants that had killed her mate. As I listened to her story I realized that the deviants that she was speaking of were animal drinkers. The only animal drinker I had ever met was Carlisle. I got as much information as I could before I left and headed here to warn you."

I could feel his hesitancy to speak and was about to call him on it when his eyes briefly flicked in Bella's direction. He didn't want to scare her further by revealing Victoria's plans in front of her.

"You're him aren't you?" His question confused me as awe had replaced his fear and was accompanied by curiosity

"I am who, exactly?" I didn't know who he was talking about

"You're the general of the southern armies that they all fear so much. The God of War" his voice was almost reverent

"That was a long time ago" mine was flat and didn't display any of the shame that I felt at hearing the nickname that I earned so long ago.

"I understand" his acceptance surprised me.

I dialed my phone and Carlisle answered right away. "Jasper is Bella alright?"

If he was only asking about her then truly his only fear was how she was handling the stranger not that we were in any danger. "She's okay. Rose and Em are with her."

"May I speak with Garrett please?" I moved to within 50 yards and then tossed the phone to our visitor. I could easily hear both sides and the more they talked the more I realized that Garrett was everything that he claimed to be and was to be trusted. Again the full warning was not given but I now knew it would be reliable when I heard it.

Garrett's conversation was coming to a close so I moved towards him so I could take the still open phone from his hand
when it was offered and answered "Carlisle"

"Jasper I trust that you heard all of that?"

"Yes, sir. I'll hear what he has to say and fill you in on the details later"

"He's a good man Jasper. You two actually have quite a bit in common." He paused "Please have Bella call us on the web cam, your mother is worried sick."

"She doesn't want to see me? I'm hurt Dad." I couldn't help but tease

He chuckled "You're not the baby and she knows you can take care of yourself"

"I'm sure Bella will need to speak with Esme as well. Thanks Carlisle." I hung up the phone and studied the man in front of me. His emotions were much calmer and he was only wary, most likely because he was outnumbered by four unfamiliar vampires. Three of which were obviously experienced fighters.

I offered him my hand "I appreciate your making the trip to see us. I'm Jasper Whitlock."

He grasped my hand and shook it "Garrett Smith"

I looked behind me and Emmett came to us to shake Garrett's hand "This is my brother Emmett McCarty and the blonde on the deck is his wife and mate Rosalie. The young one is Bella Cullen."

Garrett's eyebrows rose and he clarified "Carlisle's daughter?"

I nodded "We are all his children but she bears his name."

He made a very old fashioned bow towards the girls "Then I am truly honored."

Rosalie smiled but they were still under Bella's shield. I started with the others towards the house. I monitored Bella's emotions carefully, her fear was greatly reduced but she wasn't relaxed and I knew she wasn't going to come out with Rose until I convinced her to. 'Angel, it's okay. You can let go of it now he's here to help.'

She looked from me to Garrett and back again. We had reached the steps leading up to the large deck where she and Rose still stood. I held up my hand to the other two and proceeded up the steps on my own. When I reached her the shield fell and I cupped her cheek. Her eyes were wide and the crimson of her newborn irises were darker than they had been. 'Do you need to hunt? Did the shield drain you too much?'

'No I'm okay. Are you sure Jas?' I could feel her nervousness now that her shield was down.

'I'm sure Angel. I didn't feel anything to make me think he was bein anything but honest.' She leaned forward and put her head on my bare chest.

I hugged her to me and felt the tension melt from her body. It was the first time that I was relaxed enough that I could appreciate the feel of her skin on mine. I could feel her hair cascading over my bare arms and caressing my naked chest. I could feel how she fit perfectly in my arms and molded to my body. The feeling of her against my bare skin was the most erotic thing that I had ever felt and I was getting aroused. I never wanted to let her go but we had company and she wasn't ready. Definitely not the time or the place. Fuck, Major! Get a hold of yourself!

I could feel that she needed a minute to compose herself so I took a final smell of her hair and gave her an out 'Angel do you think you could go to my room and get me a shirt?' she silently nodded and blurred inside.

I watched her go and felt frustration and curiosity from behind me

"You'll have to get used to that. They do it a lot" the frustration was obviously from Emmett. He hated not knowing what was going on. I realized that Bella and I hadn't spoken aloud so the rest of them were in the dark as to what was said and Garrett was confused about what had happened.

Rosalie chuckled and explained "Bella has the ability to project and receive thoughts and images. Not true telepathy as she can't read your mind but a form of it. When she gets stressed she tends to go verbally mute."

"A talented newborn and a very beautiful young woman." Garrett was openly admiring and I quickly realized my mistake.

I hadn't introduced her as my sister and despite my feelings she was not my claimed mate. A deep growl erupted from my throat and was quickly joined by Emmett's. Garrett immediately stepped back and held his hands up in apology.

He was fearful and apologetic "I meant no offense. I will keep my distance, she is obviously wary of me and I will give her no cause to fear me. You have my word."

Emmett gave him a stern look and went inside to look for Bella, waves of brotherly protectiveness rolling off him.

Rosalie gave me an amused look and moved to take Garrett's arm. "Please Mr. Smith, come in, we would love to hear
news from the south. I’m sorry we don’t have much in the way of furniture but you’re welcome to stay with us for a while. We have spare rooms where you can clean up if you like.”

“I would be grateful for your hospitality Mrs. McCarty. It would be nice not to have to wander for a while. And I still have much that I need to share with you.” Garrett looked back over his shoulder at me and our eyes met.

“Well then. Let me show you to the rooms you’ll be using while you’re here.” Rosalie led him upstairs to the unused wing of the house.

I turned when I heard Bella coming down the opposite stairs with Emmett hovering on her heels. She had a clean shirt in her hands for me. I smiled at her as she handed it to me “Thanks darlin” I pulled it on and looked down at her.

“Emmett wants to go hunting.” I knew she was trying hard not to ask for permission.

“And what do you want to do?”

Her eyes flicked to the stairs leading to our guest’s room “I think I’ll go. You know he hates to go by himself.” I knew she wasn’t ready to fully meet Garrett yet and was using hunting as an excuse not to mention it was still dark out.

I chuckled at her joke and kissed her forehead. It would give me a chance to hear what Garrett had to say. “Have fun kids! Bella, you make sure that he saves some bear for you” “If he doesn’t I’ll just beat him up again” she grinned and flitted outside before Emmett could retaliate.

“I’ll keep her safe Jazz. You just figure out what we are supposed to be worried about.” Emmett was uncharacteristically serious as he turned and followed her out the door.

Rosalie came downstairs alone and I guessed that Garrett was getting settled. She came to me and gave me a hug. “We missed you Jazz”

“I missed you guys too.” I grinned at her “Your husband’s a baby when he’s away from you.”

She chuckled “And Bella is a depressing worry wart when you’re away so I guess we’re even” “Bella was unhappy while I was gone?” I couldn’t stand the thought of her worrying Rose was exasperated “Of course she was you idiot!” I shook my head but she continued “She and I had some interesting conversations.”

I would have spoken but we both heard Garrett coming. He came downstairs and looked around. “I have to say that being a vegetarian does have its advantages if you get to live like this.”

Rosalie smiled “We can blend in easier and so we can stay in one place longer. We have several houses like this one. We’re staying here for the next few years while Bella transitions”

I had to know “What will you do for food while you’re here? There are few humans this far north and there will be none in about a week once the snows hit.” I knew that his answer would affect how long he would be staying.

“I find that your diet intrigues me. You truly do belong to a family. Carlisle had told me that it enables him to form more lasting bonds with others but I really didn’t believe him. If you’ll allow me, I would like to try it while I am here” his curiosity was honest

“I take it you will be staying with us for some time then?” Rosalie was really doing Esme proud with her hospitality

“Once you have heard what I have to say I think you may need all the help you can get” His words put me on edge

“We better speak quickly then. Bella won’t be gone long she doesn’t feel comfortable in the woods after dark” I knew that she was really uncomfortable around Garrett for her to have gone at all

I moved to get the fire started in the fireplace. Bella would appreciate it when she got home. Garrett and Rosalie got comfortable on the floor.

“I told you that I came across the woman in Illinois, what I didn’t tell you was that she wasn’t alone. She had a newborn with her and she was headed to the southern covens to call in a few favors.” I could feel my anger start to rise at his words “She was intending on coming back with at least two older vampires and a small army of newborns to wipe out your entire coven.”

I was furious and at the same time terrified. I had a lot of enemies in the south. If she knew who I was then there would be no end of vampires willing to come north to try to kill me. Like the famous gunfighters of the old west, once you got a reputation as a stone cold killer with a quick draw there was always someone wanting to prove they were better by pickin a fight. “Did she know my name?” I had to know.

“l don’t know, all I know is she knew the name of your coven – Cullen”
"Fuck!" Maria knew that I was living with the Cullens. If that bitch Victoria ran into her we would all be in deep shit.

"What do we do Jazz?" Rosalie was calm and her feelings of absolute confidence made me grateful to have her as my sister.

I thought fast, my military side coming out in force "Carlisle, Esme and Alice can't come until after the new year at least. As much of a problem as this is, we still have to make sure that we cover our tracks in Forks otherwise we will have to deal with the Volturi on top of everything else. We can call the Denali's but I am sure Irina is still pissed about Laurent and I am not sure how the rest of them will feel. Besides I can't trust Edward to have my back right now."

"I'll make the call none the less. Besides Kate owes me a favor or two." Rosalie rose to go and call the Denali's I knew that if anyone could convince them it would be her. She turned back to me "And I assume you'll have to make a call for your re-enforcements as well"

I smiled up at her "My dear sister, how do you know I have any re-enforcements?"

"Because Brother, you always have a back door strategy. I know you." She winked at me and I laughed

Rosalie excused herself and I pulled my phone out of my pocket to call a number that I hadn't called in years. Garrett looked at me in curiosity but was content to wait for his explanation.

The phone rang three times before it was picked up "You cagey Mother-fucker we have been looking everywhere for you! Give us the directions and we will be there in two days tops."

"Peter how the fuck, do you know I need you? How do you know I'm not just callin to say hello?" I never would figure out how he did that

"Fuck you! Tell me where you are so Char and I can get on the road to dig you out of the fuckery you got yourself caught up in"

I could hear Charlotte yelling at him in the background for his language as I told him where we were.

"Oh and Jasper – we're looking forward to meeting her" and he hung up. I shook my head. How the fuck does he do that?

"So I take it we will be having more company in the next few days?" Garrett asked

I smiled "Yeah, I guess you could call them old army buddies. Peter and his mate Charlotte fought with me in the southern wars. They're responsible for getting me out of that fucked up life."

He smiled back "Good friends to have when your back is to the wall."

I nodded "The best, especially Peter. He knows things. I have never been able to figure out if he has a gift or what it is exactly but he has these feelins' that I've learned to listen to. If he and Charlotte were already lookin for me then I think we're gonna need them"

We turned when Rosalie came back in the room "Well the good news is that Kate will be joining us in a couple of days. The bad news is she'll be alone for various reasons."

I cocked an eyebrow at her in question and she flicked her eyes to Garrett and I nodded. If he was planning on staying awhile he deserved to know what he was getting himself into.

"Eleazar and Carmen wanted to come but don't feel comfortable leaving Edward to his own devices yet. Irina refused and threw a fit for even asking for their help because of Laurent and Tanya is too busy trying to get her claws into Edward to want to leave." Rose looked irritated but amused as she delivered her information

"So is Kate being forced to come or is she gonna be helpful?" I had to know because if she was forced by Eleazar to come then I couldn't trust her to have our backs

Rose laughed "She said she was tired of all the drama and was looking forward to the peace and quiet of a battle."

Garrett and I laughed "Well that's a relief, I always did like Kate. I'm glad she's not gonna hold the Laurent thing against us."

"From the tone of her voice I would have to say that I don't think she liked Laurent very much and she was looking forward to getting away from Irina. Personally I can't wait to hear the whole story. It may help us fill in the blanks with Edward as well."

Rose and I saw the confusion on Garrett's face. Rose explained "Edward is our brother and he was dating Bella for almost a year when she was human. We all loved her, she knew about us and truly didn't care, and she loved us." She paused with a smile for the memory of Bella as a human before her face turned serious again

"We all thought that he loved her, she was his singer and he doted on her, protected her. Turns out he didn't love her at all;
he loved her blood and loved the anticipation of tasting it. On her birthday two months ago he attacked her over a paper cut and a single drop of blood; the truth came out. Bella heard the whole thing and Jasper had to bite her several times to push more venom or the change would have taken too long and risked her heart giving out.” She looked at me and reached out to squeeze my hand briefly. I could feel her love and pride and it warmed me.

I watched Garrett, he was feeling anger and disgust for what he was hearing. Rose continued "Bella has been struggling with Edwards betrayal and the control she now realizes he had over her. She feels really insecure at the best of times and is working really hard to build a new life. We all still love her and we'll do anything to make sure that she knows we do and that we aren't the same as Edward.” The vehemence in her tone was backed by the determination and love rolling off her.

I picked up the story "Edward was sent to live with another family like ours in Alaska. Eleazar is the head of the family and used to be part of the Volturi. He and his mate Carmen are keepin an eye on him. Carlisle has told Edward that he isn't to come back until he's asked. In 100 years it's the first time he has ever been punished for anything.” I couldn't help the distain in my voice by the end.

Garrett looked at the two of us "She will have no further reason to fear from me. I find what your brother did to be abhorrent on many levels. I may hunt humans but I do not play with my food. I prefer to hunt those that deserve it, human murderers, rapists and the like. Women should be protected not preyed upon."

Rosalie chuckled "While I appreciate your sentiment Mr. Smith, I would suggest keeping your distance while us women are hunting or you may find out how savage the fairer of the sex can be"

I laughed and Garrett chuckled "It's Garrett ma'am, and I will keep that in mind Mrs. McCarty"

"Please, call me Rosalie. Jasper, were you able to get a hold of someone that can help us?"

"Yes ma'am. Peter and Charlotte are on their way and should be here around the same time as Kate." I gave her a smug grin.

She chuckled and gave me a playful nudge with her shoulder "So I finally get a chance to meet the infamous Peter and Charlotte do I?” Rosalie and the rest of the family had heard about them but only Alice had met them.

I nodded at her with a fond smile.

She started making mental lists "Well in that case I think it's imperative that we get that truck from wherever Emmett left it. We'll have to make up some other rooms and we need what's in the truck. Besides I am sick of looking at you and Bella in the same clothes." She laughed and Garrett chuckled with her

I heard the back door open and a couple of minutes later Emmett came in the room with Bella perched on his back with a big smile on her face. The smile faded when she saw that Garrett was with us and I felt her trepidation.

I moved towards them; she climbed down from Emmett's back and took my offered hand to stand in front of me, keeping my body between her and Garrett. "It's alright Angel. He's gonna be stayin with us for awhile. He's here to help'

She bit that sexy lower lip of hers and I was putty in her hands. 'Okay Jas. I'm sorry, I'm trying,'

'Nothin to be sorry for.' I kissed her on the forehead and turned to our guest and our family. Rose smiled as she leaned into Emmett's side "Bella this is Garrett Smith. Garrett, Bella Cullen."

Garrett bowed but didn't try to move any closer "Miss Cullen, it's very nice to meet you. I apologize for frightening you earlier, it truly wasn't my intent."

Bella bit her lip again and nodded "I know that now. Please, my name is Bella."

"Jasper, I am gonna go back and get the truck. I think you and Bella will be glad to get your new furniture and clothes." Emmett still hadn't regained his sense of humor obviously.

"You alright on your own Em?” I really didn't want to leave Bella and I knew she would feel better if Rose was here too.

"Yeah." He looked at Bella with a small smile "Cricket, I will be back as soon as I can ok?” Bella nodded and gave him a hug. Rose and I looked at the two of them in confusion

"What? She's knee high to a cricket and when she's hunting I can't hear her at all, only crickets. She's too quiet.” He explained

Rosalie and I chuckled and Bella's head ducked as if she was blushing. "Thanks Em"

Rose and Emmett shared look before Emmett left out the door.

Garrett shifted his attention back to me "Sounds like it may get a bit crowded around here, it will be nice to spend time among the civilized again. If you don't mind I am going to take advantage of having a regular place to hang my hat and go unpack my things. I will see you both in the morning”
I smiled at him knowing he was attempting to make Bella feel more comfortable. Looked down at Bella "Come on darlin',
lets go call the parents. They need to see you and we still have some arrangements to make." I could feel her confusion
"Garrett isn't the only company that we're gonna have. My old friends Peter and Charlotte are coming as is Kate from the
Denali clan."

"It's serious isn't it Jas?" Her voice was soft

"Come on Angel, lets go upstairs and we will talk about it. Rose, you'll need to order extras." I led her upstairs to her room
where I know she felt more comfortable while Rosalie went to her room to get online. I led her over to the mattress sitting
on her floor; until Emmett came back it was the only piece of furniture to sit on. I watched her sit down but stayed standing;
no way was I getting anywhere near her while she was sitting on it. We were vampires; there was only one use for a bed
for us. I gave myself a mental shake. Not the time Major!

"Bella, Garrett came here to warn us that Victoria is comin back. She was headed south to get support so she can come
back here to attack our family." I was expecting her to be afraid but was surprised when all I felt was anger and
determination. She didn't speak so I continued "I'm concerned that she may meet up with some of my old enemies. A lot
of Vampires down there don't like me much and that may cause a problem."

"And the others coming here are willing to help us?" she was still calm.

"Yes. Garrett told me that she was plannin on making some newborns to fight in her army so I want to make sure that there
are enough of us here to ensure our safety." She still wasn't reacting like I thought she would. "Are you alright?"

"This time they aren't attacking me when I'm on my own and by the time they get here you will have taught me how to fight."
I could feel her determination

The thought of her fighting was enough to make me ill but I knew she needed to learn to at least defend herself. I nodded
at her in resignation.

"What about Kate, Jas? She's been living with Edward." I was amazed that when she said Edward's name that the pain
that I normally felt from her wasn't there. I would have to think about that later.

"Kate is happy to come and help. In fact she's lookin forward to getting away from all the drama as she calls it. I am sure
she'll fill us in on all the details when she gets here." I searched her eyes "Are you gonna be okay with all this company
darlin'?"

"Better I get used to it now. I can't live for eternity in a bubble right?" She was sad and I could feel her confidence slipping.
Then something changed, before I could figure it out she spoke.

"I'm going to go help Rosalie and make sure we have everything to make our company feel comfortable. I'll call the family
from her room." And she was gone

What the Hell?! She had been doing this to me all week too. Every time I got her on the phone she would make small talk
and then make some excuse as to why she had to go. I paused in the hallway and looked at Rosalie's door. I could hear
them in there discussing books, bedding and linens. I shook my head and went downstairs. Now what?

I went to my favorite spot down by the lake and sat on my rock. I had been so happy to be coming home. I had missed
Bella like an aching in my chest; now I was home and she was avoiding me. Other than trying to calm her down after the
surprise of Garrett we hadn't spent anymore than 10 minutes together.

I thought about the papers that I had picked up when I was in Toronto. It was official, Alice and I were divorced. I almost
laughed when I thought about all the humans that were devastated by this same thing and here I was, happy. I had talked
to Alice and she was ecstatic because she had a vision of her soul mate. They wouldn't meet for almost another year but
she had seen it so she was content for now.

And she was excited at the glimpses that she had seen of my future. I wanted that future to be with Bella but she was
pushing me away. I had vowed to be there for her in whatever way she would have me. Rosalie had given me hope with all
her talk of Bella and I gravitating to each other but she was wrong. And it didn't matter, I would be Bella's friend if that was
all I could have; I loved her enough to let her make her own decisions. This meant that if she wanted to avoid me then I
wouldn't push my company on her. No matter how much it hurt.

I spent the rest of the night trying to come to terms with my love for Bella. I was miserable.

In the morning Emmett arrived with the truck and the three of us men unloaded it while the girls supervised the positioning.
I noticed that while Bella was much more relaxed around Garrett, she always kept one of us in between them. I wasn't even
sure that she was consciously doing it. Garrett noticed it as well but I felt his acceptance, he would wait for her to come
around on her own.

I could hear Bella in her room unpacking all her new clothes into her closet. She had been really excited when they got
here and it made my heart warm to see and feel her so happy. I had been surprised to see that we had ordered almost the
same bedroom suites. Both were made out of walnut and the wood had been distressed to the point of looking rustic. We
had both ordered a bed frame, armoire and dresser. She had ordered two end tables and I had only ordered one and her
bed frame was a four poster where mine was a head and foot board with slats. Where my armoire was squared off hers was curved and carved. She had also ordered a blanket chest for the foot of her bed.

In addition to our bedroom furniture we had both ordered sitting room furniture as well. She had picked out a large chair and a half, an ottoman with built in storage, 2 large bookcases, and a small end table to match the other furniture. All her furniture was accented with wrought iron handles and accents. She had great taste and I knew she took pride in picking it out herself. Her new desk was in the same style and had now taken up residence where the old one had been, it having been moved to one of the guest rooms downstairs.

All of the bedrooms now had mattresses. Rosalie had called Peter and Charlotte to have them pickup another full truck to be brought north on their way. This truck would be furnishing the other rooms for our additional guests. Garrett had announced that the suite upstairs in the other wing was more than he needed so he had moved to one of the downstairs bedrooms. Kate could take her pick of the other or take up residence in the small suite in the other wing. Peter and Charlotte would have the midsized one leaving the largest for Carlisle and Esme when they arrived. Rose and Bella had ordered furniture accordingly and Peter and Charlotte would be here tomorrow.

I heard Bella ask Rose to go hunting and before I knew it they were out the door. She was still avoiding me. She would talk to me when we were around the others and sit beside me but there was no more hand holding. She hadn't hugged me or asked me to go hunting since I got back and now she was hunting with Rosalie and they would most likely be gone until late afternoon.

The only good thing about this was that there was a helicopter bringing in a container of building materials and other odds and ends so we could have everything fully repaired before the snows hit. Once they did the only vehicle that would make it was my truck with chains – maybe.

The helicopter had just left when my phone rang in my pocket.

"You call this a driveway?" Peter, I shook my head

"You're here already? We weren't expecting you until tomorrow" I couldn't believe it

"Yeah well, we might have been in Toronto already when you called about the truck. What can I say? You need us and we come runnin." Charlotte must be standing right there ready to smack him for his language. He was never this polite.

"What's with you? You're never this polite." I couldn't help but chuckle

"I just don't wanna scare your girl. Is she there?"

Fuck! How does he do that?! I hadn't even told him that I wasn't with Alice anymore and he already knows I have someone new that I care about "She's out huntin with Rosalie. They should be back anytime. Peter how the fuck do you know?"

"Call when she gets home and then we will run up to the house. Char and I can't wait to meet her" The bastard hung up. He never did answer my question. I was grateful that they wanted to make sure that Bella wasn't afraid of them, even if they had no idea who she was. I would never figure out how he did that.

I was still looking at the phone in my hand when Emmett came up to me with Garrett. "What's up bro?"

"Peter and Charlotte are here already. They are waitin with the truck out at the road." I could feel his confusion so I explained. "They don't want to scare Bella by bein here when she gets back."

"Yeah she'll probably feel better if she meets them like welcomed visitors rather than invaders that are waiting for her when she gets back." He was worried about Bella and her reaction

"Hey Em? Why don't you take the truck down to the road and introduce yourself? You all can bring back a load and then Bella might feel more comfortable with them when you come back together." I hoped that it might put Bella more at ease.

He grinned. "Sounds good."

I knew he was thinking about using the 4x on the trip without supervision from Rosalie. "Hey Em? You might want to take it slow. Charlotte can be just as lethal as Rose if you get her riled."

"What? I'm a big ol' teddy bear!" He ran for the truck and I could hear his booming laughter fading in the distance. I shook my head chuckling with Garrett. "Well, I warned him"

Garrett had gone to his room to get cleaned up about a half hour later when I heard Bella and Rose come back from their hunt. Bella would have gone straight up to her room but I intercepted them. "Bella?" Rose just shook her head at the two of us and continued upstairs.

Bella was calm but it seemed forced in some way. "Hi Jasper"

It hurt not to be able to take her in my arms, but she wanted this distance so I would respect it "Peter and Charlotte are here. Emmett went to meet them at the road with the truck."
I felt her nervousness come back full force with a healthy dose of fear. Her eyes were wide. "I thought they weren't coming till tomorrow?"

I couldn't help it I pushed a stray lock of her hair off her face and tucked it behind her ear. I felt her fear recede a little at my touch. "They're early, I know. They were already in Toronto when I called them and they are anxious to meet everyone. I haven't seen them in a long time."

She swallowed; she was working to build her courage. "Do I have time to take a shower?"

"Yeah, darlin. You have about 45 minutes."

She nodded and I watched her go upstairs. I sank down to sit on the hearth of the fireplace with my head in my hands. I pulled out my phone and called Peter.

He answered on the first ring "Is she back?"

"Yeah. Listen Pete, she is tryin real hard but she's still as skittish as a new colt and I am not sure how much she'll let me help her." I felt like someone had sucked my heart out of my chest leaving me empty. I loved her and I wanted to help her; the distance between us was eating at me.

"Hey man. Char and I are here to help. Emmett says we'll be at the house in about 30 minutes." His voice was soft and supportive

"If Emmett has you back to the house in 30 minutes then everythin in the truck will be broken." I had to warn him.

He let out an evil chuckle "Well then, I think I'll let Char ride up front with him."

I couldn't help but let out my own chuckle as I closed my phone and broke the connection.

I was still sitting there when Rosalie and Bella came back downstairs a three quarters of an hour later. I could feel Rosalie's worry and behind her Bella's fear.

Rose went out to stand on the front porch and I could hear the truck getting closer. Bella came to stand beside me and I turned to look down at her face. She looked into my eyes and I could see and feel her conflict. 'Jasper'

I loved the feel in her voice in my mind. It had been days since we had communicated this way 'Angel it'll be fine. Peter is closer to me than any of the Cullens and you'll love Charlotte.' I took a chance and held out my hand 'Trust me?'

She took in a deep breath and placed her hand in mine 'With my life'

I kissed the back of her hand and led her outside to meet Peter and Charlotte.

A/N: Credit for the name God of War goes entirely to IdreamofEddy, the fabulous author of Colliding Meteors. Her story is quite possibly my favorite Fan Fiction Story ever! It was her story that inspired me to be able to write my own. If you haven't read it yet you need to!
He asked if I trusted him and offered me his hand. I took a steadying breath and looked into his eyes ‘With my life’

I made sure to push my feelings deep. I couldn't let him feel the things that I was feeling. I hadn't figured it out myself. I knew that the love that I had felt towards Edward was pale in comparison to the emotions that I had towards Jasper. While he was gone I felt empty, lost; like part of me was missing. As I had watched him come out of the trees to confront Garrett I had been hit with several different emotions at once. Relief that he was there, awe at the raw power and confidence he exuded, and desire at the sight of his bare chest. There were several others but I wasn't able to figure those ones out.

Rosalie had insinuated that what I was feeling was the instinctual pull that a vampire feels for their mate. Alice was Jasper's mate. I had to get over whatever it was that I was feeling; Jasper was not mine. The sharp pang that I felt in my chest at the thought made my breath catch.

Jasper was still holding my hand and felt my pain ‘Angel? What is it?’ His mental voice was soothing and painful all at the same time.

I swallowed hard and shook my head “Nothing Jasper. I'm fine”

I reluctantly withdrew my hand from his and went to stand with Rosalie. I wanted so badly to be able to take the comfort and safety that his arms promised. I've never felt as safe and cared for as when I was in his arms. I couldn't take it, he's my best friend's husband; and I was very afraid that I was in love with him.

I felt Jasper move up to stand beside me as the truck rolled up the last part of the driveway. I could see a woman was driving with Emmett in the passenger seat; it looked like he was pouting. As the truck came to a stop I took a step back so that I was standing behind Jasper and Rosalie. Emmett got out of the truck and I heard Jasper chuckle. The back passenger door opened and a tall man got out. He had pale blond hair that came almost to his shoulders with topaz colored eyes. I was shocked, he looked familiar to me. I looked up at Jasper and he was confused and looking back and forth between the man and I, obviously feeling my emotions.

I got distracted when the driver's door opened and a tiny female got out, she had white blonde hair that flowed just past her shoulders, she was no bigger than Alice and she also had the topaz eyes of a vegetarian. She smiled brightly at me but I was still nervous and shifted my weight backward so that I stood firmly behind Jasper's shoulder.

My gaze shifted back to the man who seemed so familiar to me. He was standing still half in and half out of the truck staring at me with his mouth open. I took a hesitant step forward and took Jasper's hand. I knew I shouldn't but I needed the support, I was so confused.

“You have nothing to fear from me little one. I would sooner hurt myself than hurt you.’ The voice was quiet and calming in my head and both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. It had come from the man who I assumed must be Peter. My eyes widened and I gasped.

“Bella?” I could hear the concern in Jasper's voice and I turned to him. I knew he could see and feel the confusion that I felt

'I...I'm okay Jas...but he looks so familiar to me. He told me that he wouldn't hurt me’ I was calming down just looking into Jasper's eyes. His eyes – I wasn't supposed to be doing this. I ripped my eyes away from his and slowly withdrew my hand; it was physically painful. I looked back at the blonde man and took a step towards him.

Emmett straightened and came to stand beside me. I looked up at him and put my hand in his big mitt and concentrated ‘Introduce me?’

His eyes widened slightly so I knew he heard me, but he turned to the newcomers "Peter, Charlotte, this is my little sister Bella. Bella Cullen, this is Peter and his wife and mate Charlotte.”

My eyes hadn't left Peter's and he came forward slowly. "Hello little one"

He offered his hand and I didn't hesitate to take it. He squeezed it slightly and smiled at me. I couldn't help but smile back at him. Everything about him was so familiar. I heard a low growl come from somewhere behind me and I spun. Jasper's eyes had gone black and he was angry; I could feel it.

Peter pulled me towards him and my instincts flared, Charlotte moved too fast to stand beside her mate; that meant that she was moving too fast towards me. Between Jasper's anger, Charlotte running towards me and the confusion that I felt towards Peter, I panicked and ran. I didn't stop until I reached the other side of the lake and was at the rock where Jasper always came to sit. I collapsed next to it and leaned on it when I started to cry. I felt my shield go up and immediately felt a bit safer.

An hour later the sun was starting to go down. My head was resting on my knees, I wanted nothing more than to go back to the house and have Jasper comfort me. I couldn't, I didn't know what I had done to make him so angry with me, I thought he
I wanted me to welcome his friends. I couldn't, I had no right to Jasper's comfort, he was Alice's. I wanted to cry some more but the release just wasn't there without the tears.

I heard someone coming towards me and my head snapped up Rosalie was standing there. "Are you going to let me in?"

I dropped the shield and she sat beside me and wrapped her arms around me and started to rock me when I started to cry again "Shhh Bella. It's okay."

"Why was he mad at me? What did I do?"

"Bella honey, you're going to have to use your words or concentrate harder on dropping your mental shield. I can barely hear you. Talk to me" Rose's voice was comforting

"He was so angry. What did I do? Why was he mad at me?" My voice was as broken as my heart felt

"Oh honey, Jasper wasn't mad at you!" she was so surprised and concerned

"I felt it, he was so angry and his eyes were black."

Rose interrupted me "No Bella. Is that why you ran?"

I nodded "That and Charlotte moved so fast and Peter...I was so confused. I'm sorry I ran but I just couldn't...he was so mad at me."

She pulled back to look at me "You listen to me. You did nothing wrong. So much has happened to you in the last few months you had every right to run, but Bella, Jasper isn't mad at you. He was just caught off guard by the way you reacted to Peter, that's all."

"Peter is...confusing. I feel like I should know him, like I have seen him somewhere. I don't understand Rose." I just looked at her, silently pleading with her to give me the answers. My head turned towards the house. He was coming. "Jasper" it came out as a whisper

"He only wants to talk to you Bella, explain what happened. I don't have the answers for you. But trust me; he's not mad at you. He feels awful for hurting you. You need to talk to him. Stop pushing him away, it's only causing both of you pain." She was so sincere. Rose would never lie to me and I trusted her. I trusted Jasper too. I nodded to her just as Jasper walked up.

He looked like someone had killed his puppy. I could feel his sadness like it was my own. "Angel"

Rosalie stood and gave my shoulder a squeeze before walking back to the house

I didn't know what to say. I couldn't look at him, I was afraid to see the anger again, even if I couldn't feel anything but sadness and pain from him.

He came over to me and sat beside me carefully putting his head in his hands.

'I'm so sorry Angel. I never meant to hurt or scare you' his mental voice was full of anguish.

'Why Jasper?' I had to know

He looked up at me with pain filled eyes "I was so surprised when you moved towards him and then he took your hand and spoke to you with such tenderness. I'm sorry, I guess it caught me off guard, Charlotte was standing right there and you were so confused and I didn't like it."

His explanation was broken and confusing but I figured that he was mad at Peter for appearing to hit on me in front of his own wife. Jasper wouldn't want me put in that position. I knew that wasn't what happened between Peter and I though.

"Peter was just trying to make me more comfortable I think. I feel like I know him somehow. I don't understand; have I met him already?"

"You need to talk to him about that but no, you two have never met. Bella I'm so sorry."

I couldn't help it, it was wrong but I reached over and brushed one of his curls back from his face so I could see his eyes. His hair was so much softer than I ever imagined and I instantly wanted to run my fingers through it. I pulled my hand back from the temptation "Jas, it's okay. I understand. I'm sorry I ran, it was all just too much at the time and I couldn't face you being angry with me. I should have stayed and figured it out."

"No Angel, I overreacted and I hurt you. I don't know how to make it up to you but I'll do anything" I didn't like to see his face so tortured

"It was a misunderstanding Jasper. I understand. I'm sorry if I embarrassed you in front of your friends." I bit my bottom lip. I was worried that they wouldn't want to stay and help us if I offended them too badly

Jasper chuckled but it sounded bitter "Trust me, the only reason it took me so long to come and apologize is because Charlotte and Peter were too busy yelling at me for upsetting you. I thought Peter was going to rip my arms off for..."
Charlotte to beat me with"

I gasped and then got angry. They had no right to be mad at Jasper after everything he had done for me.

"Easy there Angel. I deserved everything that they threw at me." I could feel him trying to calm me down.

I took a couple of unnecessary breaths "Can we just go home Jas?" It was almost full dark and my nerves were building again. It had been a crazy day and even with all the extra room in my new brain I was running on overload.

He sighed "Yeah" he got to his feet and looked at me with a conflicted look on his face before turning to walk back to the house. He looked so defeated and sad.

'Jasper?' He turned back to me and I went to stand in front of him, looking up into his beautiful eyes. 'You and me?'

He smiled gently "Yeah Bella, I told you – you and me. Always. I'll always be here for you, until you tell me to leave."

"Well then Major, I guess you're stuck with me cause I'm never gonna want to get rid of you." His smile got wider and I loved seeing it "You know, eternity is a long time to hang around an ugly kid like me" I thought it was funny but the look on his face wasn't amused.

"Don't. Don't talk about yourself that way please. You were beautiful as a human, inside and out. You being a vampire now doesn't change that. You are the most beautiful thing I have ever seen; your inner beauty enhances your outer beauty. So please don't talk about yourself that way. Edward was right about one thing, you don't see yourself very clearly." He was so serious that I just nodded.

He took one of my hands and kissed my knuckles. I couldn't help the flush that went through my body and I shivered. He let go of my hand and gestured to the trail that led back to the house as his face fell back into their sad lines.

We walked back to the house in an uncomfortable silence. I didn't know how to fix the rift that had sprung up between us. As we got closer to the house I remembered how much company we now had and I began to get nervous. I slowed down and then stopped. Jasper came up beside me and we looked at each other for a long minute. He didn't say anything to me just sent me a wave of reassurance and stepped in front of me to lead the way in. I wanted to take his hand or have him wrap me up in his arms. There was no place that I felt safer or more reassured; but I just fell into step behind him feeling empty.

When we walked into the house the first thing I noticed was that they must have brought some of the furniture from the truck because everyone was sitting down on new couches and chairs arranged around the fireplace and a new 63" TV.

Rosalie smiled at me from beside Emmett on one of the couches. Garrett was sitting on the hearth of the fireplace and must have been talking to Peter and Charlotte who were sitting on the other couch. My eyes met Peter's right away and he smiled sadly at me his eyes flicking between Jasper and I. I decided that I had some apologies to make "I'm sorry I ran off. It was rude. It's very nice to meet you both."

Charlotte was the first to speak "No Bella, we should be apologizing to you. We both know better than to react as we did around a newborn. I moved way too quickly and Peter" her voice turned hard "knows way better than to forcibly move a lady."

Peter looked chastened "I'm sorry Bella; my first instinct was to protect you when I saw Jasper's face. I didn't think, I just reacted."

I was confused "Why would you want to protect me? You don't even know me."

Peter and Jasper exchanged a look and Jasper guided me to sit in one of the comfortable chairs beside Emmett and Rosalie's couch. I sat and looked at Peter waiting for an answer.

"I was turned by the same woman as Jasper. Has he told you about Maria?" At my nod he continued "I was travelling back to Arizona from New Orleans after a weekend vacation with friends. We were on leave from the Marines and decided to party together before heading home to our families. I got off the bus at the greyhound station in Dallas to get something to eat when I ran into Maria and one of her seconds. She saw my uniform and the rest is history. I don't remember much from my human life but I do remember my little sister. She was 17 the last time I saw her and she had me wrapped around her little finger. I wrote her almost every day while I was overseas. I never made it home to her like I promised her I would." He looked intently at me "Bella, you're the spitting image of my little sister."

I tried to process this. "You said you were headed home to Arizona, where did you live?"

"Phoenix, my parents lived there with my sister Marie" he was sad.

"Your sister's name was Marie?" I was stunned, there was no way.

"Yes, why?" Everyone was looking at me now and I could barely believe what I was thinking.

"I was named for my Grandma Marie. She had a brother named Peter. I don't know what happened to him though; my mom said her uncle died before she was born. I remember Grandma showing me pictures of him in uniform. That's why"
"Morning." I couldn't help but be shy around Garrett but I got the sense that he understood. He really was a nice man. I
men stood as I came in the room.
walked to the back deck and through the doors into the house. Peter was sitting in the great room talking to Garrett. Both
stealth that everyone was so fond of praising me for and leapt out the open window. I landed silently on the grass and then
I heard someone outside my door and decided that I couldn't face the possibility that it might be Jasper, so I utilized the
nervousness with him; he had done nothing to earn it and was here to help us. I should start making more of an effort.
Emmett or Peter would like to go hunting. We could even see if Garrett wanted to go with us. I had to get over my
I got up and opened the window needing some fresh air. I changed into some hunting clothes, maybe I would see if
As I watched the sun come up through my bedroom windows I realized that it would never get easier but the thought of
human memories of the two of them together brought me. I knew seeing it through my new eyes would be so much worse.
I tortured myself with the images through the night. I hoped to desensitize myself to them, to numb the pain that my fuzzy
human memories of the two of them together brought me. I knew seeing it through my new eyes would be so much worse.
Edward's manipulation and betrayal had ripped me in two; hearing Jasper tell me that he didn't return my feelings would
had gotten me. The love that I had felt for Edward was paltry in comparison to the feelings that I had for Jasper. Where
The physical pull towards Jasper was overpowering. Every time I tried to convince myself that that I had to stay away from
him my throat would choke up and pain would rip through my chest. I couldn't put him in that position; I couldn't put myself in
that position. I had already experienced the consequences of loving a man who didn't love me back and look where that
had gotten me. The love that I had felt for Edward was paltry in comparison to the feelings that I had for Jasper. Where
Edward's manipulation and betrayal had ripped me in two; hearing Jasper tell me that he didn't return my feelings would
destroy me, I wouldn't survive it. No I had to be his friend, I had to be. I had to deal with this now because when Alice got
here I would have to endure watching the two of them hold each other. I would have to watch him look into her eyes with
adoration and kiss her forehead. Watch them go to their room together.
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men stood as I came in the room.
"Morning." I couldn't help but be shy around Garrett but I got the sense that he understood. He really was a nice man. I
Peter took my hand in his "But some things gained"
I looked back at him and saw the tenderness on his face. I couldn't help it; I leaned forward and hugged him. We sat there
for a minute both glad to have regained a piece of our human families. His arms were familiar and comforting, and not the
arms I wanted to be in; but I would definitely take them.
We separated and I looked into his eyes again when a thought occurred to me "Wait, Jasper told me you were both
human drinkers." I looked between his face and Charlotte's
I looked over at Jasper and he was looking at me with an unreadable expression on his face, he shrugged. I felt the gulf
between us keenly. I looked at Peter for an explanation before I gave into my sadness.
"We switched to animals about two months ago. I got a feeling that Jasper was in trouble. It seemed like the right thing to
do at the time." He shrugged "It looks like it was a good idea after all."
Jasper huffed out a breath "You and your feelins" He looked broken and I wanted to go to him, wanted to offer him the
comfort that he had always offered me.
I needed to go upstairs; I couldn't stay here and see his despair anymore. "It's been a really long day. I think I'll go to my
room for the night. Goodnight everyone." I squeezed Peter's hand once more and escaped to my room before anyone
could say anything.
Once I reached the safety of my room I wished for the 1000th time that I still had my iPod. I could have replaced it of
course but my mom had bought it for me before I left Phoenix and I couldn't bring myself to buy a new one yet. I sighed and
turned on my new stereo and plugged in my headphones. I wanted to drown out the whole world but with my new hearing it
was hard, so I turned up the volume to the point where the conversation downstairs was an unintelligible mumble. I curled
up on my new bed and shook silently.
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I got up and opened the window needing some fresh air. I changed into some hunting clothes, maybe I would see if
Emmett or Peter would like to go hunting. We could even see if Garrett wanted to go with us. I had to get over my
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"Morning." I couldn't help but be shy around Garrett but I got the sense that he understood. He really was a nice man. I
Peter was stunned but moved to kneel before me. He brushed my hair back from my face and stared at me. "You're my
niece? What's your name?"
"My human name was Isabella Marie Swan. My mother married Charlie Swan who is a police chief in Washington State.
They got divorced when I was two and my mom took me back to Phoenix to live with her mom." It was more than he asked
but we were both trying to come to grips with regaining family after our human deaths. "I can't remember everything but
some of my favorite human memories were of my Grandma, sitting and listening to stories of things she used to do with
her brother and looking at pictures"
"Do you remember her maiden name?" his voice broke a bit
I raised my hand to his cheek "I'm sorry. Esme told me to think of all my favorite memories while I burned but I don't
remember that. I remember seeing your face in the photo album, reading some of the letters that you wrote her, and her
telling me about the time that you threw her in the pond after she put boot black in your coffee and dyed your teeth black" we
chuckled at that "but I don't remember her maiden name. To be honest, I don't remember my mom's maiden name
either." I looked out the window into the darkness "So much lost" my voice drifted off
Peter took my hand in his "But some things gained"
I looked back at him and saw the tenderness on his face. I couldn't help it; I leaned forward and hugged him. We sat there
for a minute both glad to have regained a piece of our human families. His arms were familiar and comforting, and not the
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men stood as I came in the room.
"Morning." I couldn't help but be shy around Garrett but I got the sense that he understood. He really was a nice man. I
looked at Peter "I was just going out for a hunt and wondered if you wanted to join me."

Peter beamed at me "I would love to. You can give me some pointers, Charlotte and I have been trying to figure it out for ourselves."

I smiled and turned to Garrett "Would you like to come with us? I mean I heard that you were trying our diet while you were here and if you wanted..." I broke off, I was embarrassed.

Garrett looked a bit surprised but eagerly accepted. We were running out the door when I caught sight of Jasper coming down the stairs. I kept running and caught up to Garrett; my emotions were too raw to face Jasper right now.

Several hours later we were almost back at the house. Hunting with the two of them had been fun. I was much more comfortable with Garrett, and Peter felt like someone I had known forever. I stopped at the lake not ready to go back to the house yet.

Garrett just grimaced at me and gestured to his clothes "If you will excuse me Miss Bella, I have made quite the mess of myself. I feel the need to make myself more presentable."

I smiled at him loving the old fashioned formality of his speech "Of course, thanks for coming Garrett. Next time, don't listen to Emmett when he tells you that skunk is a delicacy." I wrinkled my nose and tried to stifle my giggle "In fact maybe ask one of us whenever he suggests anything."

Garrett just looked down at himself in disgust "He will never let me live this down will he?"

Peter and I laughed and I shook my head "Nope, sorry. My brother is an incurable prankster"

"You will help me get him back?" He had a calculating look on his face

"Absolutely!" I assured him

He looked carefully at his clothes and then at the lake. He turned and dove in, choosing to try to rinse off some of the smell by swimming across the lake instead of walking around it to get back to the house. I was still chuckling when I turned back to look at Peter.

He was looking at me with an expression of tenderness "Now why don't you fill me in on what is going on with you and Jasper?"

I stiffened "There is nothing going on with me and Jasper. He's my friend."

"Well now, you and I both know that there is a little more to it than that" he took my hand and led me over to the grass to sit down

I settled for a portion of the truth "I know that he's my best friend. He's helped me, supported me and been there for me since the day I met him and I would do anything to make sure that he's happy."

"Well I sure am happy to hear that. So you'll stop avoiding him then." It was a statement not a question

"I'm not avoiding him." I had to deny it

"Bullshit." I was shocked. None of the men in my family ever swore around any of us women. Not Jasper, not Carlisle, Edward was incapable of it; even Emmett restricted his language although he slipped occasionally and said hell.

Peter looked at my shocked expression "Well I'm sorry but would you rather I called you a liar? Bella you and Jasper are obviously very close and yet you didn't sit with him last night, you hid in your room all night, jumped out your window to avoid talking to him," At my surprised look he laughed "Oh I saw you jump out your window this morning little one. And then you ask Garrett and I to go hunting with you rather than face anyone in your family. I saw Jasper's face as we ran out the door, he was hurt Bella."

I looked down at my lap. I hadn't wanted to hurt Jasper, far from it. "I didn't mean to hurt him. You're right, I have been avoiding him."

He took one of my hands in his "You wanna tell me why?"

Again I went with a partial truth "Because I rely on him too much. Before too long Alice and our parents are going to come home, Alice will want her husband back. I have to learn to stand on my own without depending on him anymore."

"Well that wasn't bullshit but it wasn't the whole story. Are we going to have to sit out here all day or are you going to admit that you love him." The serious look on his face stripped me of my defenses and I curled into myself

I rested my head on my knees "It doesn't matter. He's my friend and that's all that matters."

I felt him rub my back "So you're going to sacrifice your happiness for your friendship."
"What else is there Peter? He's married to my friend. Alice is a beautiful, bright, loving person. She spends her days spreading happiness to others and watching the future to make all our lives better. She's Jasper's mate and I won't be the one to cause problems between them." I looked up at him "I hear him talk to her on the phone; I've seen the way they look at each other. I want that more than anything for myself but I won't take it away from someone else to get it."

He looked at me with a sad expression on his face and brushed my hair back from off my forehead. "I hate to see you so sad little one. I hate to see my brother so sad."

"I won't hurt him anymore Peter. I'll do a better job, I promise."

He kissed my temple. "But where does that leave you?"

"I still get to be his friend. I get to stay with the family that I love. It's not a bad existence." He hugged me

"I'll talk to him."

I looked up at him panicked. "No! Peter promise me. I can take this, but I couldn't take the look on his face when he tells me that he loves Alice. I already know he loves her; I don't need to lose my best friend because things are uncomfortable. Promise me Peter."

"Relax sugar; I won't say anything about that. We do have a lot of catching up to do though. Charlotte and I haven't seen him in about 25 years." He was looking at the house when he said it but I could see the frown on his face

"Come on Uncle Petey, let's go back to the house. Your wife will be thinking I stole you." I tried to lighten the mood but when he gave me his sad smile I knew that without my heart in it, I had failed.

When we walked into the house we shared a last smile and I went up to my room to get cleaned up. I took my time showering and changing. I let my now very thick long hair dry naturally before I got dressed. I knew I was stalling but I needed the time to compose myself before I went downstairs to face everyone.

When I finally went downstairs only Rosalie and Charlotte were there. "Where is everyone?"

"The boys went to get the last load from the truck out at the road. We had to get Garrett out of the house; he was stinking up the place." Rosalie's comment had us all chuckling

"Kate will be here by morning and I got her to pick up a truck as well. Once she gets here the house will be fully stocked with everything we need for all eight of us." As usual Rose had everything under control

I went to sit next to her on the couch and rested my head on her shoulder. She reached up and ran her fingers through my hair. "You alright Cricket?" She had taken to the nickname that Emmett had come up with

"Yeah."

She looked at me unconvinced but left it alone

Charlotte sat looking at the two of us. "I can't believe the difference in Peter, Bella. Finding you has made him so happy. Thank you for including him in your life."

I smiled at her "I need him just as much. Being able to keep a blood relative after my human death is a gift. He's a good man and my grandmother loved and missed him very much. I'm very lucky to have found you both."

"For the longest time Jasper was the only family Peter had besides me. Now we all have each other. We'll fix this little problem of ours and then we'll all be free to move on with life." Her voice was softly lyrical and she was so optimistic that I couldn't help but smile.

We talked and got to know each other for almost an hour before we heard the truck approaching the house. We all went out to the front porch to meet them. When the truck pulled up, Peter was driving with Emmett in the passenger seat and Garrett in the back. Everyone wore serious expressions and quietly got out of the truck.

I looked at Peter "Where's Jasper?"

He had an arm around Charlotte but they came to stand in front of me. "He's gone Bella," I heard Peter's words and he kept talking but I couldn't really hear what he said.

I tried to concentrate, "Bella, he only left..."

I tried to hear him "He'll be back..." Jasper was gone

I could see Peter's face "...greet Kate."

Peter was only trying to make me feel better, Jasper wasn't coming back. Jasper always told me where he was going and when he was coming back; he wouldn't have left if I hadn't pushed him away. He wasn't coming back and really, it didn't matter; he wasn't mine anyway.
The pain in my chest was enough to make me clutch my arms around myself. He was gone. He hadn't even told me he was leaving. I had hurt him enough to make him leave. All I could do was swallow my grief and nod. I turned and went back up to my room.

I sat in my comfy chair and felt my shield go up around me. I stared out the window all night. I could hear everyone moving around the house, soft conversations and furniture being rearranged. Charlotte had knocked on my door but I barely heard it. Rosalie came later but I didn't respond. The sun came up and Peter knocked and let himself in saying something about Kate arriving. I could hear the concern in his voice but it didn't matter.

Jasper was supposed to be back by now. He had told Peter that he would be home, something about greeting Kate. He hadn't come back. Part of me knew that it was rude not to go down and meet Kate but I didn't care. Jasper was gone.

A/N: Patience children - we are getting to where we all want to go. Hope you all liked this one. The next one will be out soon and it is worth the wait. Reviews make the fairies in the garden sing and me write faster.
We were all down at the road unloading the last of the furniture and supplies for the house. We now had two 5 ton trucks that would need to be driven back south and by morning we would have another. I felt like getting in one and taking off right now. Bella's avoidance of me had reached new lows. She had jumped out her window this morning to avoid seeing or speaking with me. It had killed me to see her rush out of the house with two guys she barely knew just so she wouldn't have to be around me.

I thought back to when Peter and Charlotte had arrived and her immediate acceptance of them and the familiarity she felt towards Peter. I was happy to be holding her hand and looking into her eyes. They were so beautiful and were slowly losing their deep crimson color and transitioning to the golden topaz unique to those of us who fed on animals. It had all started to go awry when she had pulled away from me. Then she silently asked Emmett to introduce her to them. That was when my instincts kicked in at the sight of another male vampire holding the hand of the woman who I wanted for my mate. I couldn't help the growl that escaped my throat in response to my anger. I had scared her and started a chain of events that made her feel the need to run from me.

"What the Hell Bro?!" Emmett had been furious but had to hold Rosalie back from hitting me.

Peter didn't hold Charlotte back. "HAVE YOU ABSOLUTELY LOST YOUR MIND? What did you do that for? After all the trouble we went to, to make sure that our arrival didn't scare her; you go and do an asinine thing like growl at her?! I could rip your arms off and beat you with them!"

"Please Charlotte, allow me" Peter's voice was lethal and I had never seen him look at me with that much anger. Never.

We stood staring at each other for several seconds before the magnitude of what I had done hit me. Bella had run. She had run from me. I fell to my knees and sat there for almost an hour while Rosalie, Emmett and Charlotte had heaped insults on my head. I hadn't tried to defend myself.

Peter put an abrupt end to it. "Enough" his voice was quiet but lethal

He looked down at me "We will talk about this later" it was the first time that he had ever given me a command. He looked to Rosalie "Can you calm her down enough for her to listen to Jasper's apology?"

She seemed to snap out of her fury and actually looked at me "Yes, I think so." Her next words had been for me "Jasper, I love you but if you ever hurt my sister again, Emmett will not be able to save you from me."

Emmett growled "Bro, I won't hold her back I'll help"

Peter had not spoken to me after he and Bella had come back from their hunt today. I hadn't seen him in almost 25 years and we hadn't spoken a word to each other.

Bella and I had tried to patch things up but I had been left with the feeling that there was a gulf between us that I couldn't bridge. Now that she and Peter had discovered that they were actually related by blood I was afraid that she would leave with them when this thing with Victoria was all over, maybe sooner.

Now I stood looking at the two trucks feeling the need to escape. "Emmett, toss me the keys to one of the trucks. I'm going to drive one south to Timmins tonight to drop it off at the rental depot. If I leave now I can make it back before Kate arrives in the morning."

Emmett looked surprised but tossed me the keys anyway.

Peter came to stand beside me. "You aren't going to tell Bella that you're leaving?"

I looked at him. These were the first real words that we had exchanged since he got here yesterday. "She'll be okay. She won't feel the need to avoid me if I'm not here."

"This is a mistake Major" He hadn't called me that in decades. Disapproval rolled off him.

I shook my head "I can't hurt her if I'm not here"

I got in the truck and drove away without another word. I made it all the way to Timmins without thinking about anything but battle strategies and the Art of War by Sun Tzu. As long as I was planning for the battle ahead I could avoid thinking about Bella.
I was very slowly making my way back home. I now knew from experience I could make it in an hour if I had too but I was in no hurry. My heart was heavy with the knowledge that Bella was not only avoiding me but she was likely now scared of me. The thought that she might be relieved that I wasn't there hit me like a paralyzing blow to the chest.

I had to stop and sit down. I had been sitting there for about 5 minutes when my cell phone rang. Alice.

I no sooner connected the call when a very angry pixie started to yell at me "WHAT THE HELL HAVE YOU DONE WHITLOCK?!! How did you manage to screw up your future so badly? Everything should have been fine!"

"Ali, sweetheart." I tried to placate her

"DON'T YOU 'ALI SWEETHEART' ME! You are looking at eternity alone Jasper! Last time I was able to see your future everything was on track, so I ask you again; What Did You Do?!" she was livid

"If I knew what my future looked like before then maybe I could tell you what I did to screw it up" I was a bit annoyed

She made an effort to calm down "You and Bella were on track to a very happy future and now all I see is you alone somewhere in China EATING GOATS!" by the end she was yelling again

Wait – me and Bella? "Alice what are you talking about? What about Bella? I thought you couldn't see her?"

"I saw her right after you bit her. It was so clear, now I only get flashes. It must be when she takes her mental shield down for whatever reason; maybe when she's practicing with Rose or Em. All I get is brief flashes and right now I don't even see her with our family but with Peter and Charlotte. So I want to know how the hell you screwed this up?!" yep she was pissed. Alice never swears.

"She's avoiding me Alice. We were happy before I left to pick up the first truck but when I would call her she would only make small talk and then make excuses to get off the phone. And then Garrett showed up and she was so afraid she turned to me again but once we straightened it out she was back to being distant. She started pulling away, she wouldn't hunt with me. Now she can barely be in the same room with me and after yesterday I don't think she wants to." Everything was pouring out of me

"Peter and Charlotte got here early and she was immediately comfortable with Peter, she walked right down the steps to him. When he took her hand I couldn't help it, I growled. I mean I was growling at Peter but she was so scared, Peter moved to protect her and Charlotte moved to back him up. Everything happened so fast Alice, she bolted. She ran from me; she ran because I scared her." The pain in my chest was almost unbearable

"I tried to talk to her and she swears she understands but she's avoidin me more than ever. Alice, it turns out that Peter is Bella's Great Uncle, by blood. He was her Grandmother's brother before he was turned. What if she wants to go and live with her real family? She has had nothing but danger and drama since the day she walked into our lives. Maybe she doesn't want to stay with us, with me. Now you see her living with them. I've lost her Alice."

She had been so quiet through my explanation "You're an idiot, you know that? She's your mate Jazz." Her voice was soft.

It was everything I wanted to hear but couldn't believe. I knew better than to question Alice, she had never lied to me, besides my instincts told me that Bella was my mate but now she was avoiding me. "What do I do Ali? She doesn't even want to be in the same room with me"

"Jasper, at any point in the last two and a half months did you ever get around to telling her that you and I weren't together?" She was being patient but I could hear frustration in her tone.

I paused and thought "Well no but I thought that you would have"

She sighed "No Jazz, you're the one living with her. You're the one who wants her for your mate."

"Surely Rosalie or Emmett would have said something; Carlisle, she talks to Esme almost every night" I couldn't believe that Bella didn't know about Alice and I getting divorced

"Jazz has anyone even explained to her that there is a difference between a wife and a mate?" she sounded frustrated and tired

I was ashamed "I was teaching her how to hunt, control her strength and instincts, I…"

She cut me off "Jasper there is more to life as a vampire than hunting and instincts. Did you teach her about the Volturi, coven etiquette, the differences between a mate and a spouse, the difference between human drinkers and vegetarians? Jesus Jazz did you teach her anything?"

I felt the weight of my failure "No." What else could I say? I had never had to teach a newborn these types of things before. In my past it was all about control and focus. Newborns didn't last long enough to need to know. God I fucked up!

"Jasper, this is stuff that she needs to know in order to live in our world. But it isn't all your fault, Rose and Em live there too and we all talk to her every night. We're all to blame, we all failed her." She was quiet for a minute "Jazz did it ever occur to you that the reason that she's avoiding you is because she thinks she has feelings for a married man. A married man with
HOLY SHIT!

"Ah the light bulb goes on and the future clears" She sounded happier "Jazz have you talked to Rose at all? Because I know she has had conversations with Bella about how she feels about you."

"Well no not really." Rose had talked to Bella about her feelings?

"Oh for crying out loud! I'm not in the house and things fall to hell. Small wonder why I feel the need to meddle as much as I do! We have got to find a way for Bella to let me see her future. With her in the house I can't see any of you, and clearly, you all cannot be left to make decisions on your own." I barely heard her ramblings. Two things made it through though. One, there was a possibility that Bella had feelings for me. And two, Alice couldn't see any of our futures. How the hell was I supposed to protect Bella properly if Alice couldn't see what was coming?

"So we're facing a battle and you can't see any of us clearly." Fuck, this was not a good thing. It's not like I haven't fought a million battles without knowing the outcome in advance but it sure came in handy. And now the stakes were that much higher for me. The woman I saw as my mate was in danger; I wanted all the tools at my disposal so that I could ensure she remained in my life.

She sighed "No Major I can't see any of you until you get out of her immediate vicinity." I heard voices on the other end "Wait where are you?"

"I took one of the trucks back to Timmins; I'm on my way home."

"Wasn't Kate supposed to be getting there this morning?" she seemed confused

"Yeah she was getting there just after dawn. Why?" I could hear Esme frantically talking in the background but couldn't make it out

"YOU LEFT AND DIDN'T EVEN TELL HER YOU WERE LEAVING??!!" Alice was back to yelling again

"What the Hell Alice?! Who are you talking about?" Kate didn't need to know I wasn't going to be there to meet her

"BELLA OF COURSE!" she was still screaming

"Alice she's avoiding me! I figured she would be relieved I was gone." It sounded pitiful I know but really, she had jumped out a window to avoid me.

"Yeah well congratulations Dumb Ass! She's barricaded herself under her shield in her room and hasn't spoken to anyone since you left!! She didn't even move when Peter told her that Kate arrived." Her tone was sarcastic and biting.

I felt the panic rising and I started to run; how the hell had it gotten so late?! The sun was up and I should have been home hours ago. I wanted to be there when Kate arrived in case she needed me. Fuck, Bella had been under her shield basically since I left? Fuck Me!

"I'll call you later Alice" she was still yelling at me when I hung up. The phone was ringing seconds later. It was Peter.

"I heard man I'm sorry. I'm on my way." I hadn't given him a chance to speak

"You fucked up Major. I told you not to go" he was pissed

"How long has she been under her shield?" I knew that holding it up drained her

"Since I told her that you left. She went straight upstairs and has been there ever since. Rosalie and Emmett have been trying to get her to come out but she won't talk to any of us. She looks broken and she's thirsty." He was delivering the information like a military report. He and I were too much alike; when we got angry we reverted to our military training. Right now he was livid.

"I'll be home in 20 minutes. I need everyone out of the house. I can't calm her down and talk to her if I have to deal with the rage that everyone is going to be throwing at me."

"Don't you think you deserve it Major?" yup he was pissed

"I know I do, but my first priority is to try to get Bella to forgive me. I love her Peter" Fuck! Why couldn't I run faster?

"Glad you finally realized it fucker! Now you had better hope that you haven't broken her heart beyond repair. YOU DON'T FUCKING DESERVE HER!" He was yelling now so he had calmed down some

"I know Peter, but I'm selfish enough to want her anyway. I fucked everything up and now I'm gonna do my damnedest to fix it! I would do anything for her" I jumped over a river before continuing "Now please Peter, please can you get everyone out of the house so I can grovel properly?"
"You'll have three hours. After that I'm coming for her and if you two haven't patched things up Charlotte and I will be taking her with us and to hell with your problem. I won't let you break her Jasper." He hung up.

The animal in me roared in rage at the thought of someone taking my mate away from me. My more rational side knew that I had to earn the right to stand beside her and I had three hours to earn her forgiveness.

I made it to the house only minutes later and I could still feel the hostility in the air. Yup I was smart to get Peter to clear the house. Too bad I wasn't as smart about my dealings with Bella. As I walked in the backdoor I was hit with a wave of despair and pain. The thought that it was from my Bella and that her emotions were partially blocked by her shield meant that she was in more emotional pain than I had ever felt from anyone before.

I made my way upstairs to her room. When I opened the door and saw her looking so small, vulnerable and broken, curled up in her chair my heart broke all over again. Her shield was still up and as I made my way to her side I was terrified by her physical condition. I could see that her eyes were the deepest black from hunger and were ringed with huge black shadows. Her beautiful granite skin was so pale it looked translucent; I could actually make out many of the veins that used to carry her human blood. I had seen human drug addicts that looked to be in better health. If my calculations were right, Bella had been holding her shield for roughly 14 hours and I was actually worried about her physical health.

I knelt down in front of her as close to her shield as I could get. 'Angel' her obsidian eyes shifted to me. Eyes that should have been shiny even with her thirst were flat and dull, unfocused. But I didn't get any response. Not emotionally, physically or mentally, only the constant pain that radiated from her. I couldn't even be sure that she heard me; she may have only looked at me because I was right in front of her.

'Angel, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have left without telling you first. Please Bella you have to come out, you need to hunt.' I watched as a single venomous tear welled up and actually spilled out of one of her eyes and ran down her cheek. "Oh darlin, what have I done to you?" my voice was soft and filled with guilt and pain. I had never seen a vampire cry. That one single tear tore my world apart. Knowing that my actions caused her this pain made me want to wallow in self hatred.

'Sorry Jas.' Her mental voice was agonizing in its pain and it hit me like a whip.

'You have nothing to be sorry for Angel; there is so much I should have told you. So much I was too afraid to say. Please Angel, please come out.' One of my hands was resting on her shield. What was normally a pale shimmering blue now looked like an old pane of glass.

I watched as she slowly, shakily wiped the tear from her cheek and I longed to do it for her. 'I'm sorry I pushed you away.' She was still breaking apart inside.

'Please Bella you need to hunt. I've never seen your eyes so black. Can we go for a hunt and then talk? I have so much that I need to tell you. I want you to be able to hear everything I say, if you're fighting your thirst and your instincts it will make it that much harder for me to convince you to forgive me.' I got down on my knees and put both hands on her shield. I was happy to beg if it would make a difference.

'Angel I need you to forgive me. I can't exist without you.' I dropped my head, I couldn't look at the agony on her face in addition to the pain I was feeling from her soul. I was terrified of the rejection that I was sure was coming. The weight of my many mistakes was crippling. The thought of losing Bella because of them was agony.

My hands fell as her shield dropped. My head snapped up and I wanted so badly to take her in my arms but I couldn't do that. I would tell her everything and then she would make the choice. It was always her choice. She stood slowly and I rose to my feet with her. I offered her my hand and was relieved when she took it. We had taken no more than three slow steps towards the window to go for our hunt when she stumbled and would have fallen. Like lightning I had my arms around her, my alarm spiking. Vampires don't stumble.

"Bella?" She was hanging on to me like she was afraid she would fall. I quickly scooped her up in my arms bridal style and looked down at her face. She felt so fragile in my arms; her head lolled weakly on my shoulder and I didn't waste any time jumping out her window and running into the forest. Frantically I followed the first scent I could, Bella would need several large animals and she needed them now.

Luckily I caught the trail of a moose fairly close to home. It was a large cow with a calf – perfect! I got as close as I could to them before I silently and very gently set Bella down with her back to a tree. I quickly caught and snapped the neck of the cow knowing that the calf would stay close to the scent of its mother. I dragged the animal over to Bella and lay her on top of the animal's neck. I ripped the skin open and tore the jugular, carefully positioning her mouth over the welling blood. I was relieved when she started to drink. I could see some of her strength returning as her arms lifted to hold herself more closely over the wound.

I left Bella and went to get the calf, finding it quickly and bringing it back to her. She had barely finished the cow before I had the calf already bleeding at her mouth. I was relieved to see her latch onto the kill herself with a bit more strength.

I brought her a deer and a large coyote before I saw her slow down and look at me. 'Enough Jasper. I can get my own now.'

"Please Bella, let me get you something else." Her skin looked normal and the darkness around her eyes had faded but...
her eyes were still too dark. I wanted to bring her more; I needed her to be okay. Every part of me was screaming at me to provide for her.

I watched as she got to her feet, took a long look at me and then vanished into the forest. I sank to my knees, helpless to do anything but hope she would come back; hope that she would at least listen what I had to say.

I sat there for over an hour before I heard someone approaching, I tested the air – strawberries and freesia – Bella. I watched her walk towards me and was stunned to see her eyes were the golden topaz of an older vegetarian. It should have taken at least eight more months for her human blood to fade completely from her eyes. She was beautiful.

She came over and sat beside me on a log. I watched as she played with her fingers and her nervousness grew. I knew I had to say something; I pushed out calm and affection "I'm sorry I didn't tell you I was leaving."

"I didn't give you any reason to think I would care. I've been avoiding you Jas – I'm sorry."

Call me chicken but I was hoping to find out if she had feelings for me before I spilled my guts and told her that she was my reason for existing, my hearts mate, the missing piece of my soul. "Why, Bella? I miss you, I miss spending time with you."

There it was, the flicker that I longed to feel. She managed to hide it somehow but at my mention of missing her I felt a surge of pure love. It was so quick that I almost missed it; it was overwhelmed with longing, shame and sadness. 'I can't depend on you forever Jas, no matter how much I need you, Alice will be home soon.' Her mental voice was cheerless.

Alice was right I am an idiot. If I lost her it would be no more than I deserved. Now I had to find a way to explain so that she wouldn't feel like she was breaking up a happy marriage. "Angel, did you notice the way that I introduced Emmett and Rose to Garrett? Do you remember the exact words that I used?"

"You said 'This is my brother Emmett McCarty and the blonde on the deck is his wife and mate Rosalie' so?"

"And how did Emmett introduce Peter and Charlotte?" She needed to bear with me for a few more minutes

Impatience and confusion was rolling off her in waves "He said my name and then 'this is Peter and his wife and mate Charlotte' But Jasper what is your point?"

"Please Bella, humor me. Now can you ever remember a time when Alice or I have ever referred to the other as our mate?" I wasn't sure if this was the right way to bring this up or not. Her eyes seemed a bit unfocused as she thought.

"I don't know Jas – what is the point of this?" I could feel her frustration growing along with a bit of anger.

"Bella, vampires are like swans, we mate for life. Finding our mate is not a guarantee – we spend decades, sometimes centuries looking for our mate, the one other being that is the missing piece of our soul. Humans toss around the term soul mate without ever truly knowing what it means. Their relationships are romanticized and quite often temporary. The person that they declare is their soul mate can be so easily divorced and forgotten within a matter of years." I watched her face and her emotions carefully.

"Rosalie said that finding a mate is instinctual for our kind." Her emotions were back to longing and extremely sad

"Bella, Alice isn't my mate; she isn't the one that my soul cries out to. Yes we were married, but she's my best friend not my mate. We haven't lived as husband and wife for over two years we finally got around to getting divorced last week. I should have told you sooner but I thought someone else would have. But that's no excuse. I should have told you." Her confusion hit me like a tidal wave

"But you guys have been together for decades. Alice loves you, why did you leave her?" Crap she was getting the wrong idea.

"Alice had a vision of her mate. She is ecstatic about it but says that she won't get to meet him for almost another year. I didn't leave Alice; we have always been better friends than lovers." How could I explain this? How could I make her understand?

"Rose told me that our kind will sometimes choose to spend time with another but that it was a matter of companionship." Bella's voice was soft and I felt a glimmer of hope from her.

Bless Rose! I was gonna buy her a new sports car and build her a dream garage to house it! "And that's why we got married. Alice was the perfect person to spend a few decades with. We were content together because we are the best of friends but we always knew that it would be temporary."

"I don't understand" Confusion and hope lacing her voice as her eyes searched mine.

I took a chance and took one of her hands in mine, praying that she wouldn't reject me, I lowered my forehead to rest against hers "Angel in 150 years I have never felt for anyone the way I feel for you. You accept me for who I am and I…" my voice trailed off as I looked deep into Bella's topaz eyes, our lips hovering in the sweet moment before they touch.
Jasper glanced at her, a whisper of a kiss at first, then with more passion as if the missing pieces of a puzzle were fitting together. Feeling her lips on mine filled in a hole that I didn't know was there. I drew back slowly savoring the taste of her mouth on mine. I wasn't going to miss out on one second of it, this may be the only chance I get.

I monitored her emotions for a moment but they were in too much chaos to make sense of. I decided I was going to have to man up. I raised my hand to cup her face in mine "You are the missing piece of me. I don't deserve you, and if you told me to leave now and never come back I wouldn't blame you. I love you Bella. I love you more than my own life. I can't go one more day without telling you. I love you"

The force of her love pouring over me would have brought me to my knees had we not already been on the ground. "Jasper" it came out as a sigh "I never want you to go. How can I send away the other half of me? I love you Jasper. God I love you!"

Our lips crashed together, ravenously devouring each other. I heard her groan as I ran my tongue over her bottom lip begging for entrance. Her lips parted and welcomed me, my tongue sliding over hers in a sinuous dance promising more for the future.

I felt her emotions welling up and she broke away from me. The tremendous joy, relief, and love flowing out of her; as she began to laugh I pulled her face to my shoulder and buried my face in her hair relishing the smell of her, the feel of our emotions mixing and rolling over us in a wash of pure love.

Abruptly she was pulled from my arms and I was thrown away from her. I managed to spring to my feet. Bella! My first thought was Victoria. As my eyes focused I saw Emmett and Rosalie.

Emmett was advancing on me fast; clearly he was the one who had thrown me. Rosalie was holding on to Bella who was standing there completely stunned. Emmett's punch landed hard on my cheek and again I was thrown back landing hard on a boulder. I felt it crack underneath me with the force of my body hitting it.

"EMMETT NO!!" Bella's screams drew my attention as she struggled violently against Rosalie's hold. My vision clouded and tunneled; all I saw was my mate being restrained. She was in danger. I stood to go to her, my roar of rage, cut short as I was hit full force by a tree being wielded like a baseball bat. Instead of flying through the air again I gripped onto the tree and shifted my balance. I used the momentum of my attackers swing to yank him forward towards me. Dropping the tree I flipped him over my head and away from me. I spun around to see my mate's captor losing her grip on my mate. Our eyes met and my mate's face turned from desperation to horror.

She flung one hand out to me and screamed "JASPER!"

I saw a flash of blue and then heard a crash. I spun to see my attacker with what was left of a boulder; between us was my mate's shield. "Jasper!" I turned again just in time to watch my mate break free from her stunned captor and run right through the shield that encased me. I crushed her to me as she ran her hands over my face and body, searching for an injury that wasn't there.

"Jasper, it's okay. Calm down, I'm okay." My mate's mental voice was soothing but her emotions were chaotic mix of fear, relief, love, panic…. I shoved her behind me crouching in front of her and backing us up to shield her from further attack, snarls continuously rippling from my throat; my hands curling into claws. I kept our two attackers within sight and started to formulate a plan to protect my mate.

Four more figures ran out from the forest around us increasing the number of attackers, two males and two more females. The volume of my growls increased. I could feel my mate behind me still trying to soothe me but shaking and terrified. There were now six of them and one of me.

"Damn it you two!! I told you to wait!" The blonde male yelled at our two original attackers before turning his attention to me and my terrified mate.

"Bella honey. You need to try to calm down; Jasper's feeding off your fear and protecting you." My snarls got louder again as he spoke to us. I would save her.

The largest male took a step towards us and I let out a roar backing up, pushing my mate behind me and away from the threat. I defended her with the only weapon I had at the moment; I used my emotions to render him unconscious. My inner monster roared in satisfaction at the sight of his body falling to the ground with a sickening thud. Now I could tear him apart at my leisure. I scanned our attackers to see who would be next.

My mate's captor went to rush forward but she was restrained by the other tiny blonde female. "Wait! Emmett's not hurt I promise but if you get any closer Jasper will drop you too!"

"But Emmett?" her voice was terrified and I could feel her fear. Yes! Fear me. The growl coming from my throat was continuous. They would all feel the fear that they had caused my mate.

"We told you to wait, attacking the Major is never a good idea at the best of times but by the looks of things they've formally mated and now you're dealing with the God of War." The tall female was frightened as the shorter one explained;
radiating her own fear, anger and determination. I pulled my lips back exposing my teeth. I could feel my venom running down my chin.

"Jasper? Jasper it's Peter. Bella is safe. We aren't trying to harm her. You are both safe under her shield." The blonde male had both his hands up and was looking at the ground in front of him.

My eyes darted between the different attackers in front of me cataloguing the different threat levels. The largest male was still unconscious; the tall blonde female's attention was focused entirely on the downed male and was still being restrained by the small blonde female. Two others stood farther back, a male a female; they, like the blonde male in front of me, were clearly showing submission and staring at the ground with their hands visible, their body weight shifted backwards.

I felt my mate slowly come to my side; her emotions were no longer panicked. She was radiating love for me and complete trust. I could see her shield still pulsing, a pale blue shimmer between us and our attackers so I risked a look down at her.

When our eyes connected her small hand came up to cup my cheek. 'Jasper. I love you. I'm okay. Please honey, come back to me.' Her mental words were full of love and calm.

The feel of her palm on my face calmed my ragged breathing to something more regular. I could feel my chest heaving with the force of my breaths, tasting the air around me. My eyes were locked with hers, my anchor, my peaceful island in a sea of rage and fear.

'Jasper' her mouth raised to my face and I felt her lips on my cheek. I closed my eyes savoring the feel of her breath on my face, her scent in my nose. Strawberries and freesia.

I opened my eyes and things looked clearer, the tunnel vision gone. 'Bella? What had happened? I was so confused. Why was everyone so afraid? Wait…I think I remembered Emmett…'

I watched her smile slowly and felt her relief 'Yeah Honey, it's me. We're okay.'

I reached up to cup her face in my hands and rested my forehead on hers "You're okay? We were attacked again…weren't we?" I shook my head trying to sort out the confusing images that made up my memory of the last few minutes. 'A misunderstanding. It was Emmett and Rosalie. Are you okay?' She was running her hands through my hair and down my neck in long smooth strokes. I could feel the tension leaving my body.

"Jasper?" I turned at my name and saw Peter standing there looking at me with concern. I could feel pain, confusion, fear and anger radiating off him.

"Peter?" My voice was still gravelly. I looked around and saw my family standing in a decimated section of forest. Emmett was on the ground. Rosalie broke free from Charlotte to rush to his side. I was ashamed when I realized I must have dropped him and quickly sent him his regular mix of emotions to wake him up.

I turned back to Bella concerned that she had seen me at my worst. I couldn't bring myself to feel too badly about what had happened, they attacked us and they tried to take her from me. Would she fear me now? Now that she knew what I was capable of becoming?

I must have been projecting my own fears "No Jasper. I love you. Only you. Nothing you could do would ever change that. You were only protecting me. I Love You!" I felt her drop her shield as she kissed me.

"God Bella, I love you!" I held her close to me trying to anchor my own emotions. 'I'm so sorry Angel. I'm so sorry' I could feel myself shaking. Losing myself like that came with a price and I was struggling with it. I had unleashed my inner demon on my family. I unleashed it in front of my mate; my Bella.

The feeling of anger behind me caught me off guard and I broke away from Bella in time to see Peter standing over a shaken Rosalie and Emmett "I told you two to wait until they came back to the house didn't I?!" His voice was low and controlled but it was evident that he was furious even without my gift.

I turned back to Bella concerned that she had seen me at my worst. I couldn't bring myself to feel too badly about what had happened, they attacked us and they tried to take her from me. Would she fear me now? Now that she knew what I was capable of becoming?

I must have been projecting my own fears "No Jasper. I love you. Only you. Nothing you could do would ever change that. You were only protecting me. I Love You!" I felt her drop her shield as she kissed me.

"And I told you he would FIX IT!! You people may have lived with him for the past few decades but you have no idea WHO YOU ARE FUCKING WITH!!! You realize he could have killed you right?!!" Peter was a mix of fury and fear.

"You attacked the most feared leader in the Southern Armies like children wrestling in the backyard!! He could have killed us all and lost himself in the process!!" Seeing me so lost to my rage had brought back memories of the hellish war zone that we had all escaped from and revealed the emotional scars that we all carried.

Emmett slowly climbed to his feet with Rose by his side. "You saw her! He broke my little sister!!" He was shaken but not angry. I could feel shame and fear; he was feeling defensive but regretful at the same time.

"And I told you he would FIX IT!! You people may have lived with him for the past few decades but you have no idea WHO YOU ARE FUCKING WITH!!! You realize he could have killed you right?!!" Peter was a mix of fury and fear.

"You attacked the most feared leader in the Southern Armies like children wrestling in the backyard!! He could have killed us all and lost himself in the process!!" Seeing me so lost to my rage had brought back memories of the hellish war zone that we had all escaped from and revealed the emotional scars that we all carried.

The three of us had seen and done things that would have, and in fact did, drive many of our kind mad. For years and in my case decades upon decades we had lived and breathed fear, death and destruction. We had mindlessly slaughtered thousands, waded through oceans of blood and torn apart lives like so many pieces of old newspaper. We had been soulless harbingers of destruction, our scars were deep.
Charlotte moved to his side "Peter" she touched his face when he turned to look at her "It's over

He sighed and then looked over at me and Bella. I nodded and watched as the two of them came over to us. When he got to us I put my hand on his shoulder, Charlotte was leaning into his side.

"I'm sorry my brother." I borrowed the feelings of love and well-being that I felt from Bella and spread it amongst the four of us. Peter held Charlotte closer to him as she started to quietly cry.

Bella stepped forward and put her arms around Charlotte as Peter and I sandwiched them between us. The four of us stood that way for a long time and took the comfort that Bella so freely offered.

A/N: Once again the name God of War is entirely the work of IdreamofEddy. Really her stories are amazing and need to be read often!

There you have it kiddies – the chapter that you have all been waiting for so patiently (or not so patiently *snickers*). It was probably not quite what you expected so I am looking forward to hearing what everyone thought.

It has been brought to my attention that after a rough angst filled chapter that like this I should be offering Chamomile tea to calm everyone's nerves so *brings out the tea pot and cups* Who wants a cup? *watches as the fairies dish out the tea and listens to their singing* Aren't their harmonies beautiful? Some of you loyal readers were kind enough to remind them to practice to encourage me to write more. *grins*

Looking forward to hearing your thoughts and if you hated it *opens an umbrella* I came prepared for rotten tomatoes!
I stepped forward and put my arms around Charlotte and held her as she cried as Peter and Jasper sandwiched us between them. The four of us stood that way for a long time and took the comfort that Jasper blanketed us in.

We broke apart slowly, separating into couples as we heard someone approaching. I looked up to see Garrett and another woman. The woman hung back a bit but Garrett stepped up.

"Is everyone alright here?" He was looking over all of us with complete understanding shining in his eyes.

I looked up at Jasper as he spoke. "Yeah. I'm sorry you had to see that. I…"

Garrett held up a hand and stopped Jasper "No need to explain my friend. I too have fought in wars and I have had to overcome my own demons."

The men all exchanged long looks before turning to look at Rosalie and Emmett who were still sitting on the ground. I didn't need to be an empath to know how they were feeling, it was written all over their faces. Fear was the predominant emotion as they looked at Jasper. I was starting to feel a bit pissed. How dare they look at Jasper that way? What did they expect would happen when they attacked a man with the background and experiences that Jasper had?

Emmett was sitting in front of Rosalie and was carefully holding her behind him with one arm and she clung to his back. Emmett was looking at Jasper like he was a potential threat to his mate. I suspected that this was how Jasper looked in regards to me a lot of the time. We may have just declared ourselves but he had put himself in harms way in my defense a number of times; both when I was human and after my change. Rosalie looked as timid as I had ever seen her and she was all but cowering behind Emmett; staring at the ground, she looked like she wanted to cry but was too afraid to.

Emmett spoke first "What are your intentions Jasper?"

Now I was really pissed!! "Emmett what the Hell?! Jasper is your brother! Where do you get off asking him what his intentions are? He was only defending himself and me!"

Emmett was now looking back and forth between me and Jasper warily. I turned to look at Jasper feeling his pain. His family was looking at him like he was a monster and it was tearing him apart.

I pressed myself into Jasper's chest. I needed to be in his arms and breathe his scent. I needed him to know that I didn't see him that way. He was my safe harbor, my rock, my love. He wrapped an arm around my waist and the other up my back so his hand could run under my hair and press my face to him. I could feel him hunch over me slightly. He was taking comfort from the embrace as much as I was. From the corner of my eye I could see that Peter and Charlotte were in much the same position.

Garrett stepped forward to stand in front of Emmett and Rose. "I know I am not part of your family but I am having a hard time figuring out what possessed you both to attack your brother and sister in this fashion. After everything that has happened to Bella in the last two months; how would another attack make things better? Yes, Bella was in emotional turmoil but we all knew Jasper was working to straighten things out. I have not been here that long but it has been plain to me in the past couple of days the bond that Jasper and Bella share. I knew the first day that she was his bonded mate even if they had not yet formalized their relationship. As their siblings you must have known this."

I watched from Jasper's arms as Emmett and Rosalie looked ashamed but Garrett continued "I fought in the Revolutionary War and then I was forced to fight in the Southern Wars for over a decade before I managed to escape. It took me a long time to stop from dropping into a defensive posture every time I heard a noise. I have avoided contact with others of our kind for most of my 230 years. The only friend I have is your father Carlisle. He helped me to work through my demons. Jasper spent almost 100 years fighting in the Southern Wars; his reaction was much milder than anything I would have expected." Garrett's voice was calm and soothing; teaching without condemning. "With what we are up against you should be glad that he is on our side. I also believe that you owe him an apology, Bella as well."

Jasper shifted slightly "No Garrett. Thank you but no. Emmett and Rose were only trying to protect Bella from further heartache, it's my fault." I opened my mouth to protest but he silenced me by putting his fingers over my lips. "No Angel, I am at fault on so many levels. I should have talked to you more, I shouldn't have left and I shouldn't have attacked my family."

I shook my head violently 'No! Please don't blame yourself for this.' He cupped my face in his hand and I leaned into his touch wishing with every fiber of my being that I could take away his pain.

"Jasper?" The woman that I hadn't yet met was walking towards us.
Jasper tucked a piece of my hair behind my ear before he looked up from my face "Hello Kate."

"Jasper, what happened here was no fault of yours. It was the natural instinct to protect your mate reinforced by your military training and the violence that came with it. Look at it another way, you could have easily killed one or all of us but you chose not to. You defended only, you didn't attack." She went to take a step closer but a low growl rose up in my throat and I pressed closer to Jasper. I didn't know this woman and she was stepping towards my mate. Jasper slowly rubbed my back and sent me his love and comfort.

She stopped but continued to speak after carefully appraising me for further signs of aggression "Cousin, you did no wrong here." Her voice had a hint of an accent to it. I couldn't place it, Russian?

"She's right Jasper. It was us." Jasper and I looked up to see Rosalie and Emmett standing with their arms around each other. Rosalie had her head on Emmett's chest and I was surprised to see her looking so fragile. Emmett continued "We didn't think at all, this is entirely our fault and we're so very sorry, to the both of you." He lowered his head so that his face was buried in Rose's hair.

"If I may suggest, I think it might be best if we all hunted and then gathered back at the house later. We have much to discuss about a great many things." Kate was right.

I hoped that once we had all separated for awhile and calmed down that we could get back to being a family. I looked up at my beautiful Jasper. 'Please? I need to be with you.'

I closed my eyes as he softly kissed my forehead 'Anything for you' Then he addressed our family and friends "Kate's right, Bella and I are going to hunt. We'll be back at the house before dark. We can all talk then."

Peter and Charlotte wasted no time and simply vanished into the forest headed east. Emmett picked Rose up in his arms and nodded to us before heading in the direction of the house. We left Kate and Garrett standing in the clearing as we too melted into the forest running north.

An hour later found us sitting on the shore of a beautiful lake. All was quiet around us except for the sounds of nature. I had tried to clean myself up the best I could. Having Jasper find my meals for me had been sweet but very messy. I really needed a shower and fresh clothes but I wasn't ready to go back yet.

Jasper had me wrapped up in his arms and was rubbing his face in my hair and breathing deeply; his hands were rubbing my back and arms languidly. I didn't need to ask what he was doing because I was doing almost the same thing in his chest. I couldn't get enough of the smell of him. I wanted to get closer but it was physically impossible. I could feel his contentment humming through our bond.

'God I will never leave you again.' His mental voice resonated through me right to my very soul. 'I was so afraid that someone was taking you from me.' His arms tightened 'I love you so much Angel'

"Shhh Jas. I'm here and I'm not going anywhere. I'm safe. We're safe." I brushed my lips over his 'I love you Jasper'

His hands were still rubbing my back but when I raised my arms to wrap around his neck my shirt rode up and his fingers touched my bare skin. I let out a low groan as tingles spread from the spot his fingers had touched. Our lips met again softly at first and then with increasing pressure as his hand lightly traced my spine.

I slid my hand inside the buttons on his shirt eager to feel his skin. Jasper's hand caught mine before I could reach my destination. He stopped my hand and pulled back from me. Before he could reject me I jumped off his lap to go and stand by the lake, my arms wrapped securely around my waist. It was happening again.

I felt him come up behind me and pull him back into his chest. 'Angel, please don't feel that way. I want you.'

Yeah I had heard that before – lots. The whole 'it's not you it's me' thing was really getting old. I wondered what Jasper's excuse would be. Now that I was a vampire he couldn't use the 'you're too breakable' excuse. Dear god what was wrong with me that the men in my life couldn't stand to touch me?

Jasper grabbed my arm and spun me so he could look at my face. "Stop it Bella! I don't know why you are feeling so rejected and insecure but I need you to stop. I Love You!"

I broke away from him and backed up a couple steps I couldn't help it "Edward said he loved me too! It sure didn't stop him from pushing me away every time we kissed! Now you tell me that you love me but the minute I try to touch you, you push me away! What is so wrong with me?!!!" Yeah I was yelling but damn it!

"Jesus Bella, is that what you think?" Disbelief was written all over his face as he stalked over to me and then gently cupped my face with his hand "Bella, I stopped you because of my scars. I know you've seen them but you were under a lot of stress at the time and probably didn't get a good look at them. And they feel even worse than they look."
“Really Jas? Your scars? Are you kidding me?!” God did he think I was that gullible?

I could feel his anger building. “Yeah, my scars. Do you know that all those years I was married to Alice she could barely stand to see me naked, they scared her too much. She’s sweet enough to never ask me to keep my shirt on but she never opened her eyes either, not even in our most intimate moments. She avoided touching my shoulders.” He turned away running his hands through his hair in frustration. “I’m an empath Bella, I could feel her revulsion and fear every time she saw or touched them. Hell! Anytime anyone sees them I feel their fear. So excuse me for putting off feeling that from you!!” He was yelling by the end.

I was furious! How could he think so little of me? I am not one of those shallow people who….my anger faded away and I was left feeling sad. I was being selfish, and that’s not what he needed from me right now. He had gotten the same reaction time and time again every time someone saw his scars. As much as he loved me he still didn’t know me well enough to know that I would never see him that way. I had to prove my feelings.

He was standing about 20 feet from me and I could feel the self hatred rolling off him. I walked up behind him close enough to touch but I didn’t. He had to come the rest of the way to me. ‘Forgive me.’

He turned to look down at me and I swear I could hear my heart breaking at the look in his eyes. ‘Jas, I’ve seen your scars and they are proof that you not only survived your past but overcame it. The thought of you not being here with me is unbearable. The only thing I see when I look at you is how beautiful you are and how much I love you.’

He snorted “You say that now.” I watched as he angrily stripped out of his shirt. "Look at me Bella! Really! Take a good look! Is this what you want to be tied to for eternity?” His head was turned away refusing to watch my reaction.

I slowly reached out to touch him, looking at his face the entire time. Gently I began to trace his scars starting with the ones on his wrists and moving slowly up his arms. When I reached his shoulder I leaned in lightly to kiss the largest of the scars. His head turned and he looked down at me slightly confused and disbeliefing. I continued to kiss my way across his chest making sure to kiss as many of the thickest scars as I could and tried to hold his gaze as much as possible. ‘What are you feeling from me now Jas?’

His breath was ragged and his hands were clenching and unclenching at his sides "Love, desire, pride…"

’No revulsion? No fear?’ I moved to kiss as far up his neck as I could reach. I wasn’t sure where all my courage was coming from. I had never done anything even remotely like this. Edward had never let me get even close to this far.

The last rays of the evening sunset came out from behind a cloud and our bodies were bathed in rays of gold and then reflected over the water in glittering rainbows by our skin. Jasper's scars were turned into swirling sparkling works of art. My breath caught. "God you're so beautiful’

"My Angel" he ran his fingers down my cheek before sliding his hand through my hair to the back of my head and pulling me forward. He rested his forehead on mine for a long minute "You really do love me.” He kissed me sweetly "God Bella, I don't deserve you but I swear I am never gonna let you go.”

He crushed his lips to mine and backed me into a tree. His hands on my waist gripping me fiercely and his pelvis pushed into mine. I could feel his erection pressed against my stomach and the heat rising through my body, both hot and cold at the same time "Angel you're killin me"

My hands were tangled in his silky hair and my un-needed breath was coming out in gasps. I felt his lips travel to my ear and then slowly, slowly down my neck. "Please Jas.”

"Angel, we're not stoppin; but we are pausing. Cause darlin, when I finally make you mine in every way, it's not gonna be up against a tree in the middle of the forest." He cocked an eyebrow at me and gave me a devilish grin “At least, not the first time.”

If I could've blushed I would have and he knew it. His deep chuckle had to be the sexiest thing I had ever heard. “It really is too bad that everyone can't feel your emotions Angel. You may not visibly blush anymore but I can feel it when you do and it's still adorable.” His kissed my forehead before reluctantly pulling away.

I knew what he was thinking "We have to go back”

“Yeah darlin we do.”

I sighed. He was right. "I think we should set up the web cam in the great room over the TV. We need to have a family meeting. Mom and Dad can help us get through this as a family.”

He took out his phone and sent a quick text. "Brains and beauty. How did I get so lucky?” he kissed me again deeply before we slowly made our way back to the house.

When we got there we heard Rose and Emmett in their room talking quietly. Everyone else was still gone. Jasper and I went upstairs but I didn't want to be separated from him yet. My nerves and instincts not to mention my heart couldn’t stand to be away from him for even the short time that it would take to get cleaned up.
He felt my fear ‘Wait here?’ I nodded and watched from the doorway of his room as he quickly gathered a change of clothes. He came back and we went into my room together.

‘Angel, why don’t you go shower and change? I’ll get changed out here and get your web cam un-hooked while you get cleaned up.’ He looked at me with nothing but love and I appreciated the gesture. I loved him, I knew that but as much as I didn’t want to be parted from him; I still wasn’t quite ready to jump into everything right away.

I picked out some clothes before I went into the bathroom and turned on the shower. I stripped while I waited for the water to heat. I thought about everything that had happened in the last 24 hours. Really it was a lot to take in even with my big new brain. I was so incredibly happy to find out that Jasper loved me. The fight between him and Emmett had been scary as hell and I hated the fact that my new brain meant that I could recall every second of it with perfect clarity.

I didn't want to think about the fight. I shifted my thoughts instead to our time by the lake afterwards. Poor Jasper was just as insecure as I was about how he looked. I really had no idea why everyone thought his scars were so scary; Jasper was beautiful in every way. The memory of his hands on my bare back and the feelings that his kisses brought up were enough to make by whole body blush if I were able.

I was a bit nervous as to where all this was leading. I mean yes, he was my mate now that much was obvious; but what would he expect? He had been around for almost 150 years; he would have so much experience and will have been with more women than I cared to think about. Here I was a virgin who had never even been to second base. How the hell was I supposed to make him happy?

‘Angel, are you alright?’

Right my mate is an empath and would've definitely felt my shifting feelings easily in the next room. 'Yeah Jas, I'll be out in a minute.' God this would be embarrassing. I couldn't help but roll my eyes. I used to love the fact that Edward couldn't read my mind and now I found myself mated to a man who could read my emotions like a book – Great!

I came out of the backroom to find Jasper staring at my comfy chair looking haunted.

‘What is it Jasper?’ I came up behind him and put my arms around his waist and leaned up against his back

He turned to face me and gathered me into his arms. ‘I can't get the image of you sitting in that chair under your shield out of my head. I did that to you.’

‘Jas. I did it to myself. I knew the shield was weakening me and I still kept it up.’ I tipped his face up so I could look in his eyes 'We can't dwell on the what if's and blame. We're together now, that's all that matters.' I kissed him lightly and gave him a playful smile 'Besides, you have eternity to make it up to me'

I saw my favorite sexy smirk spread across his lips 'Well I think I can handle that'

‘Good. Now shall we go downstairs and get ready to call Forks?’ I was anxious to talk to our father. I hoped he would be able to bring our family together again.

We went downstairs and I watched as Jasper set up the necessary equipment to turn our huge living room TV into a computer monitor with the webcam sitting on top. Just as we finished Garrett and Kate walked in.

Garrett took in our clasped hands "I take it you two have worked everything out?"

Jasper looked down at me with a smile and kissed my knuckles "I don't deserve her but she wants me anyway."

Kate smiled beatifically "We haven't been formally introduced. I am Kate; and you are the beautiful Bella that I have heard so much about"

I couldn't help but smile, she was so open and friendly; not to mention beautiful. I almost felt bad for growling at her earlier "Hi Kate. I'm sorry I wasn't here to meet you this morning"

"Pfft! It is nothing! You had many more important things to deal with. Now, what is with the web cam?" She looked like she knew already and I smiled at her

"We're gonna need to have a family meeting and thought it best to include Carlisle, Esme and Alice. We need to make preparations for the future." Jasper didn't need to say that we needed Carlisle to mend the rift in our family. Both sides carried guilt over what had happened and we needed our father figure to look at it and give us an objective opinion.

"Would you like us to give you privacy to discuss things?" Poor Garrett he had no place that he really belonged

"Please Garrett, could you stay? You took the time to come north to warn us about Victoria and you're willing to stay and fight with us. Not to mention you've been the tragic victim of one of Emmett's pranks. In my books that makes you family." At my words he looked at me like I had just hung the moon and I wasn't sure why.

Jasper just beamed down at me "Absolutely. If you are comfortable with it we would like you to stay." He looked over at Kate "You too cuz.”
"Like I would miss this!" She laughed "Besides, your family meetings are so much more exciting than Eleazar’s."

We were all still chuckling when Peter and Charlotte came home. I squeezed Jasper's hand before going to Peter and giving him a hug. I had to concentrate 'Are you ok Petey?"

'Oh little one, I'm supposed to be the one asking you that' We drew back so that we could look at each other. His eyes flicked to Jasper and back 'Are you sure? We can leave; you can live with Charlotte and me. We could be a family'

I squeezed his arms 'I love him. I go where he goes. I'm happy Peter.'

He hugged me again 'Then that's all that matters'

I felt Jasper come up behind me and rest his hands on my shoulders; I felt his touch all the way to my toes. He knew Peter and I had just had a silent conversation about him and he was a bit worried. I rubbed his hand on my shoulder and looked up at him with a smile.

Peter stared him down over my head "Never again Major. I meant what I said before."

I was confused and looked up over my shoulder at Jasper. He was looking at Peter "I never make the same mistake twice Peter. You know that. As for the other thing; you're welcome to try."

I was getting angry. What the hell were they talking about? Charlotte saved me the trouble.

"Alright boys, that's enough. Peter, Jasper and Bella have worked out their issues and you can clearly see that she's happy." Charlotte gave Peter a long stern look and he nodded in acceptance. She turned back to us. "Now did I hear something about a family meeting?"

I nodded "We're calling Forks over the web cam. You two will join us right? You're both my family too."

Charlotte gave me a big hug "Of course we'll stay." She released me and looked at everyone "Now how is this going to work?"

I heard Jasper's beautiful voice behind me. "I'll start by telling them everything starting from you and Charlotte showing up; once we get to the part about Emmett and F's disagreement though" he paused and seemed to be searching his memories "everything is too confusing...I can't really remember. Someone else will have to pick it up from there."

"I will" we all turned to see Emmett and Rose coming down the stairs. Emmett looked determined "I'll tell Carlisle what happened after that."

My gaze shifted nervously between everyone. I didn't like the rift in our family. I looked at my Jasper 'Jas?' he looked pained but he didn't answer my mental query only rubbed my back gently.

I watched as Garrett went over to the TV and went through the motions to connect to our family in Forks. Minutes later I could see my new parents and sister on the large TV. Esme looked relieved to see that we were all in one piece. Poor Alice was rubbing her temples; my shield made it horribly difficult for her to see our futures and she had complained about it more than once. Carlisle was absentely rubbing Esme's shoulder in comfort.

On our end everyone had settled themselves around the room with their mates. Rosalie was tucked into Emmett's massive body on one couch, Peter and Charlotte on the other and I was sitting in my favorite place in Jasper's lap in one of the overstuffed chairs. I needed him as much as he needed me. I was trying to feed him as much love, comfort and pride as I could but I knew the tension in the room would be taking its toll on him. Garrett and Kate had chosen to sit together by the fireplace; present but not interfering.

Carlisle spoke first "Hello everyone. I'm glad to see that you are all together again and safe." He looked at me and smiled when he saw that I was in Jasper's lap.

"Well then; who is going to start?" his calm voice was reassuring and I knew he would make everything better.

Jasper started to recount the events that had happened, starting with Peter and Charlotte's arrival. Carlisle frowned when he heard that I had been scared enough to run off because of Jasper's growling but Esme calmed him by placing her hand on his arm.

They all looked shocked when Jasper got to the part about me and Peter actually being related. Esme looked like she would cry she was so happy "Oh Bella! How wonderful for you!"

Peter looked over and gave me a warm smile, Charlotte looked up at him ecstatic to see him so happy.

Jasper was very blunt about his error in leaving me without explaining his actions. Alice mumbled under her breath something like "idiot man" but I couldn't be sure.

Jasper got to the end of his part of the retelling. He ended with the last part that he could remember clearly; us admitting our love for each other. Esme and Alice wore matching grins; Carlisle smiled but he looked expectant "Why do I think that..."
We all exchanged nervous looks and Alice and Esme's grins fell. They realized then that something had gone wrong.

Emmett cleared his throat "That would be where Rosie and I screwed up. We were both so angry about how hurt Bella was that we went after them when Peter wasn't looking. We wanted to make sure that Bella was okay. When we tracked them down Bella was in Jasper's arms crying. At least we thought she was crying. We didn't think, Rose grabbed Bella and I jumped Jasper."

There was absolute silence for a long minute as his words sunk in.

"Emmett McCarty Cullen!!! HOW COULD YOU!" I shrank into Jasper's arms. I had never seen Esme so furious and I wanted no part of it. "We DO NOT attack our family members!" Carlisle put his hand on her arm in an attempt to get her to calm down.

She shook him off "No Carlisle, they need to hear this! Rosalie, Emmett – I love you both but what you did was beyond wrong. Especially on the heels of Edwards attack on Bella. Jasper is your brother! Did he screw up? Absolutely! But he was eating his own guts out over the pain he was putting Bella through." She threw up her hands in frustration "You two are unbelievable! How could you do something so stupid?"

She turned to her husband and mate with fury and pain written all over her face "Where did we go wrong? Why are our children behaving like animals?!"

"Esme, darling; please sit down." Carlisle guided Esme back to Alice who lay her head in Esme's lap clearly upset. He looked back at Emmett "Son why don't you tell me the rest of the story."

Emmett hung his head and told Carlisle about the fight, my shield, Peter and Charlotte interrupting and Garrett and Kate's arrival.

Carlisle turned to Jasper "Why didn't you tell me the rest Jasper?"

Jasper started to pet my hair and I could feel that it calmed him somewhat. "I don't really remember what happened after we were attacked. I…everything is fuzzy and confusing. The only clear thing I remember is seeing fear on Bella's face and her being restrained." He turned his face to bury it in my hair.

Carlisle looked serious and he turned unexpectedly to Garrett. "It sounds very much the same as when we first met doesn't it?"

Garrett smirked "That is what I thought at the time as well"

Okay I was officially confused. Carlisle must have read the same expression on everyone's faces "It was 1799 and I was hunting in the Mississippi Territory which is now Southern Alabama when I came across four vampires attacking a single man. Now this man was putting up quite a fight but it was rather obvious that it was only a matter of time. From their comments it was clear that the man was a deserter from one of the southern armies and the four others were sent to collect or kill him. I jumped in and finished off two of them. Garrett here took out the other two. He spun to me and would have taken me apart had I not laid down on the ground all casual. For all intents and purposes it looked like I was ready to take a nap." Garret and Jasper shared a chuckle and I remembered that this was exactly what Garrett had done when faced with an enraged Jasper.

"That move still works wonders Carlisle" Garrett commented

"Anyways, after about an hour Garrett calmed down enough that he came out of his blind defense and was able to talk to me." Carlisle continued seeing us all enraptured with the story. "We spent several years together. We talked about his past a lot and I theorized that due to his time in the Revolutionary War in addition to the horrors he suffered while fighting in the Southern Wars, he was suffering from what humans now call Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or Combat Stress; as is Jasper and I would suspect Peter and Charlotte as well, although to a lesser degree."

I could clearly see Dr. Cullen had taken over the explanation as if he was standing in a lecture hall at any medical school in the country "Soldiers returning from war suffer from psychological stress. These symptoms vary in intensity in accordance with individual resilience and depend upon the degree of trauma experienced, or on the physical affliction suffered by incurring the wounds. The symptoms may just be headaches and general feelings of stress, or they may be totally mind-absorbing, incapacitating, and disruptive of social contact. Diagnostic symptoms include re-experiencing original traumas, by means of flashbacks or nightmares; avoidance of situations associated with the trauma; and increased arousal, such as anger and hyper-vigilance. Add vampire instincts to this and you get a volatile and angry individual."

Carlisle returned and he settled a level look at Emmett and Rosalie "In short children, you attacking Jasper caused him to flashback to a battlefield he long left behind. Add to that the perceived threat to his mate and you two are lucky to still exist."

I watched as Carlisle's lips thinned in anger "I will say that I am disappointed in you both on several levels; first, for attacking a member of your own family, especially in anger. Second, Jasper taught you both to fight so you have some idea what he is capable of and yet you knowingly put yourselves and Bella in danger. And third, you interfered in a
relationship that had very little to do with you. We all love Bella and right now we are all a bit overprotective but in this case you both should have had more restraint. Especially given the fact that they were trying to come to an understanding."

Emmett and Rosalie could not have looked more crushed. Jasper shifted me in his arms and pressed a kiss to my forehead. He could feel the waves of guilt coming off me. All this turmoil was because of me, the family was more divided than ever and it was all my fault. Jasper tipped my chin up so he could look at me 'Angel this is not your fault. Families go through tough times and get into arguments. We're a large family of vampires. Our problems are just a little bit bigger than a normal human family's.'

I leaned into his touch when he ran his hand down my cheek. We both turned back to the TV as Carlisle continued. "Now, having seen Jasper at his very worst; do you feel any differently about him than you did yesterday?"

Rosalie spoke for the first time "Of course not. Jasper is my brother, my twin. I hate that I did something so hurtful to both him and Bella." She looked over at us "You guys, I am so sorry. I have no excuse other than the events of the last two months are catching up to me and...I guess I lost my temper and didn't think. Never in a million years did I think that it would cause so much pain."

Emmett continued her thoughts "All we saw was Bella crying and I couldn't stand to see it again without having someone to pummel for it. Jasper man, I'm sorry. You're my brother and I wouldn't have done it, shouldn't have done it. Like Rosie said; there's no excuse for what we did." His eyes rested on me "I'm sorry Cricket."

I couldn't stand to see my big bear of a brother so sad. This whole thing was just so freakin out of control. I got up and threw myself at him. He caught me easily and hugged me so hard that I thought even my new bones would break. "I'm so, so sorry Cricket!"

I was still in Emmett's lap when Rose got up and went to Jasper. She stood in front of him for a minute unsure of her reception. When Jasper opened his arms to her she fell into them crying. They didn't say anything to each other he just rocked her in his arms while she cried.

We all sat that way for a long time before Carlisle spoke again "Well now that this misunderstanding is cleared up." He smiled at us all fondly. Esme looked much more relaxed seeing all her children getting along again. "Alice has some information"

Emmett moved us to sit on the floor with his back against the couch so I could snuggle into his lap more comfortably. We all turned to look at Alice. It was hard to tell over the web cam but I swear she winked at me. Yup I would have to call her later seeing as I was now together with her ex-husband. I didn't want there to be any hard feelings between us.

"So it's been difficult but I've been trying to keep tabs on Victoria now that we know she is gunning for us. From what I have seen she is somewhere in Texas and still travelling south. Currently she has two newborns with her and one older vampire. Things are still shifting too much for me to be able to tell when we can expect her but Jasper, it looks like she will be running into Maria sometime in the next two weeks." Alice looked worried and apologetic.

Jasper put his head in his hands and Rose rubbed his back in support. I looked over and I saw Peter rubbing his forehead. Charlotte just looked pissed.

Carlisle looked at Garrett and Kate "I take it I don't need to explain who Maria is?"

"I have travelled long enough through the States and fought in enough battles to have heard her reputation. I take it she is no fan of the Cullens?" Garrett raised his eyebrows

Kate smiled without humor "You could say that, more accurate would be saying she is no fan of the Whitlocks" She gestured to Jasper, Peter and Charlotte "She is their maker and leader of the Southern Texas Armies. Jasper, Peter and Charlotte are the only ones who have ever been able to desert her employ."

"So this is the direction that the threat will come from." Garrett's voice was calculating

I watched as three military men started exchanging speaking looks. They were formulating a plan.

Carlisle must have seen it too. "Well, I have a shift at the hospital tonight so we will leave you to it. Please let us know if we are to have any part in the plan. Alice will keep an eye on Victoria and Maria; she'll call you with any new developments." He looked between Jasper and I "Bella, Jasper; we are all very, very happy to see that you have worked things out between you. All we ever want is for our children to be happy and I can see that the two of you are." He gave us a last smile before goodbyes were shared between everyone.

The web cam was turned off and everyone sat in silence for a minute. I looked up at Emmett from my place in his lap and once I had his attention I quickly glanced at Jasper and back again. Come on ya big thug, say something!

Emmett rolled his eyes at me but spoke anyway "Hey Jazz?" Jasper looked up "I'm really happy about the thing with you and the Cricket here. I ahh...I couldn't hope for her to have anyone better."

Jasper smiled but didn't say anything. I elbowed Emmett in the stomach. Spit it out stupid! He rubbed his stomach where I had hit him and narrowed his eyes at me. I rolled mine. Yeah like I'm scared of you!
Emmett looked up at Jasper who was smirking slightly. "And I'm sorry for attacking you. I should have waited until I talked to the Cricket here before I reacted." Emmett hung his head for the next part "I'm most sorry for making you remember some of the worst times in your existence. I knew you were bad ass, but I never thought about the price you paid to get that way." He looked up at Jasper "I'm sorry brother."

Jasper stood and I rolled off Emmett's lap so he could stand to. I watched as they embraced quickly. I looked at Rose and rolled my eyes. Boys! Still too manly to give a proper hug. They broke apart and Emmett grinned. "So which one of you Mother Fu-"

Rose smacked the back of his head before he could finish the curse and gave him one of her signature death looks.

Emmett rubbed the back of his head but looked sheepish and tried again "So which one of you bad boys is gonna show me some of them cool fightin moves?" He looked between Garrett, Peter and Jasper in excitement.

He looked like such a big kid that we all laughed. I knew at that moment that our family would be just fine.

Plans were made for the next day for all of us to meet in the meadow and start training. I was excited; now I could start learning to fight. I wouldn't be the weak link in the family for much longer. And I couldn't wait to kick Emmett's ass!

Jasper felt my amusement and came over. He wrapped his arms around me and looked down with a smile. "What has you so excited and happy Angel?"

"I'm just looking forward tomorrow and having you teach me to fight" I gave him a grin and added silently "I'm gonna kick Emmett's ass!"

Jasper started to laugh and it transformed his whole face. I just stared at him loving how he looked at that moment. "Well I can tell you that we're all lookin forward to that one darlin" He chuckled again "But as for the fight trainin, I'm gonna start you off with Charlotte first then you will move on to either Peter or Garrett."

I frowned "Why not you?"

He looked down at me with a look of absolute tenderness and I felt his love sweep over me in a warm wave. "Angel I am gonna have a real hard time lookin at you as a target. My first instinct is to protect you, not attack you. I have to send you off with Charlotte somewhere I can't see or we may have a repeat of what happened today. Char can train you objectively and it is really good to learn a few different styles of fighting."

I saw his point and we really didn't want to make Jasper feel like he had to defend me again. I nodded "Okay Jas." I smiled up at him and then looked over at Charlotte who winked at me "It'll be fun!"

"Come on Angel. Lets go upstairs for awhile. I have something I wanna show you." I cocked an eyebrow at him. He looked appalled "God no! Not for that!" He was so embarrassed but I just laughed and took his hand.

"Come on cowboy, I was only teasing" I led him upstairs still laughing at him.

A/N: So I just want to say that I have some personal experience with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. It really is a serious condition and can totally take over your life. It takes a long time to get over it, if ever. I cannot imagine the things that our friends in the armed forces have experienced that cause them to suffer from this horrible mental condition. You may not agree with the wars that they are fighting but you have to admire them for the job that they do. No matter what country you live in or where you stand on the issue of the current wars in the world, please at least respect our service men and women for having the courage to do a job that can have lifelong repercussions.
Bella was still giggling when we reached the hallway outside our rooms. She sobered when she realized she had no idea why we came up here. I felt her confusion so I stepped in front of her and led her into my room. I watched as she walked over to the windows and then turned around to take a look at my room. It was smaller than hers but basically laid out the same only in reverse.

"We bought the same furniture" her mental voice was amused

"Yeah they're pretty close. Although mine isn't all girly like yours is." I couldn't help but tease her a little bit. I could tell that she was a bit nervous to be in my rooms. I walked farther into the room to stand by her. I made a point to leave the door to the hall open; I didn't want her to feel pressured into anything and the best way I knew to show it was to remove the illusion of privacy. Rose and Emmett could come upstairs at any time and they would see that nothing improper was going on. No matter how much I wished it was.

From what little Bella had let slip about her relationship with Edward I was pretty sure that my prude of a brother had barely touched her. I wasn't sure how many relationships that she'd had prior to Edward though and until I figured it out I wasn't willing to take any chances. She was my Angel and I would treat her as such.

Prior to Alice, my experiences with women were shameful. When I was first turned humans were given to me by Maria as a reward and for food; generally I would have sex with them if I was in the mood, killing them in the process. The female newborns and even some of the males used sex as a means to ingratiate themselves hoping that when the time came I might feel enough for them that I would spare their lives. They may have offered their bodies but their emotions made sure I knew that they were only using the sex as a bargaining chip. This meant that I had a never ending stream of people who did their best to pleasure me in any way I wanted.

In the beginning Maria made me have sex with her as a means of control. I was forced to please her in order to spare my life until she figured out my gift. For the first few times after she discovered my gift she made me increase her pleasure but I figured out that in this arena, I had the upper hand and she quickly grew tired of my games. By then I was too valuable to lose so I was placed in charge of training the newborns.

After almost 100 years of the counterfeit actions of the newborns and Maria's rewards, not to mention the never ending devastation of constant war; my depression was complete and I refused any sex at all. Hell I would have stopped feeding if I could have. Thankfully it was shortly after this that Peter and Charlotte came back for me. What all this meant was that I had 100 years of sexual experience and as much as I regretted much of it; when the time came I would use every minute of it to bring Bella more pleasure than she could ever dream of.

I was brought back to the present by Bella's mental question 'So what was it that you wanted to show me?'

I smirked at her and slowly walked over to her standing close enough so that every time she took a breath, her breasts brushed against my chest. I slowly leaned forward and reached behind her making sure to exhale a bit as I passed her ear.

I felt her desire spike and her breath hitch as I closed my hand around the neck of my guitar. When I straightened she looked a bit flustered and I felt her embarrassment. That was until she saw my face.

"You did that on purpose" she accused

"Not denyin it Angel. You smell delicious and I grab my opportunities when I can. Besides I wanted to show you my guitar." I gave her a small dose of the desire I was feeling for her.

I watched in hunger as her eyes closed briefly and she took a deep breath in. 'Jasper'

I used my fingers to push her hair off her shoulder and then lowered my nose to the notch in her neck. I very slowly ran my nose upwards to her ear inhaling the entire way. 'Mmmmm delicious'

I drew back and watched her eyes open. They were clouded with lust and the desire rolling off her was intoxicating. Not to mention the smell of her arousal. God I wanted this woman! I stepped back further to remove myself from the temptation of her body. I would be taking things with her very slowly; especially until I found out what experience she actually had.

She shook her head as if to clear it. 'It's a nice guitar. I didn't know you played' even her mental voice was shaky but I knew it was because her brain was still slightly clouded with lust. Join the club darlin.

"Well I'm not the musical prodigy that Edward is, but I have been playin' way longer than he has. My father taught me to play when I was human and it's one of the few things that I brought with me into this life." I wished that I had more tangible
things from my human life but being a soldier meant that I left all my things at home when I went to war. After my change I wasn't allowed to go back home.

'Just because you aren't the showoff he is, doesn't mean you should hide your abilities' she stated

I was surprised to hear her say something negative about Edward. I knew that she had mostly come to terms with how he had used her but to hear her openly call him a name, even one so mild, was progress.

She tilted her head and looked at me expectantly. 'Well? Is it only for decoration or are you actually going to play for me?'

I laughed and went to sit on the couch with my guitar and was happy when she sat beside me. I strummed the strings experimentally for a moment. I started to pick out a favorite tune of mine and I figured that Bella wouldn't recognize it. I had been listening to it a lot lately because it said so much about how I felt about Bella. I started to hum the lyrics and was surprised to hear Bella start to softly sing with me.

When the rain is blowing in your face  
And the whole world is on your case  
I would offer you a warm embrace  
To make you feel my love  
When the evening shadows and the stars appear  
And there is no one to dry your tears  
I could hold you for a million years  
To make you feel my love

I stopped the song after the first verse and looked at her 'I never would have pegged you for a country fan Angel'

'Renee went through a country phase and some of it stuck. I'm a huge Garth Brooks fan.' I could feel how much she missed her mom.

'What's she like?' I wanted to know everything about her. When she was human Edward kept her away from me. We really hadn't had a chance to get to know each other.

'Renee is eternally young at heart. She loves life and has to try everything at least once. She never sticks with anything but she's fun to watch.' She smiled sadly 'She's a free spirit that needs someone to anchor her, it used to be me but then she met Phil. He makes sure the bills are paid on time, the car is tuned up regularly, the house kept in good repair; he's so much better for her than Charlie was and I was her daughter. Phil grounds her without trying to change her and manages so much better than I did to stop her from trying some of the more dangerous hobbies out there.'

'She was your friend more than your mom.' No wonder Bella loved to come to our house all the time. Strange, how a coven of vampires was more of a stable family unit than her human family. Esme probably looked like a dream come true to Bella.

'She was pretty much my only friend until I moved to Forks and met Angela, Jessica and Alice. And Edward' she leaned her head on my shoulder and I stroked her hair.

Her mention of Edward worried me. I could feel longing from her but nothing that I would associate with her missing Edward specifically.

'I wish that we had gotten the chance to spend time together before. I used to look at you and think you looked so lonely.' Her voice was wistful

'Lonely? Bella I've never had so much support.' I was confused as to why she would think I was lonely

'Well maybe it was only when I was there but you were always apart. It seemed to me that the only thing connecting you to the Cullens was Alice. You always stood at the peripherals of the room; never joining the family.' She looked up at me 'Like I said it was probably just because I was there'

I thought about it and realized that she was right. I had always thought that the distance was because they were nervous around me because of my scars and my past but looking at it from Bella's point of view; maybe I had been partially to blame because I had set myself apart from them fearing their rejection. I hugged her to me a bit tighter 'You my Angel, are wise beyond your years.'

She smiled a bit 'Edward said that I was just really observant'

There it was again, that was twice in ten minutes that she had brought him up. 'Do you miss him?'

She sat up and looked at me. I made sure that my face didn't give anything away but I knew that we were attuned to each other's emotions and she might get something that way.

She brushed my hair out of my eyes 'I loved him Jas, I won't lie to you. Part of me will always love him, he was my first'
I pulled her back into my arms. 'I know you love me Angel but we have never really talked about how you're dealing with everything that happened.' I kissed her temple and started petting her hair again. I loved the silkiness of it running through my hands.

She sighed softly. "It hurts to think that I was fooled so easily, that I was so starved for affection that I believed everything he said and obeyed all his stupid safety restrictions." She paused. "But I think what bothers me the most is that I knew from the beginning that there was no way that someone like Edward could ever possibly love someone like me. There was no logical reason for him to love me the way he said he did.'

I went to protest but she stopped me. 'No Jas let me finish. I should have listened to my gut a bit more because when I was with him I never felt like his equal. I never felt inferior or unworthy when I was with Esme, Alice or Emmett. Even the time you and I spent together in Phoenix, I knew you were protecting me but you never made me feel like I was incapable, just in over my head.'

I didn't know what to say to that. I knew Edward could be an arrogant prick but I had hoped that in his attempt to convince Bella that he was in love with her that he would have kept his elitist tendencies to a minimum. But this brought me full circle to what their relationship had actually been like. I thought back to her anger in the forest when I had pushed her away because of my scars. 'Bella? When you got angry at me in the forest you said that Edward pushed you away whenever you kissed. What did you mean by that?'

I could feel her emotions rising again and I kissed her temple to try to reassure her. Anger, embarrassment and resentment bubbled up. 'He always said I was too breakable or it was too dangerous for me to get that close to his teeth.' She sighed. 'Now I think getting me all worked up and begging for any kind of affection was just another way to control me and stroke his ego. Not to mention I have already heard from him how unworthy I am of his attentions.' The last was laced with pure bitterness.

I was shocked and angry all at the same time. 'Are you telling me that Assward could manage to delicately stroke the keys on his beloved piano but he couldn't manage to get to second base with you? And you believed him?' Her spike in embarrassment was all the confirmation I needed. 'What about when you lived in Phoenix? You must have had boyfriends there?'

She laughed bitterly. 'Jas in Phoenix I was too shy, too smart, too pale, too clumsy and too plain to be noticed amongst all the tanned blonde cheerleader types. My high school was huge so no one noticed me. I barely had any friends never mind a boyfriend. Why do you think I fell so fast for Edward? He was the only one who had ever spared me a second glance. In his quest to figure out my thoughts I thought he genuinely loved me.'

No wonder my Angel was so self conscious. Fuckin Assward finally got something right. He didn't deserve to lick the dirt off her shoes and he could barely bring himself to kiss her. He would have used her inexperience as a tool to trap her further. My inner caveman was doing a very manly victory dance as I realized that Bella was untouched. The demon was salivating at the thought that she would be virgin tight for eternity. And she was MINE!

'Jasper!' I looked down at her and realized that she had mentally called me a couple of times but I had missed it in my completely chauvinistic internal dance of glee.

'Sorry Angel.' I tried to give her my undivided attention but I was finding it difficult to concentrate with the thoughts of all the dirty things I wanted to do to her and teach her. Give me a break. I hadn't had any kind of sexual experience in over two years!

She raised an eyebrow at me. 'Jasper. You are projecting all kinds of feelings the strongest of which is lust.' She looked down and I could feel and see her shyness. 'I love you and I want to be with you for eternity but…'

Oh yes I would be taking things with her very slowly. I would be as slow and patient as if I were gentling a wild mustang. She was my mate, my everything, and was worth using every ounce of my 150 years of experience to make sure she knew how loved and valued she really was.

I used my hand to tip her face up so I could look in her eyes. 'Bella, I love you too. I would never expect you to do anything that you aren't ready for. I respect you too much.' I gave a pointed look and a nod to the still open door. 'I'm very old fashioned in some ways, and while I am not like Edward in the whole never before marriage excuse, I have no intention of pressurin' you. And I definitely will not have our first time together in a house full of our nosy family.'

She giggled as Emmett slowly passed the open door for the third time in only an hour, curiosity coming out of his every pore. Each time he would quickly glance in to make sure that Bella was not being thoroughly debauched.

"Did you need something Em?" I couldn't help but let him know that he was busted.
To my surprise he came back and poked his head in the door "No. I mean...it was just so quiet up here!" He looked at Bella and I could feel his frustration "Cricket I love you but the silent conversations are really annoying"

Bella laughed and I delighted in the sound "Sorry Em but you know I kinda forget I'm doing it and it's much easier for Jasper and I this way."

"EMMETT!! Leave Jasper and Bella alone!! Now get down here and help me in the garage!" Rose sounded amused and angry all at the same time and I mentally thanked her.

"But Babe..." Emmett whined

"Now Emmett!" Rose commanded

"You better hurry up Em before she hides the new baseball equipment on you." Bella giggled at the flash of panic on his face

He huffed and stalked off muttering something about annoying mind readers and sassy little sisters.

I listened as my Angel laughed and luxuriated in the sound and feeling of her happiness. 'Aw Angel I would see you so happy for the rest of eternity.'

She quieted and looked at me. I could feel her desire growing; I put my guitar down and slowly took her in my arms. I loved the feel of her hair running through my fingers like fluid silk. I traced the contours of her face; her delicate cheekbones, the sweeping arch of her brows, the soft line of her jaw. I watched her eyes close and felt a small rumble from her chest; her first purr of pleasure. I trailed my fingers around the curve of her ear and down the graceful line of her neck. Her breaths increased reflexively as I ran the tips of my fingers across the softness of the exposed skin of her collar bones. I could feel her pleasure and desire sweeping over me in waves. My inner beast rejoiced knowing that I had made my mate feel this way.

She lay pliant and relaxed draped over my lap. I was stunned by the beauty of the woman who had given herself to me so trustingly. I was one of the most feared creatures on this continent and she loved and trusted me. I would never stop trying to be worthy of such a beautiful and pure creature.

Her golden eyes opened slowly and gazed at me clouded with desire. One pale hand cupped my cheek and her thumb ran lightly over my lips 'I love you Jasper'"I love you Angel"

A/N: Well I hope it was OK. I even threw in a bit of Zesty goodness. Please remember that Bella is a very innocent virgin and she is not about to jump into bed with a guy she has only been with for a few hours (no matter how hot he is) Not to worry! They may be taking the long road but it will be filled with zesty moments. Our Major has a few yummy plans up his sleeve.

Reviews make me write faster! I also have more outtakes planned so check back on my profile to see them.
**Chapter 17**: Chapter 17

A/N: As usual Twilight and all its characters do not belong to me they belong to the talented Stephenie Meyer – thank you for allowing me to play in your world

A/N: I want to thank the ladies over at Altered Lions and Sacrificial Lambs for their great reviews and shameless promotion of this story. Seriously these ladies are a group of very talented authors and betas so for them to recognize Insecurities was a huge compliment!! Check out their blog as they have some great recommendations of stories as well as fabulous punctuation, grammar and spelling tips. If you are not over 18 then this blog is not for you. But if you are then check it out! These ladies rock and I read everything they recommend.

I want to thank NCChris for the invitation to Twitter. Yes I am on there occasionally now and everyone was very happy to see me and very welcoming. Thanks Y'all!

Now enough about me - on with the Story!!

Jasper and I spent the rest of the night on his couch. Sometimes he would play for me and other times he kissed and touched me. Nothing we did was overly sexual but he made me feel cherished, loved, desired and beautiful. No one had ever made me feel the things that he did and he didn't even touch my skin other than what my clothes left exposed.

Note to self: Next time wear less clothing and close the bedroom door.

Sunrise came and with it the responsibilities of the day. Rose had stopped by on her way out to let us know that she and Emmett were going for a quick hunt before everyone met up for training.

I looked up to see Jasper looking down at me. 'I should go hunt too if I have to go and train with Charlotte this morning'

He cuddled me like a five year old does his favorite teddy and pouted 'Five more minutes'

I laughed at his obviously childish display. He sent me an evil grin and then started to tickle me mercilessly. We rolled around on the ground for a minute. I tried desperately to fight him off but I was laughing too hard to have the strength.

"I give! I give! Stop Jas! I give!" I gasped out laughing

He had me pinned underneath him and was straddling my waist. He had the most beautiful smile on his face and I could feel the love bouncing back and forth between us. He leaned down slowly and ran his nose up my jaw line before he kissed me softly on the lips.

"As much as I hate to break this up, my niece really needs to meet Charlotte for training and she needs to hunt before that."

If I were still human I would have blushed ten shades of red when I heard Peter's voice at the door. Jasper swore softly and then gave me an apologetic look before turning to Peter and growling.

"Aww knock it off Major you've been up here all night! You can have her back after she trains. Don't be such a baby." Peter turned and left and we could hear him laughing the whole way.

Jasper stood and then offered me his hand and pulled me carefully to my feet. He took me in his arms and put his forehead to mine 'I wish we didn't have to. I don't want to be separated from you all day.'

I reached up and ran my fingers over the nape of his neck and into his hair. 'I don't either but unless you've changed your mind about training me yourself, I need to go with Char.' I kissed him briefly 'I want to be able to help Jas. Everyone in the family needs to protect me right now and it puts all of us in danger. I need this.'

He drew back and looked down at me. I could feel his conflict 'I wish there was no reason for you to have to fight'

'And after this there won't be. Once we clear this thing up with Victoria and her stupid plan it will be you and me. We can do whatever we want and we don't ever have to be separated again.' I tried to calm him down as much as possible. I knew today would be the start of difficult times and he was going to need to be as strong and as calm as possible for us to have a chance at winning this fight.

'You and me?' His mental voice was hopeful and so much better than the conflict I had heard before

'Forever Jas. You and me, forever. I love you.' I stretched up and kissed him. Before I could pull back he had me crushed against his chest and he was ravaging my mouth. All rational thought left and I wrapped myself around him the best I could.

"ISABELLA MARIE! Hunt Now – Sex Later!" Peter yelled from outside

We broke apart and this time it was me that swore. I was going to KILL Peter! Jasper must have felt my anger and he choked back a chuckle. "Come on darlin, let's get this over with so I can have you back in my arms sooner."
I sighed as he pulled me out the door. When we got to the yard I walked towards where Peter and Charlotte were standing together "Come on Char let's leave the men to their games"

She grinned at me and turned to run into the forest; I followed quickly. As I ran past Peter I used my newborn speed and braced one of his feet and pushed his upper body. I heard him go down like a ton of bricks as I ran into the forest.

Jasper's laughter was the last thing I heard as I ran to catch up to Charlotte.

Rosalie and Kate found us just as we were finishing up our breakfast. We all ran to a large field near a lake. I looked at Charlotte "Well Yoda, how do we do this?"

Rose and Kate laughed at my Star Wars reference. Charlotte snorted "Gimme a break Bella, if I'm anyone it's Princess Leia! Everyone knows she was the brains of the operation. She was always having to save those boys from themselves!"

We all roared with laughter and I had to admit it was true. "So seriously. Where do we start?"

Charlotte looked thoughtful. "Well we all have different strengths so you'll get to benefit from all our experience. I was trained by Jasper as was Rose but since then I have fought beside Peter and learned a few other fighting styles. Kate lives with one of the original members of the Volturi so I would assume that she has skills as well."

Kate gave me a wry grin "Originally I was from a village in what is now known as Siberia. For the good of the whole clan men and women all fought in defense of our homes. Once I was turned I travelled extensively and have picked up much." She got an evil twinkle in her eye as she looked at all of us "I think we will manage to impress the men with our skills more if we all learn from each other yes?"

"I knew I liked the way you think! Hell yeah Bitch! Let's show those men a thing or two!" Rose was really excited and I could see why she and Emmett were such a good match. I laughed when she and Kate bumped fists.

Charlotte turned to me and smiled "I think that the easiest way to start would be with Tai Chi. Have you heard of it?"

I thought about it. "Yeah, my mom Renee went through a phase where she would drag me to the park every Sunday at the crack of dawn to participate in a group class offered through the local Rec Center. It only lasted three weeks before she found Yoga; that class started in the afternoon." I laughed at the memory "I was okay with the early mornings but Renee's more of a night owl than an early bird"

We all laughed a bit "But what does that have to do with learning to fight?" I really didn't see how the slow movements were in anyway related to fighting.

Charlotte explained "At its base Tai Chi is used as a meditation technique; and accurate, repeated practice of the routine will retrain posture, encourage circulation throughout the body, develop balance and maintain flexibility. The movements are done slowly but when they are sped up they're a defensive form of martial arts. Students are taught not to directly fight or resist an incoming force, but to meet it in softness and follow its motion while remaining in physical contact until the incoming force of attack exhausts itself or can be safely redirected." Charlotte grinned at me "And because we're vampires you should have this mastered fairly quickly. Then we can move onto other forms of martial arts."

Okay, I wasn't expecting to be turned into a ninja but this could be pretty fun. At least it would be something to occupy my now endless time. "Let's do it!"

By that afternoon we were all going through all the forms or positions of Tai Chi both as individuals and pairs in the push hands technique. I was actually having a lot of fun and I found that while I was concentrating on the movements it was easier to learn to use my new vampire brain and compartmentalize my thoughts. It was also easier to control my instincts because I was calmer and felt more centered. Wow, who knew learning to fight would have so many side benefits?

By the afternoon we all had pretty much mastered Tai Chi and Charlotte decided to move on to Judo "Because we're normally so much smaller than our opponents we can't rely on our strength alone in a fight. Speed and leverage works the best for us. Like Tai Chi we redirect force and use leverage to use our opponent's strength against him."

We all had a great time rolling each other all over the field for a few hours. Charlotte was teaching us all because none of us had ever learned this type of fighting before. I found out that Kate had a gift when Charlotte threw her a bit harder than she intended to and Kate's natural response kicked in. Next time she grabbed Charlotte, I heard a yelp of pain and saw the two girls jump apart. Kate was apologizing and Charlotte was rubbing her arm looking pissed.

"What happened? Char are you alright?" I had never seen a vampire in physical pain and I was worried.

"Yeah I'm fine." She looked grumpily over at Kate "What the hell Kate? What was that? I can't defend myself against that"

I looked over at Rosalie and she looked just as bewildered as me.

Kate spoke up. "I'm sorry Char, really." Kate looked over to Rose and I to explain "I have the ability to generate an electrical current and shock an enemy through touch. It will not incapacitate them, and I cannot throw it, but it stops me from getting physically restrained."

I looked at Rose when her face lit with understanding "I forgot that you're able to do that. Is it a physical or mental thing?"
Kate shrugged "I am not sure. Does it matter?"

Rosalie got a calculating look on her face as she looked over at me. Uh oh.

"Well the Cricket here is a shield in addition to her partial telepathy. She can repel both physical and mental attacks. Bella do you realize that when Emmett was about to hit Jasper with the boulder you projected your physical shield to cover him at a distance? That's what stopped the rock."

I didn't like to think about the events of yesterday so it was no surprise that I couldn't remember doing it. "Are you sure Rose?"

"Positive. Then you ran right through it to get to Jazz. It kept everything out but you." She was looking rather calculating and I wasn't sure I liked the look.

"What are you up to Rose?"

"Well my dear little sister. Jasper wants us to train you to fight so I think we should work on ALL your skills not just the fight training." She looked to Charlotte and Kate for back up and the traitors both got matching smirks and nodded their heads.

Kate must have seen my hesitation and sobered "You need this cousin. We are not sure what will happen when it actually comes down to a fight. Would you not like to know that you will be able to protect your mate and your family?"

Damn it! The Russian witch had me. I hated the fact that I was the weak link in the family! Everyone always had to protect Bella. In fact I had needed to be protected more now as a vampire than I had as a human. I refused to be the weak link anymore!

"Alright, but I want to keep this between us for now. In case you all hadn't noticed, Jasper's a bit protective and if he thinks I'm draining myself by using my gift he's going to be difficult." I didn't want to have him worry more about me than he already did. We all needed him to be focused for the battle ahead. Jasper was the only one who could lead us and we all knew it.

"No problem Cricket. We'll just switch our hunting patterns to the evenings instead so you go home looking and feeling strong. Jazz will never know until you have control and are ready." I love that Rose has my back. I walked over and gave her a hug.

"So now we have a plan. In the mornings we'll work on physical training and in the afternoons we'll work on Bella's gifts. Evenings before dark we'll all hunt." Charlotte looked around to see if we agreed.

"You know Char, I think you've been hanging out with the military brothers a bit too much. You're starting to sound like a drill sergeant." Kate and I giggled at the dry tone in Rose's voice.

"Whatever Rose!" Charlotte flipped her hair and turned to me. "Feel like learning to project your field?"

"What did you have in mind Char?" I really wasn't sure how this was going to work.

"Well the way I figure it, we get Kate to shock either Rose or I and you try to stop it from a distance." I REALLY didn't like the sound of that

"Alright, so if I understand Bella's gift correctly we first need to find out if my gift works mentally or physically. Yes? She needs to know what kind of protection to extend." Kate was matter of fact and I knew there was only one way to test it

"So I have to let you try and shock me first is what you're saying." I was SO not liking this plan.

Kate smiled at me "I have control over the volume of electricity that I distribute. Do not worry cousin, I will use only the minimum amount necessary, I promise."

Charlotte looked at me in sympathy "Sorry Bella but it's the only way. Just think of it this way, it may hurt but at least it can't kill you. Besides we're next." She pointed at herself and Rose

"Great Char. Thanks." I deadpanned "Alright Kate let's get this over with"

Kate stepped up to me "Just the minimum, I promise" She put her hand on my arm and there was – nothing

"Seriously Kate – just do it already the suspense is killing me" As a human I had a high pain tolerance but the whole, anticipation of voluntary pain thing, turned me into a big chicken.

"Bella I am shocking you. You should be on the ground by now. I have even turned up the volume – so to speak. Are you still feeling nothing?" Kate sounded frustrated

"No – nothing" I knew that this was an experiment but I was ridiculously happy that I wasn't in pain right about now.

"Okay Cricket, are you using the physical or mental shield?"
"I don't know Rose. I didn't even know she was doing anything" This may be harder than we thought.

Kate released my hand and looked thoughtful. I looked at Charlotte when she stepped up "Do it again Kate I want to take a good look at Bella right as you touch her."

Kate went to touch me again as Charlotte watched my arm carefully "Yes!" Charlotte looked up at me "It's physical. Right when she touched you I saw the faintest of blue shimmers" She looked at the other two "I think she pulls the physical shield so close to her body that you can't really see it" She looked back at me "Now you just need to figure out what you did to encase Jasper from a distance."

Rose looked thoughtful "A better question is; when Bella projects her shield, does it leave her unprotected or can she do multiple objects at the same time?"

Crap this was going to be a long day. I thought about what happened when I tried to protect Jasper. "Okay so I think I have an idea of what I did but that means someone has to get zapped. Who's up first?"

Rose stepped up "I am."

I REALLY didn't like this plan. I watched as Kate stepped up to Rose "Lowest setting cousin."

Kate reached out and touched Rosalie as I concentrated. I watched in horror as Rose stiffened and dropped to her knees. Kate snatched her hand back quickly "Sorry!"

I stepped up to hug Rose "I'm Sorry!"

Rose shook her head "I knew you wouldn't get it on the first try Cricket"

Crap!!! I was supposed to be protecting my family not causing them more pain. I helped Rose to her feet. After four more unsuccessful attempts Rose said that she had had enough and Charlotte stepped up. After another six tries I was seriously upset. My family was getting hurt because I wasn't able to do something I had already proven I could. I wanted to cry.

Kate looked over at me in annoyance "What are you waiting for Bella you can do this! Do you like seeing your sister in pain?"

"I'm doing the best I can Kate." What the hell? She thinks I'm not trying?! "And NO I hate seeing them in pain but I don't know how to do it!"

I saw her look at Rose in speculation "Maybe you just need better incentive."

"What are you talking about Kate? What are you planning?" I was worried she was standing right beside Rosalie and even with my new speed I wouldn't get there soon enough to stop Rose from getting shocked again

She looked at Rose with a mean look on her face "Sorry cousin, this is REALLY going to hurt!"

I saw her hand reach out and I knew that she was going to hit Rose with everything she had "NO!"

There was a flash and Kate's hand hit a solid wall of blue. I was pissed! "WHAT THE HELL KATE?!"

She shrugged "It is only Rosalie. She understands"

I stalked over to her ready to hit her. Why was she being so cavalier about this?! She could have really hurt Rose. Before I could react her hand jerked up and went to grab me. Again there was a flash and she was stopped by the wall of blue between us.

Kate got a very self satisfied smirk on her face and she crossed her arms. "See Charlotte, I told you she could do it."

"You played me." I couldn't believe it! That Bitch!

Charlotte saw the look on my face and was wary "Easy Little One. No one got hurt. Rose is fine see." She pointed and I saw Rose still encased in a blue shimmering bubble. "You protected her Bella. It worked, you protected your sister."

"YOU PLAYED ME! You were going to hurt her, really hurt her! WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH YOU!!" I was furious! I wanted to kill Kate! I watched as her hands came up and she started to back away. She was looking down at the ground. I was slowly stalking her movements. She called herself our cousin. Real family wouldn't be so quick to cause someone they loved pain. She enjoyed it!

"Bella honey, I'm okay. You stopped her Cricket calm down. You have to calm down before Jasper feels your emotions. You don't want him to get upset do you?" Rose's voice was calming

Jasper. I stopped hunting Kate and looked back towards the house. Jasper would be worried. I didn't want him to feel me like this. I took a couple of deep breaths.
"Come here Cricket. It's okay. I'm okay." I looked over at Rose she had her arms out. I sighed and went to her. The two shields melted into one and she hugged me. "I'm so proud of you" she whispered into my hair.

She rocked me for a few minutes as I calmed down. "Bella, Kate wouldn't have hurt me. She only made you think that. We needed to find out if you could really do it or if it was only something you could do with Jasper." She drew back and held my face in her hands "Bella, you can help protect the whole family now. That's what you wanted right?"

I nodded

"Bella," I looked over at Charlotte she had Kate in her arms, she was clearly upset.

"I really would not have hurt her Bella. You and Rosalie are my family. I am sorry." Kate looked really apologetic.

I kept taking deep unnecessary breaths. I knew it had to happen. I needed to know what I was capable of and if it took these women, my sisters, pushing my buttons I would do it a million times over if it meant that I would be able to help save my family.

I dropped my shield "It's okay. I'm sorry I lost it. You're only trying to help me."

"We all forget that you're still a newborn Bella. You act like a much older vampire so it's easy to forget that your emotions are still volatile." Charlotte was looking at me with a mix of apology and pride in her eyes. "You did so well! You even shielded yourself!"

"Just think of the look on the guys faces when they get theirasses handed to them by a bunch women." Rose's face had an evil grin on it and I couldn't help it. I started to laugh.

We laughed together for a long time releasing the pressure of the afternoon. We all fell silent after awhile and sat relaxing in the beautiful fall afternoon sunshine. "Guys? I think I've had enough for today. Can we hunt and then go home?"

Rose looked at my eyes and they must have been darker than they should have been "Absolutely!" She hugged me and then we all got to our feet and faded into the forest.

An hour later we got back to the house but it was empty. Apparently the guys were still out training somewhere. I excused myself and went up to my room. After taking a shower and getting into some comfortable sweats I decided to call Alice. I booted up my computer and used the web cam to call Forks.

The next minute the screen was filled with a smiling Pixie "Hello sister dear!"

"Hi Alice" I wasn't sure what to say to her now that I was with her ex-husband. I didn't want to lose her as friend and sister but if I had to choose between her and Jasper. Well, it was no contest – Jasper was my life now.

"Oh Bella, don't look like that. I'm happy for you and Jazz! I knew it was going to turn out!" She was practically bouncing in her seat.

"You saw us together?" When did she see us together? A new thought occurred to me "You didn't divorce Jasper because you saw us together did you?" Dear God, please say no.

"Of course not silly! Decades ago when I was first turned I saw visions of Jasper. I knew I had to find him and that we would be best friends and find the Cullens together. We both knew that we weren't mates. I had seen him loving a dark haired vampire. She was beautiful; long chocolate brown hair and golden eyes. I couldn't see her features clearly but I knew that she would be his everything." She was looking at me with a small smile on her face clearly happy to be able to share her vision finally.

"Jasper and I got divorced because it was time. I'll be meeting my mate next year and Jasper and I haven't been living as man and wife for over two years. It was just silly to stay married. Then when Jasper bit you I saw it clear as day. The woman in my vision of Jasper so long ago, was you. I had already seen you as a vampire only the timing and circumstances were missing. I'm so happy you're his bonded mate"

I felt a rush of warmth at her words. Jasper and I were meant to be together; Alice had seen us together before I was even born. I knew I loved Jasper and nothing was going to change that but to have it confirmed by Alice was just icing on the cake.

Then something else she had said drifted back in to my mind. Bonded Mate. I had heard that term before. Garrett had called me Jasper's bonded mate "Alice what's a bonded mate?" I knew there was a difference between a spouse and a mate and now here is a whole new term. God would I ever learn everything I needed to know?

"A bonded mate is the rarest form of mate for our kind. The only other living pair I have heard of is Carlisle and Esme. Marcus of the Volturi had a bonded mate named Didyme but she was killed. Bonded mates are bonded by venom. One mate is responsible for changing the other. Carlisle changed Esme when he found her all but dead in the morgue that day. And Jasper changed you after….well you already know that story." She paused but could see I was fascinated and continued
"Normally we find our mates when they're already vampires. Rosalie and Emmett could have been bonded mates but Rose didn't have the control yet to actually taste Emmett's blood to change him so Carlisle had to do it. You and Jasper are very lucky to be a bonded pair." She looked happy enough to burst

"But Edward bit me too." I couldn't help but ask about it. I loved that Jasper and I had such a close bond and didn't want anything to change that.

Alice's face fell "Bella, Edward didn't bite you to change you. He bit you to feed from you. When we feed there's only minimal venom in the wound by the time we're done because we've sucked the majority of it out as we feed. Edward had taken so much blood that, had Jasper not bitten you to push his venom in as quickly as he did, your heart would've probably given out long before your body could actually change. There is no doubt in my mind that Jasper's the one who changed you."

So Jasper had literally saved me. I thought about everything she had said. I felt better knowing that she was truly happy for Jasper and I. "Won't this be weird though Alice? I mean he's your ex-husband."

She laughed "Please Bella! This doesn't even begin to compare to some of the crazy relationships that humans get themselves involved in. I mean really! Have you watched any daytime talk shows lately?"

I laughed too and everything was okay. She razzed me about my sweats a bit until I told her that they were Lulu Lemon. I couldn't believe it when

I got to introduce her to a new line of clothes. We were discussing her trip to one of their stores when Jasper walked in.

He bent down and kissed my temple 'Hi Angel'

He looked up at the screen "Hi Alice."

She waved "Hi Jazzy! I saw some of your training today, you and Peter are fun to watch."

He chuckled "Have you seen any more about Victoria or Maria?"

She shook her head "Nope. Sorry Jazz, Victoria's still on the move. Her newborns are giving her problems so she isn't moving as fast as she would like."

"Okay sweetheart. Keep me posted?" I really didn't like him calling her sweetheart

"Yeah Jazz!" She looked at me. "I'll talk to you later Bells. I wanna check out the web site for Lulu Lemon. I gotta make sure you're not pulling my leg with all the hype!"

I laughed as we all said our goodbyes.

Jasper pulled me out of my chair so he could take it and put me in his lap. "You wanna tell me why I felt a spike of jealousy as I was talking to Alice?"

I twisted my fingers a bit "I don't know Jas I mean I know you love me but I just couldn't help it when you called her Sweetheart"

I was expecting him to laugh but instead he hugged me to him and kissed my forehead. 'Angel, can you think of a better name for Alice? She has the kindest heart of almost anyone I've ever met'

He did have a point. I looked up at him 'Forgive me?'

'Nothin' to forgive Angel. This is all pretty new to the both of us. Just talk to me okay?'

I loved the feel of his hands running through my hair 'Okay'

"So, how was your day darlin? I felt you get angry at one point. I was worried and would've come to see you but Peter told me to wait. What happened?" I could see the concern in his eyes and cursed myself for not controlling my emotions better

I really didn't want to lie to him. Not to mention he would know it if I did because of his gift. "It was good. Charlotte taught us Tai Chi and then Judo but we got a bit carried away with the Judo. Kate pissed me off and set off my stupid newborn reactions. Did you know she can shock people through touch?" At his nod I continued "I'm sure it'll happen again at some point so I guess you're going to have to just learn to ignore it when you know I'm training."

He frowned so I stroked his cheek and then ran my fingers through his hair "You know we have to do this. I really did have fun today."

His frown melted away and he lowered his lips to mine. 'Not too much fun I hope. I hate to think of you having fun without me'

I ran my hands around the back of his neck and pushed them up into his hair. His lips moved to my jaw and trailed down my neck.

"God Jasper" my voice came out a harsh whisper as he lightly nipped his way across my collarbone to the hollow in my
throat. I felt one of his hands glide from my back to my ribcage and I shuddered when I felt his hand ease under the bottom of my t-shirt and touch my bare skin. I raised my head needing to feel his lips on mine again.

His hand left a trail of fire and I let out a moan when his thumb brushed the underside of my breast. At my moan I felt his tongue invade my mouth and when I welcomed it he let out a groan of his own. My back arched when I felt his finger tips graze my nipple through my bra and my hands fistied in his blonde curls when he palmed my whole breast. My back relaxed when my breast got the weight and friction I so desperately needed and Jasper purred when my hip ground into his lap.

‘God Angel!’ He scooped me up and then we were on the bed. I loved the feel of his weight pressing into me. I could feel him hard against my hip and I let out a gasp and arched up into him when I felt his fingers curve under my bra and brush my bare nipple. He repositioned himself between my legs and I felt his hardness press into my center.

Both his hands were roaming across the bare skin under my shirt as his tongue and lips explored my neck and shoulders. My arms were wrapped around his back and I tried to pull him closer to me. His kisses slowed and became more tender ‘Angel we have to stop. We’re not ready for this yet’

Was he kidding? ‘Please Jas’

‘Bella darlin, I don’t want our whole family to hear you scream when I make you cum for the first time.’

I tried to calm my desire when I realized that he was right. I really didn't want to hear about it from Emmett and I wouldn't be able to face Peter and Garrett.

I rolled to the side needing a bit of space to calm down. I knew Jasper was struggling just as much as I was and it made me feel a bit better.

He sighed ‘Angel I’m goin to go and get cleaned up. Can I come back when I’m done?’

I rolled back to look at him. ”Of course. I love you Jas.”

"I love you too Angel” He kissed my forehead and was gone.

I had to figure out a way to get my family out of the house.

A/N: Well there was a bit of lemony goodness for you and I promise there will be a half naked wet Major in the next chapter. All you drooling smut fans will just have to enjoy the foreplay for a while longer :) 

Cold lemonade for everyone who is a bit overheated. *gestures to the fairys to pass out the glasses* Reviews make me write faster. Do be afraid to tell me what you would like to see. It may make it in or not or you may see it over in the outtakes.
A/N: As usual Twilight and all its characters do not belong to me they belong to the talented Stephenie Meyer – thank you for allowing me to play in your world

A/N: Just a bit of fun fluff and senseless eye candy.

I kissed Bella goodbye and watched her take off with the girls like I have every morning for the last seven days. I ran my fingers through my hair in frustration. Things with Bella couldn't be better. Well they could be better but I couldn't seem to come up with a plausible reason for them to all leave.

"Come on Jazz!" Emmett beckoned to me as he and Peter took off into the forest to head to our training field.

Garrett appeared beside me "Ready?"

If he only knew. One look from Bella and I was more than ready for her. Unfortunately that wasn't what Garrett was asking. I looked at him in time to catch him trying to smother a chuckle. Okay so the bastard did know how ready I was. "Shut up."

I could hear him laughing behind me as I ran into the forest. I broke off for a hunt before I headed to the field. We really didn't need to train all day every day but it was a good way to pass the time. Usually Peter and I would plan out battle strategies and Garrett would work with Emmett. Later Peter and Garrett would trade off and Garrett would look at the scenarios that Peter and I had come up with.

Garrett, Peter and I all had practical battle experience so Emmett was the one who was really training all day. Fortunately he loved it.

I had just finished draining a moose when my cell phone rang. "Hey Ali. What's up?"

"That's Ali the Magnificent to you! I have called with the answer to your deepest desires." She announced

I chuckled "And what do I desire Alice?"

"Tsk Tsk Jasper. You must acknowledge my greatness before I bestow the gift of my knowledge to lesser beings" Her laughing tone had me ready to play along. She only ever got this bizarre when she had hatched one hell of a plan.

"Oh great and powerful Ali the Magnificent what pearls of wisdom do you have to gift us poor undeserving cretins?" Yeah it was over the top but that's how we were.

"AH! Perfect! I have devised a plan for you to get my poor virginal and sexually frustrated little sister all to yourself." Her tone was smug but if she managed it I would buy her the full spring collection from her favorite designer.

She must have seen my decision "Ooh! Jazzy!!! I'll let you know what designer and how much once you witness the genius that is my plan!"

I laughed and shook my head. The pixie was incorrigible but she was always right "What's the plan Ali?"

"Well! Christmas is coming and since Bella can't do her shopping herself someone will have to pick-up everything she buys online. Not to mention it but; don't you also have two rather large trucks that still need to be taken back to the rental depot in Timmins?"

My God she was a criminal mastermind. "Thank God you are on our side Alice cause I wouldn't ever want to have to go up against you."

She laughed "Yup! So here is the full plan. Rose, Emmett and Kate will need to drive the two 5 tons as well as your truck. Someone will have to convince Garrett to go but somehow I think he will volunteer. And then a reason for Peter and Charlotte would be Christmas shopping."

I grinned. Kate and Garrett had been spending more and more time together and it wouldn't be too long before everyone realized it.

"The best part of the plan is that Esme, Carlisle and I will be joining you for the holidays!" I could practically hear her bouncing over the phone

"That's great Alice! It would be awesome to have the family all together for Christmas. Christmas – shit! I rubbed the back of my neck in agitation. What the hell was I going to get Bella for Christmas? I hadn't forgotten that she hated people spending money on her and I didn't think that would've changed when she became a vampire.

Alice's chiming laugh filled my ear "Oh Jazzy! I've had your gift for Bella for months! Don't worry! All Powerful Alice the Magnificent has all the answers!"

I chuckled "Oh Yeah? If you have all the answers then what's Bella getting you for Christmas?"
"Oh real mature Jasper!" She huffed

I couldn't help myself. "Oh come on Ali! This will be the first time in 90 years that you'll be surprised when you get one of your gifts."

"I don't like surprises." She grumbled

"Hey Ali," I didn't feel right about Alice getting my gift for Bella "I really want to pick out Bella's Christmas gift. I want to get her something special, something that is just from me."

There was silence on the other end for a moment "Jasper. If you could get her anything she wanted what would it be?"

I let out a breath as I thought. Bella needed so much. She lost everything when Edward attacked her. Her parents, her life, her friends – and then it came to me. Alice of course saw my decision.

"You really should've just trusted me because I saw us having this conversation months ago. I already have everything together and wrapped up. And because I saw it in advance it was still your idea, I just did the acquiring." The smug tone was back in her voice.

I shook my head "Well it's a good thing that I thought of it all those months ago then" yeah it was sarcastic but sometimes Alice's gift was a double edged sword.

"You're welcome!" she sang "Well I am off to finish my Christmas shopping! I have so much to do! Bye Jazzy!"

"Bye Alice" I couldn't help but laugh as I hung up the phone. The pixie was good. There was no denyin it.

I jogged off to meet my brothers at the training field for the rest of the day. I had a plan to put in action.

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Later that evening my brothers and I headed back to the house to meet up with the girls. When we got there they still weren't home yet so I headed up to my room to shower and change.

I had been fighting Peter today as he was the only one who had a hope in hell of beating me when Emmett had jumped in to actually challenge me. Two on one was a nice change but then Garrett had joined in the fray. Three against one was something that I had not had the pleasure of testing myself with in decades and we fought for hours. Add to that two guys with extensive battle experience and I actually had to work. I beat them – barely. We were going to do it again tomorrow and start to switch off who was being picked on. And tomorrow they were going to let me use my powers. I couldn't help the evil grin that spread across my face.

I stood under the steaming hot spray of the shower and let it warm my skin. I was as close to tired as a vampire could get.

'You feel exhausted Jas. Are you ok?' Bella's mental voice was like a warm caress in my mind.

'Yeah darlin, we just worked really hard today is all. Where are you?' I could tell she wasn't in or around the house.

'Ummm I'm about 3 miles east of the house. We're on our way back. Are you sure you're okay?' I could feel her worry

'Nothin' this shower and you in my arms can't fix.' Images of her naked in my shower with me threatened to cause a different kind of tension.

'Hmmm Jas was that spike of lust for me? Whatever has you thinking such thoughts?' She teased

'I think you know Angel.' I climbed out of the shower and sent her an image of me looking in the mirror. I made sure that I was still dripping wet and the towel was just barely tucked in low around my waist, clearly exposing my abs and the V of my hips. I knew she liked my body and the spike of lust that I felt from her confirmed it.

'Oh you are a very bad boy' She purred 'Payback's a bitch Cowboy and this is one game I plan to win'

I couldn't help but get aroused when she called me Cowboy. I decided to buy her a pair of cowboy boots for Christmas and a hat. My fantasies almost forced me to go back in the shower and turn on the cold water. Not that it would do any good. I sighed and got dressed.

A couple of minutes later I both felt and heard Bella and the girls come home. Seconds later there was a knock at my door and Bella came in.

"Awww you're dressed already" She said with a sexy smirk.

She had gotten bolder with all the time that we had been spending together at night over the last week. We had been pushing our boundaries a little but the only clothing that had been discarded so far had been our shirts. The memory of her spread out on my bed without her shirt drifted through my mind. She had looked and felt amazing with her breasts pressed firmly into my naked chest. Her skin was the finest porcelain and glowed softly in the moonlight coming through the
windows. I loved when she had arched her back to press her chest into my waiting lips as they caressed her collarbones and breastbone.

She walked in the room and flowed into my arms so I could kiss her deeply. ‘Sorry darlin but once I get you naked it won't be just to shower and we'll be busy for days’

‘Soooo... Why are you dressed again?’ I could hear the lust in her voice and feel it lapping against my senses.

‘Because, you have some serious shopping to do. Nowlet's get downstairs; I have a surprise for the whole family.’ I tried to reason with her as she was slowly stroking my tongue with hers. God she was driving me insane. I tore myself from her mouth.

Her brows furrowed as she looked at me “Shopping? What's the surprise Jas?” god she was cute when she pouted

I took that wonderfully pouting lower lip between mine and nibbled on it gently. ‘Hmmmm if I told you Angel then it wouldn't be a surprise now would it?’

She drew back and kissed her way up my jaw line to my ear where she traced the ridges with her tongue "Please Jasper. Tell me" She was drowning me in her desire

The slight wind from her breathless whisper sent tremors through my body and my eyes closed in pleasure. My determination was slipping “Angel. You wouldn't want to ruin it for me would you? Please don't make me tell you” I was practically begging. I knew I would if she really wanted to know. I couldn't deny her anything.

She sighed and I felt her acceptance "Alright. But you are going to tell us right after my shower” she gave me a stern look.

"Well what are you waitin for? Shower woman!” she giggled and I watched as she flitted off to her room to get cleaned up

"Hey Guys!! Family meeting in the great room in 15 minutes.” I hadn't needed to raise my voice and I heard a response from at least one half of each couple.

I was waiting downstairs when Bella sent me a mental image of her naked form through a steamy shower door. She was looking at her profile in the mirror over her shoulder and had a sexy smile curving her lips. Her hair was twisted up in a knot on top of her head; some tendrils had escaped and were plastered wet to her cheeks. I watched breathless as she ran the loofa over her shoulder and a trail of foam ran slowly down her spine where it disappeared around the curve of her ass, obscured by the condensation on the door.

"You had better wipe that look off your face before her brother or uncle, come downstairs.” I was shaken from my vixen's naughty thoughts by Garrett's amused voice. I looked up at him and he was leaning against the hearth of the fireplace with his arms crossed over his chest.

I shifted suddenly uncomfortable in my jeans. "Bella” I growled out and echoed in my thoughts

‘I told you Cowboy, paybacks a bitch’ Her sexy mental giggle along with the image had me shifting in my seat trying to adjust myself

Garret chuckled "I take it she was playing with her telepathy again?"

I shot him a distinctly un-amused look which of course only made him laugh.

"She is a singularly amazing woman. Treasure her Jasper; you will not ever find another like her. Her heart is pure and giving and she brings joy wherever she goes." He looked up towards her rooms "I consider myself lucky to have met her and earned her friendship"

I studied his emotions worried slightly but found only brotherly affection and longing?

"I think you'll find she thinks of you as rather more than a friend Garrett. You may have made her nervous in the beginning but she truly views you as a part of the family. As do I." I would have spoken more but I was distracted when Peter and Charlotte came down stairs.

I looked back at Garrett and he was deep in thought but I felt hope coming from him.

It wasn't long before we all settled ourselves comfortably around the room and everyone was waiting for me. Bella had winked at me and gone to sit beside Peter. The little tease.

"I got a call from Alice today and she let me know that she, Carlisle and Esme will all be travelling here to spend the holidays with us.” I announced

As I thought everyone was really excited. I looked at Bella who was bouncing and talking animatedly to Rose and Charlotte. Carlisle normally volunteered to work at the hospital so that the human doctors could be at home with their families. This would be the first Christmas since Alice and I joined the family that we would all be together to celebrate.
"Angel." As soon as she heard me say her name she danced over to me and threw her arms around me. 

"I can't wait to see them! I've missed them so much!" I loved to see her this happy

"So now you know why you need to get shopping." I turned to everyone else "I also have a plan." They all heard the deviousness in my voice and they stopped to listen.

"We all know that Alice can't see Bella or any of us as long as Bella's around. Now normally this is a bit of a problem so I propose to turn this negative into a positive. We have Bella buy our gifts for us." I looked at Rose to see if she would figure out where I was going with this

She didn't let me down and she got an evil smirk on her face "We all give Bella a list of possible gifts that we would like to get Alice, and Bella picks one and buys it online for us. None of us knows what she actually picked, which means that even if we're away from her there will have been no decision made and Alice won't be able to see it."

Emmett started to do a cheesy little dance and sing "We get to surprise the pixie! We get to surprise the pixie!"

Bella joined in and they were soon dancing and skipping around the room together as we all laughed. It was completely ridiculous to see someone as large as Emmett skipping.

I soaked up the absolute joy in the room like a sponge. For an empath, being around such a large group of vampires could be difficult. The pure happiness I felt was like being immersed in a hot bath. I loved seeing my family and my mate so happy.

Peter scooped Bella up in his arms as she went to dance past him "Our first Christmas as a family Little One! What do you want? The moon? The stars? Name it and it's yours!"

Bella hugged him tightly "All I want is to spend some time with you and Charlotte. Where ever, however. But I want for Jasper and I to spend at least two weeks with you guys."

I felt Peter's emotions well up and I was unable to name the different feelings that made up the whole. Pride, gratitude and happiness were at the forefront and I knew Bella had just given him the best gift she could have ever come up with. Peter and Charlotte had lived most of their immortal lives as nomads and were quite lonely at times. I was their only real family and now my Angel had been the catalyst for change. They were now a part of a large and loving family.

She was our gift we were all very lucky to have found her and received her unconditional love and acceptance.

Peter hugged her and then released her when she wiggled. She bounced over to Garrett and Kate. "You guys are staying right?" She looked at Garrett "I need help finding the perfect Christmas tree for when Esme gets here."

I watched as yet another vicious bloodthirsty vampire became putty in her hands and looked at her like she hung the moon.

"Miss Bella, we will find the biggest, most majestic tree in the forest for you to decorate I promise" his voice was quiet but full of emotion.

She bounced up and kissed him quickly on the cheek before skipping back to my side. I hugged her to me and pressed a kiss to her temple.

Charlotte clapped her hands to get our attention "We need a plan. We have six people, a ton of gifts and decorations to buy and two of us can't go into town. We also have two 5 ton trucks that have to be returned."

Kate shrugged "So Garrett and I will take one truck. Peter and Charlotte take the other and then Rose and Emmett can follow in Jasper's truck so we have something to bring all the gifts back in. Jasper will of course stay here with Bella. Yes?"

This was beyond easy! I didn't even have to bring it up. Peter eyed me and I saw a knowing smirk cross his face. Damn it that guy always knew. One of these days I would figure out how he did that.

"Sounds like a great plan to me. Now is two days enough time for everyone to get their shopping done and come up with options for Alice's gifts?" Charlotte looked around and everyone nodded.

"Come on Jas!! You have to help me pick out a gift for Carlisle." My angel grabbed my hand and dragged me back upstairs to her room. And I just knew it wouldn't be to mess around. I sighed, at least it would be as bad as shopping with Alice.
little chapters as they are bits of peace in a malestrom of crap that will be unfolding.
Okay so dragging my exceedingly hot mate upstairs to go online shopping was an excuse. I mean it wasn't. I really did need to shop for everyone's gifts but I was really hoping that I would be able to get some alone time with Jasper.

Yeah right! Thanks to Jasper's BRILLIANT plan my family was knocking on my door every 10 minutes with questions and ideas about this or that. Garrett and Peter were the worst and I swear they were doing it on purpose so that Jasper and I couldn't have any alone time. I loved them both but I swear I already had an over protective brother and add to that two cockblocking uncles and I was ready to set the two of them on fire!

Problem was I couldn't prove it. They were the two newest members to the family along with Charlotte so they needed lots of gift ideas from Jasper and I for family members that they hadn't met yet. Because I had been working with the girls so much on my training it was easier for them to just project a thought at me instead of invading my room.

The boys however ended up spending the night lounging around in my room tossing ideas back and forth. By morning I was ready to tear my hair out, destroy Emmett's video game collection, hide the few possessions that Garrett had, and get Charlotte mad at Peter so he wouldn't get sex for a week!

Jasper looked at me feeling my frustration and sharing it. I kissed him goodbye and fled the house with the girls on my heels.

Kate shot me an amused look "Is everything alright Bella? You look a little stressed."

The other two witches snickered behind me. Well Katie dear you asked for this one. "Well Cousin if you would take care of Garrett they way he wants you to, then maybe he wouldn't have the time to weasel his way into keeping Jasper and I out of each other's beds." Yup I outed her. She and Garrett thought they were being so sneaky with the longing looks and subtle touches. Insert mental eye roll here. They weren't fooling any one.

She stopped dead in her tracks "I do not know what you are talking about. Garrett is nothing to me. He is just an acquaintance. Part of the extended family."

Charlotte and Rose burst out laughing as I smirked "Sure Katie and I turn into a human every full moon." Cue the sarcasm.

"Please. We do not think of each other that way. You are mistaken in your observations." She tried to go for casual and missed it by a small country.

"Yeah right! You and Garrett watch each other like Bella and Jasper used to. Face it babe, your succubus days are over." Rose stood with one hand on her hip smirking

"I can't believe you are trying to deny this Kate. Seriously I think being around you and Garrett, in addition to his own sexual frustration, may actually cause Jasper to spontaneously combust. You might as well use your wealth of experience to jump him and put us all out of our misery." Charlotte laughed

"You are all Crazy!" She yelled before taking off into the forest.

Char, Rose and I all looked at each other "Denial" came out simultaneously and sent us all into peals of laughter again.

We all ran to our practice field and decided that today we would do something fun. We were going to play capture the flag. I sent Kate a quick thought saying we needed her to stop pouting and join us so we could decide partners. She showed up a couple of minutes later and picked Charlotte as her partner. I guess she was more mad at Rose and I. Oh well.

I nominated Rose's red lace bra for the flag and was quickly seconded by Char and Kate. The motion passed as Rose grumpily stripped off her bra "This is La Perla you bitches! You better not wreck it or you will each buy me six new sets to replace it!" She handed it over to Charlotte still grumbling under her breath about backstabbing and sisterhood. Even with my new hearing I didn't catch all of it but it wasn't hard to guess.

Charlotte had become our leader as she had the most practical battle experience and we listened as she outlined the rules. It was a pretty even playing field as there was one gift on each team and fight wise I could hold my own with any of them although I lost to Charlotte about 70% of the time. The bra/flag was placed behind Charlotte and Kate's territory and Rose and I were up first on offence.

We fell back and discussed our strategy. Rose was going to run rabbit drawing their attention as I was the quietest. We figured that Charlotte would be expecting this so we had a backup plan. We split up a couple of minutes later and picked Charlotte as her partner. I guess she was more mad at Rose and I. Oh well.

I took to the trees to get above the action. Kate wasted no time going after Rose and I figured that she was still hostile over the teasing when she shocked Rose a little more than was necessary for the game. Rose was pissed and quickly picked up a tree to fend her off with. I saw Charlotte at a distance scanning the forest for me. I flitted from tree to tree as
quietly as I could and made sure to stay downwind.

I could see the 'flag' in the small clearing up ahead and stretched out all my senses to see if I could detect anyone waiting for me. I had a prickly under my skin that was telling me that it was a trap. I mentally rolled my eyes. Of course it was a trap it wasn't like they didn't know what we were after. I dropped to the ground and cautiously crept towards the bra. I hoped Rose remembered the plan.

I was about 100 yards from it when it happened; I got tackled from the side by Charlotte. I used my training and bent down letting her momentum carry her over my shoulder. I watched as she rolled to her feet and started stalking me.

There was a whistle in my ear and I ducked and rolled just in time for Kate to run through the spot where I had been standing. I used my gift and trapped her in a stationary bubble. I would have smiled at her pounding on it demanding to be let out but I had other things to worry about. I was desperately trying to avoid getting pinned by Charlotte but it was only a matter of time.

She was just too good and unless I used my shield I had trouble beating her. I managed to tackle her a couple of times, but every time I got close to putting my chin on her shoulder she would twist out of it. Even with my newborn strength she was just too good at using my momentum against me. She always found a way to throw me off or wiggle out of it.

Charlotte had taught us to go for decapitation as a means to incapacitate our attackers. Now obviously we weren't going to actually do it to each other so we decided that the chin to shoulder would serve as a 'kill'.

I could hear Kate yelling for Charlotte and I knew the jig was up. Rose had captured their 'flag' and was running for our territory. Charlotte released me and took off after her. I was thanking my newborn speed as I ran and quickly caught up to her. I tackled her around the waist and distracted her just long enough for Rose to make it back to our base. She, of course, twisted out of my grasp so I didn't get the 'kill' but at least we won.

We had won the first round!!! I got up and went to celebrate with Rose. We jumped around laughing and dancing for a minute when I heard a very angry voice in my head

'BELLA!!! Let me OUT!'

OH Crap! I forgot about Kate. I quickly released my shield and Kate came to meet us looking distinctly unhappy. "I'm sorry Kate! I was celebrating and I kinda forgot." I cringed

"I think we should suspend the use of your powers. It is too much like cheating" She huffed

"Aw come on guys. They sure didn't help me when Charlotte tackled me the first time. And besides you get to use yours." I really needed to keep working with my gift and hoped that they wouldn't make it against the rules.

"Yeah Kate. What the hell was with the big shock at the beginning? You don't hear me complaining about that do you?" Rosalie was glaring at Kate now.

"Alright ladies that's enough. Bella needs to use her powers so she can understand them better and it gets to be more automatic to use them." Charlotte looked at us and nodded "Overall I was very impressed. I really didn't expect you to win and Bella; you almost had me a couple of times. Really guys very well done!"

I was pretty proud of myself. In the beginning it seemed to be the logical thing to go in for a tackle and then squeeze my opponent into submission but Charlotte quickly trained that out of me. She was just too agile and she would grab an arm or other body part and pull me past her so she could go after me from the side or behind. The judo really helped me learn to plan out my attacks a bit more. I loved fighting Rose because she was so much bigger than me that when I managed to beat her I felt a greater sense of accomplishment. I knew that even Rose had learned a lot as she had never been taught to use the force of the attacker against them. Over all we had all learned a lot and were better fighters for it.

Charlotte looked around and it was obvious that there was still bad feelings "Bella would you contact Jasper and see if they want to knock off early for the day? We're leaving for town tomorrow and we could all use the break from training to do something fun."

I nodded smiling. YES! Time spent with Jasper!

'Jas?'

'Hey Angel. Everythin' okay?' He sounded concerned because this was the first time that we had contacted each other during the day when we were supposed to be training.

'Yeah but tempers are getting short over here and Charlotte suggested a fun day with you guys to take a break from training.'

It was a minute before he responded and I guessed that he was talking to the guys 'I think it's a great idea. You girls comin' here?'

'Yup! See you in a few' I added an image of me blowing him a kiss and was rewarded with the warm feeling of his love for me.
I was smiling when I focused back on the girls "They're totally up for it. We're going to meet them at their field."

We turned and took off headed East.

I had stopped to grab a quick bite on the way so I was a couple of minutes behind. As I emerged onto the larger training field that the guys used I was tackled from the side by something very large. My fear spiked and I used my new skills to quickly roll out from underneath my attacker. As I was rolling I smelled Emmett I got to my feet but stayed in a defensive crouch.

He was grinning at me "Hello little Cricket. Come here to be squished?"

I looked up at him and realized just how big my big bear of a brother was. Well no time like the present. Jasper said I would be able to beat him. And now I had some training behind me. I chanced a glance at Jasper and Peter had him by the arm. Jasper's eyes were pitch black. If I was going to do this it would have to be fast before he lost it.

I smiled back at Emmett "Nope I came to kick your ass."

"Awww now you know there is no chance of that little sis."

Now that was just condescending. The bastard had emphasized the little in 'little sis' "Care to make it interesting bro?"

He laughed his big booming laugh "What are your terms?"

I thought. Hmmm…What would be the most humiliating for him? Something that would pay off not just now but in the future. I smirked "If I win I never have to eat another wolf again. You have to eat my share." It was going to be a long eternity for Emmett. He hated wolves as much as I did. I remembered the taste of brussel sprouts as a human and wolves were my vampire equivalent.

I saw him actually shiver in disgust. This would be perfect.

"Alright Cricket but if I win you have to eat mine." He smirked right back at me

Crap, I hope Jasper was right about this. "Done! Bring it!"

He rushed me and I heard Jasper's growl start up. I would really have to finish this fast! I ducked between his legs and spun up onto his back; before he could blink I had my teeth at his neck. "Gotcha brother bear!" I kissed his cheek and jumped down.

He just looked at me stunned. "But I haven't even touched you!" he complained

"Jeez Emmett! You're huge! I don't want to let something as big as you get your hands on me." I teased and skipped over to where Peter still had Jasper in his grasp.

I could hear everyone laughing and teasing Emmett about losing before the fight ever began but I only had eyes for Jasper. He was clearly struggling with his instincts. I knew every fiber of his being was screaming at him to protect me

"Jas? It's okay honey. I'm good. I won and he didn't even touch me!" I laid my cheek on his chest and let him hold me. It was a few minutes before I felt him relax a bit. I drew back so I could look in his eyes. They were still dark but they were better 'Are you alright?'

He took a deep breath in "Yeah Angel I am now. That was just really hard. I knew he was gonna jump you. They had to tell me and we all wanted to see what you've learned but when I saw his big body hit you…you just looked so small and…'"

I cupped his cheek in my hand and brought his forehead to mine 'I love you Jas.'

'I love you too Angel. So, so much.' he hugged me to him again and crushed my mouth under his. The kiss was a bit desperate and I knew he needed to be distracted.

I started to giggle a bit and he pulled back in confusion."Bella?"

I couldn't help it I started to laugh "I'm just happy that I never have to eat another wolf again! Emmett has to eat all my brussel sprouts!"

I could feel the happiness coming from Jasper and then Peter and Charlotte laughing along with me. Rose was over trying to console Emmett but even she was having a hard time keeping a straight face.

"You did so good Little One! He had no chance to even touch you!" Garrett picked me up and swung me around in a big hug.

I hugged him back loving every minute of it. I wasn't the weak link in the family anymore. Sure they would all still want to protect me but now I could at least defend myself until they got there instead of hiding under my shield.
"I still say she cheated" Emmett grumbled.

Garrett set me down and Kate winked at me. "Well then cousin if she cheated, you get to pick the next challenge."

Oh holy crap! I think Kate was trying to get me back for teasing her this morning.

Emmett looked at me with narrowed eyes. "Straight up wrestling match. No powers or any of that jumping around stuff."

I bit my lip and looked over at Charlotte she smiled smugly and nodded. I looked at Jasper wondering if he could take another go 'Jas?'

'Go ahead Angel. As much as I hate it I need to see that you can take care of yourself. Peter will stand with me' He nodded

I bounced on the spot suddenly excited "Name your terms Brother."

Emmett looked at me in thought and then grinned. "If I win you have to accept any gift I give you for Christmas with no complaints. I only wanna hear 'Thank you Emmett. I love it' out of your mouth."

Great! That meant that he could get me anything from a helicopter to slutty lingerie and I couldn't complain or get mad. Devious shmuck! I had to win this one and Charlotte seemed confident that I would be able to.

"Alright and if I win you have to decorate the Christmas tree in an angel costume complete with wings wig and tiara. You have to pose for pictures and when Mom and Dad want to know why you're dressed like that you have to say that you wanted to get into the Christmas spirit." This meant that he couldn't whine about losing the bet. If I won.

"Deal! Come on little sister. Let's see what you got." He crooked his finger at me as everyone backed up. I could hear several side bets being made on who was going to win. Peter had moved back to stand beside Jasper and Charlotte was on his other side.

Jasper looked calm but I could see the conflict in his eyes. I wanted to show him that I would be okay and this was a good way to do it. Chances are that none of the vampires that would be coming to attack us would be bigger or stronger than Emmett and I would be better trained than any of the newborns so if I could win this it would go a long way towards easing Jasper's mind.

My focus returned to Emmett just as he lunged forward. I shifted my weight to the side and grabbed his arm yanking him towards me. He wasn't expecting the move and it was easy for me to use his momentum to twist his arm behind his back and push him to the ground. Had this been a real fight a brush of my teeth along his shoulder and a quick jerk upwards would have torn his arm clean off. My mouth was headed towards his neck to indicate the kill when he rolled on his back intending to squish me underneath him.

I kicked out my leg and made sure to continue the roll but I lost my grip on his arm. We were back on our feet and I waited for him to strike again. He lunged again and this time when I grabbed his arm he went to swing me around intending to throw me off. I arched my back, twisted and heaved him over my shoulder on to his back. He rolled to his feet again and again he came after me. This time he leapt at me intending to push my shoulders straight back. I flipped him off me easily.

Again and again he came at me and every time I managed to get away from him. I could feel Jasper's tension rising and knew it wouldn't be long before he lost control. I was surprised to feel pride coming from him though as well as a bit of lust. He may not have liked watching me get attacked but he was happy about how I was doing. Good, it was time to end it.

This time when Emmett came at me I tripped him and followed him to the ground landing with my mouth on his neck. "Let me know what size you are Emmy so I can make sure your Angel costume fits. Do you have any preference in wig color?"

"Damn it!!" Emmett swore and hit the ground

"Language Emmett!" came from Rosalie.

Jasper came over and swung me into his arms laughing "Well done Darlin!!"

I hugged him back basking in the feeling of his love and pride. Everyone was cheering and Kate slipped something in a backpack on the ground. I briefly wondered what it was but was quickly caught up in everyone's congratulations.

Emmett was still sitting on the ground and I walked over to him and plopped myself down in his lap "You aren't mad at me are you Emmy?" I gave him my best puppy dog eyes that I had picked up from Alice. They always seemed to work for her.

They must work cause the minute he looked at me he wrapped me up in a huge hug "Of course not Cricket! You did great!" He looked down at me with a big grin "But we are gonna to try that again once you aren't a newborn anymore. How am I supposed to protect my little sis if she can kick my ass?"

I laughed and Jasper came over to take me from Emmett. I looked over at Charlotte and she winked at me "Told you, you could do it."

"You were right Char she's an amazing fighter. Her speed is unbelievable! If that had been a real fight Emmett would have
been in big trouble. What have you been teaching them?” Peter was beaming
All us girls just laughed. “Oh a little of this and a little of that” Charlotte wasn't giving up any of our secrets.

“I would not have been in trouble” Emmett protested.

Jasper spoke up "Sorry Em but you would have lost your arm on that first pin she had you in long before you tried to roll on
top of her. By the end of the fight you would have been missing both your arms and one of your legs."

"Whatever.” He said sullenly "I would have had her"

"What were you gonna do? Bleed on her?” Kate shot with a bad English accent

Everyone laughed

Peter piped up "Hey don't sweat it Em, you're better with multiple opponents. When it comes to the fight, you're going to
take on the biggest fighters.” He gestured to us girls "Leave the little Tasmanian Devils to their fun."

Emmett looked cheered by that thought.

For the rest of the day we played baseball. Garrett had run to the house to get the balls and bat. We were far enough north
and there was enough snow on the ground that we didn't have to worry about any humans hearing our game.

We spent the rest of the day laughing and teasing each other. My team lost the game but it didn't matter. Baseball was so
much more fun now that I wasn't clumsy and vampire speed made the game that much faster.

Once evening set in we paired off to go for a hunt before meeting up at the house for the night.

Jasper and I jogged farther west together and I loved the feeling of freedom I got while I was hunting. After finishing my
dinner I sat and waited for Jasper to find me so we could run back to the house together. I felt his presence before I saw
him. He came up behind me and put his arms around my waist. I leaned back into him as I felt his nose trail up the length
of my neck and shivered when he took a long slow sniff. I moaned and tilted my head to give him better access.

"Do you have any idea how sexy it was to watch you kick Emmett's ass? You weren't even tryin' all that hard were you
darlin’?” I felt the vibration of his voice resonating in my chest and felt his words on my skin

"I thought you didn't like to watch me fight?” I could barely concentrate as his hands had pulled up my shirt and were
trailing across my bare stomach.

"That was before I realized how beautiful you are when you fight. You're so graceful and you're focused, intense. And yet I
could still feel your awareness of me. I'm so proud to call you my mate" his voice had lowered and at his last words I felt all
the heat he had built up pool between my legs.

I whimpered and felt him feed me some of his lust making me squirm. His hands swept up slowly and cupped my breasts
squeezing the nipples through the fabric of my bra. I wanted to turn and face him but he stopped me "No. You'll stay right
where you are.” The command in his voice made me that much hotter and I felt my bra loosen as he undid the front clasp.

His callused hands caught my breasts as they fell from their constraints. The combination of his hands on my breasts and
his lips on my neck was driving me mad with need. I reached my arms over my head to run my fingers through his hair.

The only thing I could do from my position in between his legs. I felt the outline of his cock pressing into my back and I
wanted to feel it so badly. I squirmed again, needing friction between my legs. I felt one of Jasper's hands slide firmly
down my stomach and slide unto the yoga pants I was wearing. His fingers ghosted over my pelvic bone and brush the
minimal curls surrounding my core.

"I can smell how much you want me Angel. I can feel how much you desire me. Who makes you feel this way Bella?”

God I think the sound of his voice was enough to push me over the edge ’You Jasper. Oh God only you!

"That's my Angel"

I shifted trying to get his hand where I so desperately needed it. God I needed to feel his fingers 'Please Jasper'

"What is it Angel? What do you want? What do you need?’

He licked his fingers and returned them to my nipple. Rolling and brushing it with his fingers. His other hand hadn't gone
any farther and God I needed it to go farther. He was still feeding me lust and desire and I wanted to burst.

'Please Jasper, touch me. I need you to touch me' I would beg if he wanted me to as long as the reward was the release
of the pressure that he was slowly building inside me

"Your kitty smells so very ready for me. Are you ready darlin?’” His fingers were still circling my pelvic bone and every now
and then I could feel them brush the top of my slit. So close and yet so far from where I needed them.
"Yes Jasper, please"

At the sound of my voice his fingers went to where I needed them the most. One of his fingers circled my nub and I arched into the feeling. Fire raced over my body heating me farther. "Oh God Jas!"

He stroked and rubbed spreading my wetness everywhere but it wasn't enough. I needed more. He was only teasing me and I wanted more "Please. Oh please Jas, more.'

Still he didn't stop the torture "Tell me. Tell me what you need."

God that commanding voice was only pushing the flames higher "Please Jasper"

Again when I spoke he pushed a finger inside me stroking me. Something was building and I arched and twisted into him. His arms kept me still one hand still cupping my breast.

"I wanna hear you Angel. I wanna hear you cry my name. I want it out loud or I won't let you come. Do you understand Angel?"

God I would do anything. I needed something. I couldn't stay wound this tight forever. "Yes. Please Jasper. Please"

My head rolled back and forth looking for some kind of release. His fingers hit something inside me and I was instantly jolted. God could I die from pleasure?

"Now Angel. Cum for me now. Scream my name"

I couldn't help but obey when he rubbed that one spot and I came undone, the flames consuming me. "JASPER!"

Waves of pleasure rolled over and through me. Jasper's fingers slowly stoked me as I came down from my peak. He pulled his hand from me and I watched with heavy eyes as he licked my fingers clean "Mmmm… delicious. Next time I'll drink from the source."

Then his lips met mine and dominated me. His tongue invaded my mouth and stroked me like his fingers had just done. I melted into his arms and submitted. 'I love you Jasper'

'I love you my Angel. My mate'

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A/N: Extra cookies for anyone who caught the Monte Python reference. Fairies pass out the iced tea these ladies look a little faint. And maybe fan Zaytyll a bit she looks rather hot and bothered *snickers*

Things are heating up my lovelies! Are you ready for it?
I love you my Angel. My mate

His words echoed in my head long after we got home. I thought about our time in the forest and he was as good as his word, he had made me scream his name. Afterwards he had helped me up from the ground and led me back to the house. He hadn’t let go of my hand the entire time.

Gah! I was supposed to be shopping for my Christmas gifts. I gave up for the moment and decided I needed a shower after my phone call from Alice. I had made everyone else’s purchases for Alice and she had called me to yell about why she wasn’t getting anything from any of us. Then she really started to yell when she found out she was but it was just going to be a surprise for once. I knew when I had hung up that she would be calling Jasper so I mentally warned him. All I got was a self satisfied mental chuckle in response.

I stood in the shower and enjoyed the warmth on my granite skin. I remembered the feel of Jasper’s lips on my neck and the dark commands that he had whispered in my ear and heat rushed to my core. I shook my head to bring myself back to the present.

Everyone was leaving in the morning to head to town as planned. They would be picking up the Forks half of the family and bringing them back after everyone’s shopping was done. This guaranteed that Jasper and I would have four whole days to ourselves before the family returned for the holidays. I felt my lust flare briefly thinking about what Jasper and I would do to fill those four days.

Deep breath Bella! Back to the present – Carlisle, Esme and Alice would be staying a full two weeks until the New Year and then flying back to Forks to begin laying the groundwork for moving permanently. Alice said that if they came back to Forks after the holidays no one would get suspicious that they wanted to join the rest of the family on the East coast. The Cullens would be able to leave Forks with no one suspecting that they had anything to do with my death.

Alice even told me that Charlie was spending a lot of time with Sue Clearwater now as she had recently lost her husband Harry. Harry and Charlie had been lifelong friends and now Charlie was helping Sue and her kids, Leah and Seth, adjust to life without Harry. In turn he didn’t have time to think about my empty room and the hole that my death had left in his life.

I was happy that Charlie had found someone who he could spend any kind of time with even if it was temporary. Hopefully one day it might grow into something more. My dad deserved to be happy.

I turned off the water and stepped out of the shower mentally going over the gifts that I had gotten the family making sure that I hadn’t forgotten anything. I even schemed with Garrett as to how I could get Charlie and Renee some Christmas gifts without them finding out it was me.

My new uncle was a genius and with a little help from Alice – Renee would be ‘winning’ a new Toyota Highlander Hybrid for Christmas. Garrett told me that, as flighty as Renee sounded, she would just assume that she had entered a contest and forgotten about it. I had to admit that it sounded very much like something she would do.

So then there was Charlie. We went with the contest theme and Garrett helped me find a beautiful fishing lodge where he would be spending 5 days with one of his friends on a fully guided trip. I knew it was risky, but Garrett and I checked with Peter and decided that it would be safe; the contest would inform Charlie that it had been me that entered him way back in August. Painter’s Lodge was located in Campbell River, British Columbia and the website showed monster fish that I knew Charlie would give his right arm to be able to reel in. I wished I could see his face when he caught one. It would be my last gift to him.

I had just pulled on my hoodie when Jasper walked into my room. I felt his arms slide around my waist and I leaned back into the comfort of his embrace. ‘Why so sad Angel?’

‘I was just thinking about Charlie’s Christmas present and how I wished I could watch him reel in his big fish’ I turned in his arms to press my face against his chest. ‘This will likely be the last gift that I’m able to give him’

He kissed the top of my head and cuddled me close, running his fingers through my still drying hair ‘We’ll think of somethin’ Darlin. We may not be able to get him a gift every year but we can make sure that every couple of years he wins some kind of prize. He’ll never know that it’s from you but that’s not the point is it?’
I drew back to look in his beautiful golden eyes. I pushed every loving feeling that I could think of at him. Love, desire, comfort, contentedness. I loved him with everything that I was and I wanted him to know it.

"I love you too Angel" He leaned in and kissed me sweetly. "Now are you done shoppin?"

I sighed and dropped my head to rest on his chest in frustration "No, and I have no idea what to get Carlisle or Alice. I am going just about crazy trying to come up with something."

I had already picked out Jasper’s gifts and I really hoped that he liked them. I knew that I had money now and I was enjoying spending it but I also wanted the gifts to reflect the thought that went into them.

Jasper helped me find and order gifts for the last people on my lists and I was so glad for his help. Now all we had to do was wait for the time that everyone was leaving. I loved my family but I REALLY wanted to be alone with Jasper and I could tell that he was counting the minutes as well.

We spent the remainder of the night surfing the net and making the occasional purchase. It was only a couple of hours until everyone would be leaving when Rose knocked on my door "You want to go for one more hunt with your girls before we all leave?"

I jumped up and kissed Jasper quickly before following her out the door. As much as I wanted them all out of the house I would miss them while they were gone.

Kate and Charlotte quickly joined us and we all ran into the forest laughing and teasing each other. It didn't take long for us all to finish our breakfast and find ourselves sitting in our training field giggling at the look on Charlotte's face.

"I'm telling you Kate, if you ever trick me into eating anything that nasty again I will rip the heels off of all your favorite Jimmy Choos!" Charlotte was still trying to spit out the taste of beaver that Kate had convinced her was a treat.

Rose and I were practically hanging off each other we were laughing so hard. Kate didn't manage to pull off the contrite and apologetic look that she was going for, and it only made us laugh harder.

We managed to calm down and I was looking at the pink streaked sky of the approaching dawn, reveling in the colors that I was now able to see so clearly.

"So Cricket, you and Jasper are going to have the whole house to yourselves for the next four days." Rose wiggled her eyebrows at me suggestively

"Jeez Rose, you and Em spend entirely too much time together!" I was trying to hide my embarrassment

Charlotte looked at me seriously for a minute "Do you have any questions Little One?" Her voice was soft, caring and I realized that she knew that Jasper and I hadn't crossed that bridge yet.

"What questions could she have? She and Jasper spend every night together." Kate was looking confused.

"Well we haven't...I mean...we weren't..." I stammered. Damn it why couldn't I have lost the stutter along with the blushing! God the blushing! I was so glad that I wasn't able to do that anymore. I would have been up in flames by now if I had been able.

Rose looked stunned "But you and Jasper..."

Charlotte looked the two of them like they were idiots "Did you two really think that Jasper was so classless, that he would take a girl's virginity in a house full of her overprotective and teasing family. A family of vampires that would hear every little moan I might add!!" she was clearly disgusted.

"Cricket, please tell me that you didn't think it was because you weren't good enough." Rose's voice was soft and she put her hand on my arm.

I looked up into her eyes "At the time I couldn't figure out why he wanted to be with me at all. I thought he was only trying to protect me because he loved me. I know now that it was all a bunch of crap." I looked at them all. I wanted to explain properly.
"I loved Edward. A small part of me still does. He was my first love and obviously his feelings weren't real but mine were. There are a lot of wonderful things about Edward and while I hate what he did, my feelings for him were real and I will forever be grateful that he led me to my family." I felt tears that would never fall, well up in my eyes.

Rose pulled me to her, and I felt Kate and Char embrace me as well. I pulled back slightly and sniffed reflexively. "Besides, imagine how much I would have regretted it had I actually had sex with him!"

We all chuckled a bit. "Well Little One, that brings me back to my original question. Do you have any questions that we can answer for you before we leave?"

I had to admit that I was a bit nervous. Not really about the act itself but that I wouldn't be able to please Jasper. "I'm just worried...I mean Jasper is almost 150 years old and I'm...well I've never..."

Kate exchanged looks with Charlotte "Cousin, trust me when I say to you that your virginity will be the greatest gift that Jasper has ever received. You must not worry about your lack of experience."

"Bella, trust us. Jasper loves you. Anything you do will please him and he'll help you. My only advice?" I looked at Charlotte. I would take any advice she had to offer "Trust him. You know that your first time will be painful right?"

I nodded. I had heard stories when I was in school.

Charlotte looked at me concerned. "Jasper will make it as easy as possible for you but you need to trust him. And forget about the human ideals about sex, and the way they turn it into something dirty and shameful. The love that is shared between mates is special and beautiful. Nothing the two of you do together is wrong."

I was a bit worried about that last bit. What did they expect would happen? I mentally shrugged my shoulders. It didn't matter; I would take her advice and trust my mate. He had never ever let me down and I wouldn't start doubting him now.

****

Jasper and I stood and watched as the pick-up rolled down the driveway. Our family was so excited that they were taking turns jumping in, out and over the moving truck. I could hear Charlotte yelling at Emmett who was jumping up and down in the bed making it hard for her to steer.

I was still laughing when I looked up at Jasper. He was looking down at me and I swear his eyes were burning in their intensity. I felt a wave of desire hit me and I swayed. He caught me around my waist. "You promised me a dance Angel. Are you ready to deliver?"

Dance? I thought about it and I remembered the conversation we had over the phone when he had gone to town with Emmett. Rosalie had taught me how to dance and he had said 'I can't wait to see what you have learned. Will you honor me with a dance when I get home darlin?'

"Now?" We were finally alone and he wanted to dance?

His eyebrows rose "Did you have somethin' else that you wanted to do Angel?"

Well crap, I wasn't going to throw myself at him. "No. No dancing sounds good." At least I would still be close to him.

He guided me into the house and went to the entertainment centre. He turned on something I didn't expect. George Straight's – I Just Wanna Dance With You, came out of the speakers.

"Country?"

"Well yeah. I thought you said that Rose taught you to dance?" He was looking at me with a smile but I could feel his confusion.

"She did. But we danced to Madonna and Lady Ga Ga and the Black Eyed Peas." How the heck was I supposed to dance to this?

He chuckled "Angel when I dance with a woman – I dance with her. I don't dance in her general vicinity hoping to brush up against her every now and then." He held out his hand "Come here. I'll show you."

I went to him and his arms went around me in a traditional dance position. I couldn't help but put my hand on his shoulder. I could do this. I caught on to what Rose showed me pretty quick, I would let him teach me. I wasn't the clumsy human girl I used to be.

He stepped forward and I automatically stepped back. He took another step and then a small quick one. Each time I just moved with him. The dance was actually really easy and it wasn't long before I relaxed and just enjoyed being in his arms. The feeling of his breath in my ear whispering the words as we danced around the great room gave me shivers.

The songs changed and so did the style of dancing but I never left his arms. Occasionally he spun me and sometimes the turns were complicated enough to make me laugh in delight. We were in our own private little world and I loved it.
The sun had started to sink in the sky and the room was flooded with the vibrant reds of the winter sunset. We were swaying slowly to the Luckiest by Ben Folds

I don't get many things right the first time
In fact, I am told that a lot
Now I know all the wrong turns, the stumbles and falls
Brought me here

And where was I before the day
That I first saw your lovely face?
Now I see it everyday
And I know

That I am
I am
I am
The luckiest

I looked up into his eyes and was lost. The love I saw reflected there, and the emotions swelling between us were overwhelming. I would spend the rest of eternity trying to prove to this man that I was the lucky one. I reached up and our lips met in a soft languid kiss.

I could feel his hands on my back, holding me firmly to him. One drifted lower and cupped the curve of my ass. I tried to press closer and felt his hard length against my stomach. He reached down, sweeping me up in his arms and carried me slowly up the stairs, never breaking our gaze. He carried me into my room and laid me gently on the bed. I stared deep into his eyes as he crawled his way up the bed and pressed his body into mine.

I felt a hand slide up my side and around my back as his mouth met mine again. Our kiss was still unhurried and I trembled as his tongue slid surely in my mouth to stoke mine. The hand on my back drifted farther up my neck and into my hair. As his mouth released mine, his hand pulled my hair to gently expose my neck. His tongue traced my ear and trailed down my neck alternately licking, kissing and nipping me.

My breaths were coming faster and I couldn't help the moans that were escaping my mouth. I could feel a deep rumbling purr coming from his chest. I mentally thanked whatever god made me choose to put on a button down shirt this morning, as his mouth continued down my chest. I could feel his reverence, as he gently undid each button on my shirt and pressed a kiss to the newly exposed skin. He sat me up so I could slide my arms out of the shirt and kissed my shoulders and the curve of my elbow.

I could feel our combined desire and I wanted to drown in it. He was sitting on his knees in between my open jean clad legs as he lowered me back to the mattress of my bed. He ran his hands down my sides and under my rib cage. I was limp from desire when he pulled my stomach up to his mouth and tongued my belly button. When he allowed me to lay flat again, my bra had disappeared.

'So beautiful' His mental voice caressed me, as his hands cupped my breasts.

I cried out when his lips drew my nipple into his mouth.

'You're my gift, my Angel!' His mouth never left my breast as I felt a tug on the waist band of my jeans.

I wanted to feel his skin on mine so sat us up and gently drew his t-shirt up his chest and over his head. I leaned forward and kissed right above where his heart no longer beat. His head dropped back in pleasure as my hands and mouth roamed the hard muscles of his chest. My fingers traced the dips and curves of his chiseled abs and his breath came out in a hiss as I dipped a finger under the waistband of his jeans. His mouth slanted over mine and his kiss became more demanding, more dominating as he pushed me back onto the bed.

He started moving lower and laved openmouthed kisses over my breasts. I barely felt my jeans and panties being pushed down my legs as I became desperate for his mouth and tongue to take my nipple again. He sat back and looked at me with lust filled black eyes. I hungered for him and I knew he was pushing my lust higher, fanning the flames that burned us both.

For the first time, he took in my body as a whole. I lay before him completely bare and I felt beautiful. I felt loved. As my desire for him grew my impatience rose. He had looked and not touched for far too long. 'Jasper. Please, love me,'

'Oh I intend to darlin' He smiled my favorite sexy smirk 'Every last inch of you'

He pulled one of my feet up to rest on his chest and pressed a kiss to the ankle bone. I gasped as he licked my Achilles tendon and then trailed his mouth up to the hollow of my knee. He repeated the process on my other leg and I was panting with need. He kept his eyes locked on me as his hands moved higher up past my knees to my thighs. Every place his hands touched his mouth followed.

I arched my back desperately seeking some kind of friction. I felt my orgasm building and he hadn't even touched me...
where I needed it the most.

His hands pinned me to the bed by my inner thighs and I felt his teeth and lips caressing the curve of my hip. ‘Are you ready to fly Angel?’

‘Oh God Jas Please!’ I was writhing with need and had no way to fulfill it. I needed him.

I felt his breath at my core and stilled instantly waiting, praying he would give me what I needed. God please what was he waiting for? "You're so wet for me Angel and I've barely touched you"

"Please Jasper, touch me"

At my words his tongue licked one long trail up my slit before gently flicking my hard nub. I bucked under him and heard his low chuckle "That's it my angel. Purr for me. Scream for me. Who makes you feel this way?"

"Oh God Jasper. Please. You do. Only you. Please Jasper" he had my emotions whipped up so high I thought I would break apart.

With my declaration his mouth found me again and this time it stayed. He licked and sucked and rubbed me with his tongue winding me tighter and tighter. 'God you taste so sweet. Better than any blood. I could live off you for eternity.'

I felt him press a finger into me and I lifted my hips, physically begging him to go deeper. He added another finger and started hitting that spot inside "Cum for me – scream my name Angel."

I broke apart under his hands. "Jasper!"

His mouth caressed me gently as I came down from the heaven he had sent me too. He slowly kissed his way up my body and I welcomed his weight as he pressed his body into mine. I claimed his mouth needing the closeness. I needed more. 'Please Jasper. Make love to me. Make me yours.'

He drew back and his black lust filled eyes gazed into mine ‘Oh you can count on it Angel’ He rocked his hips into mine and I could feel his length through his jeans larger and harder than before.

A/N: Don't kill me!! I will have the next chapter up soon. I mean really soon!! Like tomorrow soon! I wanted the next part to be from Jasper's point of view. *ducks and runs from the rotten tomatoes* Fairies!! Evasive maneuvers!!
'Please, Jasper. Make love to me. Make me yours.'

I drew back and her black lust filled eyes gazed into mine. 'Oh you can count on it, Angel.'

I rocked my hips into hers and I could feel her desire building again.

I knew that making love to her for the first time wouldn't be a simple task. If her barrier was still intact, it would take all of my considerable skills to make sure that this went as smoothly as possible. I only wanted to have to do this once and, if I didn't time it just right, the barrier would heal and she would have to go through the considerable pain of losing her virginity all over again next time.

I knew this because at one time Maria had used it as a punishment for some of the female newborns that she had made. It was towards the end of my time in the Southern Armies, and watching Maria order their rape and the pain that it caused them disgusted me. Our bodies were extremely tough and to break a virgin's barrier was no easy task, but, if steps were not taken, then the barrier would simply repair itself and it would be just as painful the next time. This made it the most creative form of sadistic torture that Maria had ever come up with.

Thankfully, Peter and Charlotte had come for me barely a month later. Maria was contemplating killing me because I refused to play this game for her enjoyment. At the time, I think I would have welcomed death.

I felt Bella's small hands at my waist, and the tug when she undid the button of my jeans. I had considered talking to her about what we were about to do, but, after discussing it with Charlotte, I decided not to. At first, it felt like I was lying to her, but Charlotte pointed out that Bella would be expecting some kind of pain her first time. If I told her about the difficulties that being a virginal vampire added to the process, she wouldn't be able to enjoy herself. She would be too busy thinking about the coming pain.

I would use all my experience, every part of my gift, and all my love for her to make this as easy as possible. Still, I dreaded the fact that I would cause her such pain.

I helped her slide my jeans off my hips and then kicked them off my legs. The feeling of our naked bodies fully pressed together for the first time would have taken my breath away if I was human. Her skin felt like the finest silk and as her hand pressed against my chest and moved to grasp my neck I was once again self conscious. My scars not only looked horrific, but the rough texture of them next to the perfection of her body was something akin to sacrilege. I wanted to be whole for her, I wanted to be perfect more now than at any other time in my long life.

I felt wave after wave of love, desire, and compassion hit me and I looked down into my angel's eyes and watched as she once again leaned in and kissed the thickest of them at my shoulder. 'You're perfect the way you are, Jas. I love you and wouldn't want to change anything about you, not even your scars.'

I pressed my weight into her and wrapped her up in my arms. All my vain insecurities completely vanished for the first time in 150 years. It truly didn't matter to her what I looked like on the outside. She saw all of me and loved all the parts that made up the whole.

I gently touched my nose to the curve in her neck. I took a long slow inhale, slowly trailing my nose to the spot just below her ear and felt her desire. "You smell edible, darlin'. I love the way you smell after I make you cum. It'll smell even better after we cum together. You'll smell like me for days."

Her hips bucked up into me and I pushed her lust higher. My angel likes it when I talk dirty to her. I couldn't help the smirk that curved my lips. I kissed her lips and then slowly made my way to her breasts. God, they were perfect; a little more than a handful and oh so tasty.

Her desire was climbing and I knew she was on her way to another orgasm. It was almost time. I settled myself at her core and kissed her passionately, stoking the fire that was building inside her. God, I wanted her, but I knew that this time wouldn't be very enjoyable for either of us if I fucked it up and that thought alone was damn near ruining the moment for me. Add to that the fact that I was in no way a small man and I knew that this would be extremely painful for my angel.

The heat of her desire pulled me back to the present and I gently pushed into her. Fuck! She was so tight, she felt so
good! I pulled out and then pushed in a bit farther and met up with the barrier of her virginity. I looked into her lust filled eyes dreading the fact that I was about to cause her so much pain.

'I love you, Angel.'

I crushed her mouth under mine and flooded her with all the desire and lust I could, hoping it would make her pain more bearable. I thrust into her as hard as I could and felt her tear inside. Bella screamed underneath me and I stilled letting her adjust a bit to my size.

I smoothed the hair back from her pain filled face and hated the fear in her eyes, framed by tears that would never fall. "Shhh Angel it'll be better soon."

I knew that I had to act now before she started to heal and I quickly withdrew and replaced my cock with my mouth. I used my tongue to push as much of my venom up inside her as I could.

I knew that I had succeeded when Bella began to try to wiggle out from underneath me.

"Please, Jas, no more. Please, it burns." Her voice broke as she begged me and I knew she would be crying if she could.

I looked up at her and I knew she could see the anguish on my face. "I'm sorry, Angel. There was no other way."

I pushed my fingers into my mouth coating them with more venom and then gently pushed them up inside her. Only venom caused a scar and would stop her barrier from healing back the way it was when I changed her. I tried to take as much of her pain into myself as I could, but I knew that it would only lessen it not erase it.

I kept my eyes locked with hers and pleaded with her. "Please Bella, you have to trust me. I'll make it better, I promise, but you need to trust me that this was the only way."

She nodded and smiled a watery smile and lay back on the bed no longer fighting me. I could feel her love and acceptance warring with the pain that my venom was causing her; her every flinch a lash across my heart. When I figured that I had coated the intimate injury enough, I slid up the bed and took her in my arms. Her face rested on my chest and our legs entwined; I held her and sent her my love, comfort, and calm. I couldn't help but whisper a steady stream of apologies mixed with multiple 'I love yous' into her hair. Gradually, I felt her pain lessen and the echo of it that I was still absorbing ebbed from our bodies.

'That wasn't what I was expecting;' her mental voice was small and I could feel her disappointment

I couldn't help but chuckle. "Awww Angel, that was in no way close to what I wished could have happened."

I looked down at her. "You didn't think that we were done did you?"

I could see on her face that she thought that that was it.

"Angel, what just happened…the pain you went through? That had nothin' to do with makin' love." I kissed her forehead and then settled her back onto my chest so I could stroke her back and pet her hair.

I could feel her confusion and knew I had to explain. "Darlin', you know vampires are almost indestructible and any injury we manage to sustain will heal itself fairly quickly right?"

"Yes. I mean, I know that even if we have a limb torn off if we hold the pieces together the venom will heal us right?" she replied

"Exactly. Because you were a virgin when I changed you, not only is your body more durable, but the barrier of your virginity is as well, making it harder to break. I had to do what I did with my venom so that a scar would form and your body didn't repair itself making you a virgin all over again." I rolled her onto her back and looked down at her, taking her face in my palm. "I didn't want you to have to go through that ever again. Nothin' but pleasure from now on, Angel. I promise."

"So that hurt more than it would have had I been human?" she asked

I nodded, worried about her reaction. "Let me make love to you, Angel. Let me show you how good it can be."

I leaned down slowly to kiss her. I didn't want her to push me away, but I wanted her to know she had the option. She didn't. Her mouth welcomed mine and I could feel her love wash over me in a gentle wave.

I fed her a bit of desire. I wanted to forget the pain I had just caused her. I wrapped my arms around her and pulled her up into my body. I could feel her purring as she wound her legs through mine. I fist ed her hair in my hand and used it to bare her neck to me. Her moan went straight to my cock as I kissed, licked, sucked and nipped her neck and delicious collarbones.

Her rising lust had me lowering her back to the bed and working my way down to her breasts. I used the flat of my tongue to lick and nip every part of them except where she wanted me the most. I watched as her nipples hardened and peaked practically begging for my touch.
I ignored them and licked my way down her ribs to the curve of her hip. "Hmmm…so beautiful."

This was my favorite spot on her body; the hollow where her hip melted with her leg and lower belly. She was oh so sensitive here and I took advantage of it, gently licking and then blowing air over the moist skin. With every slight touch, I bathed her with more of my desire weaving it together with hers. She bucked and gasped under me and I could feel a self satisfied smirk curve my lips. "So tasty. Are you wet for me, my mate?"

She was gripping the bed clothes and her head was rolling side to side. "Please, Jasper."

I moved to smell her arousal from the source. My nose brushed her curls softly and she gasped above me. I pushed her legs apart and could see her beautiful kitty all laid out like a buffet; glistening and wet with her need. "Such a good girl, all wet and ready for me. You smell so delicious, my mate. Like strawberries and freesia, a summer picnic all spread out just for me."

I used my whole tongue to give her one long slow lick up her slit, gathering her juices on my tongue. "Mmmm…so good. Better than blood, more addictive than any drug."

I could feel her desire and frustration and couldn't wait anymore. I moved up her body and once again I settled myself between her legs. This time she would feel nothing but ecstasy. I gently pushed into her reveling in the feel of her hot and wet around me. She was so tight that I almost lost it, so I pushed my desire into her, fanning her lust and need for me even higher.

I sheathed myself fully; her moans and the feel of her pleasure had me struggling for my control. "Oh God, Angel! You feel so good. So tight."

Her hands gripped my back and I slowly withdrew. I listened to her whimpers of need with satisfaction before firmly thrusting to the hilt.

"Jasper!"

Her cry broke through my control and I quickened my pace. I kept up a steady rhythm; pushing in forcefully, waiting for a beat, and then slowly withdrawing before starting all over again. GOD, there was no way I could keep this up! Her urgency joined with mine. I could feel our desire and need building, pulling us tighter.

We were rushing towards our end; the emotions swirling between and around us, joining us together perfectly. I reached between us and used my thumb to rub her clit. I felt her push into me, her body tight as a bow and heard her scream my name as she found her release.

The feeling of her orgasm clenching around my cock sent me falling headlong with her. Blinding light flashed behind my eyes as I emptied myself into her.

"BELLA!"

At that moment I gave her every last feeling of love, adoration and desire I had for her. I couldn't help it, it poured out of me and I felt her tighten around me again finding another release.

I collapsed on top of her barely able to catch myself on my elbows. I rolled onto my back; taking her with me, staying sheathed inside her and draping her across me. In 150 years I had never felt anything that powerful. I held her to me needing to be close to her, part of her. God, if I could, I would absorb her into my own body.

She curled into me like a cat and I reveled in the feeling of her face rubbing across the bare skin of my chest, as she listened to my contented purr rumble through our bodies. I curled one of my hands around the back of her neck and pulled her mouth to mine using my tongue to pull her deeper in to me; my other hand stroking her back loving the texture of her skin under my fingers; each touch hot and electric.

I felt myself getting hard inside her again, and the feeling of her purring vibrating through my chest sent delicious vibrations down through where we were still joined. She moved her hips and I felt her walls tighten around me, I groaned. She felt so good. I felt her lips curve in to a smile and I looked deep into her black lust filled eyes.

'I love you, Jasper, my lover, my mate.'

It was the first time she had called me her mate. I knew she thought of me that way, and that she had probably said so to one of the others, but this was the first time she had said it to me and the primal part of me let out a deep growl.

"Mine!"

I pulled her onto me as I thrust roughly up into her. It wasn't enough. I needed more. I rolled her on her back again and started thrusting into her hard; my inner animal growling in satisfaction at the look on my mates face and the sounds of pleasure coming from her mouth. She wrapped her legs around my waist and I used my hands to pull her hips up allowing me to drive deeper into her. She used her hands to pull on my neck forcing me to push into her harder.

We came together in another burst of energy that had me seeing stars. I rolled us to our sides making sure to stay deep
inside her. I ran my hand down her cheek. "Are you alright Angel?"

I knew I would never be able to actually hurt her, my love, my mate. I was pretty sure it was impossible for our kind to harm their mates, no matter what frame of mind they were in; but I had been rather rough with her and that wasn't part of the plan for our first time in bed together.

Her eyes opened and they were a beautiful contented gold. "Of course."

She kissed my palm. "Better than alright, I just took a couple of trips to heaven." She snuggled deeper into my chest and I could feel her breathing in my scent.

We lay there for hours just enjoying the feel of skin on skin; the euphoric high melting into a feeling deepest contentment. I couldn't get enough of the feel of her against me, the scent of her mixing with mine. I had never felt so at peace in my long life.

As the sun was dipping low in the sky I realized that we hadn't hunted since before the family left in the morning yesterday. A day and a half was nothing to me but Bella was still a newborn and would need to feed.

"Bella."

Her eyes opened for the first time in almost twelve hours, her purr still vibrating through me. Her eyes were dark and while I knew some of it was due to lust, the majority was hunger.

"Angel, we need to hunt."

She pulled closer to me and rubbed her face against me. "Hmmm... five more minutes."

I laughed at her using my own words against me. "Come on, Angel. We can't stay in bed forever, as much as I would love to."

I pulled her face up to mine and kissed her tenderly. "We'll go for a quick hunt and then we can come right back here I promise," I murmured against her lips.

She sighed, "I am thirsty."

I watched as she slowly got up and took the top sheet from the bed with her wrapping it around her naked form. I chuckled and she looked back at me, curiosity radiating from her.

I just smiled at her. "You do realize that I have seen and tasted almost every inch of that delectable body that you are trying so hard to cover up?"

I felt her embarrassment and knew that if she could still blush she would be ten shades of red right now. She quickly turned back and went into her closet to grab some clothes. I got up and followed her in there, wrapping my arms around her from behind. "I'm gonna go grab something to wear. Meet me downstairs?"

She turned in my arms and looked up at me with love in her eyes. "I'll be quick. I love you, Jas."

My undead heart swelled every time she told me and I wondered at what point it would burst. I hugged her and pressed a kiss to the top of her head. "I love you, Angel."

I quickly released her, while I still could, and rushed to my room to get dressed.

We met barely three minutes later in the great room and wasted no time; rushing off to get our dinner. We split up as usual and I quickly found a lone wolf and a lynx. I knew Bella probably would still be hunting for awhile because she had been so thirsty. I wondered if I could get any closer to her now, I wanted to see if her hunting style had changed at all. She was so beautiful when she hunted, that I had to find out.

I found her scent quickly and cautiously tracked her through the beauty of the December evening. With only a week until Christmas, the snow was heavy on the ground and in the trees. It had been cold so everything was frozen and the ice caused millions of prisms when the last rays of sun hit them just right.

I stopped to take in the sight before me. It was post card perfect; an open meadow with a small herd of woodland caribou digging down through the snow to graze. The late evening sun sending sparkles across the untouched snow. And there was my angel, standing motionless at the edge of the meadow; dressed in a long sleeved white shirt and white yoga pants that blended perfectly with the snow around us. Her long mahogany hair trailed in thick silken waves down her back and stirred slightly in the breeze. The scent of the caribou blowing right to her; she was entirely focused on the animals grazing only 100 yards from her.

She took two slow graceful steps forward, so silent that the caribou didn't stir. I watched as she launched herself at the largest cow, silent and deadly; graceful and savage at the same time. Before the animal could even register the danger, Bella had broken its neck and lowered it gently to the ground. Her arms lovingly cradled the animal to her body, her hands almost a caress on its face.
I had unknowingly drifted closer to her. Drawn in by the macabre grace of her kill; I had wandered well within her comfortable kill zone. Her head snapped up to look at me with lethal black eyes; her body hunched defensively over her kill and her lips drew back savagely exposing her razor sharp teeth dripping with the blood from the dead caribou.

My instincts screamed at me to be ready for her attack, but she was my mate; even if she did attack me I would be unable to hurt her. The slight breeze shifted and I watched as she drew my scent deep into her nose. Her posture shifted and she rose from the ground. I watched mesmerized as blood ran freely out of her mouth and down her chin dripping onto the ivory of her shirt in sharp contrast. She stalked slowly over to me, seeming to hunt me, but not.

A feral smile curved her lips and her black eyes glinted. "Were you spying on me?"

Her voice was low pitched and betrayed nothing of her emotions.

I couldn't feel anything from her except focus, determination, lust and hunger; all the emotions that we all had while we were hunting. Damn it! I couldn't tell if she meant to attack me or fuck me. I figured a bit of caution would be called for in dealing with my, still newborn, mate. "Not spying, Darlin', I just wanted to find you so we could head back to the house together is all."

She was still half crouched and she was slowly trying to circle around me. I kept shifting to keep her in front of me where I could see her. She was my mate, but I sure wasn't stupid enough to show her my back when I wasn't sure what her intentions were. "I'm sorry, Angel, I shouldn't have intruded on your hunt."

I tried to back up and give her the space she needed.

"Oh Jasper, I think it's far too late for apologies. You interrupted my dinner. The blood is cold and all the others animals are gone. What are you going to do?" Her eyes were narrowed and her tone was flat and menacing. I was positive that coming to watch her hunt had been a very bad idea.

I took another step back but her snarl froze me on the spot.

"Stop trying to escape me, Jasper. We both know that I'm faster than you."

Crap! She was gonna attack me. Fuck, Major! When did you go and lose all your good sense?! I watched as her blood covered hands curled into claws; the crimson of the blood a beautiful image against the backdrop of the white of her clothes and the snow covered meadow. I should have been watching her eyes instead of the contrasting images of her blood covered beauty.

She launched herself at me and I only had time to raise one hand before she was on me. She grabbed my upraised hand and used it to twist my arm behind my back as she pinned me to the ground. Had it been anyone else besides my mate I would have torn them apart.

But it was Bella, my Angel. I had knowingly trespassed on her hunt and threatened her kill. I was her mate and so she wouldn't be able to do any serious damage to me but she could take out her anger on me and possibly hurt me a bit in the process. I was surprised out of my little pity party when I felt her breath on my ear and her tongue lick slowly up the length of my cheek from my chin to my ear.

"Mmmmm…lynx. So nice of you to see to your own dinner and then interrupt mine. Tsk Tsk, Jas! I thought that you were supposed to take care of your mate, not scare away her dinner," she teased

I wasn't sure what to make of her tone. It was teasing but there was still an uncomfortable edge to it and I wasn't sure what the safest response would be. "I'm sorry, Angel. I just-"

"Shut up, Jasper." Her tone was back to being sharp "What am I going to do with you?"

She released my arm and turned me over to straddle my hips.

I looked up and the combination of the blood still covering her face and the feeling of her thighs pressing against my hips had me hardening under her. Fuck, she was so beautiful! I wanted to lick all that blood from her face as I drove myself deep into her folds until she screamed my name.

She felt my growing erection pressing into her and arched an eyebrow at me. "See something you like, cowboy?"

She reached down and tore the shirt from my body and then licked one slow stroke from my ribs up to my chin. Slowly meeting my eyes and giving me a slow smirk.

Fuck! The woman was trying to kill me! I could feel her lust rising and knew I was in a whole different kind of trouble now. I liked it. She raised one of her blood covered fingers to her lips and sucked it into her mouth half closing her eyes at the taste.

I felt a low growl rise up at the sight of her lips wrapped around her finger and being sucked in and out of her mouth slowly the way I wanted to see her lips around my cock.

She snarled and jumped off me her eyes flashing. "Not so fast! You don't get to interrupt my meal and then growl at me!"
I got to my feet slowly and a bit painfully due to the tightness of my jeans over my aching cock. Fuck, she was trying to kill me! I was never going to sneak up on her again; this hot and cold punishment wasn't worth it. I backed away a few steps and turned to leave. I would wait for her to find me after she hunted down another meal.

I felt her hand at the back of my jeans before they were ripped from my body and I was once again tackled to the ground. I instinctually grabbed her hips as I fell onto my back to brace our fall. I felt her skin hit mine and realized she was naked. Her lips crashed into mine and I could taste the caribou on her mouth. Our kiss was wild and desperate; my senses flooded with her lust. She shifted upwards and then in one stoke impaled herself on my erect flesh. Her back bowed as she screamed out her pleasure.

I gasped at the sudden feeling of her warmth around me and I crushed her chest to mine. Her tongue invaded my mouth and the taste of the blood and the feeling of her body on mine sent us to our first climax, but it only served to take the edge off our combined lust. She sat up quickly and began to ride me.

My hands had transferred some of the blood from her face to her body and her bare breasts were red streaked and begging for my mouth. I pulled myself half upright to lick and suck the blood from her nipples and chest. Her hands tangled in my hair pulling me closer as she pushed herself harder and faster down onto me.

The desire and lust swirled and pulsed between us with every desperate thrust until we could be pulled no tighter and the exquisite tension broke, we reached our peak together mentally and verbally screaming for each other.

I lay there afterwards with her body draped boneless on mine. I didn't know what to say. I stroked her back gently waiting to see what she would say; if she would say anything. If I had known that interrupting her hunt could cause this, I would never let her hunt alone again. My innocent angel had stunned me. I had never seen anything as beautiful as the sight of her feral lust, her breasts bouncing above me. I was speechless.

She raised herself up a bit and grinned at me, the humor dancing in her topaz eyes. "I like it when I get to hunt you," she giggled.

I ran my hands up her arms and then gently cupped her face drawing her down to me to kiss her tenderly. I smiled against her lips. "Darlin', you can hunt me anytime you like! Damn, that was hot!"

She tossed her head back and laughed. "Mmmm...Cowboy!" she licked her lips, "My new favorite meal!"

I used her hair to pull her back down to me and kissed her deeply. I intended to take it much farther but she rolled off me and started to pull her clothes on.

I propped myself up on an elbow confused. Things were just getting good! "Where do you think you're goin'?"

She laughed and started to dance away. "Back to the house. Someone got me all dirty and I need a shower."

She winked at me, "Care to join me?"

She laughed and took off running as I scrambled to grab my clothes. Fuck yeah, I wanted to join her!! I looked down at the scraps of cloth in my hands and growled. The little minx had torn all my clothes off and there was no way they were going to cover anything now. I ran after my crafty mate with her mental laughter ringing through my head.

Fuck, now I had to run back to the house naked!

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A/N: *sets up and industrial sized fan* Here you are my over heated lemon fiends! Sit in front of this for awhile and the fairies will get you some iced tea. If you ask them nicely they might be able to get you something a bit stronger. *skips off singing the theme to the Muppet Show*
The last four days had been the very best of my life. Jasper and I had spent every moment of them together. We talked, laughed, read, hunted; whatever we wanted to do we did. I'm sure that the family fully expected that we would be spending every second of the four days in bed, and I wouldn't have complained if we had; but the fact was I loved spending time with Jasper.

We spent hours in the study; he told me stories about his time with the Cullens and Peter and Charlotte. My favorite stories were of when he was a boy. Like most vampires he couldn't remember much about his human life, but I loved even the simplest of things; like the tree he used to use to sneak out of his room at night, the name of his horse and hearing what his mother smelled like. I told him stories about my childhood, my parents and my grandma. They were simple memories but I cherished them all the same.

We had pretty diverse tastes in reading so we would swap books and then debate the parts that we liked or hated, the author's points and in some cases historical inaccuracies.

Jasper loved to dance, and now that I wasn't a clumsy human anymore, I loved it too. At some point every night he would hear a song on his iPod that he loved and would hold out his hand and ask for a dance. One dance always turned into ten or more and I would get to spend more time in his arms. I loved to be in Jasper's arms more than anything else in the world. He made me feel beautiful, loved, protected and cherished all at the same time.

Since we had admitted our love for each other, we had hardly spent any time alone together. And let's face it even when we were alone in my room, we only had a very thin illusion of privacy. Our family was large and very close, and the vampire hearing made it impossible to hold a private conversation. While my telepathy made it easier for Jasper and I, inevitably someone would come looking for one or the other of us for something.

These four days alone were just what we had needed to cement our relationship.

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I was so excited; our family was coming home today! As much I was happy to have the time alone with Jasper, I missed everyone so much! I couldn't wait to see Esme, Alice and Carlisle! Carlisle had called Jasper and told him that they had had to buy a new pick-up because of all the shopping that Alice and Esme had done. I could practically hear Alice bouncing in the back seat, and Esme was giggling and laughing they were so excited to finally come home.

Emmett had called me, he was ecstatic that Alice had shipped his Jeep to Toronto so now they were a convoy of three vehicles.

Peter called Jasper in exasperation and said that they would be later than we expected because of the snow.

They were travelling down snow covered roads that humans claimed were impassible and were getting stuck pretty often. The upside was they just got out, picked up the truck and moved it before getting back in and driving as far as they could before they got stuck again.

Apparently Emmett's jeep was fairing the best, and tempers were getting short because he wasn't letting anyone forget it. Yup, I was very glad that Jasper and I had stayed home.

Twilight found us standing on the front porch waiting. Alice had called and said that they were going to run to the house, and the boys would go back for the vehicles later. The snow was falling gently, and I had Jasper string the Christmas lights that I had found in the basement. The white and red of the lights sent beautiful sparkles glittering across the newly fallen snow.

It wasn't long before I could hear the family running up the driveway. They were laughing and teasing each other. I looked up at Jasper and I could see the love he had for me reflected in his eyes. I leaned into his touch as he softly stroked my cheek. 'Vacations over Angel. I have to share you again'

I kissed his palm 'You'll never have to share me Jasper, I'm all yours. Forever.'

'Ummmm...forever. I like the sound of that' He kissed my forehead and looked towards the approaching hoard.

I could feel my instincts nagging at me and tried to quiet them by taking one step back and placing myself just behind his shoulder. My instincts quieted even more when I grasped his hand in mine and entwined our fingers.

He looked back and down at me with a smile as I leaned into his back 'That's my girl'
I smiled up at 'Vampire 101'

Peter, Garrett and Emmett were the first to make it back to the house and I swear I was almost deafened by them bellowing out my name, or their versions of it.

"CRICKET!" Came from Emmett

"BELLA" was yelled almost in stereo by Peter and Garrett

"What the heck are you doing hiding behind him for? Get down here and give me a hug Sister!" Emmett was bouncing but knew better than to try and force me from behind Jasper.

I giggled and bounced out to jump down into the waiting arms of my brother and uncles. "Oh I missed you guys!"

"BELLA!"

I was ready to spin and meet the rest of my family but my nose picked up the scent of unfamiliar vampires and my cursed instincts took over. Before I could think, I was perched on Emmett's back with Peter and Garrett in front of him. My shield flashed up and the four of us were under my bubble. I looked over at Jasper and I had projected another shield to cover him as well.

"Damn it Bella! That was supposed to be a secret! Now we have to beat the boys another way!"

I looked over, and Charlotte had her hands on her hips looking disgruntled. Kate and Rose were standing beside her fighting back smiles. Everyone else had incredulous looks on their faces.

"Bella" the voice was a relieved whisper

My head snapped back around and there was Esme. "Mom!!"

I used Emmett as a springboard and jumped over him, my shields dissolving as I passed through them, before running into my mom's arms. God it felt so good to be held by her again. She smelled like fresh baked cookies and vanilla. "Mom I missed you so much!!"

"I missed you too Dear! Never again, I swear I am never letting you out of my sight again!" She kissed my temple and hugged me again.

"Mom!! My turn!"

I gasped and turned releasing my mom "ALICE!"

Alice may have been almost 80 years old, but at that moment we were a couple of giggling teenagers bouncing all over the place and talking a mile a minute. Honestly, I have no real idea what we said, because we were both talking so fast and right over each other that even my new brain and hearing couldn't keep up.

Then a throat cleared behind us. The noise, which was so wholly unnecessary, stopped Alice and me mid sentence. I turned around and realized I had forgotten someone.

"Dad!" I launched myself at Carlisle and he swept me up in his arms. My whole human life I had found it hard to call Charlie, Dad. Not because I didn't love him, but because our relationship wasn't like that. I cooked his meals and did his laundry. We had lived in the same house but we were both so self contained that we barely knew each other.

But with Carlisle it was different. I looked to him for advice; he doctored my hurts and kissed my forehead when he was done; he sheltered and protected me; and occasionally reprimanded me. He was everything that a traditional father should be and he did it because he loved me.

"I missed you Bella." He looked down at me and I could see a hint of tears in his eyes.

"I missed you too Daddy." I hugged his waist again and took in his scent, fresh picked apples and a hint of tobacco.

I turned to see everyone looking at me. "I'm so happy you're all home!!"

"No sense in standin' outside. Come on everybody, shall we?" Jasper waved us all in the house and we trooped in laughing and teasing.

We spent the next hour catching up. Carlisle, Esme and Alice had only had time to pick up their truck and packages before meeting up with everyone else and driving north. Garrett and Carlisle especially, had the most news to share as it had been over a century since they had seen each other.

Plans were made for the men to go down to the road and bring the trucks and Emmett's jeep up to the house. The driveway was rough on a regular day, but with the snow now piling up, they were most likely going to have to carry the vehicles most of the way. Emmett of course was trying to get someone to take his bet that his jeep would make it.
Suddenly I realized that it was Christmas Eve and we still didn't have a tree. "Garrett you promised!"

I ran over to him and bounced hopefully in front of him. I hoped he would clue in to what I was talking about. I really wanted to surprise Esme. He frowned slightly and then I could see the light bulb turn on as he glanced at Esme. When he looked back at me I nodded, and then worked my Alice Cullen special puppy dog eyes. He looked over at Kate who simply laughed and waved us off.

He looked down at me and narrowed his eyes "You think you can handle this mission soldier?"

I laughed and snapped him a cocky salute "Sir, yes sir!"

"Well alright then Miss Bella! Let's go!" He grabbed my arm and swung me onto his back.

As we raced out the door I called out to the family, "Be back soon!!"

I could hear Esme's concerned voice fading behind us and knew that Jasper would calm her down.

It didn't take us very long at all to find the perfect tree. Thanks to the vaulted ceilings we were able to get a HUGE one. Garrett said it was only twelve feet but I swear it looked bigger. Of course, our trip home was considerably slower than our trip out because I didn't want the needles to be torn out because of the wind from our running.

I looked over at my adopted uncle and smiled "So, Garrett. What was with needing Kate's permission to go tree hunting?"

I teased

He snorted "I wasn't looking for permission. I was…looking to see if she wanted to join us…?"

"Oh you so were not!" I laughed. God he was in just as much denial as Kate! "I don't know what it is with you two. Everyone can see how much you like each other. You spend all your time together. Honestly, you should just admit that you're meant to be together already!"

He stopped and gently put the tree down. When he looked up his eyes were troubled "It's not that simple Little One. She is a fine woman who has lived in a coven for centuries. I'm a human drinking nomad who has spent very little time around our kind." He looked down at his hands "I have nothing to offer her. I came here with little more than the clothes on my back; it's the way I have always lived. I don't know how to be part of her world."

As someone who had felt like an outsider for most of my life, I could fully understand where he was coming from. That didn't mean that I agreed with it. "Tell me something." I waited for him to look at me before I continued "Do you love her?"

He nodded "I would follow her anywhere if she would let me"

"Then the rest doesn't matter. As for you not knowing how to live in a family; her family is much smaller than ours and you are managing to get along with all of us just fine." I walked over and hugged him "Besides if you want to go off roaming around like a nomad; I think you'd like that Kate would like a chance to see more of the world."

"Really?" He looked at me with hope in his eyes but then the concern came back "But I can't provide for her. Not like she is used to"

I laughed "I tell you what. I will loan you $100. And I bet you a thousand dollars, that once you talk to Alice she will have shown you how to turn that borrowed $100, into half a million by the end of next year. At which time I will expect my $100 back as well as the thousand for our bet."

"Alice would do that for me?" he asked

"Are you kidding?! Alice lives for this kind of thing. Besides you're family, and we help our family" I shrugged.

He picked up the tree and I could see the plans forming in his brain all the way back to the house.

When we got there the guys were off getting the trucks but Mom was waiting on the porch, and she didn't look happy.

"Isabella Marie Cullen, where did you run off to? You didn't even kiss me goodbye!" she was clearly worried.

Sometimes being the baby of the family sucked. Now I know how Emmett felt most of the time. "But Mom, Garrett and I wanted to surprise you with a Christmas tree!"

"Oh!" she looked over my shoulder and smiled "Oh Garrett dear, here let's get that inside." She opened the double doors on the back deck so Garrett could maneuver it in.

She turned back to me a minute later and I knew I was off the hook "Next time dear at least kiss me goodbye." Her smile was tender as she tucked a strand of my hair behind my ear.

"Sorry Mom." I hugged her and then went to help Garrett position the tree.

Alice came up from the basement with Rose, Kate and Charlotte carrying the decorations and we began to decorate the
There was a flurry of activity as everyone got settled into their respective suites. Suddenly the house was really full. Carlisle and Esme had naturally taken the largest suite in the other wing of the house and Alice had taken the medium sized one across from them simply because she needed the closet space. The smallest one was already taken by Peter and Charlotte when they first got here.

Jasper had moved his things into my suite while everyone was in town, so I convinced Kate to move out of the small guest room downstairs and into Jasper's old suite. The way I saw it, she was family and therefore entitled to a suite.

I passed Rosalie in the hall and she winked at me, I heard, 'His costume is all laid out on our bed.'

Perfect! I went skipping downstairs to my big bear of a brother, "Time to decorate the tree!" I sang.

He hung his head and sighed and then looked up at me with a pleading look.

'You wouldn't be thinking of reneging on our bet now would you Emmy?' I teased silently

I watched as he shook his head sadly.

"Awww Mom, I was just trying to get in the spirit that's all." He added the perfect amount of whine to his voice and made it sound like the whole idea was his.

Kate of course was getting everything on film. Perfect!

We all turned when Emmett came skipping down the stairs, and I swear I heard Carlisle choke. The girls had really outdone themselves in getting everything for his Angel costume. He was wearing a white dress that had the slightest of gold shimmers running through it. It draped toga style off one shoulder and had gold beading down the front. They had found him gold gladiator sandals that laced up his calves and a long silky red wig, perched on top of his head was a crystal tiara. The final touch to the outfit was beautiful feathered wings that were held on by clear straps over his shoulders like a backpack. He would have looked pretty if he hadn't been a 6'7" behemoth of a man.

The whole family burst out in hysterical laughter as Esme stuttered "Emmett Cullen, what are you wearing that ridiculous outfit for! You are not going to be the top on the tree no matter how big it is!"

That of course sent us all off even more because of the mental image of Emmett trying to stay perched on top of the tree.

"Mom was looking at him in concern as she obviously couldn't hear my taunting of him. "Don't you want to help decorate the tree Emmett? You normally love it."

"Uh, yeah. I mean no. I mean...I'm gonna go get changed." He said and then turned and slowly walked upstairs.

'Your outfit is on your bed Emmy! Don't forget the tiara!' I couldn't help the mental giggle that followed him.

'He looks like he is on his way to a funeral' I heard Kate chuckle silently, and I exchanged amused looks with most of my family. Well, at least the ones that were in on the bet.

Esme was organizing everyone to play their parts and Carlisle was struggling with putting the lights on the tree. Apparently even vampire speed and strength can't make putting lights on a Christmas tree any easier. I saw that Kate had a video camera out and she was capturing our first Christmas as a family on tape.

It was almost midnight as we finished and Carlisle started us off singing O' Christmas Tree. We sang a few more carols as Jasper played the guitar. We finished with Silent Night before we all retired to our rooms for a few hours. We would open our presents in the morning, as was traditional.

Jasper and I entered what was now our room, and as soon as the door was closed I leaned up to kiss him. His hands wandered over my breasts and massaged my nipples before drifting to my back and pulling me close.

My hands were tangled in his hair and I was bent slightly backwards as he pulled my hips into his. I started to walk backwards towards the bed; my hands drifting to the buttons on my shirt when he stopped me.

'No Angel, I wanna do that.' His hands took over from mine 'I wanna unwrap you like the gift that you are.'

His lips caressed my skin as he slowly revealed my naked form button by button. 'You are my gift Angel. I've never done
a thing to deserve you, but I'm gonna spend the rest of my existence showing you how grateful I am to have you by my side.'

His lips found my nipple as he lowered me to our bed 'Oh God, Jasper'

His hands and mouth worshiped me as he very slowly undressed me. Before I knew it, I was fully naked underneath him desperate to have him inside me. Somewhere along the way his clothes had disappeared and I relished the feel of his body against mine. I loved having his weight on top of me; pressing me into the bed. I felt cherished and safe.

When he finally parted my legs and slid home, I cried out in relief and immediately climaxed around him. I clung to him riding the waves of euphoria and before they ebbed he started to move inside me. Every stroke was heaven as he whispered words of love and seduction in my head.

When we reached our peak it felt like we were joined mentally and physically. I could feel everything he was feeling and he could feel everything I was. Our thoughts and emotions flowed freely between us in a never ending stream. I was completely lost as I gazed into his love filled eyes.

He turned us onto our sides and we stayed locked together as we stared deep into each other's eyes.

Hours later we heard the rest of the family stirring and making their way downstairs. Jasper insisted that I wear pajamas as it was tradition. So I pulled on a pair of fuzzy blue flannel pants with penguins on them and a matching navy tank top. I almost dragged my very hot mate back to bed as he put on blue plaid drawstring pants and a black tank. I was also a bit surprised as I knew he hated his scars showing, even around the family.

I went over and kissed him deeply; proud that he was shedding some of his self consciousness.

"What was that for Darlin?"

"Just because I love you" I replied before pulling him downstairs.

Everyone was waiting for us and I was tickled to see Kate sitting in Garrett's lap. I winked at him and received a silent, 'Thank you Little One.' in return.

We made Peter play Santa, and I put the fuzzy red hat on his head so he could do it properly. I was intrigued at the smell coming off the gifts. I knew they had been handled by a ton of humans and although nice, I had to say that it didn't smell good in an appetizing kind of way. More like food that you would eat but wasn't your favorite. I would have to think more on that revelation later.

Alice was bouncing in her seat when Peter handed her the envelope from Jasper and I. She had given up on being mad about us using my gift to ensure that all her presents would be a surprise.

Kate was again videotaping as she said that she wanted to catch the first ever look of genuine surprise on Alice's face. Alice didn't disappoint and launched herself at the two of us when she saw that we had bought her tickets to all the major fashion weeks around the world. It would be a whirlwind trip starting in New York on February 11 and had her travelling through London, Milan and finally ending almost five weeks later in Paris. Peter and Charlotte paid for all of her hotel expenses for the trip and Garrett and Kate gave her ten thousand dollars to spend.

Rosalie and Emmett had split their gift with Carlisle and Esme and they had gotten her a new yellow, Porche 911 Turbo for her to drive around while she was in Europe. Everyone was impressed that I had managed to turn their lists of possible gifts for Alice into the shopping trip of a lifetime. Alice was beyond ecstatic and decided that maybe being surprised once in a while could be fun.

Next it was Peter's turn. I had talked to Carlisle and Esme, and they had agreed to help me. Jasper and I would be taking them to Isle Esme off the coast of South America. Yes I said Isle Esme! I had to shake myself when I realized the extent of the extravagance that the Cullens were capable of. Carlisle had bought Esme an entire island and named it after her. Peter and Charlotte were over the moon for their vacation, and Peter danced me around the room when we told him that Jasper and I would be joining them for a month.

Carlisle and Esme extended their use of the island for another month every year for the next decade. Charlotte looked faint and simply went up and hugged Esme, whispering about it being the perfect gift. Charlotte loved the sun and naturally, as vampires, finding a safe place to reveal ourselves was rare, especially in a tropical climate.

Alice, being Alice, had 'seen' the intended gift and gave them a complete set of luggage including steamer trunks. I couldn't help but chuckle at Alice's assumption that everyone packed the way she did.

Rosalie got Charlotte the complete DVD boxed set of the Star Wars saga, which of course set Charlotte, me and Kate into hysterical laughter. The laughing only got worse when Charlotte opened Kate's gift of a life sized Yoda replica. We only shrugged when everyone wanted to know the significance. Really it was only funny if you had been there.

Jasper and I again went with the couple gift, and collaborated with Peter and Charlotte as well as Kate and Garrett. I set up a vacation for Emmett and Rosalie to Las Vegas. We rented them a villa at the Bellagio, some shows, shopping at the Forum Shoppes at Caesar's Palace, and the Mario Andretti Qualifier where they could drive real F1 race cars. Kate
and Garrett added the Richard Petty Rookie Driving Experience so they could drive a stock car as well. Peter and Charlotte helped me pick out the dates so that they coincided with a major car show that was in town.

All in all it would be a very busy week for them. You would have thought we had given a trip to Disneyland to a couple of five year olds the way they carried on. It was tough to say who was more excited about driving the race cars, Emmett or Rosalie.

Kate, Charlotte and I decided to be sarcastic witches and each bought Rosalie new bra and panty sets from La Perla in bright screaming red. Everyone was really confused until we filled them in on our game of capture the flag. Emmett was just excited about the new underwear. Horn dog.

I knew that, because I was a newborn, we would be spending quite a few years here in Northern Ontario and I knew that the growing seasons would be short. Esme would miss the huge gardens that she had in Forks. Jasper and I came up with some plans to fly in the materials for a tropical style conservatory for Esme to build here. She was bouncing at the thought of being able to grow tropical plants in such a cold climate. The geothermal energy that heated our house was perfect for heating, what was essentially, a large hothouse year round.

Peter, Charlotte, Kate and Garrett had all done their research and found numerous species of rare plants that would be shipped here when the building was completed sometime in the summer. I had called Alice and she had bought some beautiful fountains and supplies to add a large pond and small creek to the centre. Carlisle was having several large Koi brought in from Japan and I was surprised to learn that these beautiful fish can live for centuries, making them really the only pet that a vampire can have.

Garrett was surprised when Peter started handing him wrapped gifts. I just looked at his confused face and rolled my eyes, "Honestly Garrett, did you think we would ask you to stay for Christmas and call you family but not get you anything?"

He very maturely stuck his tongue out at me much to our amusement.

I had seen him fiddling with Jasper's iPod, so we had gotten him his own laptop complete with web cam so he could call us from anywhere, and an iPod. Carlisle and Esme found him a beautifully preserved antique 18th century compass. Carlisle said it was so he would always be able to find his way back to the family. Kate had gotten him an antique 18th century travelling brass tobacco and pipe carrier.

Garrett looked stunned and said that he had had both items when he was human. Alice bought him damn near a whole new wardrobe all nicely packed in a new set of luggage. Rose and Emmett got him a matching truck to Jasper's to carry it all with.

My adopted uncle had worried about only having the clothes on his back, and now he had a home with Kate, a truck to get there, more personal possessions then he had owned in centuries and a family to share his existence with. I watched as he went to each member of the family to embrace them and thank them with a voice loaded with his emotions.

He gave me a long hug and looked deep into my eyes before kissing my forehead. 'Thank you Little One. You made this possible.'

'No Garrett you did. You came here to warn us about the danger headed our way. It would have been easy for you to leave and continue your wandering but you didn't, you opened yourself up to the possibility of friendship.' I said seriously.

'We just got lucky that Carlisle and Esme happen to like taking in strays.' I couldn't help but tease him a bit.

He laughed and nodded.

Peter started stacking packages in front of Carlisle, and I hoped that Jasper had been right about his suggestions. Jasper had found him a rare first edition of The Origin of Species by Charles Darwin. I had gotten some preserved original drawings by Leonardo Da Vinci. They were all drawings that Leonardo had done as he studied human anatomy and, while I found them morbid, Carlisle was practically giggling.

Emmett had gotten a little silly and found him the old game Operation, which Carlisle found really funny. Rosalie had just shaken her head and handed over their real gift of a trip for Esme and Carlisle to stay in Paris and visit the Louvre. Garrett, Kate, Peter and Charlotte all got the hotel as well as tickets to several art shows in the city. I knew the Carlisle would be bringing home several new paintings and sculptures.

Then it was Jasper's turn. Garrett and Kate had tracked down a very rare Texas 'Bonnie Blue' from the 3rd Texas State Cavalry that was flown during the War for Independence. I thought Jasper's eyes were going to fall out. Apparently it was a pretty big deal. I couldn't wait to hear all about it later.

Rose and Emmett got him an antique Confederate Presentation Sword. Jasper told us a story of when he got his sword when he made Major, and how big of a deal it had been because he was so young.

Peter and Charlotte gave him a new acoustic guitar that had been signed by Garth Brooks. I couldn't help but smile over at Jasper remembering the first song he had ever played for me.
I had spent weeks searching but I had found several pictures, scattered in various archives around Texas, of Jasper's family. He was speechless as he looked at the faces of his parents and baby sister for the first time in 150 years. Very few pictures were taken in those days as they were so expensive, so I hadn't been able to find very many, but from the look on his face it didn't matter at all.

He tore his eyes from the pictures in front of him and looked up at me 'Angel. I...I don't know what to say.'

'You don't have to say anything Jas. The look on your face and the happiness that I am feeling from you is all I could ever need.' Truthfully his emotions were really complicated. A mix of joy, disbelief and confusion.

He leaned forward and caught me up in his arms. He was shaken by the gift and I sent him my love and comfort until he was calmer.

Then it was Kate's turn. Jasper knew Kate much better than I did, but we both thought that a trip to New York would be a nice change of scenery for her and we were right. She said that she hadn't been there for close to seventy-five years and wanted to see all the changes. She decided to meet Alice there for Fashion Week and attend some of the shows with her. Peter and Charlotte bought her tickets to several Broadway shows for her to see while she was there.

Carlisle and Esme gave her some beautiful first edition books but they were all written in Russian. Kate seemed to like them though.

Garrett shyly held out a small package and I heard Kate catch her breath when she opened it. Inside was a beautiful Faberge egg pendant suspended off a heavy gold chain. Kate looked like she would cry and explained that she had one when she was a small girl but lost it when she was turned.

I watched as Garrett looked at Kate like she had hung the moon, and she looked at him like he was the center of her universe.

I felt Jasper take my hand "Your turn Angel."

I looked around and felt a bit uncomfortable when I saw everyone was looking at me "You guys didn't have to get me anything. I mean, it's not like I can leave the house anytime soon right?"

Carlisle chuckled. "All the more reason to find you things to occupy your time with."

"Alright Cricket, now I know you hate people spending money on you so we all got a bit creative." Rose handed me a small box that was attached to a larger one wrapped in a pretty green bow.

Emmett was bouncing in his seat "This goes with it!" and he handed me another larger package.

I opened the smaller one and found a rather beat up iPod Classic. I picked it up and turned it over to see a familiar inscription engraved on the back 'To my Bella on her 17th birthday, Love Mom'

I gasped and my hand went to my mouth. It was my very own iPod from Forks; the one I thought I would never see again because of my 'death'. "Oh you guys! I wanted to have this back so badly! Thank you!"

"There's more." Rose reminded me

The larger box held a brand new lap top computer that Rose told me held all of the information and music that had been on my old computer in Forks. I was so happy to realize that I hadn't lost all of my music, as well as the poetry and fiction that I had written over the years. It was such a huge part of my human life that I thought that I would never get back.

"Open the other one Cricket!" Emmett encouraged

I opened the other one to find a brand new iPod docking station with surround sound speakers. It would be perfect for Jasper's and my room.

"Me Next!" Alice bounded over with some huge boxes.

I opened them to find a set of luggage and when she told me to open them I found some of my favorite band t-shirts, the stuffed bear that had sat on my bed and my baby blanket that I used to carry everywhere when I was little. Of course there was also a whole new wardrobe, but Alice had restrained herself to things I actually liked to wear, like jeans and funky retro T's.

Peter and Charlotte were eager and gave me a set of leather bound photo albums that already had several pictures in them of my new family. There were some great shots of me laughing and playing around with everyone, as well as a beautiful one of me and Peter sitting down by the lake.

Kate handed me an envelope with a card inside from the Denali clan inviting Jasper and I to visit whenever we were able, as they wanted to have the chance to meet the newest member of the family. I was quite touched that they thought to include me in their extended family but concerned that we might run into Edward there.

Jasper must have felt my worry, 'Don't fret Angel. Carlisle and Esme will arrange to take Edward away whenever we visit Denali.'
I smiled at him gratefully as Kate and Garrett came forward with a gorgeous acoustic guitar for me. They had heard me say that I wanted to learn to play an instrument, and thought that it would be something easy for me to start with. Not to mention that both Garrett and Jasper played, so I would have plenty of help learning.

Esme stepped up next with an envelope of her own. She and Carlisle exchanged nervous glances "This gift is actually for the both of you."

Jasper opened the envelope to find the deed to the Ontario property with our names on it. Holy Crap! They gave us the house!!!!

"Mom, it's too much!" I had to protest. We all lived here. It's the family's home.

"Nonsense." Scoffed Carlisle "We gave Rose and Emmett the house in Montana, Alice has the property in France; we insist that you take this one."

I shook my head and looked at Jasper who was just shaking his head and chuckling in defeat. I looked back at Esme.

"But we all live here." I was confused. Surely they wouldn't leave would they?

Esme smiled "And we still will unless you kick us out, but at some time in the future you will want to live apart from us for a few years. The family hardly ever uses this property and you said that you absolutely loved it, so we thought that it would be a good home base for you and Jasper. Rather like the house in Alaska is for Carlisle and I."

I was confused. Surely they wouldn't leave would they?

They really were giving me my dream home. Could I really accept it?

'Just hug them and say thank you Angel. They won't take no for an answer anyway.' Jasper's suggestion grounded me again and I moved forward to do just that.

"My turn Angel."

Jasper placed a large box in my hands and I sat down to open it. What I found made me wish that I could cry again. It was a huge photo album of all of my childhood pictures.

There were pictures of my disastrous ballet recital when I was 6, me fishing with Charlie, playing in the tide pools with Jake and Rebecca, ball games with Phil and my mom, cooking lessons with my Grandma Swan, the pictures were endless. There were even pictures of my Grandma Marie when she was a girl with a smiling Peter. The whole family poured over the pictures endlessly and I explained everything I could remember about them.

"How did you ever...?" I looked up at Jasper in confusion.

"I told Alice what I wanted to give you, so she'll have to tell you the magic she worked to make this happen. It's even better than I hoped for to be honest." Jasper explained

I looked over at Alice and she looked a bit sheepish. "I figured in this case you wouldn't be opposed to breaking and entering, so I committed a couple of small burglaries and 'borrowed' the necessary albums from both Charlie and Renee's houses. The rest was just getting them reproduced at a local photography store. I put all the originals back so your parents will still have them, but now you have your own copies." She got up and flipped to the very back pages and pointed out several computer disks "These are DVD copies of all your old VHS home movies. I 'borrowed' them from your mom's house too."

Jasper handed me another small package. "This is from the whole family"

I opened it to find a locket with the Cullen crest on the outside. When I opened it I found a picture of Charlie on one side and Renee on the other.

I looked up with tear filled eyes "Thank you. Oh my god, thank you so much." I looked around at everyone "For all of it. I never thought that I would get any of it back again."

I got up and went to my parents first and as I hugged them I felt the rest of the family gather around. I was being passed from one set of arms to the other as we all thanked each other for the thoughtful gifts.

I was in Peter's arms standing beside Jasper when I heard the back door slide open and then I heard a voice that I was in no way prepared to deal with.

"Well isn't this cozy." The speaker turned their eyes on me "Hello Love."

A/N: Okay so I am not entirely happy with this chapter as it was a bit rushed. I know there are spelling mistakes and punctuation errors and I promise that I will fix them when I get back. I wanted to get this special Christmas chapter out in time for the holiday.
Now, I am off to places warm and tropical for a week but I will have plenty of time to write while I sit under a palm tree.

Everyone please have a very Merry Christmas and a safe holiday season! Catch ya all in the New Year!!
I was in Peter's arms, standing beside Jasper, when I heard the back door slide open and then I heard a voice that I was in no way prepared to deal with.

"Well, isn't this cozy."

The speaker turned their eyes on me. "Hello, Love."

Just like the disastrous night of my eighteenth birthday, several things happened simultaneously; Peter pushed me into Jasper's arms and crouched defensively in front of me. Jasper moved to stand in front of me with one arm reached behind him so he could curl a hand around my upper thigh. My shield flashed up to encase the three of us.

Carlisle had moved to stand in front of Edward and was instantly flanked by a very unhappy Esme.

Rosalie, Charlotte, and Kate, surprisingly, didn't move other than to stand together; while Garrett and Emmett moved to stand, what would have been, shoulder to shoulder with Peter, if it hadn't been for my shield. Alice was sitting on the couch rubbing her temples with her eyes closed. I knew she was trying to figure out why she hadn't seen this happening.

The growl coming from Jasper's throat was chilling, and I was really glad that it wasn't directed at me. As unhappy as I was to see Edward, and as nervous as I felt at seeing him, I had to admit that I wasn't as terrified as I had thought I would be. I actually thought that the actions of the majority of the family were a bit of overkill. I mean, really, my mate was known as the God of War; not to mention that I could at least defend myself now.

Carlisle was the first to speak. "Edward, what are you doing here? Why aren't you in Denali with Eleazar and Carmen?"

Edward was looking Carlisle with a slight frown on his face. I watched as he looked from face to face and his frown deepened. When his eyes reached me, Jasper's growls turned to snarls.

Carlisle tried to diffuse the escalating situation. "Edward, I asked you a question."

"It's Christmas and I wanted to spend it with my family. Where else would I be but here with all of you. Although, I see you still have the family pet with you along with a few strays." His tone was arrogant and the last was said with a sneer clearly directed at me and Garrett, with the possible addition of Peter and Charlotte.

God, was he this stupid when we were together?

Snarls and growls erupted from several throats at his words and I realized that Jasper's hostility was most likely spreading to the rest of the family. I wrapped an arm around his waist in an effort to calm him, but it really didn't have any effect. He was entirely focused on Edward.

"Edward!" Esme was appalled and really had no idea how to handle such blatant rudeness.

"Edward, where are Eleazar and Carmen?" Carlisle's tone was hard and I knew Edward was in trouble, even if he didn't.

Edward still had a frown on his face and he was starting to look frustrated and angry. "I told them I was going hunting and when we all split up I started to run here."

He shook his head. "Why can't I hear any of you?!"

Rose, Kate, and Charlotte all got matching smirks on their faces and Carlisle looked taken aback. I'm pretty sure my face probably matched the ones that the girls were wearing, but I was still pretty much hidden behind the wall of men protecting me. I could barely even see Edward.

Esme recovered first. "Bella has turned out to be a very gifted newborn. I would assume that she would be the reason you are unable to hear any of us." She sounded very proud and perhaps a bit smug when she said this.

Edward's head swung in my direction as he tried to see past my brother, uncles, and mate. "My pet is gifted?"

Jasper lurched forward and would have attacked if it hadn't been for Peter and I holding him back. I wasn't sure what he had objected to more the 'my' or the 'pet'.

Either way, he was pissed, I could hear Peter in my head. 'Shit Bella his eyes are completely black. We're losing him,
do something!"

I slid around and squeezed myself between Peter and Jasper's bodies. I needed him to look at me. I had seen how painful it was for him to revert to the darkest side of his character; I couldn't let him do it again, especially not with the entire family standing between him and his intended target. 'Jasper, honey. Please look at me.'

I looked up at him and stroked his face. I could feel he was still struggling to move forward and the only reason he hadn't dropped Peter, was because I was standing in the way.

I sensed that Garrett and Emmett had moved to block what was happening from Edward, and I was glad for the privacy. Carlisle was arguing with him and trying to get him to leave the house, but things weren't going well.

'Please, my love, my mate; look at me.' I wasn't sure what it was that caught his attention but his black eyes shifted and focused on me. I reached up and cupped his cheek. 'I'm not afraid. He can't hurt me ever again. Please, don't do this to yourself. He's not worth it.' I stood on tip toe and kissed his lips gently.

I felt him come back to himself and his arms came around me. 'I'm sorry, Angel.'

Peter relaxed his hold when he felt that Jasper was no longer on the attack. I shifted back and looked at him. His eyes were still dark but they were no longer the dangerous black of the Major from the Southern Armies.

'I'm not. You're willing to protect me and I'm grateful for that, but, Jasper, I don't want you to sacrifice the man that you've become because of a spoiled child. Look at me. I'm not afraid. He can't hurt me anymore.'

'But he makes you nervous,' he said, stating the obvious.

I rolled my eyes. 'Of course he makes me nervous, but I can handle nervous. Besides, if anyone gets to kick his ass it's going to be me!'

Jasper's eyes softened and he lowered his head to mine. 'Alright, Angel, but leave a piece for me will ya?'

I sighed dramatically. 'Oh, if I must!' I thought sarcastically.

I turned to stand with my back to Jasper's chest. There were too many bodies in the way for me to see clearly.

I tried something that I hadn't done before and projected my thoughts to Peter, Emmett, and Garrett simultaneously. 'Come on guys, back up. Jasper's good now and Eddie boy can't get to me through my shield.'

It must have worked, because they all shifted to stand to the side leaving a path between me and Edward.

Edward was still arguing with Carlisle and Esme, and I took the opportunity to study him. He was still beautiful, but now I saw a boy where I once saw perfection. I looked to the man who stood beside me and there is where I saw perfection.

Jasper's scars and the hardness that time had etched on his face before his turning, only reinforced the strength that radiated from him. He was a man, a man that had seen and experienced more of life in the 20 human years that he had lived, than Edward had in his 110 years total. I was so proud to be his mate.

Jasper felt my emotions and leaned down to kiss my forehead. I smiled and turned back to look at Edward. I could see that Carlisle was getting angry.

'Dad, it's no use. He is too much of a child to listen to reason. Let me handle it'

It was the first time that I had used my gift on him and he looked back at me in confusion. I nodded and he relaxed. Esme on the other hand was still trying to protect me. I had the best mom!

'Mom, it's okay.'

She looked back at me with her eyebrows raised.

I went on to explain. 'Like it or not, he is part of this family and I won't be the reason that it's split up any more.'

'You are not the reason this family is split up. He caused his own punishment by attacking a member of this family.' Esme took my gift in stride just like she did everything else.

"What is going on?" Edward spat out still looking at Carlisle and Esme.

He was obviously confused at their silence and inattention.

"That would be me," I said calmly.

His attention shifted to me and his look was calculating. "Well, look who finally got their wish. Don't you have something to say to me?"
Huh? "Like what?"

"How about 'Thank you Edward for finally changing me'. You did want to be a vampire after all." His tone was condescending.

I could hear a collective breath in as everyone prepared to give him a piece of their minds.

'WAIT! This is between me and Edward! I can fight this battle on my own.' This group projection thing was going to come in handy. Everyone relaxed and waited.

I turned to Jasper and kissed him on the cheek. "Thank you Jasper for changing me when Edward would have left me to die."

A growl came out of Edward's throat. "I was the one that changed you, not him!"

Jasper stiffened beside me and I put my hand on his arm. I waited until he looked down at me before I shook my head. He stopped growling, but didn't relax.

I turned back to Edward. "Actually, you drank so much of my blood that there wasn't any of your venom left to do the job. Jasper had to bite me four times before I got enough venom to force the change. You killed me. Jasper gave me this life."

"Impossible!! Jasper doesn't have the control to change a human. I changed you, you're mine!" His voice came out in a growl.

Again with the arrogance and condescension. So, I decided to give Edward his fondest wish.

My eyes connected again with Jasper and he raised my hand that was closest to his chest up to his mouth. I could see my arm shaking with the force of the tremors that were wracking my body. Jasper pressed a kiss into the palm of my hand and then sunk his teeth into my wrist. Quicker than Carlisle's cry of alarm, Jasper pushed his venom into my wrist and then sealed the wound with his tongue.

"Jasper!" Esme looked at him with worry and a trace of pride.

"We don't have time for this Esme; I have to push more into her system. We can talk later." I could hear the command in his voice as he shifted me in his arms and reached for my other wrist where he repeated the procedure. He then ripped open my shirt and bit me right over my heart.

"That's enough, Son. You pushed an astonishing amount of venom into her system in a short amount of time. The change will happen quickly now." I felt the prick of a needle as Carlisle injected something into me. "Morphine, Bella. I am hoping that it will numb some of the burning."

I felt my jaw threatening to crack as my teeth were clamped together to try to hold back my screams.

Edwards eyes widened as my human memories poured into his mind. When we came to the time that the burning started he fell to his knees. I stopped the flow of my memories and he looked up at me in astonishment. "You're a telepath?!"

I smiled slightly. "Sort of."

I deliberately didn't elaborate. I didn't want to give him more information than he needed.

His eyes shifted between Garrett and Peter warily as he stood. "You can lift your shield. I have no intention of hurting her."

They looked like they were about to speak, so I silently interrupted. 'Let him think one of you is the shield. It will do him good to be kept in the dark for once.'

I could see several of my family trying to suppress their smiles. Garrett just shrugged and I dropped my shield. I watched as Edwards gaze sharpened on him. I could almost hear Edward's mind calculating the options. Peter frowned; I guess he was disappointed Edward hadn't thought it was him.

I saw Alice stand and look at me. 'I need to see something.'

I nodded and she took off out into the night. I frowned wondering what she was doing, but I knew better than to second guess Alice.

Jasper started growling again and I turned to see that Edward had taken several steps towards me.

"Are you the reason that I can't hear everyone's thoughts?" He was angry. He had never had to live without his gift before and it had made him arrogant.

I looked at Edward, but focused my thoughts at Carlisle and Esme. 'Mom, Dad? I think I might be subconsciously shielding the family. I think that's why Edward can't hear any of you.'
I didn't want Edward to know that I was plotting behind his back so I answered a question with another question. "What's the matter Edward? You always said you hated hearing everyone's thoughts."

Carlisle silently answered me and I relayed his side of the conversation to Esme. 'I think you're right, Bella. I am impressed that you seem to be able to shield so many at once. We will need to work with your shield. Jasper will find this very beneficial for the battle to come I'm sure.'

Esme was looking incredulously between me and Carlisle obviously confused that she could hear Carlisle in her head. I was really glad that Edward's back was to them or he would have caught on immediately.

'Bella! I heard Carlisle!'

Poor Esme.

I decided to get all the surprises out of the way and relayed her words through to Carlisle. Now, he looked incredulous.

'Oh yes, we are going to have to work with this little gift of yours extensively!!'

He took it a bit better than Esme, but I needed them to focus.

Edward in the mean time was getting pissy. "Don't be cute, Bella! I want to know if you're blocking their thoughts from me!"

Peter, being the strange all knowing magic 8 ball that he is, ran interference. "Don't yell at her! Just because your gift is on the blink doesn't give you the right to go after her!"

While they argued, I carried out my plan and talked to Carlisle and Esme. 'I think it would be good for Edward to live without his gift for awhile, but I wanted to get your permission first.'

'How long do you think he is going to be here Bella? We were planning on following through with his punishment and sending him back to Denali,' Carlisle thought.

'He is just going to keep coming back here, and we need all the help we can get with the newborn army and Victoria.' I figured if he could get away from the Denalis once, he could do it again.

'But, Bella, how are you going to deal with having him here all the time? I don't want you to be uncomfortable dear, and I worry that he might attack you again. He's obviously not the person we thought he was.' Esme was truly worried and I loved her all the more for it.

'I'm not as helpless as I used to be. Everyone has been teaching me how to fight. Not to mention there is no way that Jasper will let it get that far. Yes, he makes me uncomfortable, but we need him. He could be really helpful when Victoria and her hoard of goons get here. Besides, I think learning to live without his gift will take him down a few pegs.' I really didn't want him here, but I hoped that we could all learn to live together.

Carlisle looked at me carefully. 'I'll allow him to stay, but the minute he oversteps his bounds or threatens you he gets shipped back to Denali. Agreed?'

'And the mind reading?' I had to know

Carlisle and Esme exchanged a long look and if I didn't know better I would have thought that they were speaking telepathically. I wondered if it was just them or if it was a bonded mate thing? Did Jasper and I look like that? But we wouldn't count because we actually could speak telepathically. I shook myself mentally, now wasn't the time to be a newborn and get distracted. I could think about it later.

Esme looked at me. 'I think that this might be a better punishment for him than sending him to Denali. Do whatever it is that you are doing. He can learn how to live like the rest of us.'

'And we can find out what he is really like. He won't be able to say what he thinks we want to hear. He will have to accept the consequences of his actions and the responses to things he may say.' Carlisle's tone was firm and I had the feeling that it would be a rough few days for Edward. Charlie would have called it tough love.

I turned my attention to the argument that was still going on between Peter and Edward.

Peter was clearly winning as Edward looked pissed and Peter looked like he had been enjoying himself.

"Enough! Yes, Edward I am the reason that you can't hear anyone." I cut through their argument like a hot knife through butter.

Edward's glare was intimidating. "Turn it off!"

I lifted my chin. "I don't know how. I'm still a newborn and don't have control over my gift yet."
"Kinda the truth. I mean I'm sure I could figure it out pretty quickly, but I really didn't want to go to the effort and he needed to be taught a lesson.

"Then you better learn to figure it out, little girl." His tone was menacing

All my male protectors straightened and shifted their weight forward. I would have stopped them with a thought but Carlisle spoke up.

"Edward. If you don't like the way things are here, then you are welcome to go back to Denali. Bella seems to be gracious enough to allow you to stay in her home, so telling her how to use her gift is poor manners to say the least." His tone was reasonable, but carried the weight of the head of the family.

"You gave her the house?!" He exclaimed angrily.

Now, Edward was just being petty. God what a child!

"Yes, Edward, they gave me the house. It was a Christmas gift. Now, as Carlisle said, if you don't like the fact that you can't hear everyone's thoughts, you are welcome to leave and go back to Alaska. However, if you choose to stay the two downstairs bedrooms are available; you can take your pick." I was getting tired of the drama and wondered if he wasn't more trouble than he was worth.

"But my suite is upstairs!"

Everyone tried to bite back their smiles and Emmett actually snickered. Edward sounded more and more like a whiny child.

Jasper's mental voice caressed my mind. 'I haven't heard him whine this much since Alice and I first joined the family and he came home from huntin' to find all his stuff in the garage.'

I couldn't help the smile that stretched my lips. "I'm sorry, Edward, but all the suites are currently taken up by the family. The rooms are all we have left."

I cocked my head and couldn't help myself. "What does it matter anyway? It's not like you need the bed for anything."

Emmett and Rose laughed. The rest of them did a credible job of containing themselves. I could feel nothing but amusement and pride coming from Jasper.

Then, just like that, he changed his tactics. Edward tilted his head and looked down at me intensely; that slow crooked smile that I used to love so much spread across his face. "Bella, Love. It's fine, you just surprised me that's all."

He lowered his voice a notch. "I'll just stay in your suite with you."

I felt Jasper's rage and put my hand on his chest to stop him. I used my new position to my advantage. I looked into Edward's eyes trying to imitate the look that must have been on my face when he dazzled me as a human. "I'm sorry, Edward, but you will have to ask Jasper how he feels about us sharing our suite with you."

I turned my fake dazzled look to Jasper, and the heat in his eyes and the mix of lust and possession rolling off of him, nearly brought me to my knees. He smoothly wound a hand around my waist to anchor me to him.

When he turned his face to a stunned and outraged Edward his expression turned icy. "I'm sorry, Edward, but our suite will be off limits to you for the duration of your stay. Bella was gracious enough to offer you our hospitality, don't abuse it or I will take great pleasure in tossin' you out."

Jasper cocked an eyebrow. "Oh! I don't think you were properly introduced. Edward, this is Isabella Marie Cullen, my bonded mate. Bella, you remember Edward don't you?"

I heard Peter cough out, "Smooth."

Emmett and Garrett smothered their chuckles.

I crossed my arms over my chest and looked at Edward in annoyance. "Vividly," I deadpanned.

I was rather unimpressed with Jasper's blatant display of ownership, but then I had started the whole thing, so I couldn't really blame anyone but myself.

Edward seemed to recover himself somewhat, but still looked rather pained. "I will go and claim one of the rooms."

He nodded minutely in my direction and glared at Jasper before disappearing in the direction of the guest rooms.

"I need to hunt!" I announced to the room in general before running out the door and into the forest.

I heard someone behind me and guessed that it was Jasper but I was too angry about the entire situation to wait for him.
I took off after the first appetizing scent I caught and quickly downed a moose. I made a bigger mess than I usually did due to my bad temper. Why did Edward have to show up now? I was so happy! My family was all together for the first time.

Jasper and I had just spent four glorious days together. I was more secure in my new body and I was starting to get a handle on these stupid instincts of mine.

Case in point: Edward's unexpected arrival not throwing me into a panic filled tailspin that resulted in Jasper having to talk me out of my own bubble. God, I was so pathetic! Why Jasper ever wanted to be mated to me in the first place is beyond me, seeing as how terrified and pathetic I was all the time. It had only been recently that I started to get better.

Now Edward shows up, and my whole world is up in the air again. I really didn't want to go back to the house. My damned instincts were screaming at me that I really didn't know what his intentions were. I mean did he still want to kill me? It was obvious that he thought he would still be able to manipulate me.

God! I can't believe that he thought he would still be able to dazzle me after he tried to eat me!!

I leapt up into a tree and climbed onto a comfortable branch and used the trunk as my back rest. I didn't want to be out here but I didn't want to be at home either.

My sharp senses were picking up several of my family out in the forest with me. I mentally ran over the route that I had taken hunting. My scent should be confusing enough that they would have trouble finding me easily. I felt bad, but I just wasn't quite ready to talk to any of them yet.

I hadn't told any of them about my plan in regards to Edward's telepathy, and although I had cleared it with Carlisle and Esme, I knew there would be a ton of questions. They would all want to know how I was feeling about Edward, they would want to know why he was here, why I allowed him to stay, and then there would be the questions about the expansion of my gift.

It was all just too much to deal with right now. The one good thing that had come out of Edward showing up, had been the realization that I had no real feelings for him anymore. My human memories had him painted as this image of perfection. Always there; looking at me in devotion, protective and caring. I actually used to like his constant hovering. Now I could see his actions for what they were; possessive, obsessive and stalker like.

Time and perspective had given me the ability to see, that it was the feeling of being taken care of that I liked. After a lifetime of taking care of the people in my life, Edward's attention had been a welcome change.

Speaking of being taken care of; I could feel my family trying to use my gift to contact me. I had mentally 'turned off' and their projected thoughts were like a muted poke against what I now knew was my mental shield. I could feel Jasper's worry as I continued to ignore my family's attempts to find me. I hated that I was making them worry, but, really, I wasn't all that far from home and I was a big girl.

I watched as Emmett ran right under my tree but made no move to alert him to my presence. Really, how did my brother ever manage to hunt down anything?

Jasper's anxiety was starting to evolve into panic.

‘Jas, honey, I'm fine. I just need to process everything for awhile. I love you, and that will never change.’

I felt his frustration when I wouldn't accept anything from him mentally. He communicated the only way he had left. I felt his acceptance and love, but he made sure that I knew he was worried and wanted to be with me when I also felt his longing, comfort, and anxiety.

'I love you too, Jas, but I just want to be alone for a bit. Why don't you go and find Alice? She left to get away from my shield to look at the future.'

I felt him withdraw, but he wasn't happy about it. I felt terrible for causing my mate pain, but this was the first time that I had been alone since my change. Well, at least the first time that I really wanted to be alone.

I sat there for hours. By the time the sun began to fade, I felt a lot calmer. I had come to a number of conclusions. Edward no longer had the ability to hurt me. Not only was I physically stronger and could defend myself, but I was in a better place emotionally. The only ones that had the ability to hurt me were the people that I cared about, my family. I no longer cared about Edward. Not that I would ever want anything bad to happen to him, but his actions and words had shown me the person that he truly was and that person had no influence over me anymore.

I dropped down from my tree and brushed myself off. I turned to go back to the house and had gone no more than 50 yards when I saw someone stand up. It's not easy to startle a vampire, but he had managed it.

I let out snarl before I realized who it was. "Holy Crap Garrett!!"

"Sorry, Little One." He held up his hands. "I only wanted to make sure that you were safe. Edward managed to surprise us and I didn't want Victoria to do the same."

I wanted to be angry, but he hadn't disturbed me so there really wasn't any point. "You know, I can take care of myself..."
"now," I grumbled.  "Yes, I know you can. But I could too, until I was attacked by four large men at once. If it hadn't been for Carlisle, I would have died that day."

He looked at me with a pleading look. "I have just managed to find a family, Bella. Please don't let me learn what it's like to lose one of them."

My silent heart melted. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be. I understand your need for solitude sometimes, especially after such an emotional day."

I took his hand and he smiled down at me switching our grip so that his arm was draped over my shoulder. As we walked slowly back to the house, a thought wandered through my mind. "How did you manage to sneak up on me anyway? Everyone says that my senses are really sharp! I thought that I was the quiet one?"

Jasper had told me that my hearing and smell were extremely acute even for a vampire.

Garrett smiled softly. "I spent almost 200 years avoiding our kind. You learn really quickly to be quiet."

He was right. Actually, now that I thought about it, he had very little natural scent at all. He tended to blend in with the smells around him or smell like an old scent trail. No wonder he was able to sit out there without me noticing.

As we walked, I realized that I would probably be in trouble with Esme again. I was really not used to having to check in with someone every time I wanted to go anywhere, even as a human. I started to think that just taking off like that had been pretty insensitive. My family loved me and just wanted to keep me safe, they would have been worried sick about me and I had just left without a word.

"Kate must be wondering where you are." My voice was soft and tentative.

Garrett squeezed my shoulder. "She knows that I went looking for you."

He stopped and turned me to face him. I couldn't look at him. My actions had been childish and had probably hurt everyone. Worse, I had hurt my Jasper.

"Bella, they understand. They are not angry with you." He lifted my chin to look into my eyes. "We are all very proud of how well you handled yourself when Edward arrived. That had to have been a huge shock to you and you dealt with him in a very mature way. You didn't retreat into yourself and you didn't have to be talked out of your shield. You even managed to talk Jasper back from losing control. We are very proud of you, Little One."

"Really?"

He nodded and hugged me. "Now, off you go. You still need to show everyone that you are back and I believe your mate will be anxious to have you back in his arms."

"Thank you, Garrett. For everything."

I looked at him one more time before I ran back to the house. I loved my new Uncle and wouldn't trade him for anything.

When I got back to the house, Jasper was waiting for me on the back deck. He took me in his arms and then cupped my face in his hand. I couldn't help but close my eyes in pleasure at his touch. This is where I should have been. It took me hours sitting by myself to reach the same calm place that one touch from my mate brought me.

'Are you alright, Angel?' His tone was worried and I regretted ever having caused him stress.

'I'm sorry I ran off on you, Jas. I just wanted time to think, but I should have taken you with me. I'm sorry.'

'Sshhh, Angel, it's okay. I understand. I did want to be with you, but then, I always want to be with you. It's alright to want to be alone every now and then.' He put his forehead on mine. 'Did you hunt?'

I nodded.

He pushed my hair back behind my ear. 'Are you really alright with Edward bein' here? It's not too late to get rid of him.'

'I talked to Carlisle and Esme and we are going to keep him mentally deaf for the time that he is here. We all figure it will be a good exercise in humility and common etiquette if he can't hear what he is expected to do and actually has to learn to interact with people on their level,' I explained

'Darlin', that doesn't answer my question. I want to know if you are gonna be okay with him bein' here. My only concern in this life is you. If you want him gone, he's gone. If you want him to stay, then tell me.'

His concern for me and the fact that he was asking me what I wanted, instead of telling me what to do, made me want to cry. What had I ever done to deserve him? 'I love you, you know that?'
He chuckled. 'I love you, too. I take it you want the ass, excuse me, I take it you want Edward to stay?'

'No, you had it right the first time. I want the ass to stay.' I smirked up at him. 'I would rather have him where we can keep an eye on him than have him pop up or cause more problems later.' I tried to explain my reasoning.

'Well, I can't say as I want him around either, but, strategically speakin', it is easier if he's here.' He kissed my forehead.

'Jas?'

There was one thing he could do for me

'Yeah, Angel?'

'Don't leave me alone with him?' All my carefully thought out conclusions about Edward not being able to hurt me still stood but that didn't mean I had to voluntarily submit myself to his manipulations alone. He was the masochist not me.

'Not even for a second, Angel.' He pushed a wave of love and reassurance to me.

I melted into his arms and let him hold me.

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A/N: Holy Shamolly! I give you guys three chapters in three days and then take a break and I get messages asking if I have died or abandoned the story! I love y'all, but I gotta ask for some patience from you. I had to put the fairies on sentinel duty to keep from getting stormed.

Flattering, that you think I can just whip up a new chapter every few days, but alas I am not that talented. I have caught up on my writing and am trying to write ahead again so you will all have to learn a little patience. It is a virtue after all.

Fairies please pass out the Angel Cake cupcakes and pour the tea.

Until next time everyone!
To say that the last week had been stressful would be a massive understatement. Since Edward's arrival on Christmas Day, things had gotten hellish for me.

Everyone was on edge constantly. Bella tried to protect me as much as possible. She would send me as much love and comfort as she could, but she couldn't keep it up all the time. She was being affected by the tension as well.

Edward just seemed to want to cause problems; he always wanted to know things. Kate had busted him snooping in her and Garrett's suite; he said he wasn't doing anything, but he really had no purpose for being in there. Kate gave him a pretty severe shock and I got the pleasure of watching him get thrown out the second story window. That was until I realized that he was in the room next to mine and Bella's while she was taking a shower. Again, nothing I could prove, but it had my protective instincts humming at a fever pitch.

The next day, he and Alice got into a screaming match because she had caught him in her room. It would have turned violent if Emmett hadn't pulled Edward away. Carlisle and Esme laid down the law and told him, in no uncertain terms, that he was not to be found in anyone's private quarters again. Poor Esme was ashamed and frustrated by her son's behaviour, and I couldn't help but compare her feelings with that of a mother, who watched helpless, as her child threw an embarrassing tantrum in the middle of a crowded mall.

Then there was the day that the girls had caught him trying to spy on them as they went off to train together. Bella sent me an image of a furious Rosalie chasing a petulant Edward through the forest and asked me to please keep a better eye on him. It is a good thing that Edward is so fast; otherwise I hate to have seen what he would have looked like if Rose had managed to lay her hands on him. Peter commented that it felt like babysitting.

Honestly, it was like having a five year old in the house. Boundaries meant nothing in his quest to know what was going on. He had spent 100 years knowing every detail in everyone’s lives through his telepathy and, because of it; he seemed to have missed the most basic lesson regarding personal privacy.

Peter, Charlotte, and Garrett (and by association, Kate) seemed to bear the brunt of his childish and manipulative behaviour so far. Carlisle and I reasoned that it was because he didn't know them at all. Thankfully, he seemed to ignore Bella almost entirely except for snide remarks.

In addition to his snooping, there were the transparent attempts at controlling situations. Petty, trivial things like who sat where; who went hunting with whom; when training sessions took place; and who fought against whom. He failed to realize that he had walked in on already established patterns. We had been living here together for months and had a comfortable routine that worked for all of us.

I was dreading the day that Carlisle, Esme, and Alice went back to Forks. It was only a week away and Carlisle and, to a lesser degree, Esme were the only ones that Edward seemed to heed.

All in all, the level of irritation and anger in the house was unbearable. Peter was the first to notice that the constant anger, annoyance, and general turmoil in the house was causing me to fall back into old habits from my time in the Southern Armies. An old mask was falling into place; a hardened callus façade.

I rarely spoke except to issue orders and, when things didn't happen fast enough, my temper would snap. I thought that I was handling it and that Peter was over reacting, until I snapped at my Bella.

Peter had been telling me for days to get out of the house for a few hours on my own, that I needed to take a break from all the emotions swirling around. Our training session that day had gone badly. I lost my temper with both Emmett and Edward when they hadn't followed my instructions properly. It had ended with Peter and Garrett pulling me off of Emmett and Carlisle tending to the severe bite I had given to Edward.

Everyone was walking on eggshells around me and last night I hurt my Bella.
Everyone was in the great room trying to spend time together as a family. I was on the couch sitting beside a seething Rosalie; which probably, in retrospect, hadn't been the brightest idea. I watched as Garrett and Carlisle tried to catch up on their time apart, which was being made very difficult by Edward's constant interruptions criticizing Garrett's nomadic lifestyle. Esme was trying to shush him and I could feel her disappointment and frustration. Carlisle was a chaotic mix of disappointment and anger. Even easy going Garrett, who was normally very pleasant for me to be around, was getting extremely irritated with Edward.

Charlotte was getting more and more livid with every snide remark, especially since she and Peter lived pretty much the same way Garrett did. Alice and Emmett were playing Halo, but Alice was not her normal happy perky self. She was frustrated and angry because now she too was learning to live without her gift. Not only was she losing at Halo, but she was angry at Emmett for teasing her about it. She was also pissed at Edward's judgments.

Emmett may have been outwardly teasing Alice, but I could feel that it was an attempt to lighten a tense situation. He was surprisingly furious and, I suspected, it was because of Edward's judgemental and personal attack of people who he had become very close with. You could always count on Emmett to have your back in a fight, but in this case the enemy wasn't so clear.

Kate and Garrett hadn't come out and said that they were mated, but it was clear to me that they were. Kate's silent fury in defence of her mate was a hot, red, wave rolling off her. If she could have killed him with a glance she would have. I briefly wondered if she was trying to use her gift from a distance rather than through touch.

I saw Edward turn to look at Bella and it was obvious that they were having a silent conversation. I could feel the restless beast that was already pacing inside me start to growl. Edward smirked and Bella let out a chuckle. I could feel the rage and possessiveness rising in me as he glanced in my direction and then back at my mate. I watched, entirely focused on her, and when she threw her head back and laughed, I let out a growl; anger and jealousy whipping my instincts to a fever pitch.

'Having a good conversation with your ex, Bella?' My mental voice was cold and sharp.

'Jas, I was-'

'Shut up! You will not speak to him again!' I mentally barked and let out a loud snarl that had our family cringing and Peter standing up to look between Bella and I warily.

I watched as she stood frowning, her anger feeding my own. She went to go upstairs and I moved to cut her off. I stood tall glaring down at her.

'Jasper, you are my mate – not my boss,' she said firmly.

I grabbed her arms and snarled down at her, my vision going red. A hand landed on my shoulder as I was hit like a sledge hammer with Bella's fear, triggering an entirely different set of reactions. Her fear made my snarl of anger morph into one of protection, but as I went to pull her closer, my hands were forced from her and I was pushed from her with enough energy to send me staggering back into Peter.

As I looked in my Angel's eyes, saw her safely encased behind a shimmering wall, and felt her fear of me; my inner demon fell silent. Everyone's emotions hit me all over again, too numerous and chaotic to name. That coupled with the horror of what I had just done to my mate crushed me.

'I'm so sorry, Angel.' I ran from the house and into the forest.

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I had run for hours. I ran until I couldn't feel the fear and hurt that I had caused my Bella anymore. Our bond was muted and all I was left with, was my own anguish. I stopped and proceeded to demolish everything around me. Because I had run so far north, all there was were boulders and ice and it did nothing to alleviate the pain I felt over scaring Bella. I was weak. I let the emotions of others influence my actions and it unleashed the demon caged within me on my Angel.

Night faded and the sun rose, turning the world around me from shades of grey, to glittering white and brilliant blues. The days were short here and typically only lasted for an hour or two. Soon it was dark again and I felt Bella getting closer. How would I be able to face her? My guilt rose higher and threatened to choke me.

All I could feel from her at the moment was anxiety and I knew it was due in part to the darkness. She was a vampire and her eyesight was no different in the dark than the light of day, but some of her human frailties and insecurities still lingered; she hated being out after dark.

I wondered who had come out here with her to chew me out. I thought it would be Emmett as he would be the only one she would be able to sweet talk into coming with her. Not only would he want the chance to kick my ass, but he still felt guilty about attacking us and would do anything to make her happy.

Almost an hour later she came cautiously into the small valley where I sat. She looked like the angel I thought her to be, dressed in a long white empire waist gown. The sleeves were long and made her look like a vision from a bygone era. Her hair was loose and fell in luscious curls to swirl softly around her hips. I scented the air but couldn't smell anyone but
The smell of summer strawberries and freesias brought back all the guilt and made me wish that the legends of stakes and silver were true.

'Jasper?' Her mental voice was soft and far too kind.

I couldn't think of anything to say to her. I couldn't bring myself to look up; I just sat there with my head in my hands.

'Jasper, please look at me?'

I couldn't take the pleading in her voice. My Angel should never have to beg for anything. I raised my head and the love on her face and the warmth of it spreading through me made me feel worse.

'God, Angel, I am so sorry!' For the first time in my un-dead life I broke.

I had murdered, pillaged, desecrated, eviscerated, and performed acts that were unspeakable; I had never felt half as bad as I did in that moment. I heard the sob break and tried to hold back more. I hunched over myself trying desperately to stop the others that were close behind it. I felt her arms around me and was lost.

'Bella, I'm so sorry! I would never...I could never-

'Shhh...Jas. Honey, it's okay.' She stroked my hair and rocked me as I tried to get a hold of myself.

'No, Bella, I grabbed you...I could have-'

She interrupted again, 'No, Jas, you couldn't have. You didn't hurt me. What happened was not your fault.'

'Bella, I grabbed you! I shook you! I SCARED you!' I gently pushed her away and got to my feet. I had to put some space between us. "Bella, I almost let the demon have you! I-"

"You did exactly what Edward wanted you to."

Her voice was soft and understanding.

Wait, what?! "What do you mean I did what Edward wanted me to?!"

"Let's just say that Edward thinks REALLY loudly." She eased closer and put her hand on my cheek. "I love you Jasper. What happened was to be expected with all the hostility in the house. Peter and Charlotte agree with me."

I shook my head. 'Peter tried to tell me...'

'And you should have listened to him. He knows you well. But, Jas, that doesn't make it your fault.' She pulled my forehead down to hers. 'I love you and I can't imagine how hard it is to live with everyone else's emotions. This is just one more thing I know about you and now I can learn to help you through it.'

"Did Edward really want that to happen?" I couldn't believe that the guy that I had called my brother for decades would intentionally– well maybe I could, but I didn't want to.

She released my cheek and frowned. "I think he is testing himself. Without his telepathy he has to learn to read facial expressions and body language like a child. I don't think he expected you to do what you did he just wanted to find out what would happen, rather like a child kicking over a bee hive."

I thought about what she said and it made sense. "You said that he thinks really loud. Did you read his mind?"

I watched as she thought for a moment. "Not exactly. And it wasn't really clear, but he was so focused on causing trouble in general that vague intentions just sort of leaked out. I tried to get him to stop, which is the silent conversation that set you off."

She kissed me softly before continuing. "He was taunting Garrett, so I silently asked him if he ever got tired of thinking he was so much better than everyone else. He responded that at least I wasn't so far beneath him now that I was a vampire, instead of a pitiful human. That's when I caught the thought that he was going to mess with your emotions in retaliation for you biting him earlier."

Things really had gotten out of hand at our training session that afternoon, but he had been so damn lazy and arrogant over his miniscule amount of skills. It pissed me off!

I was brought back to the present when Bella continued. "I reminded him that he was no better than anyone else without his gift and in fact his behaviour was worse than any human teenager I had ever met. He mentally told me to 'fuck off' which is what had me laughing at him."

Now, I felt a hundred times worse. I had been jealous over Bella putting Edward in his place. I had scared Bella over nothing. I must have been projecting my guilt or maybe Bella was just getting really good at reading me.
"Jasper, I'm sorry that I didn't include you in the conversation. I was trying to avoid more tension but you have to realize that your reaction was not all you. Between the hostility in the room and Edward intentionally sending you what I'm sure was rage and jealousy you really didn't stand a chance. Now, will you please listen to me and Peter and let us help you?"

Her eyes were wide and pleading.

"Anything for you, Angel."

I cupped her neck and kissed her, not knowing what I did to deserve such a forgiving and loving woman, but I would do anything to make her happy. She and Peter were entirely right. I needed to be more aware of how things were affecting me if I didn't want to become the monster that I had worked so hard to tame.

I looked down into her golden eyes. I was surprised that we hadn't been interrupted yet. "So who did you manage to convince to come with you? Who's waitin' to kick my butt for scarin' you?" I was waiting to be knocked to the ground and I totally had it coming.

She laughed. "Are you kidding? I told them all that I was going hunting. It's just you and me."

Was she serious? Alice had seen that Victoria was going to send spies north to report back on our actions. "Bella, we have an army of vengeful vampires bearing down on us and you take off into the wilds of Canada on your own?" I tried not to raise my voice but the thought of what could have happened terrified me!

"I was coming to find you! I could feel how upset you were Jas, I couldn't leave you alone, you needed me!" She was half laughing, but fast realized I was angry.

I rubbed the back of my neck in frustration. "Then you should have brought someone with you! How do you know one of Victoria's spies didn't follow you? They could have killed you and then what would I do?"

She eased up and put her hands on my chest trying to soothe me. "No one followed me. You know how quiet I am. The only one that may have stood a chance of finding me besides you would have been Garrett."

I ran my fingers down her face horrified at the thought of losing her; terrified that I would be left to walk this earth alone. "Please, Angel, for me; don't leave home without someone to back you up again. I can't exist without you."

She smiled softly. "Anything for you," she murmured, repeating my earlier words, "I love you, Jas."

I pulled her to me and kissed her deeply. 'I love you, Bella.'

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Now, at night, we would retreat to our room where she would work on extending her mental shield to cover me. She had told me that she and the girls had been working with her shields in addition to practicing their fighting skills. At first, I had been pissed that she had kept it from me but when she explained her reasons and I saw how upset she was; I realized that I had been acting just like Edward and not trusting her to make good decisions.

Bella went into detail about their routine, she and the girls were actually doing a great job of dividing their time between fighting and working with their gifts. They also were very careful about monitoring Bella's need to hunt, and the amount that the use of their gifts, drained both Bella and Kate. So, when I asked her for a demonstration of her mental shield, we were pleasantly surprised to find that when she covered me with it, I could no longer feel anyone's emotions except hers because she was under it with me.

The only problem was because of the bond that we shared. She could also feel my emotions as clearly as if she was fully empathic. It created a fascinating echo effect as our emotions bounced between the two of us, and, while it made for some outstanding sex, the stress in the house still took its toll.

Bella could only shield me from the constant barrage of negativity for a few hours at a time. This meant that time that I wanted to be spending with my mate, was spent out in the forest by myself. I needed the solitude of my own emotions so that I didn't get overloaded. She had laughingly pushed me out the window of our room and told me to go and be emo somewhere else. Everyone had heard her of course and I grumbled at the chuckles I heard from various locations in the house.

"I am not emo!" but it had sounded hollow, even in my own head.

I had been banished out here long enough! My emotions were my own again; it was time to go back where I belonged. I needed to feel her in my arms, to hold her close to my body, and breathe in her scent.

I jumped out of my tree and crept back to the house, thinking to surprise Bella by jumping in the window she had so conveniently left open. I leapt up on to the ledge silently and what I saw set my inner demon loose.

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A/N: There we have it kiddies! Fear not I won't leave you with this evil cliffie for very long. So don't throw rotten fruit or anything else for that matter. My fairies are well rested and ready to take you all on.
Special thanks to my wonderfully patient beta NCChris. Thank you for putting up with me and my weird ideas and spontaneous freak outs.

Sugar cookies and iced tea all around. Reviews make me write faster and inspire great things. Shameless I know but I do love to hear from everyone.
I had put on some of the lingerie that Rose had secretly brought back for me from Toronto, and was now laying draped across our bed. I knew Jasper would be home soon. He never really stayed out for as long as Peter and I thought was necessary, but he was handling everything so much better now, that I didn't want to push things.

I was looking forward to Jasper's reaction to my little (emphasis on the little) nightgown. Rose had excellent taste. It was a deep burgundy silk that was held up by two barely there spaghetti straps. The neckline plunged almost to my belly button and was loosely laced with the same small cording that was used for the shoulder straps. The length fell all the way to the floor but the sides were split all the way to my hips exposing the length of my legs when I walked. The cut made it impossible to wear panties and I knew they would only be ripped off anyway. The silk was soft against my skin and I felt beautiful and sexy in it.

Rose had bought me two. I couldn't help the smile that curved my lips when she told me that she knew the first one wouldn't survive.

I heard the bedroom door open and close quietly and kept my eyes closed; breathlessly savouring the anticipation of the feeling of Jasper's hands on my skin.

I smiled slowly and felt the bed dip; he was on top of me. His mouth pressed into mine, his hands roughly pinned my wrists to the bed. I panicked. It wasn't Jasper.

My eyes flew open just in time to hear the most terrifying roar I had ever heard, come from the window. I looked up at Edward and my insides went cold. My gaze transferred to Jasper, but he was no longer my kind and loving mate. The Major was staring at us; his eyes black as obsidian and promised all the fires of hell.

I tried to push Edward off me, but he was gone before I could put up a good fight. I screamed for Peter and ran to pull Jasper off of Edward. I got there just in time to keep Jasper's teeth from Edward's throat.

Edward needed to be punished, but not at the expense of Jasper's sanity.

I used my new skills to my advantage and levered Jasper off of Edward and threw him towards the far corner of the room. Peter, Emmett and Garrett burst through the door with Carlisle on their heels just as I encased Jasper in one of my solid force fields. I spun with a snarl to crouch protectively in front of my mate.

Emmett had Edward by the throat against the wall; Garrett and Carlisle were trying to hold Peter back from attacking Edward and making a bad situation worse. I only had eyes for the man who dared to lay his hands on me. My own growls were nothing in comparison to the snarls and roars coming from behind me.

The rest of the family rushed into the room to help and it only made Jasper worse. His rage wasn't able to affect the family because of my shield but I could feel it through our bond, and combined with my own anger, I was starting to lose control.

Rose, Char and Kate had pushed me to my limits time and time again in our training sessions. They had all seen me at my worst and knew what was happening. They nodded to each other and split up quickly.

Esme was standing at Emmett's shoulder glaring at Edward.

Charlotte went to Peter to try to calm him down, knowing that he was making the situation harder on Jasper and I.

Kate went to stand at Garrett's shoulder to assist with Peter if he needed it.

Rose came to stand in front of me, carefully avoiding touching me; knowing that to do so, would set me off and enrage Jasper further.

"Bella? Cricket, you need to look at me." Her voice was low and calm, but I couldn't take my eyes from the monster that had touched me when he had no right.

Jasper roared behind me, my shield shimmering and flexing with the force of his blows; angry, frustrated, hunger, wanting, vengefulness, hostility, aggression, determination...his emotions were crashing into me with the violent consistency of the ocean against the shore during a storm.

"BELLA!" Rose's shout snapped my attention to her and away from the turmoil of the moment.
"Hey Cricket. You need to calm down okay?" she said soothingly.

I tried to focus on what she was saying, but Jasper's emotions were distracting. I could hear him pacing in the bubble behind me; hitting it violently in his fury at being restrained.

"Bella, you need to focus for Jasper. He needs you to try to calm down. You're the only one who can bring him back, Cricket. You need to do this for him. Focus Bella, he needs you to focus." Her words were a low soothing litany that repeated over and over and gave me something to concentrate on other than Jasper's rage. Her eyes were honey gold pools of tranquility. I could feel my breathing slow and my emotions become my own once more.

Jasper was still pacing behind me but he was no longer hitting the shield; my calmer frame of mind affecting his. His snarling however hadn't abated.

I nodded at Rose in appreciation. I took a deep un-needed breath and let it out slowly.

Carlisle was talking to Alice who was standing in the doorway "-won't have him here causing more problems. Go and pack our things quickly, we will be leaving in a few minutes."

Alice disappeared, and I watched as Esme walked over to a still struggling Edward with an expression of fury on her face, that I knew, I never wanted to see directed at me. "Edward, I love you very much, and this hurts me much more than it does you, but you leave me no choice."

I was stunned as I watched her grab one of his arms and violently rip the hand from the end. Edward's scream of pain was drowned out by Jasper's rage at being denied his revenge. The rest of the family looked on in horror. Emmett dropped Edward and took a step back, too shocked to keep restraining him.

Kind, gentle, loving, Esme had just ripped off her own son's hand.

"I will be keeping this with me for the time being. When you learn how to behave and conduct yourself like the gentleman that I have raised you to be, then you will get it back and your father will help you fuse it back on. Until that time, I expect you to keep your mouth shut and think about the consequences of touching a woman inappropriately and all your actions that have led up to this point." Her voice was low and calm but held an edge of steel that brooked no argument from anyone.

Edward's eyes frantically sought out Carlisle, hoping for salvation from Esme's punishment. What he found was a united front. "I'm sorry Edward but you have brought this on yourself. We warned you that there would be consequences for your childish actions, and now you will have to live with your decisions."

He turned to Emmett and Kate. "Could you please escort my son outside? Esme and I will join you in a moment. We would like to speak to Bella and Jasper before we leave."

Emmett and Kate dragged a disbeliefing Edward out the door, as he clutched at the stump where his had should be; a calmer Peter and Charlotte following. Garrett took up a post by the door and Rose stayed near me in support. I couldn't bring myself to stand up out of my crouch; the need to protect my mate, and at the same time protect my family from my mate, was tearing me in two. Carlisle went to take a step closer to me but Jasper's roar pulled him up short.

"You might want to step back Carlisle. He's not himself as you can see. We need to make this as easy on the two of them as possible." Garrett's voice was low and he kept his eyes focused on the ground.

Carlisle clasped Esme's free hand and he slowly lowered them both to sit on the ground a careful eight feet away. He kept his gaze on the floor to keep from antagonizing Jasper. "Bella, honey, we are so sorry that this happened."

I could hear Jasper's growls increase in volume every time someone spoke to me. I uncurled my fingers from the claws they had instinctively become. I hoped a less defensive posture would help to calm Jasper.

I lowered my hands to the floor relaxing slightly, but remained crouched. "It's not your fault, Dad. As you said, he made his own decisions."

"We'll take him with us back to Forks while we make the arrangements to move out here. We should be back in a couple of weeks." Esme's voice was full of remorse and I relaxed further.

"Mom, stop blaming yourself. You couldn't have known what was going to happen." I loved them both, but I needed to get them all out of here so I could calm the Major down and get my Jasper back.

"No, I didn't know, but we should have made him leave when he first showed up." She looked at Carlisle, and then over my shoulder at Jasper, and started to slowly rise. "You need to see to my son now. Please call me when things are calmer. I love you, Bella."

Carlisle didn't get up all the way; he simply crouched and slowly backed to the door. "Have Jasper call me when he is ready. I love you, Bella."

"I love you guys, too. Please, be safe." I really wasn't ready for them to leave, and hated that it was under these
Then they were gone, and it was just Garrett and Rose in the room with Jas and I. I eyed them warily, knowing it was unnecessary, but unable to stop myself. I watched as Rose backed up slowly to join Garrett by the door, neither of them leaving.

I turned slowly to face my mate and my heart broke at what I saw. He was still pacing, his un-wavering stare fixed on the other two occupants in the room. His chest was heaving with his anger and his growling was a loud continuous rumble that rattled the mirrors on the wall in the bathroom. His eyes were black without even a trace of white and looked demonic in their intensity. He had curled his fingers into claws, and the muscles in his arms and across his shoulders were rippling with the rage coursing through his body.

He looked like a caged tiger, the way he would take two steps pivot, and step one or two steps in the opposite direction before reversing again; a picture of savage beauty, his attention entirely focused on his prey. Garrett and Rose wisely stayed in very submissive and unthreatening positions as far from us as they could, without leaving.

"You two need to leave. I can't calm him down if you're here." I loved them both for their support but their presence was only making it worse.

"We aren't leaving, Cricket. I've never seen him like this and not even you may be able to handle him." Rose kept her voice low but she was firm.

"You don't know what it's like little one. He doesn't even know who you are right now. We need to leave him alone until he calms down a bit."

Jasper's growls turned to snarls at the sound of Garrett's voice and I felt like joining in. I looked at them in disbelief.

"Jasper would NEVER hurt me. I'm not just going to abandon him to fight this on his own!"

I tried to rein in my emotions because they were agitating Jasper all over again, but I couldn't believe that they both thought that I would just leave him alone when he was like this!

"Just give him some time to calm down on his own, Bella. He can't hurt anyone where he is and once he's more rational you can talk to him. Rose's voice was calm but all it did was piss me off.

"I will not leave him up here caged under my shield alone! He's not an animal, Rose!" My voice had risen to a shout and Jasper roared in response.

Peter stepped into the room and Jasper went back to hitting the walls of my shield in fury and frustration.

"Little One, you don't know the Major like we do. You can't help him when he's like this; you have to just stay out of his way until it runs its course. At least this time, you can help him by preventing him from killing anyone." Peter was trying to reason with me.

"You're right. I don't know him like you do. I know him much, much better!" and with that I stepped backwards and through the wall of my shield to be with my Jasper.

He immediately grabbed me hard and shoved me behind his body so he could crouch in front of me. He kept one arm curled back behind him and around my hip; keeping constant contact to reassure himself that I was still there.

I managed to look at my family over his shoulder "There, you see? He isn't going to hurt me. Now get out so I can try to bring him back." I snapped.

Their looks of panic over my rash move were replaced with looks of concern and in Peter's case, anger.

Jasper's rumbling growls went deeper at the look on Peter's face and Peter immediately backed up a step.

"I will be right outside this door Isabella." Peter was still angry with me but I knew it was because he was scared. At least he was leaving.

He took Rose's hand and backed her out of the room.

Garrett gave me a long look. "Remember what I said about losing a family member." His gaze shifted to Jasper and back to me. "I meant what I said; but I meant him, too. Bring him back little one."

"Don't worry, I will. Thank you, Garrett. I love you." He trusted me to protect myself and he loved Jasper and I both.

"I love you too, Bella." He backed out of the room and shut the door.

Jasper backed me into the corner and turned to me. He pulled me into his arms shielding me with his body. He was rocking me gently as his hands roamed over me seemingly searching for injuries. He kept returning to my hands and I realized that watching Esme remove Edward's hand had affected him on some level.

My eyes rose to his face; his eyes were still just as black. I knew that talking to him either out loud or mentally would be like
talking to myself at this point so I fell back on my instincts.

I concentrated on the feel of his hands on my body and the comfort and security that they were offering; the love that I felt in every brush of his finger tips. Even though he was not himself, his first concern was my safety and well being. It wasn't long before I was pressing closer him and purring into his chest.

I still didn't know how our bodies were able to purr like a cat's, but I did know that when I heard it coming from my mate, it was the most soothing and loving sound in the world. The girls and I had all talked about it and we all agreed that it was the one sound that brought us the most comfort.

Kate had said that vampires only purr for their mates and Alice had confirmed it. All the decades that she and Jasper had spent together, and the intimate times that they had shared, never once did they purr for each other. For her it only confirmed what she had already known; she and Jasper were never meant to be mates.

Jasper seemed to settle down after awhile, although he still stiffened and growled whenever he heard someone else in the house. Everyone must have noticed, because it wasn't long before they all left. Charlotte had even managed to pry Peter away from the door, and Jasper was calmer for it.

After about 7 hours Jasper's eyes were losing their demonic look, and I could see the whites reasserting themselves. Soon I would be able to start talking to him. I hoped that I would be able to talk him down soon because the strain of holding onto my shield was starting to wear on me and my throat was beginning to burn.

Jasper could feel my thirst and I knew it was adding to his own, but I also knew that I couldn't let the shield down until he was calmer. I couldn't risk him hurting one of the family.

I tried to centre myself the best I could and focus. I knew that clearing my mind helped to reduce the strain of keeping my shields up and I wouldn't get thirsty so fast.

Jasper tensing around me brought me out of my daze. He growled when the door opened and Alice eased her way into the room. She had an armful of large thermoses.

"Carlisle called; he suggested we bring you guys some blood. It might help to calm him down and you need your strength." She said with a tentative and nervous smile.

I could see that she was really nervous to be in the room with us while Jasper was so feral. It had taken a lot of courage, and her friendship and love for the both of us, to get her to come up here.

I could have kissed her. "Thanks Alice. It'll really help. Can you just roll them over slowly?"

I turned to Jasper. 'Jas, honey. Alice brought us some blood.'

I searched his face for any sign of recognition, but was disappointed. I could only hope the blood would help.

When Alice rolled the first thermos towards us, Jasper hissed and backed us further into the corner.

"We better make this fast, Alice; I don't want to lose the progress he's made." I encouraged her.

She nodded and quickly rolled the others to us and flitted out of the room.

Jasper stayed motionless until we heard the door downstairs open and close. I knew my entire family was waiting out in the forest for me to talk Jasper back to his sanity.

When he relaxed and turned back to me I reached out for the nearest thermos, my shield expanding to accommodate my reach. I unscrewed the lid and tried to give it to Jasper. He smelled it carefully and then took it from me. A purr rumbled up through his chest as he sat down pulling me into his lap.

He surprised me by putting the thermos to my mouth and encouraging me to drink. I had wanted him to drink first, hoping the blood would calm him down, but I was so thirsty from the strain of holding my shield for this long; I took a long swallow and knew that Emmett had gone hunting for me. Only he would find me a bear in the middle of winter when they were all in hibernation.

I gulped it back greedily as Jasper purred and petted my hair. When it was gone, I looked up at Jasper and saw that the whites of his eyes were back to normal. Only the blackness of thirst and the wildness remained. I would be able to start talking to him now. Now, he would be able to hear me.

I felt him reach for another thermos and was startled, as he again put it to my lips and not his own. I wanted him to drink but the simple act of caring for me seemed to be helping him more than anything else had. I finished half of it before I took it from him.

I lifted it up to his mouth. 'Drink, my love. You need it just as much as I do, and there's plenty for both of us.'

His eyes never broke contact with mine, as he tipped his head back and allowed me to pour the blood into his mouth. He drank until it was empty; I recapped it and reached for another. I repeated my motions, when he was done I leaned up to
lick away a drop that was running out of the side of his mouth.

He let out a sexy growl and his hunger turned to lust in a human heartbeat. He shifted over me and slowly lowered my back to the floor. I felt his nose trail the length of my neck as he breathed in my scent. My breath caught as he pulled me into him and his hardness ground against my centre. My head twisted from side to side, my body humming with the need and desire flowing between us.

I was still in the silky nightgown that I had put on so many hours ago; the contrast of the rough denim of his jeans, and the silk of the nightgown sliding over my naked skin was erotic. His lips met mine in a soft and gentle kiss before it became more dominating. As his tongue invaded my mouth, he pushed his hips into mine, his hard length confined by his jeans pressed against my core, and I climaxed for the first time that night. The vibrations of his satisfied purring only increased the sensations sweeping through my body.

In one swift move he removed his clothes, pulled my knees up around his waist, and sheathed himself deep into my still pulsing core. I cried out at the sensation of being filled so completely. He thrust hard into me, the desire and all consuming need that we had for each other wrapping around us in shades of crimson and violet. As our bodies rocked together, joining us as completely as it was possible for two people to be, I felt as if I would burst with the love that we were sharing.

The violence and brutality of his nature was inversely proportionate to his love and caring for me. The farther he fell into darkness, the more his base instincts and feral drives demanded that he care for and protect me. Jasper's monster would never be able to hurt me. The demonic nature that he feared so much, demanded that I be protected at all times. I was the light to his darkness and had no reason to fear.

As he pushed our bodies harder and faster, I felt the warm pulse that signalled my approaching release.

'Ooh, God! I love you, Jasper!'

'My Angel.'

We reached our peak at the same time and he rolled to his back, bringing me with him to rest on his chest. I loved to lay with him afterwards, still joined, complete. I felt my shield drop as I relaxed into him, loving the feel of his arms around me.

'Did I hurt you?' His question was low and tentative as if he feared the answer.

I pushed myself up so I could look into his eyes. They were back to a normal gold, only slightly darkened with thirst. I ran my finger tips slowly down his face from his forehead to the curve of his jaw. His eyes closed in pleasure at my touch. My Jasper was back.

"You could never hurt me, Jas. The demon inside you loves me just as much as you do and was all the more tender because of it." I said truthfully.

His eyes opened and a frown creased his brow. "Was it bad?"

"It was scary, but only because I didn't know if I could bring you back. There was never a time that I was scared of you." I knew that he would have a lot of questions because he never remembered the time when his bloodlust took over. It was a lot like blacking out for a human.

"How long?" His voice was quiet

I looked at the clock. "About nine hours."

He closed his eyes as if in pain and pulled me closer.

I slowly traced the swirling patterns of the scars covering his chest, loving the way the sunlight made the crescent shaped ridges glitter and change colour. He hated his scars, but I loved them for being a part of who he was. I thought that the scars reflected the beauty of his soul, a visual depiction of the life he had worked so hard to overcome.

"What's the last thing you remember?" I really hoped he didn't remember anything.

"Seeing Edward leaning over you, pressing himself between your beautiful thighs and the look of horror on you face as you realized that it wasn't me," he said sadly.

I let out a whimper. I hadn't wanted him to have that image. With our perfect recall, he would be forced to endure that image for eternity.

"How can you be sure? What if he-"

I cut him off. "I told you, Edward thinks really loudly; especially when he is scheming. He wouldn't have even gotten that
close if I had been paying better attention. I felt you coming back and was expecting it to be you, so I kept my eyes closed and stopped breathing to draw out the anticipation; otherwise I would have caught his scent long before he made it in the room, never mind to the bed."

"Where is he now?" Jasper's voice was hard.

I couldn't help but chuckle. Now that everything had calmed down, I could appreciate the perfection of Esme's punishment. I pushed up and looked at him. "Oh you missed the best part! Mommy Dearest ripped Edward's right hand off and is keeping it until she feels he's learned his lesson."

Jasper's eyes widened in surprise and made me laugh. The force of my laughter caused him to slip from inside me and I sighed at the loss.

He chuckled as he sat up and gathered me close to him, still shocked at Esme's display of violence.

"She really ripped off his hand?" His tone was disbelieving.

I nodded. "And dear old Dad backed her up, saying that he had brought it on himself. They packed up and took him back to Forks ten minutes later." My amusement died as I looked at him "They would like you to call them when you feel up to it."

He hung his head and I could feel his shame.

"Jas, they aren't angry. They are only very worried. We've all seen how you beat yourself up after one of your black outs. This isn't your fault. Hell! Even Emmett was scarier than I have ever seen him, and let me tell you, I would take your demon over Esme's, any day of the week!" I shuddered at the remembered look on Esme's face.

I tipped his chin up so I could meet his gaze. "You were trying to protect me. How could anyone be mad over that?" I asked him softly.

"I hate that you have to see me like that. I hate that you have to talk me down all the time."

"Oh please! And how many times have you had to talk me out of my own bubble, because I was too terrified to do it on my own? How many times have you had to help me think around my instincts? How often, do you have to try to calm me down because my emotions are pinging off the walls?" I asked without waiting for any answers.

"Honestly, Jas! This is what being together is all about. Supporting the other person when they're weak; helping them stand when they've fallen; and protecting them, even if sometimes it's from themselves." My voice had gotten softer as I tried to make him realize. "I love you, Jas, because you need me, as much as I need you."

"Alright, Angel, I see your point. You're right. But I am going to work harder at learning to control my demon around you. I need to, so I can control myself when the battle with Victoria happens. I won't be any good to any of us if I lose myself and slaughter everyone instead of just our enemies."

I could see the thought of him hurting a member of our family haunted him.

He looked up at me. "How is it that I didn't hurt anyone? Assuming I didn't that is."

"I wouldn't let you hurt anyone, Jas. I couldn't stand to watch it destroy you afterwards. I pulled you off of Edward and put you in one of my solid shields before anyone got here." I really hoped he wouldn't get mad at me for effectively caging him.

"A solid shield? I thought they only repelled attacks?" He looked confused.

"Well, the girls and I have figured out a lot about my powers. I can do quite a bit actually, although I'm not sure how useful it can be."

"Show me" was all he said.

I sighed and stood up, feeling the nightgown slide down to cover me again. He had been so tender with me, that he hadn't even broken the straps like I thought he would. I tossed him his pants and heard him pull them on as I walked away. I heard him start to follow me; a brief thought was all it took, and I heard him collide with the inside of my perfectly round, blue, shimmering shield.

"HOLY CRAP!"

I turned with a worried look on my face and watched as he tested the boundaries of the shield.

"I'm trapped in here?" he asked.

"Until I let you out or I am sufficiently distracted enough to drop it." I replied unsure of his reaction.

"How much does it take to distract you?" he asked.
"Usually, getting my ass handed to me by Char and Kate does the trick, but I can hold my own for about 10 minutes before I start to get angry, lose my focus and Rose escapes."

That slow sexy smirk that I loved so much spread across his face and I relaxed. He wasn't mad.

"Darlin, this is going to be so much fun," he drawled.

A/N: Well I will be hiding in the garden with my fairies, waiting with baited breath to hear what you think. This chapter is my favorite so far and I really hope you all liked it as well. I hope it was worth the wait.

*runs off into the garden leaving sugar cookies and lemonade behind*
Coming back to myself was a surreal experience. One minute I was watching Edward pin my mate to our bed and the next I was buried deep inside her and feeling her climax around me. I mean, it wasn't completely gone; I had flashes of images, but they weren't clear. Bella crouched defensively, Peter being held back, someone...losing a hand?

I knew it had happened again. The demon had been let loose; and, simply by virtue of the fact that I couldn't remember anything, I knew it had been bad. Maybe it was selfish, but I was just glad that no matter what had happened, Bella was safe in my arms and still loved me. The rest could wait.

When she told me what had happened, I knew that her version of the day's events was severely abridged; but I hadn't hurt anyone and Edward was gone. Beyond that, I really didn't want to know the details. Okay, maybe I wanted to know about Esme ripping Edward's hand off, but, other than that, I was good.

Well, I didn't want to know, so much as I needed to know. I had to be sure I could be trusted around her; around them all.

As if sensing my turmoil, Bella continued, carefully explaining that she had taken care of me and kept us all safe. She had encased me in a solid field that contained my demon until she could bring me back. I had her show me what she meant and when I walked into a solid but transparent shimmering wall I was stunned. Immediately, my inner tactician started cataloguing all the ways that this could be useful, but I needed more facts. I knew seeing all the aspects that her gift entailed would be fun.

But that could wait; I still had questions about us. When she had told me that she had stepped into my 'cage' while I was at my worst; and against Peter, Rose and Garrett's advice; I was frozen. I knew what the results of my rages had been in the past; Peter knew and yet, even after all the warnings, she did it anyway, to save me.

I needed to know what had happened. I needed her to show me. I was so scared that my inner monster had hurt her and that she was trying to protect me with her edited version of events. I knew that there was no way in hell that I would ever do anything to hurt her, but my demon was an entirely different animal.

In the early 1880's, the demon had slaughtered an entire town of unsuspecting Mexicans and decimated the town itself. Maria called it whetting the appetite. Bitch. She had learned to prod me until the demon awoke and then get the hell out of the way before she got hurt. The innocent town had been between me and the newborns that Maria had unleashed me on as we pushed our way back up into Texas, expanding our feeding territories. She had starved me for almost a week and then had one of the expendable newborns attack me. I had 'woken up' three days later surrounded by bodies, both human and vampire alike, covered in blood. Hell, not even the livestock had survived.

I had been sickened, horrified, revolted and devastated. Maria had been delighted as she danced among the still twitching pieces of the vampires. She had ordered them burned; kissed me passionately and gave me three humans and a female vampire as a reward. It had been the birth of my reputation as the God of War. I had single-handedly taken out 23 newborns after I had slaughtered every one of the 87 humans in the little town.

All of my existence as a vampire there had been a burning, raging demon inside of me; always eager to fight, to hunt, to attack. I had learned to control it somewhat after I left the wars with Peter and Charlotte. But it had still been there lurking, taunting; patiently waiting for its chance to seize control.

Shortly after that, I met Alice and she taught me to hunt animals. The demon had roared in fury knowing that the animal blood would well and truly chain it and build a cage around it; never to be let loose again. Then Bella had walked into my life and the cage had been unlocked, the chains broken. It was set loose and so far, through blind luck, no one had gotten hurt.

I was terrified to see what had happened, but I knew I wouldn't be able to move past it until I did. If I was a danger to my mate, then I would find a way to keep her safe, even if it meant leaving her. The demon snarled in anger at the thought.

"Bella, I need to see what you saw. I need to know that I didn't hurt you." I told her softly

"I told you that you could never hurt me. Don't you believe me?" Her eyes showed her sadness and her voice reflected it.
I went to stand before her. "I believe you when you say that I didn't hurt you, but Angel, I need to see how bad it was. I need to see, for my own peace of mind; I need to know that you're safe around me."

She reached up and stroked my cheek. "Okay Jas. You'll see. You have nothing to worry about."

She stepped into the circle of my arms and pressed herself into my chest. I felt her purr of contentment as images flooded my mind.

I felt her desire, turn to fear and anger, as Edward pinned her to the bed. I saw myself hurtling through the open window tearing Edward away from Bella. I felt Bella's fury at Edward and her desire to protect the family from the avenging angel that she saw me as. The image I saw of myself; the demon in complete control, solid black eyes, venom dripping from my exposed teeth; was terrifying on so many levels. I was furious at Edward for touching Bella, but as she had said; he was plainly only doing it to stir up trouble. There was no heat in his eyes, no arousal in his touch. His movements were calculated and mechanical. He was doing it to get back at Bella and me for keeping him mentally deaf. I wouldn't have wanted him dead. Severely beaten and in several pieces, though, definitely.

I watched as Bella used her own momentum to roll me away from Edward and into the far corner of the room. She encased me in her shield and then crouched to protect me as the family burst through the door. I was stunned. No one ever protected me. That was my job. I protected the family. I was the first line of defence and the first to fall if need be. I couldn't process what I was feeling. I, the empath, couldn't name my own emotions. I hugged her closer to me loving her even more for her desire to keep me safe the same way I did her.

The images continued; Emmett holding Edward by the throat, Peter being held back by Garrett and Carlisle, Rose speaking to Bella, who was struggling with my emotions on top of the stress of the situation. The images ran together as Bella's eyes darted around the room.

Then I saw and heard Esme's voice. It was cold as she scolded Edward and then, without warning, ripped his hand off. Bella was right; Mom was almost as scary as I was. The dichotomy of her gentle, loving nature versus the viciousness of the action, made her all the more frightening. I suppressed a shudder.

I wanted to cry when Bella reached the part where Carlisle and Esme blamed themselves. The look on Esme's face as she referred to me as her son almost tipped the scales. I really did need to call them both; I was man enough to admit that I needed my parents.

The images morphed into a new scene and I felt myself agreeing with Rose, Peter and Garrett when they tried to talk Bella into leaving me alone to calm down. I felt her love for me even as she looked into my soulless black eyes. I had never seen myself at the height of my bloodlust, and the sight of the unending blackness of my own eyes showed me the face of the demon that lived inside.

I clutched her tighter in apprehension, as she foolishly stepped backwards through her shield, and into the arms of the demon caged within.

Then I watched in relieved fascination as the demon, known as the God of War, the feared Major of the Southern Armies, carefully and tenderly checked her for injuries. He ran his hands over her body protectively and gently; paying special attention to her hands and face; he made sure that she didn't have the slightest scratch and wasn't feeling any fear. The gentleness he showed in feeding her first, caring for her, and placing her needs before his own; was both startling and beautiful to watch.

Bella took the inferno of darkness and rage within him and calmed it, until the demon was totally at ease. When she was with him and he knew she was safe, the demon purred in contentment; he felt nothing but total calm. Having never experienced such a feeling before, he revelled in it. She had tamed him completely. She had tamed us completely.

She truly was my angel, my salvation.

I knew now what she had been telling me all along, she was safe with me. In fact, seeing the way he took care of her, she might be safer with my demon then she was with just plain old me.

The images faded and she pulled back to look at me.

I smiled and tucked a wayward lock behind her ear. "He loves you. My demon, I mean."

She smiled and leaned into my hand. "I told you."

"Thank you for stopping me from killing anyone. I don't know what I would have done if I had hurt any of them." I stopped and thought for a moment, "Well, except maybe Edward. You could have let me damage him a little before you stopped me."

She arched one of her beautiful eyebrows at me. "If anyone is going to 'damage' Edward, it's going to be me! Well, unless Esme tells me not to. I tell you Jas, I am never doing anything to tick her off! She scares the crap out of me!"

I couldn't help but laugh at her disbelieving tone. Neither of us had ever seen Esme look so fierce. "I hear ya, darlin'. The image you showed me totally convinced me. I think even the Major would think twice about crossin' her when she's like
that."

We sat in contented silence for a few minutes just enjoying the feeling of being together. I cocked my head but didn't hear anything. I stretched out my senses and couldn't feel anyone. "Where is everyone?"

"They're all probably out in the forest waiting. Having them in the house was aggravating you more, so they left." She turned to look at me, "Do you want to go and see them?"

"Yeah," I rubbed the back of my neck. "I have more apologies to make."

She touched my chin and turned my face so she could look into my eyes. "No Jas. You have nothing to be sorry for. You protected your mate. You didn't do anything that any one of them wouldn't have done in the exact same situation. There isn't one of them that wouldn't do vicious and terrible things in defence of their mates."

If I thought about it that way, then she was absolutely right. "Okay, Angel." I kissed her palm. "Get dressed and let's go and see the family. Then we'll go for a quick hunt." I brushed my thumb under her eyes. "Your eyes are still too dark."

She shrugged. "Some kinds of shields drain me faster than others. The blood that Alice brought helped. Something small and I will be right as rain."

I watched as she picked some jeans and a long sleeved 'T' out of our closet and went into the bathroom. I heard the shower start and then felt her desire hit me. Little minx.

"Coming Jas?" I heard her not so innocent question as the steam billowed out the door.

"Not yet." I replied under my breath and quickly went to join her.

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A little over an hour later, after a very satisfying shower, we made our way out to the field that the men used to train. We found the family there waiting for us. Charlotte and Rose came immediately to hug me. Kate and Alice shoved their way in and I was repeatedly passed from one to the other as they reassured themselves that I was fine. As I breathed in the scent of my sisters and cousin, and felt their relief and love, I knew everything would be okay.

That is, until I looked over and saw Peter and Bella glaring at each other. She was being passed between Emmett and Garrett as they took turns hugging her and telling her how proud they were of her. Peter just looked pissed.

"He was really worried about her." Charlotte's low voice whispered in my ear.

I frowned as I heard Peter unnecessarily clear his throat.

"Bella, can I speak to you for a minute?" He growled his question out between clenched teeth.

Bella extracted herself from Garrett's grasp and crossed her arms. "I'm not so sure I want to talk to you right now, Peter."

His growl was quickly joined by my own. He had no right to growl at her.

Bella threw up her arms in frustration. "Fine!" She walked over to me and kissed my cheek lightly. "It's okay, Jas. I'll be right back."

Without looking back, she ran off into the tree line. I made to follow them but Charlotte's hand on my arm stopped me.

"No, Jasper. Peter needs to learn that she can make her own decisions. She's not a child." Her voice was firm and it was obvious that she and Peter had already had words on this very topic.

Rose chuckled darkly, "It's about time Petey learned a thing or two about his precious niece."

"Best of luck to him. He'll need it." Kate snorted.

Alice just smirked.

Just as I was about to ask Kate what she was talking about, I was hit with a blazing red wave of anger. I was about to run out and protect Bella from Peter, when I realized that the anger was, for the most part, coming from Bella.

"WHAT THE HELL - - THINKING?!!" As Peter's voice rose and fell in volume we would get words were and there.

" - TRYING TO HELP HIM! I COULDN'T JUST - "

We listened as random shouts drifted from the forest. They were far enough away that we only could catch the odd couple of words here and there, but it was obvious that Peter was still angry that Bella had ignored him and stepped into danger with me.

"- HAVE NO IDEA -" Peter's voice rose and broke off.
"I KNEW EXACTLY –" Bella interrupting.

We all stood unabashedly eavesdropping; trying to catch as much of the argument as possible, but only hearing snippets of it. I heard Emmett trying to get Garrett to bet on the outcome. I had never felt so much anger from my mate before. Bella was normally so easy going and selfless, she never stood up for herself.

"- NOT SAFE WITH – " Peter was making more of an effort to control the volume so we couldn't catch the whole thing.

"THAT'S STUPID!"

" - FOR YOUR OWN GOOD – PROTECT YOU!" Peter was losing control and he was getting louder.

"I'M NOT LEAVING!" Bella yelled

What the Hell! Leaving?!!!

Kate snorted as we heard Peter's voice roar "YOU WILL DO AS I SAY YOUNG LADY!"

Silence from Bella.

The girls in particular seemed to find this hilarious as us poor men stood around wondering what they knew that we didn't. I was pissed that he was yelling at her like that. He had better not have told her that he was taking her home with him. I had had just about enough of that threat.

Our eyes all focussed on the same spot as Bella walked out of the forest muttering under her breath.

She focused on Charlotte first.

"Char, your husband is going to need to spend a little time by himself to think about what I said." Her tone was sweet but her teeth were clenched and we all heard the steel underneath it.

Again the girls all laughed. What the HELL was going on?

I wasn't going to get any answers.

"Sounds good to me, Little One. Shall we hunt?" Charlotte was practically giggling.

They all skipped off and left us standing there.

Emmett broke the silence "Oh this I gotta see!" He jogged off in the direction that Bella had come from. Peter hadn't come back yet.

It took all of half a second for Garrett and me to follow him.

Minutes later, we found Peter sitting crunched up in an uncomfortable ball on the ground, enclosed in one of Bella's shields. Yup, there was my second in command, brought low by his angelic little niece; he was not happy.

Emmett burst out into loud booming laughter.

Garrett walked over and knelt beside the little blue bubble. "I did try to tell you, Peter."

I couldn't help but smirk at his predicament. "Well Captain, this is a surprise. I thought you 'knew shit'? How did you, in all your infinite wisdom, get yourself in this situation?"

"Can it, Major." he snapped out crossing his hands over his chest.

Garrett and I both chuckled, seeing that he looked just like a sulky child. Emmett was on the ground now rolling with laughter.

"I tried to tell you she knew what she was doing. Charlotte told you not to interfere between mates. But no, you had to go and 'set her straight' that she 'needed to be protected' because 'it wasn't safe to be around him'." Garrett was taunting him now with what were obviously his own words.

Emmett and I had the same thought at the exact same time. We looked at each other and said the same thing. "Edward."

I raised my eyebrows, but Emmett got to explain. "Awww... Peter you went and put your foot in it this time. You'll be lucky if she ever lets you out of this little bubble." He shook his head still chuckling. "My little sis had to listen to that overprotective, overbearing, controlling bullshit from Fuckedupintheheadward for far too long. You hit a nerve brother."

I snorted and Garrett frowned in confusion. "Fuckedupintheheadward?"
"What else would you call the guy that tried to grope the mate of the guy known as the God of War? Dude is fucked in the head." Emmett explained as Garrett laughed in understanding.

It really was rather perfect.

"Whatever." Peter said, still pouting.

"No, Peter. Not 'whatever'." Emmett's voice now had a very rarely heard undertone of steel. "Jazz and I watched as Edward controlled every aspect of Bella's life. He dictated what she wore, where she sat, when she slept, when she ate, what she ate and who she talked to. He did all of this because 'she needed to be protected'. Now I know she is your niece, and believe me when I say I am jealous as hell that you guys share actual blood; but don't try to protect her so much that you border on control or you'll lose her. She's had enough of the shit to last a lifetime."

"I'm not like him! That's not why I got mad! She scared the shit out of me!" Peter yelled.

"Peter, she scared the shit of all of us! But you've seen the bond that she and Jasper have. She knew he wouldn't hurt her and she needed us to trust her judgement; to let her make her own decisions. This is something that I believe we have all been trying to help her do." Garrett's soft spoken good sense got through to Peter.

His emotions were severely muted by the shield but I could feel his remorse and shame. He looked over at me. "Haven't you got anything to say?"

"Nope. I got her to show me what happened, and I was in complete agreement with you. I was terrified of her being that close to me when I was that far gone. I could've killed her and you guys wouldn't have been able to do a damn thing about it. Now I'm not gonna apologize for trying to defend my mate against a manipulative child, because he deserved to have his ass kicked. But, I also asked to see what happened before I acted." I looked at him calmly letting my words sink in.

"Ask her to show you what happened after you guys left. You'll feel better."

I could see him thinking over everything that the three of us had said; along with what I was sure were some choice words that Charlotte and Bella had had for him, but I wasn't quite done.

"And Peter," I waited until he looked at me again "if you ever think to try to come between me and my mate again, I'll let loose the monster and let you fend for yourself. Get me?"

He had threatened to take her away, he had told her to leave me alone, and then I was pretty sure that he had told her he was taking her. He was my comrade, my oldest friend and my brother; Bella was my life. There was no contest.

He nodded his head solemnly.

"So, any bets on how long it will take before Bella lets you out of there?" Emmett asked with a smirk

Leave it to Emmett to lighten up a tense situation.

"If I know Bella, I would think you have a bit of a wait yet, if only to make sure you know she's serious." Garrett joked. "She forgives too easily. You'll be out before the day is over."

"Charlotte's so mad I bet she gets Bella to keep me in here." Peter said, morosely.

"I wonder where they went anyway. I mean how far away can she be if the shield is still up?" wondered Emmett.

Peter, Garrett and I all exchanged looks.

"Do you get the feeling that the women are keeping things from us?" Garrett asked.

Peter had a calculating look on his face and muttered something.

"Alright Captain, spill it! Whenever you get that look on your face, you generally spout some cryptic nonsense, and come off sounding like a talented Magic 8 Ball! What is your deal?" I demanded.

He shrugged and gave me a grin. "I just know shit."

Garrett laughed. "For a man know 'knows shit' you're not playing very smart right now."

"What are you talking about?" Peter asked, looking offended

"Well, you're sitting there looking smug and all knowing inside a small shield of energy that can only be released by the mate of the person in front of you." smirked Garrett.

"Yeah, man, and she's pissed at you! Which means, if Jazz asks her to keep you in there until you answer his questions, she might just go along with it." laughed Emmett

I just leaned back against a tree and examined my nails; picking imaginary dirt from underneath them. He would have to crack eventually. I couldn't help the slow smile that pulled my lips.
"Fuck." Peter swore.

Yes! I was finally gonna get some answers. That asshole had a gift and I knew it, but he wouldn't ever tell me what is was, denied having one entirely. I mean I could understand it when we were under Maria, that bitch was crazy. But after we got out, he still denied it and gave smartassed remarks. Now I was finally gonna find out what his deal was.

I waited.

"Fine!" He burst out.

That hadn't taken long at all.

"So you know how I was in the Marines when I was human?" he waited until we all nodded our heads.

We had all heard the story that he had told Bella the day that they met.

"Well I was part of Marine Corps Intelligence. Our job was gathering raw intelligence, analyzing that data in context, and producing tactical plans for any and all situations. We looked at tactical military operations and calculated the odds of all the possible outcomes. I was the best of the best at what I did. They would give me all the information, no matter how obscure and I could project several possible outcomes for any given situation. I would give them a calculated percentage, of the likelihood of a given situation happening, and the effect that it would have." He paused seeing our understanding he continued.

"Now imagine how that ability was amplified when I was changed. I knew that if Maria ever knew the extent of my ability that she would chain me to her side. Just as I knew what the odds were of Charlotte and I escaping if you were the one that was supposed to destroy her." He looked at me intensely. "Didn't you find it strange that you were the one that was asked to kill the newborns that day rather than that asshole Michael? He had been the one doing all of the newborn disposal for the previous year. Why then did Maria suddenly ask you to do it?"

I remembered being surprised. Michael had loved killing the newborns after their year of service and their strength had waned. I had wondered when Maria had ordered me to do it but I was so far gone in my numbness that I hadn't thought to question it. Not that I could have questioned Maria's orders anyway. Michael had killed one of Maria's favorite blood bags and she had been pissed.

Once Maria had found out about the human process of blood donation, she used to keep particularly tasty humans prisoner hooked up to IV's so she could feed from them often rather than just killing them. The poor things had been caged and treated worse than animals; knowing the monsters that held them prisoner and the things that we were capable of, drove them insane in a matter of days.

To punish Michael she had taken away his favourite job of disposing of the newborns. That left me to do it. I looked down at Peter.

"Did you kill the human or did Michael actually do it?" I asked him

"Oh, he did it. I just happened to knock the cage over and cause the human to cut herself on the bars. Her blood did the rest." He answered.

"So, you set me up." I deadpanned.

"The odds of us surviving and getting away were higher if you were the one that decided our fate. What wouldn't you do to save your mate?" He countered, unapologetic.

The answer to that was simple. There wasn't anything I wouldn't do to save Bella, and he knew it.

"So you see the future like Alice does?" Emmett asked.

"No, I can't see the future. I make educated guesses and weigh the odds based on the information that I have at the time." He explained. "For instance, I have no idea when I am getting out of this stupid bubble. There are way too many variables and emotions involved. Not only is Bella mad at me, she's scared that I will kidnap her to save her from Jasper."

I growled at that

"Ease up, Major; we've already settled that argument. I won't be taking her anywhere she doesn't wanna go." He tried to placate me before he continued. "Add to the mix, the other four emotional and conniving beauties that are firmly on her side, and I have no idea if I am ever getting out of here; never mind when."

We all had to laugh at the frustrated look on his face. Plus, he looked ridiculous sitting in such a cramped position.

"So, how did you know to come looking for me and how did you know I wanted your help?" The question had been nagging me for months.
"Well funny thing. Last spring we ran across your scent in Phoenix. We followed it and found a very strange scene; a burned out ballet studio with the ashes of a vampire, lots of human blood and the scents of five vampires, including yours and Alice’s. Now normally I would think that this was a dispute over food, but I know that the Cullens are vegetarians. I also tracked the human scent to a hospital so I knew that the human had survived.

"You, Alice and the human had also spent time at a local hotel. I asked a couple of questions at the desk and when I got the answers I could make some proper calculations. I knew a few things were likely at this point; your family had been protecting a human from one of our kind and that you had killed him in her defence. I found it strange, but filed it away for the moment. Then, six months later, I get a report of a female vampire on some kind of revenge mission against a coven that had killed her mate. There are not too many covens in the US, and I knew of one vampire that had been toasted in the past six months; I knew you had gotten sloppy with your clean up." He shook his head at me. "Shoulda made sure all the loose ends were tied up, Major."

"Fuckin’ Assward said it wasn't a problem. She wasn't important. Carlisle relied on Edward's telepathy too much and said that we should leave it alone." The whole situation still pissed me off.

"Yeah well, when I heard that, I knew you were gonna need Char and I. I also knew that if your back's to the wall, you're going to head as far north as you’re can to minimize human casualties. We made the decision to go veggie to make it easier to feed in an uninhabited area. Char was not happy." He teased.

"Alright, but how did you know I was with a newborn female vampire?" Explain that one, Fucker.

"Please! You guys keep a human around for six months and don't turn her? Not likely. Add to that; you with her, screams newborn. I mean, who’s more qualified than you to babysit. Then I talked to you, and I've never heard you so stressed out. I knew she meant something to you." He chuckled. "Really, things aren't so hard to figure out when you sit back, listen and watch."

"So what do you think the ladies are up to? Obviously they know way more about Bella's gift then they are letting on." Garrett was thinking about using our new found weapon to good use.

"Yeah! Those chicks are clearly plotting against us." said Emmett.

"Well, I think Bella has WAY more control of her ability than we've seen. I also think that the girls are saving her as a secret weapon for when we all eventually train together. Charlotte knows the two of us," he gestured between him and I, "well enough to know that they are going to have to take us on in a men versus women mock battle."

I nodded smirking, knowing that is exactly what I had planned to do. It was the best way to discover everyone’s skill level, and it was fun.

"Hmmm...plotting our demise I see boys."

The voice had us all spinning to crouch defensively.

Rose materialized out of the trees with the other four flanking her.

They had successfully snuck up on three military trained men and Emmett, who was no slouch when it came to hunting and fighting.

They all wore matching smirks on their faces, seeing that they had caught us flat footed.

I locked eyes with a smug looking Bella and sent her a wave of lust and desire. "Not your demise. Just your domination." I drawled out and watched as Bella suppressed a shiver of desire.

"Bring it." Kate stated.

A/N: The title of ‘God of War’ is eternally the brain child of the brilliant IdreamofEddy. Her story Colliding Meteors is one of the best Jasper/Bella fics out there and must be read – repeatedly!

The new nickname Fuckedupintheheadward comes from abbymickey24. I damn near spit out my coffee when I read it in her review and had to use it! That is some funny shit!

So as the fairies serve up chocolate chip cookies and milk, (hopefully you all get some before InsaneGrizzlies hoards them all - Girl is a cookie fiend!) I hope you will take the time to leave me a review. They totally make my day and sometimes give me great ideas for upcoming chapters!
"Not your demise. Just your domination." He drawled out and I felt a pull somewhere a little farther south than my stomach. God, that was hot.

"Bring it." Kate stated.

We all knew that we had caught them unaware. They had been so focused on their conversation, trying to figure out what it was that we had been working on, that they had made it easy for us to ease up to them. The girls may have been teaching me to fight, but I had been teaching them my 'mad ninja skills' as Rose called them.

Now it appeared that the time had come for us to reveal all our hard work and start planning for the battle that was coming.

"Alright. Full contact, capture the flag. Any and all gifts are fair play. The usual rules apply; mock decapitation is the only way to knock someone out of the game." Jasper outlined the rules with a calculating look in his eyes.

"Gentlemen against the ladies for the first game, of course." Garrett said with a small bow.

If I didn't know him so well, I would've thought that he was mocking us. I saw Char, Kate and Rose shift their weight, and I knew that they had taken it as a mild insult. I wasn't going to disabuse them of the thought. One, because they both fought better angry, and two, Garrett was Kate's mate; if she didn't know any better, then it wasn't my place to correct her.

'Game on, Bella' Charlotte, our general instructed me silently.

I knew this meant that I was to start working now. I sent a thought to Alice. She had spent a few days with us and we had integrated her into our battle strategies with ridiculous ease. She had also envisioned the fun that we were going to have, keeping in all our skills and battle skills from the guys. She had been fully on board with what Char called the 'Master Plan'.

'Ready, Alice?'

Out of the corner of my eye she rose up on her toes and back again in a small bounce. She did this often and no one would think anything of it, but within our little group of Amazon warriors, it meant yes.

I willed my mental shield from covering Alice.

It really was too bad that Esme wasn't here. She had been the one to name us Amazons, after the first day that she had gone to practice with us.

"Fierce! That what you girls are! You fight as a unit, like the Amazons of myth. The boys won't know what hit them!" She had declared laughing.

A thought struck me. "I think we should video tape the battle. That way, we can analyze the game. You military guys can see where we're weak."

I hated to sound so insecure, but it would play in our favour if the men thought that I was still nervous and weak. I saw Alice bounce again and Rose flipped her hair over her shoulder. Both seemingly normal gestures, were really an agreement with what I had just said; a silent support of my addition to the plan.

Kate took a step forward. "We don't have any weaknesses, Bella." She said arrogantly.

What seemed like arrogance, was actually serving two purposes. Jasper, Peter and Garrett would view overconfidence as a weakness to exploit, and secondly Alice was rubbing her temples.

It was a familiar sight around the house as my shield made it very, very difficult for Alice to have visions. The guys would see it as her trying to see the outcome of the battle. They had no idea that she could see just fine now that I had pulled my mental shield from her. She was rubbing her eyes to cover the fact that she was having a vision now.

"What's the matter Katie? Worried that you'll have to watch the tapes of us kicking your asses for the rest of eternity?"
Emmett taunted, completely unaware of our actions.

I watched as Jasper studied each one of us. We were all being very careful to check our emotions. We didn't want to give anything away. We had worked very hard on focusing on a certain thought that would elicit a certain emotion. We hoped that it would work as a defence against Jasper's gift. If our emotions didn't change then he couldn't guess what we were thinking or planning.

Kate and Emmett were bickering back and forth. The trash talk had started and the game hadn't even started yet. Well, as far as the guys knew, anyway.

"As entertaining as this is, can I be let out now?"

Peter spoke for the first time and I remembered that I had put him on a time out. He sounded slightly whiney and I looked over at him still irritated.

"I don't know, Peter. Can you?" I asked him with a raised eyebrow.

"I think you should leave him there." stated Charlotte. "It would serve him right to have to sit and watch; maybe teach him about the stupidity of interfering. What do you think, Peter? How would you like having to sit and watch as everyone fights around you and makes decisions for you?"

Yup, as angry as I had been with Peter, Charlotte was worse. Peter had 'decided' that I was to go home with him and Charlotte, and nothing either of us said would change his mind. He was being overbearing and she had had enough. Neither one of us took well to being dictated too. We may be women, but this was the 21st century; no one was going to pat us on the head and tell us to go back to our knitting while the men took care of us.

"Char," he began.

She held up a hand and he stopped.

"No Peter. We've spent decades together, and you have never spoken to me like you did. You've always at least listened to what I had to say. Then Bella comes along, and you not only go all caveman on her, but you do it to me. She means just as much to me as she does to you, and you totally ignored everything I said to you, even though I spend every day with her."

We didn't need Jasper's gift to hear the hurt in her voice. I knew how it felt to have someone you loved disregard your feelings and opinions, because they thought that they knew better. Edward used to do it to me all the time. I was sorry that it had happened to Char because of Peter's love for me.

"I know, Char, and I'm sorry." He looked over at me. "I'm sorry to the both of you. My first and strongest instinct was to protect the both of you." He looked over at Jasper. "I'm sorry, Brother, but seeing you like that again; my instincts were screaming at me to grab my mate and niece and run."

He looked back at me and Charlotte, after receiving a nod from Jasper. "I would like to see what happened after we all left, if you'll let me."

I looked at the family, as they waited for Jas and I to finish our silent conversation. Jasper was right. There was no room for doubt on a battlefield. If it would put everyone's mind at ease, and help us deal with all the crap that was headed our way then, I would do it.

I released Peter from his timeout bubble with a thought and took a deep unneeded breath as he rose to his feet.

I reached out with my mind and replayed a severely edited version of the events of the bedroom to everyone. I added the part about Jasper feeding me before taking any blood for himself. For me, that was the biggest indicator that I was completely safe with Jasper's demon; he had put me first.

When I was finished, I looked around and saw that all my sisters had tears, that would never fall, in their eyes. Peter, Garrett and Emmett were just staring at Jasper incredulously. No one expected to see the feared God of War looking so
lovingly protective and tender. Jasper just kept his eyes on me, still leaning against the tree; the picture of a relaxed cowboy enjoying the afternoon sun.

SLAP!

Emmett was rubbing the back of his head while Rose glared daggers at him. "Why can't you be sweet like that?!"

She stalked off to the house in a huff. 'I'm going to get the cameras from the house.' she sent back to me.

Emmett trotted behind her grovelling. "Awww Babe."

We all chuckled at the sight of bear like Emmett, following Rose like a scolded puppy.

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Two hours later found us all in the large field that the guys used for training. We had four cameras set up in various locations to capture as much of our mock battle as possible. Because it was an open field, it would be a much different battle than the ones that the girls and I had staged before. It didn't matter; we had trained for this as well.

The men were outnumbered, so I 'offered' to sit this one out. The Amazons all silently supported me in this aspect of our battle plan. We were making me the target as the weak link; someone who wasn't as confident and who would be easy to take out.

The gentlemen all agreed that they would be happy to be outnumbered this time. Jasper was eyeing me speculatively, so I reined my supposed nervousness in a bit. I didn't want to make him suspicious.

The flag this time was one of Alice's favourite pair of Jimmy Choo shoes. To add to the 'danger' we were only using one of them, so if it got destroyed, then the whole pair would be useless. Alice was less than pleased, at least outwardly.

For the first game, the Amazons would be on the offensive. The 'flag' would be on their side of the field and we would be attacking them to steal it. We had to make it back across the field to our home base with it to win the game. For them to win, they had to steal it back and successfully 'kill' us all before the flag made it back to our home base.

"Alright everyone, let's remember the rules. Full contact, all gifts are allowed, everyone starts out spread across the playing field, and mock decapitation is the only way to knock someone out of the game." Garrett reiterated the rules and we all nodded.

Alice cradled her favourite shoe to her chest looking worried, as she handed it to Garrett.

"Do not worry little cousin, nothing will happen to your precious shoe." Kate tried to reassure Alice, patting her on the back.

"They're new arrivals. They don't even go into the stores for another month." Alice said forlornly.

'Alice, are we going to lose this?' I asked her silently in concern.

'Nope! This is going to be great!' She sent me an image of her doing a happy little dance and I almost laughed.

The boys were looking rather confident as they strode back to their side of the field with the 'flag'. Garrett placed it on a stump and they all turned and faced us. As the rules stated, they had spread out wide across the field in front of the flag in a defensive position.

As we had discussed, we spread out to match them. We all faced off against someone other than our mates. Alice and Kate took Emmett, Charlotte against Jasper, Rosalie against Peter and I took Garrett. I tried my best to look nervous, but I'm not sure how successful I was.

We all moved forward as one and I opened my mind. As we broke into a jog, Alice 'saw' Jasper flooding Charlotte with mirth and joy. I shored up my shields and felt a twinge of confusion through the bond I shared with Jasper.

Alice 'saw' Peter crouching to avoid Rosalie's tackle. I relayed it, and Rose changed her tactics immediately. Peter and Rose were the first to clash. I relayed Alice's visions as fast as they happened and Rose was able to counter each and every move Peter made.

"SHIT! Jasper they-" Peter yelled, almost giving away our secret but Rose was quicker. She had him by the throat and 'ended his existence' rendering him unable to give the warning.

Peter pouted and slunk off to the sidelines to watch as Rose joined forces with Charlotte. Jasper, Rose and Charlotte were circling each other warily, sparring sporadically, each feeling the other out for weaknesses as the girls tried to create an opening to take him out.

Alice and Kate were playing with Emmett; alternately shocking him and using him as a spring board to jump off of, as he tried to manoeuvre his large body quickly enough to catch his much smaller and quicker opponents.
Garrett dove at me, and I cart-wheeled to the side to dodge him. Thanks to Alice's visions I rolled down into a ball and somersaulted backwards knocking him off his feet. I was on him in a second and he too was out of the game.

I could see the boys were getting frustrated as I relayed all the visions Alice was having to the Amazons involved.

The moves were coming fast and furious, the movements almost a blur even to my new eyes. I ran to Emmett as Kate switched her focus to Jasper with Charlotte and Rose. So far we had not attacked; so much as let the boys attack us. Now, it was five against two.

"Alice." Her name came out of Jasper's mouth as a curse.

'Game's up!' Alice thought.

That was our signal. We fell back quickly and took our fighting partners hand. I threw up two shields, one around each group of us and we ran forward to take the flag. Emmett bounced off the field unable to stop us, as Alice and I ran.

Charlotte, Rose and Kate were having a harder time of it as Jasper threw boatloads of fear at them. He couldn't get at them physically, but he could scare them bad enough to slow them down.

Lust hit me like a tidal wave and I stumbled to a stop; my shield no defence against the connection that I had with Jasper. While he still couldn't get me to drop it, I didn't feel much like running anymore either.

What I really wanted to do was strip the man naked and...I shook my head to clear it.

Alice and I were kneeling on the ground as Jasper strode over looking smug.

'Ladies, plan B.' I thought.

I felt a snapping at my shield as it broke into three different bubbles when the other girls separated.

Jasper was jumped from behind as Kate and Rose landed on him. Alice ran to grab the 'flag' as Charlotte took down Emmett.

Jasper's concentration broke and I was up and running. I took Alice's hand and she pulled me to my feet as we ran back to 'home'. Emmett was pouting as he joined Peter and Garrett on the sidelines. Kate gave Jasper a massive shock and she, Rose and Char ran 'home' to join us.

We cheered and danced as we sat it on the half buried boulder that served as our 'home base', celebrating our win. None of us had 'died' and we had taken out three of theirs.

We heard clapping as the men looked on in pride. Jasper looked stunned.

"What the hell was that?" Peter exclaimed

"That was you guys getting your asses kicked by the Amazons!!" yelled out Rose.

We all followed up with very Zena-like yells.

"Hot damn! It normally takes an army to defeat just the Major; we did it with just five beautiful women!" Charlotte laughed.

Jasper shook his head as Peter clapped him on the back. "You better hope this doesn't get out, Major, or your reputation is shot!" he teased.

Jasper raised his head and turned his heated gaze on me, his eyes darkening towards black.

Emmett laughed, "I don't care. Look at them and tell me that isn't the hottest thing you have ever seen!"

I took a deep breath trying to calm my still raging libido. I looked around and all the girls, barring Alice wore the same expressions on their faces.

"You guys are going to be impossible to live with after this." Alice said snarkily; looking at all the love sick couples, with her hands on her hips.

She wandered back to examine her shoe for scuffs. "I really need to find my mate." she grumbled under her breath.

"Next round," Garrett said looking at Kate; his voice harsh with suppressed desire.

The men retreated to their side of the field, their gazes still heated.

'I'm coming for you, Angel,' Jasper promised me silently, his mood indecipherable.

Our new strategy was fairly simple. I would stay in front of the 'flag' and keep it shielded. The girls would try to take out as many of the guys as they could manage.
Jasper strode forward and before Alice could warn me, she dropped unconscious. I threw up my shields to protect the rest of them, but with Alice out of the picture we had no advance warning of what would happen. Our advantage was gone.

Jasper kept walking forward never breaking stride as a wave of desire dropped me to my knees, his now black eyes never leaving mine. The Major had come out to play.

Kate managed to take out Emmett and she moved to help Rose with Peter. Charlotte was holding her own with Garrett.

Rose glanced over at Jasper. "Oh My God, Bella!" She tried to go after Jasper, but Peter flipped her over his shoulder, sending her flying to the ground. "Kate! The Major's here!"

"SHIT!!" Kate cursed and jolted Peter hard. He fell to the ground with Rose on top of him while Kate tried to get to Jasper.

Jasper's eyes flicked in her direction and she stumbled, falling to her knees. I knew that without my shielding she would be unconscious right now. As it was she was too scared to get up.

"Damn it! I do not want to lose this game!!" yelled a frustrated Charlotte. She was trying to take out Garrett, but wasn't able to do more than hold him off. They were too evenly matched.

As Jasper got closer, he fed me more and more lust and desire, pushing my need for him higher. I tried to make my shields stronger to defend myself against him, but it was no use. Our connection was too strong.

'You shield yourself against me, my mate? I'm hurt. I thought you liked being close to me; liked having my hands on your body.'

I felt a phantom caress as he flooded my mind with images of the two of us; entangled in the sheets of our bed, him pushing into me from behind in the shower, his mouth on me as his tongue teased my clit, him holding me in his arms as we both reached our peak.

It was too much. My shield dropped and he slung me over his shoulder, grabbing the 'flag' with his free hand.

'What are you doing?' I managed to ask him through the fog of lust clouding my brain.

'Spoils of war, Angel. You're mine.' He put Alice's shoe on their home base and carried me deep into the forest as the men celebrated their victory behind us.

We were several miles from home by the time he put me down. I was breathing hard, trying to gain control over the heat in my body. He wasn't feeding me lust anymore but the effects remained. His back was to me so I backed away from him trying to create some space.

"Tsk, tsk, tsk. Where do you think you're goin?" His voice was deep and husky. I felt it resonate and pull within me. His head tuned and our eyes met. His were pitch black.

As he stalked towards me he started to undo his shirt, one button at a time. "You fought well today, my Bella. I was very impressed."

His words complimented me, but the tone suggested a 'but'.

"Thank you, Jas." I backed up another couple of steps, not sure what to make of his mood.

"Yes, you did well against Garrett, and I've seen you fight Emmett, but when it came time to fight me you hid under your shield."

I watched his eyes darken further and wondered if he was truly angry, or if seeing me fight had aroused him. After the first fight his eyes had been dark, but not black, and the Major had definitely not been present.

It wasn't until I had blocked myself off from him, in the second game, that the Major had shown up.

"I don't like it when you hide from me, Angel." He pulled his shirt from his shoulders. His pants were already undone, hanging loose around his hips.

I couldn't help but lick my lips. What I wanted to lick was that delicious V of his.

He closed his eyes and took a long breath in through his nose, clearly scenting the air. "I can smell you, Bella. I can smell your need for me."

"Take your clothes off, Bella." His voice was hard, demanding.

I was confused, I knew he would never hurt me but he had never been like this with me before. He looked truly angry.

"I said, take your clothes off, Bella." One arm reached out and shredded the shirt from my body. I could feel his anger now, it was a burning orange fire licking at my skin.
I jumped, startled. I could feel myself taking un-needed breaths to combat the nervousness that began to trickle in. I pushed my yoga pants down and stepped out of them standing in only my panties, waiting to see what he would do.

He walked around me in a circle inspecting me like a prized mare at auction.

"Hmmm...beautiful." His voice came out in a rough purr. "On your knees." He commanded.

I swallowed and battled my instincts that were telling me to run; telling me that I was being hunted, that I was in danger.

He circled around to face me again, his black eyes unreadable. I knew he could feel my internal battle; the fight or flight instincts that were screaming from within.

"On your knees, Bella." His voice was quieter this time and with it came a small swell of reassurance and love, although his expression didn't change and I could still feel his anger.

I dropped to my knees and looked down at my hands. I knew now that he wouldn't hurt me, but I was still nervous about his intentions.

I felt his hands gently pull the elastic from my hair, freeing it from my ponytail. I closed my eyes in pleasure as he ran his fingers through the strands so that they hung around my naked torso.

"You've been hiding things from me, Bella." He had moved to stand in front of me again.

"Jas, we were-"

He cut me off. "All I want out of you right now are yes or no answers, do you understand?"

"Yes." I knew there was a possibility of him being angry at our deception, but we had thought it would be fun; a way to tip the odds in our favour. I mean we were all inexperienced in comparison to Jasper, Peter and Garrett. They had all lived through and fought in wars, both as humans and as vampires. We had wanted to take every advantage that we could.

"Yes, what Bella?"

"Yes, Jasper." I replied.

"Do you know what could have happened if Victoria and her army had decided to attack and we had no knowledge of your gifts? Do you know the confusion that it could have caused?" His voice was hard and unyielding.

I didn't know what to say. There was no way to answer his questions with a yes or no answer, so I kept quiet. I felt horrible. We had been so focused on winning our small battle against the guys that we had lost sight of the real reason that I was learning to fight in the first place. He was right.

"I have a responsibility to this family to keep you all safe. I can't do that if I don't know all the abilities of each person. I can't protect you all if there is confusion on the field of battle. More than that, you kept something from your mate, something that could have gotten you killed." The last came out in a snarl and I knew it was because the thought of losing me was so abhorrent.

I wanted to cry. I should never have listened to the girls; I should have told Jasper what we had been doing every day when he had asked. I had never outright lied to him, but I had never told him the full extent of our activities either.

"Is there anything else that you are keeping from me, Bella?" he asked me quietly

I looked up at him then. I could feel the tears in my eyes. "No, Jasper."

"I can't lose you, Bella. I won't lose you. Don't ever keep something so important from me again. Do you understand?" His eyes had softened somewhat, but he was still very much the Major.

"Yes, Jasper." My voice broke on my sob as I looked down and folded my arms over my chest, feeling very exposed. He felt all of this, of course.

He stepped forward; his hand caressed my cheek before sliding down and using my chin to tilt my face up to look at him. His thumb skimmed the skin under my one eye and I knew it was because he was seeing the shadows there. I was thirsty.

My newborn thirst wasn't quite as bad as it had been when I was first changed, but using my gift every day drained me. I normally didn't need to kill anything big; sometimes a couple of rabbits were enough to take the edge off. The two mock battles today though, had put immense strain on me and I would need to hunt before we went back to the house.

"You will stay here, exactly as you are. Do not move. Do you understand?" commanded the Major.

I nodded "Yes, Jasper."

Then, he was gone. I tried to choke back my sobs; I felt vulnerable sitting here in the snow on my knees, wearing nothing
but my panties. I didn't know how long he would be, but I wouldn't disobey him after keeping the extent of my gifts from him.

I had plenty of time to think about all the things that could have gone wrong if Victoria had attacked and Jasper hadn't known what I could do. As Jasper had said earlier, everyone needed to be able to trust each other. If I had tried to project one of Alice's visions into one of the guys head while we were in the middle of a fight, they may have gotten distracted enough that they were killed. Had I tried to shield them and they didn't know how it worked, it could have cost someone else in our family their life. The fact that I could split my shield into more than two protective bubbles could have made the guys think that they were under a different kind of attack.

Yup, the girls and I had screwed up, and, apparently, I was taking the punishment for it. I should have known better though. My mate is the Major after all; he had every right to expect and trust that I would keep him in the loop about everything; especially, something this important. I knew better than anyone, how much Jasper took on himself when it came to the safety of the family. Had we not been living under the threat of attack from Victoria and possibly Maria, Jasper might have laughed at our actions. But because of our situation, what seemed like a fun prank to the girls and me, felt like a serious breach of trust to Jasper.

As the light began to fade from the sky, and my crying subsided, I realized that I had been kneeling here for a long time. I wondered where Jasper went. I stretched out my senses to try and feel him. I heard a twig snap somewhere in front of me and my attention focused on the sound. Then I heard another from behind me. I scented the air but couldn't smell anything. I could feel my instincts rising and the urge to run surfaced again. I tried to fight it off, Jasper told me to stay here. I thought about putting up my shield, but I decided against it.

Another sound came from my left and I visibly flinched.

"Shhhh...Angel. I'm here."

Jasper appeared out of the darkness in front of me with a struggling deer in his arms. He snapped its neck and offered the throat to me.

"Drink, Angel."

As I bit into the animal and began to drink, I could feel Jasper stroking my hair. It was the closest that he had ever been to me when I had fed from an animal. The other time I had been too weak and he had been off finding me more food.

I felt his hand trail slowly down my back and heat flooded my core. The feeling of the hot blood in my mouth, and his cool fingers trailing across my skin ignited my desire. I felt a purr rumble through my chest as his hand moved to caress the side of my breast.

The deer's heart had stopped beating and now, I had to suck the remaining blood out. I felt Jasper move behind me and his fingers trail over my now wet pussy. I groaned as he dipped first one finger and then two into my core. I gathered the deer into my arms wanting more. As I bent over its now drained body, Jasper drove his cock hard into me from behind in one long thrust. My back arched and I dropped the deer as I threw my head back in ecstasy, blood running out of my mouth and down my neck and chest.

Jaspers fingers tangled in my hair and pulled me back into him as he sunk deep into my flesh. His free hand pressing down on my back forcing me to submit to his will.

"MINE." He snarled as the tension inside me coiled and burned. His desire wrapped around me like a velvet crimson cloak; his lust and possession striking like black lightning through my body.

I cried out as his arm snaked around my hips and both his arms anchored me down onto his hard piercing flesh. My head was bent back as his hand gripped my throat chaining me to him.

My hands tried to hold his thighs, but he switched his grip so that one of his hands held both my wrists behind my back; his fingers twining in my hair once more. He pressed my chest into the forest floor, his greater strength shackling me into submission beneath him.

As he pounded into me from behind I heard his voice, "Never again my mate. You WILL tell me everything. You WILL help me keep you safe!"

He jerked me savagely when I didn't respond. "SAY IT!"

I was so close to my peak I would have promised him the moon if it meant that he wouldn't stop. "Yes, Jasper! Oh God. Yes!"

"SAY IT!"

"Never again....oh GOD! I Promise...everything, I'll tell you everything! Please Jasper!" I begged him. I needed more.

"MINE!" He gave one more brutal thrust as he jerked me to him, biting deep where my neck joined my shoulder.

I cried out in both pain and pleasure, finding my peak as he pulsed deep inside me.
Afterwards we lay in the snow as he cradled me tenderly into his chest. I could feel his contented purr rumbling though my body. He was licking the bite on my shoulder carefully as I winced at the sting.

"How bad does it hurt?" he asked me softly.

"Not too bad. I've had worse pains." I told him.

It was true. I remembered burning my hand on a hot cookie sheet when I was fourteen and making cookies for the school bake sale. The bite on my neck burned and stung just like the red welt that I had gotten across my palm from the cookie sheet. And of course nothing hurt as bad as the burn of the change.

"I'm not sorry, Angel."

"I know. I am, though. About not telling you, I mean." I turned in his arms so that I could look into his now golden eyes. "Honestly, we didn't think about the big picture. We only thought about how fun it would be to be able to beat you guys just once. I never meant to lie to you; it just seemed like a good prank. I'm sorry, Jasper." My voice broke and I buried my head in his chest.

He kissed the top of my head. "I know you are Angel. And I know that it'll never happen again. I just love you too much to risk something so stupid causing you to get hurt."

I cried into his chest as he comforted me. He stroked my back and kissed my face, whispering words of love and comfort as he wrapped his love around me like a warm blanket.

Once I calmed down and was assured that he wasn't mad at me anymore, he began to question me about my gifts.

I told him about being able to encase all the girls individually in both a mental and physical shield. How I could pull my mental shield back from Alice, enabling her to have clear visions and then projecting them to everyone else. How my shields muted the effects of his empathy in all cases except mine. He smirked at hearing that I was just as vulnerable to him with my shield as without.

"It would've been helpful to know that when you were locked in your bubble practically comatose as a newborn." He grumbled.

I told him everything that I had learned so far and he was impressed. Once I had fallen silent, he kissed my face tenderly; my eyes, my cheeks, my chin, my forehead. He brought my fingers to his mouth and kissed first my fingertips then my palm and finally my wrist.

"Let's go home, Angel."

He watched as I pulled my panties and yoga pants back on. When I frowned at my ruined shirt, he helped me put his on instead. He kissed my slowly healing bite mark carefully before covering my shoulder and buttoning up the shirt for me.

"I love you, Angel."

"I love you too, Jas."

He swept me up into his arms and carried me back to the house.

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A/N: Some of you may not have liked the direction that that this chapter took, but Jasper's actions will be explained, I promise. Would love to hear your thoughts. Don't be shy, I have an umbrella to ward off the rotten fruit.

Until next time, enjoy the brownies and milk! *waves the fairies to pass out the goodies*
I knew she was hiding something from me. She and the girls were all too steady.

People don't realize that emotions are like the wind; they shift and move according to their thoughts at the moment. As I looked at each of them, I could only feel one emotion from each of them; one emotion in a steady stream. They were hiding something.

Bella was feeling nervous, which in itself, wouldn't have roused my suspicions; if I had felt anything else from her, but no, nothing but the nervousness. Alice was feeling nothing but happy, hmm...

I turned my attention to Kate, who was feeling nothing but confidence. Then, there was Rose, she was feeling nothing but calm. I narrowed my eyes; Rose was never calm.

I watched as Char refused to have Bella let Peter out of her shield. I felt everyone's emotions resume their natural shifting as they were shown the interaction between Bella and my demon. I laughed out loud when Rose got mad and smacked Emmett.

Now, we were all lined up on the field. The cameras were set and the girls were back to the abnormal state of fixed emotions. The exact same emotions they displayed earlier. This was wrong and it all had to do with Bella.

I felt her manufactured nervousness dissipate somewhat and knew she was keeping something from me. I shook my head; it wouldn't be anything big. Bella knew how important it was for her to tell me about her gifts, so I could properly prepare for any attack that came our way.

I had already decided to include the girls in our daily training. I knew Victoria and her newborns wouldn't accommodate us and stay away for too much longer, in fact, we were expecting to have to deal with a scout any day now. Alice would leave a couple of times everyday to run out from under the influence of Bella's shield to scan the future. She had seen flashes of the battle to come and the scouts that would be coming to gather information. The battle itself seemed to be happening in Spring, there were still patches of snow on the ground so we were looking at the early part of Spring, as long as nothing changed. I wanted to be prepared in case they decided to attack us sooner.

The thought of Bella in the middle of a battle terrified me, shield or no shield. I knew she could protect herself and the girls, but she had already told me that her shield would only hold until her concentration broke. Her shield could come in handy in a couple of different ways, but being in the middle of a battle provided a ton of distractions. I was glad that we had talked about the things that she and the girls had been working on. While we hadn't finished the conversation, I thought that she had told me all the pertinent details. I had already begun to formulate plans for the war with Victoria.

As the game started, I tried to incapacitate Charlotte by throwing humour at her. She should have been on the ground laughing, but all I got was a chuckle. What the Hell?

I was amazed when Peter was taken out so quickly; by Rose of all people. What the fuck was going on??? Rose should never have been able to take out Peter. He was a battle hardened soldier, my Captain, and, gifts aside, he was damn near my equal.

Peter tried to shout me a warning, but Rose had 'killed' him too fast for him to finish. Rose joined Charlotte in attacking me and, as we circled each other, I watched Alice and Kate toy with Emmett. I knew after all the training that I had put Emmett through; he should've been able to take out at least one of them. This whole thing wasn't right.

Bella was even more of a mystery. She was actually holding her own against Garrett. While I was proud of her skills, there was no way she should have been doing this well. When she rolled backwards into him and took him out of the game, I knew that Bella had been keeping a HUGE secret from me. I felt like she had stabbed me in the chest. A ridiculous thought, as there was nothing that could penetrate my diamond hard skin. Nothing but her betrayal could cut me this deeply.

There was only one way that they could be accomplishing all this, "Alice." Her name came out of my mouth as a curse.

As soon as the name left my lips, the girls fell back and regrouped. They split into two teams and Bella covered each
group with her shields. I was furious. They had all kept this from me. Bella had kept this from me. Alice didn't need to leave every day; Bella could've just let her see at any time. Hell, all the time! Who knows what information we were missing because Alice couldn't see all the time?

I turned my focus to Charlotte. She, of all of them, should have known how important Bella's training was. I needed all the intelligence I could get in order to protect us all. The others were children when it came to battle experience, but Charlotte had been in Maria's army with me. She knew what we would be up against. She knew how important communication was.

I flooded Charlotte, Kate and Rose with my anger and watched as they dropped to their knees in fear, even under Bella's shield. FUCK! They should be unconscious from that.

I turned my attention to Bella and Alice. I knew of one emotion that would drop my Bella faster than any other and threw it at her. She hit her knees and closed her eyes in ecstasy, our connection making it impossible for her to shield herself from the lust I hit her with.

Just as I was ready to taste victory, I was hit from behind by Kate and Rose as Charlotte tackled Emmett and took him out. All the girls were under separate shields. FUCK!!! Four separate shields?!!

I felt my anger spike again, but just as I was getting ready to attack, I was hit with a massive shock from Kate that dropped me shaking into the snow. I watched as Alice and Bella collected the flag and ran to their home base.

If I wasn't so angry at her betrayal of my trust, I would've been proud of her. Hell, on one level I was proud, they had fought as a well disciplined unit, taking out seasoned soldiers in the process. Their strategy was flawless, but the images of her dead on a battlefield kept intruding.

They were obviously communicating Alice's visions using Bella's telepathy. If they had tried to use that during a battle with Victoria, and we hadn't known about it in advance, the results could have been tragic. I would have thought it was a direct attack had she tried to send me an image without warning. At the very least, the confusion could have caused one of us to get hurt. I didn't want to think about the worse case, but I couldn't stop it.

The images of what could have been flooded my head. Images of Bella being bitten by feral newborns; of my Angel's screams from being brutally raped by Maria's second in command, Michael, and then passed around; and her, screaming in pain, as she was slowly pulled apart. I had seen all these images and more, in person, when I served in the Southern Armies. The thought of Bella being on the losing end tortured me. As my mate, she would be tortured the worst and I would be forced to watch as punishment. Her shield would be useless, because she wouldn't be able to summon the concentration necessary to hold it.

If enough newborns swarmed me and ripped off my head, my gift would be useless and I would be forced to watch helpless as they made my Bella pay for my sins.

Images of my Angel in pieces, with Maria laughing as she lit the fire, wouldn't leave my mind. Bella's beautiful golden eyes filled with pain, gazing at me as the flames consumed her body, leaving me to wander for eternity alone. Maria would find it a fitting punishment for me. The thought left me feeling empty, terrified and vulnerable. I couldn't exist without her.

I could feel that Peter knew what I was thinking and was trying to make light of a serious situation.

Sorry Captain, I am WAY past pissed on this one.

I focused on Bella; I could feel her lingering lust from my earlier attack.

As Garrett announced the next game, I focused on my conniving mate. 'I'm coming for you Angel.' I silently promised her.

She needed to realize how much her actions had hurt me and endangered the family. I would make her experience a small dose of how alone and lost I would be without her.

Winning the next game was as simple as taking out Alice before Bella could shield her. After that, they fell apart.

Rose recognized the look on my face first and tried to warn the rest of her sisters. They intensified their attack but, without Alice to tell them how to react, they were ineffective. I managed to drop Kate to her knees as Charlotte cried out in frustration. Silly girls, they still thought that this was a game. Playtime was over.

My Bella tried to protect herself from me as I paralyzed her with lust.

'You shield yourself against me, my mate? I'm hurt. I thought you liked being close to me; liked having my hands on your body.' My mental voice was smooth and betrayed nothing of the anger that I was feeling.

As I sent her image after image of the two of us during intimate moments, her shield fell. She was dazed and slightly confused as I slung her over my shoulder and captured the flag, a formality only. The game for me was long over. It ended with her betrayal of my trust.

As I set her on the ground, far from the protection of our family, I felt her trying to calm her body. I couldn't look at her right now; the pain of her keeping something so important from me, lashed across my chest biting deep as a whip.
I heard her trying to place some distance between us, "Tsk, tsk, tsk. Where do you think you're goin'?

I knew my strange behaviour was confusing her and as she caught sight of, what I was sure were, my very black eyes; she froze.

As I stalked her and removed my shirt, I felt her desire spike. Sorry Angel, not time for that yet. I needed her to feel how vulnerable I would be without her. I needed her to know the danger she had put herself in. The danger she and the girls had put the whole family in.

"Take your clothes off, Bella." I demanded, showing her my anger.

I felt her nervousness; she didn't move fast enough and I was starting to lose my patience. "I said, take your clothes off, Bella." I violently ripped her shirt from her body.

As I circled her, I couldn't help but see her beauty in spite of the situation. "On your knees."

I felt her fear jump and knew her fear of my intentions and the projection of my anger was to blame. She was terrified and hurt and battling the urge to run from me. I took a deep breath trying to rein in the anger that I was feeling in reaction to my fear of losing her.

"On your knees, Bella." It would make it easier for me to catch her if she had to stand before she ran. I really hoped she wouldn't. I tried to send her a small amount of the love I felt for her, but my demon was clamouring to be released; furious at her for putting herself in danger.

I rationalized with myself that she hadn't been in danger, nothing had happened, but the images of what could have been, of her torture and destruction at the hands of my enemies, rose up to taunt me.

I pulled the elastic from her hair hoping that the familiar feel of it sliding through my fingers would help calm me. As she closed her eyes in pleasure, the familiar sight pulled me back from the edge and my demon quieted somewhat.

I moved to stand in front of her, her submissive posture doing much to calm my raging instincts. "You've been hiding things from me, Bella."

Her eyes shot up and stared at me with a hint of defiance, "Jas, we were-"

If she tried to justify herself to me and argued, I would lose control and say or do something that would hurt her. My voice cracked out with the force of a whip, "All I want out of you right now are yes or no answers, do you understand?"

"Yes." She said quietly.

"Yes, what Bella?" I needed to know she was listening.

"Yes, Jasper." she replied.

"Do you know what could have happened if Victoria and her army had decided to attack and we had no knowledge of your gifts? Do you know the confusion that it could have caused?" I was trying to stay calm but memories from the past, memories of how prisoners in Maria's camps were treated, invaded my thoughts.

"I have a responsibility to this family to keep you all safe. I can't do that if I don't know all the abilities of each person. I can't protect you all if there is confusion on the field of battle. More than that, you kept something from your mate, something that could have gotten you killed." My inner demon roared at the thought of losing her over something so stupid, as her keeping her skills from me for the sake of a game.

I could feel her utter despair and regret. I watched as her shoulders trembled with her attempts to keep from crying. The only thing that was keeping me from losing it completely, was knowing that she hadn't outright lied to me and that she felt terrible for misleading me.

"Is there anything else that you are keeping from me, Bella?" I asked her quietly.

She looked up at me "No, Jasper."

"I can't lose you, Bella. I won't lose you. Don't ever keep something so important from me again. Do you understand?" Some of the tension left my chest as I looked down at her tear filled eyes.

"Yes, Jasper." Her voice broke on a sob and she folded her arms over her chest, curling inward feeling vulnerable.

I stepped forward and caressed her cheek needing the physical contact with her. As I tipped her face up, I saw the darkness of thirst on her face. One last thought of how ravaged she would look after being tortured crossed my mind, and I knew I had to get away from her for a bit.

"You will stay here, exactly as you are. Do not move. Do you understand?" I commanded her. I wouldn't go far, but leaving her alone with the approaching darkness, would let her feel a fraction of the fear and loneliness that I would feel, if I lost her.
"Yes, Jasper." She whispered and I was gone.

I ran wide circles around her, out of her range of hearing, but close enough that I was still able to protect her if I needed to. I gave myself over to pure instinct, destroying trees and rocks, as I tried to vent my fear and anger.

Terror rose up in my throat, practically choking me, at the thought of her in Maria's hands; fury and rage fighting to be released on those who would hurt my mate. I again fought with myself, nothing had happened. Bella was safe. I took several deep breaths, the unnecessary action doing much to calm me.

My eyes refocused and I realized that darkness was falling. I knew that I hadn't been away from Bella for long, but that in her emotional state, she would feel like it had been hours. I remembered the thirst in her eyes and quickly tracked down a deer, running it back to where I had left her.

Her fear, remorse and feelings of abandonment hit me hard and I dropped the deer. I had to run to capture it again and the noise scared her even more. She visibly flinched and I tried to reassure her.

"Shhhh...Angel. I'm here."

I snapped its neck and offered the throat to her.

"Drink, Angel."

As she bit into the animal and began to drink, I crouched behind her, stroking her hair. The sight of her near naked and feeding was erotic, and being so close to her as she drank, fuelled my own needs. My hands began to caress her soft skin; the urge to take her was strong.

She was drinking in deep long draws as my fingers found her centre. She was wet, and let out a long moan as I pressed first one, then two fingers deep into her. I quickly undid my pants with my free hand and when she hunched over to drink the last of the blood from the deer, I plunged deep into her dripping wet core.

As she arched her back in pleasure, the position caused her to pull away from me slightly. It was enough; my instincts took over. My fingers tangled in her hair and my hand pressed her into the snow, pulling her back onto my rock hard cock.

"MINE." I snarled out, the need to possess and dominate her was pure instinct.

If I chained her to me she couldn't get hurt. No one could use her against me, no one could take her from me. I wouldn't be forced to endure eternity alone. I crushed her to my chest, holding her by her throat, unwilling to have her separate from me in the slightest way.

I could feel her need for me, her lust and desire like flames on my skin. Her hands clutched at my thighs and, unwilling to feel any kind of struggle, I used one hand to shackle her wrists behind her, and the other to wind her hair in my fist; making any thought of her being taken from me impossible.

Nothing but her complete submission would do. She had to listen to me, I would lose her otherwise. She would be taken from me, she would be killed.

"Never again, my mate. You WILL tell me everything. You WILL help me keep you safe!" I pounded into her, accentuating my words with each thrust of my cock.

She let out a loud moan, the walls of her pussy clenching around my cock, but it was far from the assurance my instincts were demanding.

I jerked her hard into me, "SAY IT!" I roared.

I could feel her orgasm approaching and knew that I wouldn't let her cum until she submitted to me. I had to keep her safe!

"Yes, Jasper! Oh God. Yes!" she gasped out.

It wasn't enough. I needed to hear her promise. My demon was clawing at the walls of the cage, demanding her complete domination. "SAY IT!"

"Never again...oh GOD! I Promise...everything, I'll tell you everything! Please Jasper!"

As I listened to her promise and her pleas for relief, the instinct to dominate her overwhelmed me.

"MINE!" exploded from my throat as I leaned forward and bit deep into the curve of her neck, my seed shooting from me deep into her body; my teeth chaining her to me, claiming her as my mate in the most primitive and instinctual way, covering her with my scent. Everyone would know she was mine!

She cried out and I felt both her pain and pleasure as she reached her climax.

As I came down off my high, the fog of my instincts began to lift; the stress of the last few hours draining from me. I gently
I pulled my Angel into the curve of my body, sheltering her from the world that would try to take her from me.

I examined the bite that I had inflicted, and thought that I should feel bad, but I didn't. My instincts urged me to care for my mate, and I began to clean the wound, gently bathing it with my tongue. I felt her wince and knew it was painful.

"How bad does it hurt?" I asked her softly, knowing that it burned like hell.

"Not too bad. I've had worse pains." She replied quietly.

I could feel a mix of remorse, regret, sadness and love coming from her. I knew that my treatment of her had probably been a shock, but that I hadn't actually hurt her in any way other than the bite. If the physical reminder that the scar would represent, reminded her of my fear of losing her because of her keeping things from me, then I refused to think it was a bad thing. Better the small pain now, then the horrific torture that she would have to endure if our enemies ever got a hold of her.

"I'm not sorry, Angel." I was though.

I was sorry that I had to act like such a caveman over something so stupid as hiding her gifts. Sorry that her shoulder and neck felt like it was on fire because of my instincatual need to dominate my mate in times of danger. Sorry that she had to feel any kind of fear and pain at my hands. Sorry that I hadn't impressed upon her the need for her honesty and the seriousness of the situation. Sorry that the whole fucked up situation with Victoria had made this whole situation a life and death struggle, rather than the fun that we should have been having in her newborn year. But I couldn't tell her that, I didn't want her thinking that I thought I had over reacted. We were in a fucked up situation that required her obedience. All I could do now was make sure she knew that I loved her.

"I know. I am, though. About not telling you, I mean." She turned in my arms so that she could look into my eyes. "Honestly, we didn't think about the big picture. We only thought about how fun it would be to be able to beat you guys just once. I never meant to lie to you; it just seemed like a good prank. I'm sorry, Jasper." Her voice broke as she pleaded with me for understanding, and then buried her head in my chest.

I kissed the top of her head pulling her closer to me. "I know you are, Angel. And I know that it'll never happen again. I just love you too much to risk something so stupid causing you to get hurt."

I continued to hold her and kiss her as she sobbed against me. Her sadness, remorse and shame over her actions poured over me in dismal shades of grey. Every ounce of her sadness making me want to destroy Victoria in even slower and more creative ways.

I kissed her face, and stroked her back, whispering words of comfort and love over and over; reassuring her that I loved her and would never leave her, would never allow her to be taken from me. She was mine as I was hers body and soul.

When the wracking sobs quieted and she was breathing a bit easier, I asked her about her gifts. This time she told me everything. The depth of her gift was staggering, and would go a long way in preventing injuries to anyone in our family, but that was a discussion for another time. Right now, she was exhausted and needed me to care for her. I needed to care for her and soothe the hurts that I had caused.

I placed a dozen tender kisses to her face and hands. "Let's go home, Angel."

I watched as she slowly got dressed. She held up her ruined shirt and frowned slightly. I could feel her slight embarrassment over the thought of having to run home topless, and helped her put my shirt on instead. I kissed her slowly healing bite gently before covering it up, and carefully buttoning the shirt over her breasts.

"I love you, Angel." I told her cupping her face in my hands and looking into her beautiful golden eyes.

"I love you too, Jas."

I felt her love wash over me in a warm wave as I gathered her up in my arms to carry her back to the house, unwilling to have her out of my arms for even the short time it would take to run home.

As we came in sight of the house, I saw Garrett across the lake. I pulled Bella to my chest, instinctually needing her closer; the urge to protect her still very dominant.

He stepped back a step and gave me a deep nod before melting back into the forest, a very repentant and submissive looking Kate behind him. I hadn't been the only one who had been chastising their mate apparently.

The house was quiet as I carried Bella up to our room, but I could feel Peter and Charlotte were still in the house. From their emotions I knew Peter was also very angry with Charlotte. But none of that mattered to me right now.

My Angel came first; I could feel her exhaustion radiating out from her and set out to take care of my precious mate.

A/N: I hope this chapter goes towards redeeming Jasper for his actions in the previous chapter. The next chapter will be posted tomorrow (that's right people, a double release!) and will be from Bella's POV. The girls needed to have their say.
as well and it will further explain things as well as move the story along. I would love to hear your thoughts on this chapter -
good or bad they are all welcome and appreciated.

Recently a Jasper/Bella story has captured my undivided attention and I feel it is not getting the love and attention that it
should be. This story has quickly become a 'Drop Everything' and I scramble to read it everytime an update hits my inbox.

http://www(dot)fanfiction(dot)net/s/5620038/1/Thought_Like_Flames by ALiteraryLife

If you haven't started reading this story yet, you need to.

And now - on with the afterparty! Cue the music. Fairies, pass out the brownies and chocolate chip cookies. Please limit
InsaneGrizzlies to 1 each until everyone else has had a helping. The one plate rule is in effect Grizz. "narrows her eyes"
Do not make me call for the trolls. Mynxi, you are not allowed to start tapping your toe impatiently until next weekend at the
very earliest. lol

Enjoy everyone!
Jasper carried me all the way back to the house and into our room. He set me gently on the bed and went into the bathroom. I heard him turn on the water to the tub and watched as steam billowed out the door.

I felt a mental poke and opened my mind.

'Everything okay, Little One?" Charlotte's concerned voice filled my mind.

'A little intense, but we're good. Thanks.' I replied

'We can talk later if you need to.' She said

'That would be great, Char. The girls, too?' I asked. I needed to talk to them about what had happened.

'Whatever you need, Little One. For the record, we're all really sorry we talked you into keeping your gifts a secret from Jasper. Peter pointed out, rather forcefully, how stupid it was right on the cusp of war with Victoria.' Charlotte's mental voice was apologetic and sheepish.

'We'll talk about it later 'kay, Char?'

'Of course. Love you, Little One.'

'Love you, too, Char.'

I severed our connection and closed my mind just as Jasper came back into the room. He picked me up again and carried me into the bathroom, setting me on the ledge of the tub. He carefully undressed me and then lowered me into the steaming water.

I watched as he undressed quickly and then joined me in tub. I leaned back into his chest with a sigh and then a hiss as the hot water lapped over the still healing bite mark.

"It'll be better by tomorrow, only a little bruised. It might itch a little for the next day or so, but after that you won't suffer any lasting effects, apart from the scar." He murmured in my ear.

I hummed my agreement as he lazily washed me, carefully avoiding the bite. Every now and then he would place a kiss to my temple or my neck, the bend in my elbow; each time whispering his love and adoration.

The day had been an emotional rollercoaster. From talking Jasper's demon into a state of calm, dealing with Jasper's emotions in the aftermath of his blackout, the fabulous sex in the shower, the fight with Peter, winning the first round of capture the flag, realizing how angry Jasper was over the secrets of my gifts, dealing with his anger and my punishment, and now his care of both my body and emotions. I was as exhausted as a vampire could get, and Jasper knew it.

He felt my turmoil. "Shhh...Angel. It's all over now. I love you; let me take care of you."

Jasper finished washing me and pulled the drain on the tub. He stood up with me in his arms and set me back on the ledge so he could dry me off. The softness of the towel felt wonderful on my skin, and the care and attention I was getting from Jasper was heaven.

He gathered me up into his arms and carried me to our bed, where he tucked me in under the covers. I whimpered and reached out for him, needing him close to me.

He climbed in behind me and pulled me to his chest, petting my hair. "I'm not leavin', Angel."

I felt a wave of velvet blue lethargy sweep over me. 'Jas?'

"Shhh...rest, Angel. I can't put you to sleep, but I can help you rest." His voice sounded like it was really far away, his purr...
further soothing me into a state of relaxation. Then I was floating. I could feel my chest rise and fall with each unnecessary breath as if it were in slow motion. My body felt heavy as the duvet draped around me in soft comforting creases. I felt like I did when I was human, and I was just in the process of waking up after a great night's sleep on a Saturday morning; not awake but not asleep either.

After months of not sleeping, this was heaven.

Sometime later I heard Jasper's voice. 'Time to come back, Angel.' I felt him stroke my face and kiss my lips gently.

I returned to myself slowly, and opened my eyes to see brilliant morning sunlight slanting through our windows. I rolled towards him and wound my arms around his neck, pulling myself into him. I moaned as he ran his hand down my back and curved his hand around my ass pulling me closer; our bodies fitting together perfectly.

He buried his face in my hair and inhaled, as I rubbed my face into his neck.

"It's time to get up, Angel." He whispered in my ear

"Hmmm...five more minutes." I never wanted to leave the comfort of this bed and his arms.

"Come on, Angel. You need to get up and spend some time with Alice before she leaves."

That got me. I pulled back so I could look in his eyes. "Leaves? Where is she going?"

"She said she's going to New York." He tucked a piece of my hair behind my ear and kissed my lips. "Come on, if you get up she can tell you all about it."

I got up and started pulling on clothes. "But the New York fashion week isn't for another month. Why is she leaving so early?"

My mind was going a mile a minute, and, for a vampire, that's saying something. I didn't want Alice to go. Was she leaving because of the game yesterday? Was she leaving because of Jasper's blackouts? Did I do something to upset her? I didn't shield her as fast as I should have and Jasper had knocked her out, maybe she was mad. I should have protected her, I-

Jasper interrupted my racing thoughts when he came to stand in front of me, he took my face in his hands, "Bella, stop. Alice isn't leavin' for any reason other than she says it's time. You didn't do anything wrong." He pulled me into his chest, trying to reassure me.

"You're sure?" my voice was small and worried.

He kissed my forehead, "Go and talk to her, Angel. You'll see."

I was torn. I wanted to go and talk to Alice, but after the events of the past two days I really didn't want to leave Jasper's side. I was feeling similar to when I first woke to this life. When I was with Jasper, I was safe; the thought of leaving, even for a short while was scary. He felt my turmoil of course.

Jasper pulled me into the circle of his arms and tucked my head under his chin. 'Hey, it's okay. I'll be right here when you get back, and if you need me all you have to do is call. You need this, Angel.'

He was right of course. It was stupid to feel this way. I had become a stronger, happier, more confident me and I wouldn't give that up now. I nodded and closed my eyes briefly as he kissed my forehead.

I quickly finished dressing and was about to leave, when he caught my arm. He pulled me to him, running his fingers across my cheek. 'I love you, Angel.' His eyes were a beautiful soft caramel and looked at me with all the love he had.

'I love you, too, Jasper. So much.' I kissed his lips tenderly making sure to send him my love and then darted out of the room.

Alice was waiting at the bottom of the stairs for me. She held out her hand and I took it. I heard Jasper chuckle behind me as we darted out of the house together, still holding hands.

We ran our usual route and ended up at the smaller training field that the Amazons used. We sat down and she looked at me in amusement before laughing out loud. "Oh Bella, stop looking at me like I ate your dog. I'm leaving because it's time silly!"

I could only imagine the look of confusion on my face. "Time for what, Alice?"

Her neck disappeared into her scrunched up shoulders, as she bounced excitedly. "I saw him Bella! My mate! When I was grumbling yesterday about needing to find my mate, it happened! I saw us meeting in New York!"

"Aaaahh! Alice, I'm SO HAPPY FOR YOU!" I squealed and threw myself at her, sending us both tumbling back into the snow.
She laughed at my enthusiasm and pushed us both back up. "I know right!!!! I can't wait! I mean I didn't actually see his face only that it was during one of the parties that led up to the start of Fashion Week in New York. Now, I just have to go to all the parties and wait to meet him!"

"Hey, is this a private party or can we all join?"

Charlotte, Rosalie and Kate wandered into the clearing with tentative smiles on their faces. I felt my excitement for Alice drain away, when I saw how sad they all looked.

Rose came over to me and took me in her arms. 'I'm so sorry, Cricket, are you alright?'

"Yeah, I'm okay, Rose." I looked up at all of them. "It got pretty intense last night, and I swear I will never keep anything from him again, but he didn't hurt me."

"Honey, we're not worried that he hurt you. But we know how intense things can get between mates and wondered if you had questions." Charlotte asked.

I thought about everything that had happened the night before. My emotions were all over the place. I still felt awful about keeping the full extent of my gift from Jasper, and the fear I felt at his anger was terrifying, but I knew that his anger was based solely on the fear of losing me. I could still see the haunted look in his eyes.

"He was REALLY angry. But he was also really scared. He told me about all of the things that could have happened if we had been attacked and I had tried to help without the guys knowing what I could do. And he was right, we should never... He was so angry..." I was babbling but I was still upset about the whole thing.

"Shhh...Cricket. It's okay." Rose pulled me into a big hug and I could feel Charlotte hugging me from behind.

I reflexively sucked in a breath when she put her chin on the still tender bite from Jasper. They both pulled away and exchanged a look with each other.

"Bella, did Jasper bite you last night?" Charlotte asked softly.

I heard Kate and Alice gasp softly in shock.

I ducked my head not knowing what to say. I didn't want them to be mad at Jasper. What had happened didn't feel wrong, but I was afraid that they would view it as some kind of abuse. But Jasper wasn't like that. He had already proven that even in the midst of his demon wreaking havoc, he never lost control with me. He cared for me deeply. This was something totally different.

"Cricket, it's okay. You can tell us." Rose tried to reassure me.

"Yes he did, but he didn't hurt me and I know you'll think he did it to hurt me but it wasn't like that he-" I tried to blurt out everything at once, feeling like a battered wife who tried to justify the actions of a violent husband, which SO wasn't the case.

"Bella. Bella!" Charlotte loudly interrupted my jumbled explanation. "You don't have to explain. We know exactly what happened. It's completely normal for our kind."

"But how?" I was confused. How could they know what happened? Normal?

Alice and Kate looked just as confused as I felt. Rose and Char exchanged another long look and then pulled down the shoulders of their tops exposing old bite scars on their shoulders.

"You guys? They bit you, too?" I didn't know what to say.

"Rose, you said that you got those scars from a fight with some nomads in Africa..." Alice was confused and her beautiful little face was pulled into a very unnatural looking frown.

Rose chuckled darkly. "And I did, but it wasn't from the nomads. Emmett bit me because I refused to run when he told me to." She turned to look at me before she continued.

"We were on our first honeymoon. Emmett was only about 5 years into this life, but he was really protective of me; especially because of what I had gone through with my human fiancé. I may have been the older vampire, but he had been quite the brawler in his human life. Obviously I hadn't been, but when the two nomads decided to attack us for 'invading their territory'; I refused to leave Emmett to fight without me. He managed to kill them both easily but one of my hands got torn off in the process of me trying to help. He helped me fuse it back on and then proceeded to yell at me for not listening to him when it came to my safety. It was obvious that I hadn't helped in the slightest, as there wasn't a scratch on him and I had lost a hand, but I was stubborn and refused to back down." She smirked at the memory before continuing.

"The fight led to a fantastic round of make-up sex, which resulted in my complete submission to his dominance and the bite mark you see here." She gestured to the silver scar on her shoulder with a small smile. "And since then, I only join him in a fight when he says I can. As much as I enjoyed the make-up sex, I couldn't stand it if I was the cause of making him..."
feel so scared and powerless again." I could see the sadness on her face as she remembered Emmett's fear of losing her.

I'm sure Jasper looked much the same last night.

"But Rose, everyone knows you wear the pants between you and Emmett." Alice stated.

Rose laughed, "Sure, most of the time I do! I have to keep the big lug out of trouble, and heaven knows he has to be reminded to mind his manners; but when it comes down to fighting? He's the boss, always has been, always will be. I would defend him with the last ounce of strength in my body but I'll do it how and when he tells me too."

Charlotte smiled sadly. "My story isn't much different. I remember standing with a group of newborns. We were all almost a year old, and our strength and speed were fading with the last of our human blood. Jasper was ordered to destroy us that day. I was the only one that knew about it. Peter and I had secretly fallen in love and he said he had a plan to save us both. I had thought that the plan had backfired when I saw the Major join us for 'training'. I couldn't see how we were going to get away from the most feared vampire in the Southern Hemisphere. I resigned myself to the fact that I was going to die. I remember being so worried about what would happen to my Peter without me."

Charlotte was far away as she remembered the day Jasper was supposed to kill her. Her gaze was vacant and I could see tears in her eyes. "One by one, I watched as each of my fellow soldiers was disposed of by Jasper. When he got to me, I closed my eyes, silently said goodbye to my love, and waited for it to happen. But nothing did. I opened my eyes to see Jasper looking at Peter in amazement and longing. Peter told me to run, and I did, thinking he was right behind me. I didn't get very far when I realized I was alone. I stopped and hid in an old barn. I was terrified that Peter wasn't with me. I was all alone and needed my mate, I couldn't leave him, and I didn't know if Jasper had killed him or if he needed my help. I was just about to run back to look for him when he showed up. He had four of the younger newborns chasing him. Peter took out two as I fought the remaining two. They were so much stronger and faster than me. One had managed to rip off one of my arms when Peter saved me. He killed them both and nursed me back to full strength. He was so angry that I had stopped. I should have kept running and he would have found me. From there the story is exactly the same as Rose's, and I suspect, yours Bella."

I nodded, suddenly feeling much more secure in the events of last night.

"Can I see, Bella?" Kate asked.

I nodded and pulled the neck of my shirt down. I had checked this morning and it was healed over and looked like a very fresh scar but the area was still pretty tender. It felt bruised just like Jasper said it would.

"Were you scared?" Kate asked, her voice quiet.

I thought about everything that had happened last night. "I was scared because he was so angry. I knew he wouldn't hurt me, but I think most of my fear was actually him projecting accidentally. He didn't even really yell at me. The only time I was really scared, is when he left to go and get a deer for me to drink from. You guys know how I hate the dark."

"But when he bit you; weren't you scared?"

I knew Kate was nervous about the possibility of it happening to her now that she and Garrett were mated.

"It's not like that, Kate." Charlotte explained "Our mates can never physically harm us, it goes against their nature. The fight is over at that point. I think I speak for all of us when we say, that it isn't used as a painful punishment." She waited for Rose and I to nod before she continued.

"When we were bitten, it was during the make-up sex and as a result of the last bit of fear that our men felt when they think of losing us, and the connection we share as mates." Charlotte looked at Kate carefully. "Think of how you would feel if had to watch Garrett being destroyed before your eyes."

Kate gasped and her hand went to her stomach reflexively. I suddenly had the urge to run back to the house and the comfort of Jasper.

"Exactly. The males of our species are physically stronger than the females and are designed to be even more lethal. In a straight up, one on one, head on fight with a male vampire; we would lose every time. That's why I only taught you guys to defend yourselves, using their larger body mass against them, and to take an opening only if it presents itself." Charlotte explained gently.

"Male vampires are very territorial, and have a clear and definite instinct to protect their mates. When their mate does something to clearly put themselves in danger, the male's instincts tell them to reassert their dominance, to ensure the females safety in the future. The thought of losing our mate is abhorrent, and very few vampires survive the loss of their mate. They seek out their own destruction." Charlotte explained.

"But Bella wasn't in any danger yesterday." Alice pointed out

"But we all would have been if Victoria had attacked, and the men didn't know about my gift and how to work with us." I wouldn't be forgetting that anytime soon.
Charlotte smiled sadly at me. "Yeah, Little One, it could have gone very badly." She looked down at her lap for a minute and I noticed that Kate, Char, Rose and I were all very subdued.

"You guys got into trouble, too, huh?" I asked quietly

Kate let out a sad sort of chuckle "Yes, Little One, we did. Although nowhere near as much as you did, obviously."

"Well That's Just crap!" Alice huffed out crossing her arms over her chest, "I mean, Bella didn't even want do it from what you guys have said. You had to talk her into it. Why should she get in more trouble than the rest of you? And I didn't get in any trouble at all!"

Charlotte shook her head at Alice's attitude. "First of all Alice, you are the only one here without a mate to answer to. And secondly, Bella is mated to the God of War; he's naturally the most dominant guy in the group. Besides, I think the majority of his reaction stems from the things he saw in the wars. As Jasper's mate, if Bella was captured, she would be tortured worse than anything he has ever seen and Jasper has seen a lot. There are many out there that would use her to destroy him out of revenge, Maria being one of them. The thoughts of what could have been would have had his instincts screaming; driving him to drastic action."

"Okay fine, I see your point; but no one seemed all that upset yesterday except for Jasper. Why then, are you guys all looking like your Louis Vuitton luggage, just got destroyed by baggage handlers?" Alice asked confused.

We all chuckled at her analogy. Only Alice would compare our feelings to losing her most prized set of designer luggage.

"Peter, Emmett and Garrett were most likely trying to downplay the situation, in front of Jasper, hoping to diffuse some of his anger and make it easier on Bella, after all, like you said she wasn't actually in any danger yesterday. But we all got punished for our parts in the deception." Rose explained.

"Whatever! I still don't get it. Jasper sure wouldn't have gotten away with treating me that way, when we were married!" Alice threw up her hands as we all looked at her with small, slightly condescending, smiles.

We all refrained from reminding Alice that she had not been Jasper's mate. Alice would find out what it was like to be mated soon enough, she would understand then.

"So, what's this I hear about you leaving us to find your mate, Alice?" Rose asked, changing the subject.

Alice let out a squee of excitement and started bouncing. "I'm going to meet him at one of the parties before fashion week starts!"

"So, you're really leaving?" Rose asked

"Yup! This way I can keep an eye on Vicky and Maria without Bella having to strain herself. We still have a couple of months before my visions say they will get here. I can't miss this chance, you guys understand right?" She looked at us all with pleading eyes.

How could we deny her this chance? And she was right, it was really hard for me to concentrate all the time on lifting my mental shield off her. If she was out of range she would actually be more effective.

"Of course we understand! You have to do this!" I hugged her hard.

"But you have to promise to bring him home with you! We have to make sure he's good enough for our sister!", scolded Rose.

We all laughed and ended up running through the forest, racing each other home.

When we got there all our men were on the deck waiting. I jumped into Jaspers waiting arms wrapping my legs around his waist.

'You were gone too long, darlin'. I missed you.' He thought as he caught me and held me to him. 'Is everything alright? I felt you get upset."

'Yeah, everything is fine. We were just talking about some stuff. Everything's good.' I reassured him.

The knowledge that I had gotten from Rose and Charlotte had gone a long way to soothe the last of my fears.

"Okay everyone!! I will call you when I get to New York." Alice was back to bouncing again in her excitement.

"Alice, what about your bags?" I asked stupidly

She rolled her eyes and shook her head in frustration. "Bella, I'm going to New York for Fashion Week! I will be buying everything I need!"

Everyone laughed as she went from person to person kissing and hugging us goodbye. And then she was gone.
‘Come on, Jas, we need a nap.’ I said teasingly and dragged him back to our room.

A/N: So a couple of you were still pretty upset after the last chapter. I hope this one finally puts to rest the accusations that Jasper is abusive and is trying to change their relationship from a loving one to one of slavery. I appreciate each and every review I receive good or bad. However, I have said from the very beginning that I am writing this story for my own entertainment but that I am willing to share it. I won’t change the way it hits the paper (computer?) to please my readers. Besides, I cannot please everyone all the time.

The story is moving on from here and we will be getting closer to the battle with Icky Vicky and the Newborns (sounds like a punk band!). I will also be introducing a couple new characters. Well no rest for the wicked - I am off to continue writing.

Enjoy the iced tea and cookies *eyes InsaneGrizzlies warningly as the fairies begin to serve*.

Until next time! *skips off into the garden humming the theme from the Muppet Show*
A/N: As usual Twilight and all its characters do not belong to me they belong to the talented Stephenie Meyer – thank you for allowing me to play in your world.

~ As the M rating suggests - if you are under 18 you shouldn't be reading this fic. It contains dark themes and sexual material. ~

A/N: Thank you to NCChris for once again looking over my chapter and correcting my many mistakes.

Three weeks. It's been three weeks since Alice left us to go to New York to find her mate. Things have been eerily quiet since Emmett had killed the scout that Victoria had sent two days after Alice left.

Emmett had started to pull pranks out of boredom, as was normal for him, and this time his target had been Kate. Rather stupid of him considering she could shock him senseless if she got her hands on him, but, as Bella had said at the time, Emmett doesn't have any sense when he is pulling a prank. Kate was angry enough at him for gluing all her shoes to the floor of her closet that he thought that it would be wise to go for a run until she cooled off. Thus the reason for him stumbling across Victoria's spy.

Alice had called me to warn us about the scout, but by the time we had gotten there, Emmett had already burned the head. I didn't have to tell him how stupid that was, Bella did it for me.

"Jeez Em, you couldn't have burned the body first? We could have grilled him for information." She said dryly with her arms crossed.

We all snorted at her play on words but she was right. The spy would have been valuable if we could have talked to him.

Emmett had hung his head like a scolded puppy at her soft statement.

That's it; from now on we are getting Bella to lecture him. She seems to get through to him faster than any of us, including Esme or Rose.

Now, three weeks later, nothing. Alice calls me every day to tell me that they are all just preparing to attack us. The lack of action was both a blessing and an irritant. At least we had plenty of time to train.

Bella and the girls had been joining us almost every day for training, and, I have to say, the girls have skills. It didn't seem to distract them at all to have multiple voices running through their heads to co-ordinate an attack or defence. Bella would connect the minds of everyone on a team so that they could talk to each other silently, making it impossible for the opponent to know what the plan was. They seemed to almost move as a single entity, and it was frustrating as hell to watch. We couldn't figure out how they did it.

The biggest challenge had come for the 'Military Brothers' as the girls called us. Garrett, Peter and I were all so used to giving or following orders that, for us to adapt on the fly and have the battle plan evolve as it happened cooperatively, was WAY outside of our comfort zones. Emmett of course fell in with their style of fighting right away. Moron.

I hated the feeling of not fitting in with a battle plan. It had never happened before. In 150 years I had always been able to look at a conflict objectively and devise a plan. The plan was then carried out and the battle was won. But this? Their whole idea of strategy seemed more like organized swarm tactics to me. It had an objective and a plan, but damned if I could see what it was. I could see that Garrett and Peter were equally as stumped.

Rose knocked on the door to Bella's and my room interrupting my musings. "Hey, wanna go for a hunt with your favourite sister?"

I smiled at her feeling the longing and regret coming from her. I felt bad. Rose and I hadn't spent any kind of time together since Bella's change and she was missing me.

"Of course, just don't tell Alice that you're my favourite." I winked at her and stood, following her downstairs.

My Angel was waiting for us at the bottom. "Have fun hunting. I have a date with Garrett and Emmett for a Halo challenge."

I could hear Kate, Garrett and Emmett in the games room in the basement. The trash talk had already started. I rolled my eyes and kissed her forehead.

Rose laughed "Do that thing I told you about, and you'll kill Emmett right away. He hates to lose in front of an audience." She said in a low whisper.

Bella laughed and winked as I watched her bounce down the stairs.

As Rose and I ran out the door I teased her a bit "Conspirin' against your husband Rose? What kind of a wife are you?"

She snorted. "One that puts up with a ton of his crap and loves him in spite of it. Or maybe because of it." Her laughter
was beautiful to see and I realized that I hadn't heard it much lately.

We ran south for a nice change in scenery. Snow still blanketed the ground, but Valentine's Day was coming up and soon after that, it would be spring. We both managed to find our meals pretty quickly and ended up sitting by a frozen lake enjoying the day.

"Remember the first time you hunted with us, Jaz?" Rose said quietly.

I chuckled. "How could I forget? You threw me head first into a tree and then ate my dinner."

She laughed with me. "What was I supposed to do? You had only been with us for a little over a day, and then you disturbed me just as I was finishing that lovely lynx by stampeding an elk over my head."

"That was the moment that I knew you were my sister. Everyone else was so damned afraid of me because of my scars, but you treated me just like you did anyone else." I looked over at her, grateful to have her to share eternity with.

She smiled, "I figured that if you hadn't killed the annoying pixie you brought with you, or the nosey mind reader, that I didn't have anything to worry about. I mean, you hadn't even seen my bitchy side yet."

I thought about that for a minute. Everyone Rose meets for the first time gets the bitchy ice queen attitude, but she had never been like that with me. "Why is that? Why weren't you your usual charmingly nasty self to me? Alice bore the brunt of it, but I never did."

Rose pulled her knees up and wrapped her arms around them, turning her face to rest her cheek on her arms so she could look at me. She looked like a vulnerable little girl in that moment, and I knew no one but me and Emmett ever really got to see this side of her.

"Because you looked as battered and lost as I felt." Her voice was small and her eyes were swimming in tears that would never fall. "Emmett and I hadn't been together all that long, when you and Alice came to us. He was still practically a newborn. I don't think I had really come to terms with this life and the circumstances that led to my change. I loved Emmett and never wanted to be without him, but he was still helping me heal in a lot of ways. You didn't need any grief from me on top of everything you had obviously already suffered."

I shifted closer to her and pulled her into my arms. "You are the best sister I could ever have hoped to find; you're kind, funny, loyal and caring. You should let people in more, let them see what Emmett and I see."

"It's not that I don't want to; it's just that we never seem to stay in one place long enough for it to matter. Humans are fleeting enough as it is, and we never spend more than seven years in any one place so why bother." Her voice was soft and I could feel her sadness.

"I've been doin' some thinkin' and I think that when this whole thing with Victoria is over, that Bella and I will be stayin' here for the most part. I mean I haven't talked to Bella about it yet, but I for one am tired of movin' from place to place. Carlisle and Esme have given us this place, and I have to say that in 150 years, this is the first time that someplace has felt like home."

"That sounds really nice. I think Emmett and I will take a break from high school for awhile too, maybe do some travelling." She sighed.

I knew then that I would talk to Bella about asking Emmett and Rose to stay with us. Rose needed somewhere to call home too. Eternity was a long time to spend roaming around.

"Where did Peter and Charlotte get to today? They weren't at the house when we left." Rose asked.

"Peter dragged Charlotte off for a few days alone. They've always been nomads, and as much as they love being a part of the family, they enjoy each other's company and needed the time alone. I would expect that they will be taking Carlisle and Esme up on their Christmas gift and head down to Isle Esme soon." I thought about my brother and his wife.

Peter and Charlotte were closer to me than anyone else except Bella. Rose was my sister, but she hadn't shared the same experiences that Peter, Char and I had. And I really never wanted her too.

We stayed there on the shores of the frozen lake for a couple of hours talking about everything and nothing, just catching up on quality sibling time and I loved it. Rose had her head leaned on my shoulder and I had my head on top of hers. The stillness and tranquility were a balm to my emotions and stark contrast to the way things had been in the distant past. Sitting there with my sister was the perfect way to spend a day away from my Bella.

I started feeling the faint emotions of rage and hate, and sat up straighter pulling away from Rose. I listened intently and stretched out my gift to try to pinpoint where the emotions were coming from but they were coming from two different directions. Fuck! There was more than one of them.

The silence was broken by my cell phone ringing in my pocket, knowing it would be Alice telling me what was coming. I went to reach for it but found that I couldn't move. Dread filled me. There was only one reason that I would be immobilized like this. There was only one person that I knew who had the power to freeze a person. The phone rang again and again.
"Jeez Jasper, are you waiting for an invitation, answer it, it could be Alice." Rose joked.

But as she turned to look at my face she realized something was wrong.

"Rose, run. Run Now!" I threw out as much panic and fear as I could, hoping that it would scare her enough that she would run for help. Run away from the monster that was lurking in the trees. I could have sent out the necessary emotions to knock everyone unconscious, but without knowing how many and how far away they were, I would be risking Rose.

"Jasper? What is it? Jasper, what's happening?" I could hear the panic in her voice, but my stubborn sister was too loyal to run and leave me here so vulnerable.

"The Major is a little tied up at the moment, I'm afraid. But not to worry, I'll take care of you." The voice was deep and gravelly and out of the trees stepped a vampire that I had hoped to never see again. Michael, Maria's second in command and the one man who hated me above all others. What the Hell was he doing here?

"Rose, get out of here! You have to run, you have to get away." I tried to convince her to leave, to get her away from the one man who is almost as dangerous as I am, but was no use, I couldn't move. I could have knocked him out but Rose was standing too close and she would drop too. I could feel more emotions and knew that there was at least one, maybe more, lurking in the trees.

In the blink of an eye, Rosalie was crouched defensively in front of me. Trying to defend me would only get her killed and there would be nothing that I would be able to do about it.

"How sweet of you to defend your mate, but it really won't do you any good. Maria told me that if the opportunity to eliminate you presented itself, that I should take it. This will of course piss off the red head, but that doesn't matter to me." His tone was condescending and it was pissing me off.

The problem was that he thought that Rose was Bella, and that meant that he wouldn't let her go. Her torture would be so much worse for it. Michael had always hated me for being María's favourite and now Rose would pay the price. Rage bubbled up in me and I knew that my eyes had gone black. Just as I was about to defend us the only way I had left, and knock him out; a blur flashed in front of my eyes and I screamed in pain as my left arm was torn off and I was knocked to the ground.

Rose's pained scream joined mine, and I shifted my eyes to see her pinned by another vampire. He was about her height, but was thick and brawny, he looked Mexican; he had managed to badly break her arm at the elbow when he hit her. She shifted her weight and threw him off her.

A shadow fell over my face and I snarled in anger and pain. Michael rolled me over so I could see him. "While Ramone plays with your mate, you and I have some unfinished business to discuss." He sneered down at me. "Some God of War you are. I knew if you were distracted enough, that your gift would be no match for me. Maria never could see past that pretty face of yours to see how worthless you really are."

I heard Rose still fighting with her attacker over my head, and knew I had to help her. I never should have taken my eyes off of Michael. I heard the screech of tearing metal and screamed as he tore my right leg off at the knee. I was getting weaker and knew that I wouldn't be able to help Rose in my condition. The pain was too much; I couldn't concentrate on the emotions necessary to knock him out.

"Now that I have your attention, I think I will make you watch as I play with your mate." His voice was pure evil and pain stabbed through my body, like blinding white bolts of lightning, as he propped me up against a tree.

He leaned in close to my ear and whispered, "I think I'll make her beg" and then he savagely bit into my neck and ripped off a chunk of my granite hard skin.

I screamed again and could feel my venom running down my chest, draining me of my strength. "Leave her alone. She's not my mate. She has nothing to do with this." I ground out around the fire that was tearing through my body and pulsing where my limbs had been ripped from me.

He laughed, not believing me, and walked over to where Rose was still trying to defend herself. She was now missing an arm and was limping badly. She would be no match for Michael.

I wanted to get up and tear them to pieces, to set them on fire for what they were doing to my sister but Michael had me frozen still, and I was too weak to do anything even if I had been free. I was only thankful that he was only able to freeze one thing at a time. Rose might still have a chance to get away.

But my stupid loyal sister wouldn't leave me. "Jasper!" she cried out seeing me incapacitated and so badly wounded.

Her moment of distraction cost her and the Mexican grabbed her from behind. With only one arm she couldn't get the leverage necessary to break free.

Michael stood in front of her and stared down at her with an evil smile "Such a beautiful mate you have Major. I think I will fuck her before I kill her."
Rose snarled, “Just try it asshole. I'll rip your puny dick off before you get the chance!”

“Hmmm...fiesty. I like it. It will be so much sweeter when I break you.” Michael purred out.

“FUCK Michael, let her go! It's me you want! Leave her alone!” I yelled trying to distract them.

The Mexican's eyes were trained on me as he restrained Rose, and I could feel his nervousness at being so close to me, even as wounded as I was.

Michael ignored me and strode up to Rose. He went to touch her face and she snapped at him. I watched helplessly as he back handed her hard enough to crack her beautiful cheek and a trickle of venom spilled out of her mouth.

Rose sneered at him. "I've been hit harder by a human. Fuck you!"

I groaned knowing that my sister's bitchiness would cost her dearly.

Michael growled, and I yelled out in frustration and helplessness, as he ripped the other arm from her body.

She lay on the ground crying as Michael casually tossed her twitching arm away. "You can have her Ramone. Break her in for me. Make sure she learns her place." He turned back to me and smiled. "Now it's your turn, Major. I am going to have so much fun."

He pulled me up by my shirt front and agony spread through me as he sank his teeth into my right shoulder and prepared to rip it off.

Then out of the trees came a terrible snarl and Michael was thrown off me, his distraction causing him to release me from his gift. Bella stood over me radiating rage, protectiveness and torment; the image of a celestial avenging angel, beautiful in her ferocity.

Rose managed to kick Ramone away from her, and with a glance Bella had him encased in a solid shield.

Rose was safe from him for the time being, as she pushed herself to the tree line with her feet; agony written all over her face and her clothes hanging off her in tattered shreds.

"Well, well, well. Who do we have here?" Michael sang out as he got to his feet. "My, my Major. You do have quite the collection going don't you? Are there more in your harem that I can break to my will?"

Bella growled low in her throat, and if I hadn't been in so much pain, I would have found it sexy.

"Awww, isn't she cute. Come now my little beauty, let's dance." he taunted her.

I watched horrified as Michael leapt straight at my Bella, but even in her feral rage she remembered her training. Grabbing his hand and shoulder she tossed him up, over and away from us; her sharp nails shredding his jacket and shirt, leaving oozing gouges trailing down his arm. It happened three more times, each time causing Michael to get angrier. Every time she managed to throw him off, she inflicted some kind of minor damage.

I caught my breath on the fear that was choking me, as I watched my Angel battle a powerful vampire twice her size, and almost two hundred years her senior, to protect me. She never once moved away from her position standing over me. I could see that Michael was getting angry and desperate, she wasn't behaving like the newborn he thought she was and she wasn't backing down. I felt his deviousness as he sought to gain the upper hand over Bella.

She must have felt him try to freeze her because a cruel smile twisted her face, and she cocked her head to the side almost taunting him.

He rushed her again with a frustrated roar but instead of flipping him away, this time she swung him off to the side where he landed at the feet of a very, very angry Garrett. Kate was behind him but quickly moved to Emmett's side as he cradled an injured and crying Rosalie to his chest.

Bella fell to her knees beside me her shield flashing up around us.

I watched as Garrett and Michael fought fiercely, but in the end Michael was no match for Garrett without the power of his gift. Garrett savagely dismembered Michael and started a fire. Garrett leaned down to Michael's head that was still attached to his now limbless torso.

"No one fucks with my family." He said quietly.

Garrett tossed the arms and legs into the fire. Leaving Michael to watch his own body parts burn, Garrett turned to Bella and cocked an eyebrow. Bella snarled at him above me, but the shield encasing Ramone dropped. He was off like a shot with a furious Emmett hot on his heels, leaving Rosalie in the tender care of Kate.

Pain and the loss of venom from my wounds was making it hard for me to focus. I could hear Bella snarling above me and feel her arms as she gathered me close to her body rocking me carefully.
I could hear a phone ringing and someone answering it. I saw a plume of smoke off in the distance and knew that Ramone was no more. Bella's growls were interspersed with her whimpers of fear and I wanted to help her, but I had lost too much venom. I needed to feed. I needed to fuse my arm and leg back on. I needed the wound in my neck closed. I needed to feed. I needed to protect Bella. She was scared and angry. She needed me.

Voices punctured the pain filled fog.

"What do we do? Jasper needs help." It was a man's voice. Garrett, I think.

"I do not know. I have never seen her like this before. Normally, when she gets angry, Rose calms her down." Kate's soft accent washed over me.

"Well, that doesn't help us now. Rose is in almost as bad a shape as he is and Carlisle won't be here till tomorrow."

"Call Peter and Charlotte. They have the experience with newborns and he is her uncle. Maybe they can help."

There was a long pause as I listened to Bella's fear filled soft whimpers and felt her hand petting my hair.

"Peter, it's Garrett. You need to come home right now."

The pain overwhelmed me again and I concentrated on the feel of my Angels fingers running through my hair instead. Bella was here, she was safe and she wasn't leaving me.

A/N: Exciting News Insecurities fans!! This fic has been nominated for the ‘Everything's Bigger In Texas Awards’ hosted by the Jasper's Darlins blog. Insecurities is nominated in a whopping FIVE Categories! Thank you so much to the ladies over at Jasper's Darlins for hosting this great contest for the second year in a row. And thank you to the person (people?) who felt that this story was good enough to be nominated. There are some fantastic stories nominated so go and vote for your favourite one!

Also the Altered Lions and Sacraficial Lambs blog has featured me on their Meet and Greet Monday spot. Check it out if you want to know more about boring me. Their link as well as the link to the Jasper's Darlins blog is located on my profile.

*dances off into the garden to a tune no one else can hear*
I hugged Jasper goodbye and bounced downstairs to join my family for a relaxing day of video games and fun. We had all been training hard for the past three weeks and decided that we needed a couple of days to decompress. The stress of waiting for Victoria to get her act together and attack was taking its toll on the entire family. Peter and Charlotte had left last night to spend their time 'frolicking in the Canadian wilderness' as Charlotte put it.

Emmett, Garrett and I had been playing for several hours with Kate providing the cheerleading when my cell phone rang.

"Hi Mom!" I was so happy to see her name on the call display.

"Hello Dear, how are you?"

I handed my game controller over to Kate so she could play for me, and went upstairs to talk to Esme in a quieter environment.

As the sounds receded somewhat, I could hear her laughing. "I'm guessing you've been pulled into another Halo tournament by your crazy brother?"

I chuckled "Yeah, but I was willing this time. I'm actually getting pretty good and I haven't broken a game controller in awhile." Occasionally the excitement of the game would get to me and I would accidentally crush one. Emmett accused me of doing it on purpose to get out of losing to 'his awesomeness'.

"So how are things in Forks? Are you almost ready to move home?" They had been delayed moving here, as the hospital was having trouble finding a suitable replacement for Carlisle, and they didn't want to raise any suspicions by leaving in a hurry.

"Yes we are. That's why I'm calling actually; we will be there in two days. We have to drive to Timmins with a large truck. There are some things that we take from home to home instead of selling. Carlisle's father's cross, Rosalie's tools, my blue prints and drafting desk; then there is all the computer equipment and everyone's books and music, the paintings. It really can be quite the ordeal at times but some things you just can't part with. We'll put it all in storage until the roads get better and we can get it to the house safely." She sounded really excited despite, what I'm sure was, a mountain of planning. Esme thrived on the relocation and set up of the Cullen family's new homes.

"Some of those things are pretty valuable. Maybe we should consider having them flown in. I mean I would hate to think of them getting stolen out of storage or getting broken on the rough road." I couldn't believe that I was suggesting renting a plane to transport furniture. Man, had my perspective sure changed.

Esme laughed, "This coming from the girl that hated to spend money on anything? My, my, I am impressed."

"I don't hate spending money. I just hate it when people spend money on me." I grumbled in my own defence. "Besides, I would imagine that Carlisle's cross is really valuable, not to mention the sentimental and religious value it holds if he has managed to hang onto it for over three hundred years." Yup, definitely defensive.

"Oh Bella," she said still chuckling, "calm down. I think it's a great idea. And I'm proud of you for thinking of it. We'll look into it when we get to Timmins."

I knew I had to ask about Edward. If he was coming back here, then I would have to prepare Jasper. I mentally sighed, unsure about how I felt about it. "Mom, how are things with Edward?"

I heard her sigh softly "I am just so disgusted with him still. He has been behaving lately, but with his gift back now that you aren't around; I have no idea how much of it is an act, and how much is him actually learning his lesson. I really have no idea what to do. I can tell you that he isn't allowed to leave the house unless it's to hunt with your father, and he isn't allowed to play music or touch his piano. Carlisle has given him a list of books to read. The Act of Courtly Love in the original latin, The Romance of the Rose, The Canterbury Tales, Le Morte d'Arthur, Debrett's Guide for the Modern Gentleman, How to be a Gentleman, Chivalry-Now The Male Code of Ethics; the list is enormous. He is getting Edward to study acceptable gentlemanly behaviour, both in the past and the present."

I chuckled, "So basically, he's grounded and is forced to write book reports every night. Sounds like elementary school to me."
"Yes, I guess it is." She laughed, "But like I said, now that he has his gift back I'm not sure if he is really learning anything or if he is just placating us. It's very frustrating."

"So, what is the plan for when you come back here?"

"He is going back to Alaska. Carmen and Eleazar were horrified to hear what he's done and, surprisingly, Tanya was very angry as well. I mailed them his hand. They will be determining when he gets it back as I'm not able to be objective about it."

"Yeah, you don't want to give it back too soon. Or he won't learn anything." I was surprised though, that she had gone to the lengths that she had, to prevent her from giving in to the temptation of returning it to him.

"Oh No. I wasn't worried about giving it back; I was worried that I would burn it in a fit of anger. He really has crossed a line." She was emphatic and I was stunned.

She was going to burn it?! Holy Crap! I am never going to piss off Esme.

"How long can he go without his hand? I mean, he must be in pain." How long would it be before punishment changed to torture?

"Carlisle tells me that our kind can go for decades and still be able to reattach a limb. Apparently it is a common form of punishment for the Volturi. The person will have to feed more to replace the venom that they lose on a day to day basis; the more venom we lose the weaker we get, the more pain we feel. The pain is a constant ache after the initial removal, depending on how large the limb that was removed is. Obviously the more limbs removed the worse the loss of venom and pain; which means a longer recovery period. But as long as no parts are burned, they can be reattached fairly easily years later."

It was obvious that she and Carlisle had discussed it extensively. Esme may be angry but she would never torture or abuse one of her children.

She paused in thought and when she continued she sounded like she was in pain. "Edward is rather distracted by the pain, and is having problems learning to write with his left hand, but Carlisle assures me that what I started, and what we are continuing to do, is fairly common in our world."

I knew that punishing Edward this way was killing Esme and that's why she had mailed his hand to Alaska, not because she would ever actually burn it.

"You're doing the right thing Mom. He has to have consequences, and how else do you punish a vampire?" I tried to reassure her.

I could hear her getting choked up, "I know dear, but it's just so hard. I knew that when I mailed the hand it was the right thing to do, but I'm his mother and I feel like I've failed. It should never have come to this if I had been doing my job and raising him properly. I know technically he is older than me, but he was only a boy when he was changed; a very spoiled boy. We should have given him more guidance."

"Mom, stop blaming yourself. Jasper told me once, that all families have problems, but we're vampires, so our problems are just a bit bigger than a normal family's. We'll get through this. We have forever to beat it into him." I tried to lighten the mood a bit.

It worked and she laughed, "You're right. Oh Bella, I can't wait to see you. Two more days my dear and then we can spend some time together."

"I'd really like that. I miss you Mom. Rose does too; she's been a bit down lately. The stress is getting to us I think."

"Where is she now?" Her voice was full of concern.

"She and Jasper went hunting. I think it was an excuse for some sibling bonding."

"That will help. She and Jasper have always been close. I mean sure they have their arguments like any siblings, but they truly love each other. She will be better when she gets back, you'll see."

It felt good to hear my hopes from Esme. We said our goodbyes and I lay on the couch in the great room, enjoying the softness of the chenille blanket draped over the back, and watching the rainbows on the ceiling from the late afternoon sun coming through the window and hitting my skin.

I was lying with my eyes closed when I started to feel uneasy. I sat up and opened up my senses. I couldn't hear anything out of the ordinary, there were no strange smells and I couldn't see anything that would make me feel this way.

Suddenly, I could feel panic, anger and a sense of urgency. My hand flew to my mouth. Jasper. These were Jasper's feelings.

"Garrett!!!” I yelled and then ran for the door, desperate to get to Jasper.
I quickly picked up the trail, but hesitated when it lead south. There was a risk of running into humans if I went too far south. A burst of pain, Jasper's pain, decided for me. I would go through a whole city of humans if it meant that I could get to Jasper.

I cursed my inability to run fast enough. Jasper's pain, anger, helplessness, rage, fear, pain; I shook my head trying to center myself, to distance myself so I could concentrate. His emotions were overwhelming and the feeling of his pain almost brought me to my knees. I slowed down and approached cautiously, when the scent of Jasper and Rosalie indicated that I was close. I could hear Rosalie screaming out in rage and fear. Jasper's pain lanced through me like a well thrown spear, and I stepped out of the trees to see a large man holding my mate, his teeth sunk deep into my mate's shoulder.

NO! I rushed the monster holding my mate and levered him off, throwing him head first into a boulder. I could feel the snarls in my throat and the rage bubbling up inside me in a tidal wave of heat. I crouched over my wounded mate protectively, my fingertips resting lightly on the ground. My attention shifted when the downed female was able to escape her own attacker momentarily. Now it would be two against me. I quickly encased the second dark skinned male in a solid shield. I would save him for later; the one who hurt my mate would be first.

I saw the familiar looking female struggle to put some distance between her and the fight, hampered by the loss of her arms. She was almost as wounded as my mate and her face tugged at my memory. I tested the air. Perfume. Sister. My snarls intensified as I realized that these monsters had not only attacked my mate, but my sister as well.

"Well, well, well. Who do we have here?" The monster sang out as he got to his feet, dusting himself off. "My, my Major. You do have quite the collection going don't you? Are there any more in your harem that I can break to my will?"

I growled low in my throat; he dared to speak to my mate, taunting him when he's in pain. This was a waste of my time. I needed to help my mate and my sister.

"Awww, isn't she cute. Come now my little beauty, let's dance."

The fiend had turned his attention back to me and clearly he meant to attack me. My instincts were on overload and I knew, deep within myself, that I wouldn't be able to beat him. He was too big, too fast. He was a much older male vampire, and he had had the strength and experience necessary to take down my own very formidable mate.

He leapt at me, and I used his weight and momentum to shift him over and away from the downed man underneath me. I would give my life to keep him safe.

The monster got to his feet and I could see that I had carved his arms with my nails. Now he was wounded and furious. I shouldn't have gotten any satisfaction from that fact, but I did. I had wounded him in the same way he had hurt my beautiful mate. He snarled and came at me again and again; each time I was able to keep him from grabbing a hold of me. I knew that if he managed to grab me he would kill me, leaving my mate and my sister defenceless.

He got to his feet and I could feel pokes against my mental shield as he tried to use some kind of power on me. I couldn't help but smile at that. Silly monster, your tricks won't work on me. Now I understood how he had been able to get the drop on my mate.

Suddenly, I could hear three more running towards us. I couldn't fight them all, and holding them all under shields would only be a temporary solution. If I couldn't kill them, I couldn't save my mate.

I listened closely and the next time the monster attacked, I changed my tactics and swung him at the approaching vampires, hoping to take a few of them out long enough for me to grab my mate and move him closer to my sister, so I could defend them both. It was no use. My throw fell short and the monster only ended up at the feet of the newest arrival. Great, another two males and a female! I couldn't get to my sister fast enough to protect her and the largest male ran to her.

I barricaded my mate and I behind my shield and tried to come up with a plan, but my panic was overwhelming me. The pain from my mate's wounds pulsing through my own body distracted me from my dilemma. I wanted to hold him and look over his many injuries, but I had to focus on our safety. We were vastly outnumbered and now they had my sister.

I watched as the new male looked down at the monster with rage on his face. Incredibly, they started to fight amongst themselves. I wanted to go to my sister, but she was being held by the largest male and the small female. It looked like they were taking care of her.

I was distracted from the confusing sight, by a tearing screech that signalled a change in the ongoing fight. The monster was being dismembered, and I alternately felt relieved and angry at the same time. I wanted to be the one to kill him. I wanted to watch him scream as the flames devoured his body.

I watched as the tall brown haired vampire leaned over the monster.

"No one fucks with my family."

Then he tossed the arms and legs of the monster into a waiting fire, forcing the monster to watch as his own limbs were consumed in the inferno. I could hear the monster screaming in pain, anger, disbelief? It didn't matter. The brown haired
man was the new threat, and he was walking towards me and my mate with a curious look on his face. I snarled, knowing he couldn't get to us, but nervous all the same.

I released the dark skinned vampire from my other bubble. If the new comers had killed one of my attackers, maybe they would oblige me and kill the other.

The large, mountain-like vampire holding my sister was up and after him like a shot. I was hoping that they would all leave, but my wish was not to be answered. The brown haired vampire and the woman stayed with my sister. At least my sister wasn't screaming anymore. Maybe they wouldn't hurt her.

I clutched my mate close to my chest needing him to reassure me that everything would be okay, that somehow we would get out of this. I needed his arms around me but one was laying six feet away and the other was torn half off. He was missing one of his legs and there was a huge hole where his neck should have been. We were both covered in his venom and he was moaning in pain.

I didn't know what to do. I hadn't been able to save my mate or my sister, and now we were all trapped. I managed to expand my shield enough to carefully gather my mate's missing limbs. I didn't want our captors to burn them like they did the monster’s, but I didn't know how to help him. I screamed as the large one came back and gathered my sister up in his arms, taking her away from me.

I cried into my mate's chest as the other two discussed what to do with us. I needed him to tell me what to do. I was so confused, so scared.

Once again we were approached, but this time it was the female.

"Ah Little One," Her voice was accented and very sad but it was also very loud.

I growled at her and clutched at my mate harder, reinforcing my shield to an almost solid wall of blue.

"Bella, it is alright. We are not here to hurt you. We want only to help you and Jasper."

Her voice beat at my brain and I wanted her to go away. I snarled and pulled at Jasper, manoeuvring us so that a large rock was at our backs. My mate groaned in pain, and I roared at her for causing his distress.

"Come away from them Kate. She's only getting more agitated." The male said. "We'll have to wait for Peter and Charlotte. Maybe they can calm her down."

His voice was sad and the woman went to him, putting her arms around him. "Do not worry my love, we will help them. She is only defending her mate. Her newborn instincts will calm and we will be able to get Jasper the help he needs."

"Are you sure Kate? Look at her eyes. The stress of the situation, and the strain of holding up such a strong field, is draining her. And I am pretty sure she was fighting that thing," he gestured to the still moaning torso with a head, that was what was all that was left of the monster, "before I got here. If she doesn't let down that shield soon, we are going to have not two, but three, incapacitated fighters and we will be ripe for attack."

He grabbed his hair in his hands and looked up at the sky "We need to get Jasper healed as soon as possible. We need his strength if we are going to get out of this alive. Not to mention that with us out here, and everyone else back at the house, we are divided and easily picked off."

"Patience my love, Peter and Charlotte are coming. They will know how to help Bella." She stroked his face. "I am so proud of you my mate. You didn't hesitate to defend your family and your first thought now, is how to protect us all, even from ourselves. For someone who lived as a nomad for so long, you are a pillar of quiet strength to this family."

He leaned down and put his head on her shoulder. "I can't go back to being alone again, Katie. I finally found something worth fighting for, the thought of losing you all...We almost lost them today, I don't know how to deal with how I'm feeling. To see Rose and Jasper torn apart, Bella looking so feral; I feel like I'm losing everything." He raised his head and pulled her close, gazing deep into her eyes. "All I see when I look at Rose's ravaged body, and Bella's traumatized face, is you. I couldn't stand it if that had been you. I was so glad that you stayed behind me and went to help Emmett with Rose. Losing this family would torture me, losing you would kill me."

"Oh Garrett," she leaned up and kissed him softly.

Suddenly my attention was drawn from the scene in front of me, my eyes snapped to the north. I growled low in my throat, hearing two more vampires approaching.

I watched as the dark haired male pushed his mate behind him, shielding her with his body.

Two blonde haired vampires stepped into the small clearing around the lake, a tall male and a short female. Their eyes took in the scene wordlessly and they exchanged a long look.

The male spoke first, "Garrett, Kate, come with me." His voice was the barest whisper.

"But Jasper," The dark haired male protested.
"Keep your voice down. Bella's instincts and senses will be in overdrive. The sounds of your normal voice will be irritating to her ears." The small blonde female warned in a low soothing whisper.

"Charlotte will work on helping Bella. We'll take Kate back to the house so she can help Emmett make Rose comfortable. Then we'll come back here to get Jasper." The blonde man put a hand on the other man's shoulder. "Don't worry Garrett, Charlotte will be here with Bella and Jasper. It won't take her long to calm Bella down."

"Don't forget to take the trash with you." The blonde female nodded to the moaning torso of the monster. "We'll let the Major question him later."

They all exchanged smiles and left, leaving the small blonde woman behind.

She didn't say anything she just sat down on the ground and looked out over the lake. I was so scared. What did she want? Why wouldn't they all just leave? How was I going to help my mate? I looked down at his beautiful face and stroked the hair back from his eyes. He moaned in pain and I started to cry.

'Your mate is very hurt. Did you get hurt in the attack?'

Her silent voice was soft and filled with concern, but it was so much better than all the noise that had battered my ears only a short time ago.

I didn't want her to think I was weak, so I answered her. 'No.'

'You're very fortunate; the man who attacked you is almost as dangerous as your mate. He's an evil man and the world will be a much better place without him.'

She hadn't asked a question so I said nothing. I just continued to try to bring my mate some measure of comfort.

'I knew your mate once, same as I knew the man that attacked him. Your mate is a very good man. You're a good match for him. You protected him when others would have run.'

'It didn't matter. I didn't get here in time.' I couldn't help but 'voice' my shame. All the times that my mate had protected me, and I hadn't been able to do the same for him.

'But you tried. You faced down two male attackers knowing that there was no way to win in the end. You're very brave Little One.'

The sound of her 'voice', and the phrasing of the words was familiar. She wasn't making any move to attack me.

'Where have you taken my sister?' I had to know where she was. I needed to know if they had killed her but it seemed stupid to carry her away to kill her, when there was a perfectly good fire here.

The woman looked over at me. 'She's been taken to a house near here so we can help her. Her Mate is there and the rest of our family is on the way. They will help fuse her arms back on and feed her so she can heal.' She frowned slightly. 'Your mate is hurt very badly.'

'I don't know how to help him.' I admitted. Maybe she would have some advice. As long as I kept my shield up she wouldn't be able to hurt us. I wasn't sure if she had lied about my sister, but I could listen to what she had to say. Something about her was familiar and I didn't think that she would hurt me.

'The wound on his neck is the worst. If you have the piece, you should fit it into place properly; hold it closed. That will start the healing and help with some of his pain.'

The advice was practical and made sense so I decided to try it. I reached behind me and found the chunk that had been torn from his neck. It was larger than my palm and slick with leaking venom. I spent a couple of minutes spinning it and positioning it so that it fit like a puzzle piece where it had been torn away.

Jasper gasped and then moaned in pain when I pressed the flesh together. I went to pull back, hating that I hurt him, but the woman stopped me.

'No, don't pull back. Press firmly. Healing is painful, but it's necessary. The wound will never heal without the missing piece and he's lost too much venom. Getting that piece to fuse will go a long way to help him.' Her voice was urgent and insistent.

I hated that Jasper was hurting but if this helped then I would do it.

'Angel,'

I sobbed in relief. His mind was weak but it was there. 'Jasper, oh my god! I'm so sorry I didn't get here sooner. Please, honey stay with me!'
'Safe...Run. Find, Peter.'

And then he was lost in his pain again.

'Jasper!' I didn't get a response, only waves of pain.

"Jasper, please." I looked up and saw Charlotte. "Charlotte, help me. I don't know what to do." I started sobbing over Jasper's chest as she got up.

"Bella, honey. You have to let me in. We can help him, but you have to drop your shield." Her voice was coaxing and soft.

I couldn't drop the shield. What if more of them were out there? I looked up at her and the shield flashed, enclosing her inside with us. She looked at me shocked.

"I can't leave us exposed. I can't let anyone hurt him anymore." I tried to explain as she moved to my side.

She took me in her arms the best she could without me letting go of Jasper. "It's okay, Little One. Jasper will be fine. We will get him back to the house and make him comfortable. Carlisle will be here in the morning and we'll get him fixed up in no time. Right now though, we need to get him to the house." She smoothed my hair back from my forehead. "Can you call Peter and Garrett? They can come and help us get Jasper back to the house without hurting him too much."

I nodded. 'Uncle Peter? Garrett? I need help. Jasper's hurt. Oh my god, please hurry. I can't...'

'We're coming Bella. We'll be there before you know it.' Peter's voice was reassuring and strong.

'Don't cry, little one. We're immortal remember? Jasper will be fine once we get him put back together.' Garrett's soft joke was appreciated and I choked back my sobs.

Charlotte was still stroking my hair when my uncles jogged into the clearing. They stopped when they saw my shield was still up but strode forward quickly when I dropped it. I didn't want to let Jasper go, but had to when Peter and Garrett started to gently pick him up.

Charlotte took me into her arms and I clung to her. "Shhh...It'll be fine. Peter and I have seen injuries much worse than this before. Jasper will be fine in a couple of days, you'll see."

We followed along behind the men as they carefully carried Jasper back to the house. Carlisle couldn't get here too soon and I prayed that he hurried.

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A/N: If you haven't done so already, head over to the Jasper's Darlins blog and vote in the Everything's Bigger In Texas Awards. Insecurities has been nominated in five categories!!! Voting closes April 12th. http://jaspersdarlins (dot) blogspot (dot) com /p/ everything-is-bigger-in-texas-awards (dot) html

*gestures to the fairies to pass out the desserts* Double chocolate cake and apple pie for everyone. Insane Grizzlies, the normal rules apply; no second pieces, until everyone has had their first!

An extra helping goes to Lady Blue Knight who created a FABULOUS banner for Insecurities. You can find it on my Live Journal account. I love how it looks and it is EXACTLY how I pictured Bella's shield.

I am slowly uploading Insecurities to Live Journal as well as the Writer's Coffee Shop in case the FanFic union shows up to ruin our fun.

One last thing on this Epic authors note; if you haven't already put me on author alert, you might want to. I will be posting a second outtake to this story and it is one that I think you will find very interesting. The first peek at a new character! Yup, it is Alice's mate, and an extra slice of cake goes to whoever can tell me where I dug him up from.
I watched as Garrett and Peter laid Jasper carefully in our bed. My heart was tearing in two. The pain I felt from him was making it hard to breathe. I could hear him moan and it was killing me. The need to do something to help Jasper was overwhelming. He needed me to do something, but I didn't know what I could do. Charlotte grabbed my hands and I realized they were shaking.

I could hear Rose crying for Emmett in the room across the hall.

"Where's Emmett? Why isn't he with Rose? Why is she by herself?" I would have continued in my panicked line of questions, but Charlotte stopped me.

She squeezed my hands, "Kate's with her. Emmett went out to get her some blood. She'll need it to heal."

"I need to hunt for Jasper, he needs blood too." I turned to leave, finally something I could do! A commotion in our room stopped me.

"Easy brother, you need to stay still." Peter's voice floated out of the room.

"Be-la" Jasper's voice was full of pain and I could feel his fear. "Peter – Bella...safe,"

"She's right here, Jasper. Bella's right here and she's fine." Garrett was trying to talk to him, when Peter appeared in the doorway in front of me.

"You can't go hunting for him Bella, he needs to stay still if he's going to heal and he won't do that if you leave, even if it is to hunt for him." His voice was firm.

Garrett stepped back quickly when I rushed into the room and leaned over my beautiful Jasper. He was chalky pale and looked almost feverish. His eyes were wild and sunken deep in their sockets, rimmed with deep purple shadows; his head was thrashing from side to side, causing the still seeping wound on his neck to open up.

'\[I'm here, honey. Jasper, I'm right here. Shhh...it's okay. Stay still. Jasper, I need to go and hunt for you, you need blood badly. I won't be gone long.\]'

"NO! Not Safe!" He tried to sit up, but it was almost impossible with one arm missing and the other hanging on only by the barest bits. "Stay!"

I stroked his face, crying.

"Bella, you can't leave. One of us will go and get Jasper the blood he needs," Garrett said softly.

I looked up at him with, what I was sure was, an anguished expression; the echoes of Jasper's pain rippling through me. "But it's my job! He's my mate; I have to hunt for him." I wanted to get the blood he needed, but the thought of leaving him tore my heart out.

"No-Bella," Jasper moaned.

"Little One, let one of us do it. I know your instincts are telling you to protect and provide for him, but let one of the family get the blood he needs. Your job is to protect him and keep him calm." Charlotte's voice was calming, and what she said made perfect sense; but Jasper was my mate, my responsibility.

Peter slowly knelt in front of me, "Let us help you; help him. He may be your mate, but he's my brother. I would be honoured, if you would let me get the blood for your mate."

I could feel the sobs building, so I simply nodded my consent. I needed everyone out of the room. I needed to be with Jasper.

"No-Bella," Peter moaned.

"Little One, let one of us do it. I know your instincts are telling you to protect and provide for him, but let one of the family get the blood he needs. Your job is to protect him and keep him calm." Charlotte's voice was calming, and what she said made perfect sense; but Jasper was my mate, my responsibility.

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Peter kissed the top of my head, embraced Charlotte briefly, and then disappeared out the window.

I knelt by the side of the bed and smoothed Jasper's hair back off his forehead, kissing him carefully. I could hear Charlotte and Garrett talking quietly behind me. He would be standing watch downstairs.

I heard him leave the room and Charlotte came to stand a few feet behind me. I felt the strangest urge to growl at her. I
didn't want her too close, but she had moved slowly and hadn't made any move to touch him. "What can I do Char?"

She answered me softly, "Nothing for now. When Peter talked to Carlisle, he said to give them both blood and he would fuse the limbs when he gets here in the morning. We need their limbs to fuse properly so they heal faster."

"But Jasper and Rose are in pain now!" The thought of waiting, with Jasper in pain, was agonizing.

"But if the wounds aren't aligned properly it will take twice as long to heal. He would be in pain for much longer than if we wait until Carlisle gets here. He and Esme are on a plane right now, they'll be here in a few hours." She tried to reassure me but the feeling of helplessness was choking me.

Charlotte's phone rang and she stepped back to answer it. I wanted to comfort Jasper but didn't know how. He didn't have a hand that I could hold that wouldn't cause him pain. I settled for putting my hand on his uninjured leg and rested my head on the bed.

'Angel,'

My head snapped up to look at his face. 'Jasper. I'm so sorry I didn't get there in time. God Jasper, I thought I lost you. I can't –'

'I'll be...fine. Not your fault...' His mental voice was broken and strained.

'We can argue about this when you're better. They won't let me help you. I don't want to see you in pain anymore...'

'You are helping...Stay with me...I need you.' His voice faded out, lost to his pain.

Charlotte closed her phone. "That was Alice. She should be here by midnight."

I nodded, not really caring. My whole focus was on Jasper.

"Bella, she's bringing her mate and his sister with her." Charlotte's voice was tentative. She thought it would upset me. She didn't realize, that for me, nothing mattered outside of Jasper.

"It's fine Char. Is Peter back yet?" I knew it hadn't been that long but Jasper needed that blood.

"No honey, not yet. Emmett should be back anytime though."

Just as she said that, I heard a snarl downstairs and Charlotte ran out the door. I heard a small commotion including a few more growls and snarls. I heard Rose's door open and close, and Kate go running downstairs; then Emmett's loud steps in the hall and him consoling Rose in their room. Charlotte slipped back in the room quietly, but seeing the tension in my body, stayed by the door.

"What happened?" I asked concerned. My nerves had spiked at the growling and the sounds of the struggle downstairs.

"Garrett didn't leave the house fast enough. Vampires are very territorial as you know. Emmett's mate is badly injured and he's having problems reining in his instincts. Garrett knows this and tried to get outside and out of his way, but Emmett thought he needed to leave faster. Don't worry, Kate and I calmed him down."

"How is Carlisle going to be able to help Rose, if Emmett won't let another male near her?" Rose needed Carlisle almost as much as Jasper did; if Emmett was going to be stubborn she could end up even more hurt.

"The blood that he brought her will help with the pain and she'll be able to calm him down long enough to get him to see reason." She shrugged, "If not, then we'll get you to put him in a bubble so Carlisle can put her back together."

I couldn't help but smile a little.

I felt a mental poke and opened myself up.

'Bella, can you send Charlotte down to help me get some blood out of this bear? I don't want to aggravate Emmett even more by coming upstairs.' I mentally relayed Peter's request and Charlotte was out the door.

She was back quickly with a large pitcher of blood and a glass. She approached slowly doing nothing to startle me.

"I'm not sure how you're going to get it down his throat. He's as close to unconscious as a vampire can get." She stated sceptically.

"I'll manage," I snapped out. I had an idea and hoped it would work but Charlotte was getting too close to my injured mate for my liking.

She smiled at me, backing away. "I'll leave you to it then." She was closing the door behind her quietly before I could blink.

I poured some of the blood into the glass and sat beside Jasper on the bed, putting my hand on his neck. I took a mouthful
of the blood but held it in my mouth without swallowing. I leaned over and pressed my lips to Jasper's, slowly allowing the blood to trickle over my tongue and into his mouth. I felt his throat move as he swallowed under my hand. Once the mouthful was gone I quickly took another and repeated the process, intimately feeding him the blood from my mouth. I did this over and over with life saving kisses, until he slowly finished the glass.

'Mmmm...we'll have to try this again... when I'm... feeling better.' His voice was still pained but sounded much stronger.

"Jasper," I sighed out relieved. I quickly refilled the glass from the pitcher and held it to his lips, but too much was spilling out around the glass and being wasted.

I took another mouthful and slanted my lips across his, once again letting the thick blood run from my mouth into his.

' Hmm... better.'

'Jasper Whitlock, did you intentionally spill the blood so that I would feed you like this?' I silently asked him, incredulous that he could do such a thing when he was so hurt.

'Well... I would rather take blood... from your sumptuous... lips... than a tasteless glass... any day. Besides, this way is... easier. It's not like I... can hold the glass right... now' His mental voice was broken and strained and I immediately felt bad for questioning him.

I let him conserve his strength while I fed him the blood from my mouth, both of us finding comfort in the intimate act. I may not have been able to go out and get the blood for him, but in this, I was truly caring for Jasper as his mate.

Jasper became more and more coherent, the more blood I managed to feed him. He was still in a great deal of pain, but now he was at least able to talk a little.

Garrett and Kate were guarding the back side of the property, and Peter and Charlotte were watching the front. Both Peter and Garrett were concerned about the possibility of attack with Jasper and Rose so injured.

It was getting close to midnight when I heard Peter's phone ring. Charlotte knocked on our door shortly after, and I asked her to come in. I was feeling defensive as she entered. Jasper opened his eyes in greeting and she smiled, but only let her eyes skim him before looking at the floor. "You're looking better, Major."

I looked down at him. I had to disagree, he still looked terrible.

He grimaced out a smile. "Thanks to Bella." His voice was weak and I felt a frown crease my brow.

He was still in so much pain.

"That was Alice on the phone. She and her mate will be here in a few minutes. She wanted to warn us before she brought two unfamiliar vampires into our territory, while we're all so tense," Charlotte explained.

"Peter?" Jasper gasped out.

"He and Garrett are out running a quick perimeter at the edge of the woods. Peter doesn't think that we have anything to worry about for at least another day, maybe two. Garrett disagrees."

Charlotte sounded like she was giving a military report, and in essence, I guess she was. My instincts were getting stronger and I tried to focus on the conversation.

"Rose?" Jasper was only getting out one word at a time and I could feel his pain levels increasing.

I mentally asked Kate to warm more blood and bring it upstairs.

"Emmett is across the hall with Rose. She's getting the same treatment you are. Carlisle called and they managed to get a flight into Timmins from Calgary. They should be here no later than six this morning." Her voice softened and she leaned forward as if to come to him, "It won't be long now Jasper."

A low growl escaped me and she straightened infinitesimally, taking a slow step back. She needed to keep her distance. My body was tense and my breaths were coming faster.

"Alice...who is coming... with her?"

She continued her report, "Alice's mate has a sister. I got the feeling that the sister is a special case in some way, but she didn't want to get into it over the phone."

"Alice would never bring someone here who is a threat," I offered, calming slightly now that Char was making no more moves towards Jasper.

I felt a weak wave of love and affection from him but he didn't speak. Kate stepped quietly in the room with a new pitcher of blood and handed it to me, not looking at Jasper.
My sisters were about to excuse themselves, when I projected to them both. 'Thank you. I'll call you when I'm finished giving him the blood. He'll want to see Alice. He can meet her mate later when he's more himself.'

They both nodded and left.

Jasper was only about halfway through the pitcher, when I heard Alice and her guests arrive. My tension increased when I smelled the unfamiliar vampires, and heard Emmett growling across the hall. Rose chastised him with a pain filled voice.

I couldn't help my own wave of anxiety as their smells drifted into the room and I heard arguing downstairs. I was leaning over Jasper with another mouthful of blood when I heard two things almost simultaneously.

"Alice Wait!" Charlotte cried,

Kate's warning almost on top of it. "Alice No!"

The door to our room, burst open with a bang; a small black haired vampire exploded into the room.

My shield slammed up and I flew onto the bed, spinning to kneel over my mate; snarling at the intruder. I could feel the blood running out of my mouth and down my chin, mixing with the venom that was pouring out.

"Bella, what?" Her eyes focused on Jasper and a hand went to her mouth in shock. "Oh My God, Jasper."

She took a step forward, towards the bed and my injured mate. I roared out my anger at her looking at him, he was MINE!

I could hear deep growling across the hallway from a male vampire and the sounds of a woman trying to calm him. The sounds increased my anxiety and anger.

A blonde haired woman appeared in the doorway behind the black haired intruder. She was looking at the ground and had her hands relaxed in front of her. She was no threat. "Alice, you need to stop looking at Jasper and back slowly out of the room."

"No, I want to see Jasper," The black haired one insisted belligerently. She looked and me, "Bella, what are you doing?"

She leaned forward as if to take another step, and I shifted my weight; prepared to spring if she so much as looked at him again. The snarls tearing out of my throat echoed through the room. I could feel my mate's pain and anxiety, and I got angrier. One more step and she was history.

"Alice. Now!" The blonde's voice was firmer and my growls rose in pitch. She reached out and grabbed a hold of the intruder and dragged her from the room.

"But she's my sister," the black haired one protested from the hall.

"Not right now she's not," was the blonde's reply.

I stayed frozen over top of my mate, panting heavily, watching and listening for any sign that they would be coming back.

'Angel, it's okay. I'm okay.'

His mental voice was stronger and I didn't hear any sounds of them coming back. The growls from across the hall were softer and my instincts were quieting.

"Mary Alice, I told you to wait." Drifted up from downstairs and another low growl bubbled up from my throat.

'Shhh...Darlin'. It's okay. Do you...have any more blood for me?'

His pain and his mental voice brought me back to the present, and I quickly took a mouthful right from the pitcher and lowered my mouth to his. This time when the blood was gone his tongue swept across my lips and entered my mouth. I relaxed into his kiss, as I felt his love sweep over me.

I pulled back and looked into his ravaged face, softly petting his hair.

'Ah, there you are.'I could feel his relief and love as he looked into my eyes.

'Oh my god Jasper, are you alright?' My hand went to my mouth, and I was horrified to think that he might have gotten hurt while I was trying to defend him. I had been ready to kill that interfering little pixie. How DARE she barge into our room? I was still furious but I had to focus on Jasper.

'You protected your...wounded mate. Its okay, Angel. Natural...Ask Carlisle.'He took some deep unnecessary breaths to try to control the pain.

I started to feed him again, hoping that the blood would help with the pain. I didn't try to talk to him about my actions again and how they may have caused him more pain, I wanted him to conserve his strength.
Every hour, someone would knock softly at the door and leave a new pitcher of warm blood in the hallway. I could hear that they did the same thing at Rose and Emmett's door, but the deliveries were staggered so that Emmett and I didn't have to face each other. The house was silent except for the movements from the two sick rooms, though I could still smell that everyone was in the house.

Six a.m. came and went and I was getting nervous. Where was Carlisle? "He should have been here by now," I muttered to myself.

By seven I was pacing. I stopped when I heard a phone ring downstairs. I was immediately at the door when Charlotte knocked.

"Carlisle is only minutes away. Are you going to be okay?" Her eyes were down and her voice soft.

"I'm sorry Char," I couldn't believe that she had to act this way with me. I hated feeling so territorial, but Damn It, I needed them to stay away from my mate!

"It's not your fault Bella. I'll explain later, or you can ask Carlisle." She glanced up at me and I stiffened involuntarily. Her eyes dropped back down. "I'll send Carlisle up as soon as he gets here."

She backed up a couple of steps and then was gone.

I went back to sit with Jasper. Minutes later I heard Carlisle and Esme come in downstairs. There was some low discussion and then Carlisle made his way up the stairs and down our hallway. He was moving so slowly, human speed.

His green apple and tobacco scent reached me and I heard Emmett's low growls from across the hall.

Carlisle knocked on our door and slowly walked in when I called for him. He kept his eyes down and looked submissive, but I tensed just the same. He had a large black bag with him and he hadn't moved from just inside the door.

We were both still for a long moment, my low growls barely audible even to our ears. My body was coiled to strike.

'Angel, it's okay. He can help me.' And I felt a wave of Jasper's love mixed with his pain.

I placed my hand on his head, petting his hair but I didn't take my eyes off of the man by the door.

'Please darlin', I need him. Let Dad... help me.'

A wave of his pain distracted me from my vigilance. I looked down at my Jasper's feverish face and stroked his cheek. Only because he asked me to. Only for him would I allow this. I shook my head minutely. I was being stupid, this was Carlisle. He would never hurt Jasper.

"Dad, you have to help him. Please?" my voice came out as pleading and I heard Carlisle release the breath he had been holding.

"I will honey, I promise. Can I come and take a look?"

I nodded, but didn't take my eyes from Jasper's.

Carlisle slowly came over to the bed and silently looked over Jasper's many injuries. "It looks worse than it actually is Bella. We can get him all fixed up."

I looked up at my adopted father for the first time. He met my gaze evenly, his eyes filled with compassion and love. I was fighting with myself. There was a huge part of me that hated that this man was so close to my mate. But part of me knew that this was Carlisle, he would never hurt either of us.

"Can you help me get him out of his clothes Bella? I need to see everything so we can get his limbs aligned properly."

I nodded and gently tore Jasper's remaining clothes from his body and separated limbs. I clenched my fists every time Carlisle had to touch him, growled at every pain filled hiss from Jasper's lips. It took everything I had to stop myself from throwing Carlisle out the window. Only Jasper's silent reassurances kept me in check.

It wasn't long before Carlisle had Jasper all in one piece and looking whole, but I still couldn't relax.

"Now he just needs to lay here quietly for awhile and rest," Carlisle said and then reached into his big black doctor's bag. He pulled out several bags of what looked like blood bags but the liquid inside was yellowish. He handed them to me carefully. "These bags are why I was late. They are human plasma."

Jasper groaned, protesting "No Carlisle, not human."

I knew that Jasper was worried about drinking human blood and undoing all the self control that he had learned, but if it helped him, then I didn't care if it was blood from a member of the royal family. He would be drinking it.

"Relax Jasper; you won't be thanking me once you drink it. It doesn't taste anything like blood and your eyes won't go red
from it. You need it to stop the venom from running, and to help the fusing process. I have had it myself. You and Rose both need this to heal from your wounds; animal blood will work, but it could take weeks for you to regain your strength. The plasma will have you back to normal in a day or two." Carlisle turned to me, "Bella, this stuff tastes terrible. Can you go out and get Jasper some fresh blood? There isn't any more left downstairs."

I nodded but I was torn. I didn't want to leave Jasper.

'No Bella, stay.' Jasper pleaded silently. I could feel his helplessness at the situation. But I could also feel he was strong enough that he would be okay while I left to hunt for him.

Carlisle could see my hesitation and mistook the reason for it. "Would it be okay if your mom came in and sat with Jasper while you're gone?"

Tension flooded my body. There was a tap at the door and Esme opened it looking down.

I snarled long and low at this new intruder. How many more people would be barging in here?

The woman looked sad but backed out of the room and closed the door. My gaze switched to the man. He quickly dropped his gaze and backed to the door.

'Jasper, I'm going to get you more blood. I won't be long, I promise.' I tried to reassure him the best I could.

"No one comes in this room while I'm gone, understand?" My voice was low and even but as cold as the snow outside.

He nodded and I went to the window. I had to get blood for Jasper now.

Carlisle stopped me, "Bella?"

I looked back at him with one foot out the large window.

"Take your brother or one of your uncles with you please. And make sure you hunt for yourself as well; you won't be any good to Jasper, if you aren't strong enough to protect him."

I nodded, conceding his point. As soon as he left the room I jumped out the window. I hit the ground where Garrett was instantly at my side and we were off racing into the forest.

It wasn't long before I caught the scent of a moose. I had only intended to grab it to take back to Jasper, but once I got it in my deadly grip I couldn't control myself. I snapped its neck and drank deeply. Once it was drained I lost my temper. I picked up the moose and swung it into a huge tree. The tree cracked and felt to the ground, the moose was still in one piece but its body was pulverized. I knelt over the shattered carcass and started to scream.

Strong arms wrapped around me and lifted me to sit in a lap.

"Shhh...He's going to be fine little one," Garrett's soft voice made me feel all the more confused.

I had attacked my family. Then I had growled at various members, including my parents, when they were only trying to help; and Alice, she had only been scared for her best friend and ex and what do I do? Attack her. And now, I had fed from the moose that was supposed to be for Jasper. I wanted to feel bad about all these things but I couldn't. I would do all that and a hundred times worse if it meant that I was protecting Jasper.

"I hate that I feel this way. I'm so confused Garrett," I gasped out, my whole body shaking. I felt bad for him, he had wanted to be a part of a family and he got dragged into all my drama. "I want to cry and fight and apologize and...God! I feel like I want to explode! What is wrong with me?!"

He pulled back holding me by my upper arms. "You listen to me Isabella Cullen. Nothing is wrong with you! Nothing. You're a newborn that has been repeatedly attacked in your short existence. You arrive onto a scene where you find your mate has been torn to pieces and your sister is in the process of being raped. Not only did you fight off your mate's attacker but you protected your sister."

"But once we were back at the house?" I still didn't know why I was growling at Char and Kate and what made me feel the need to attack Alice.

"And so you should have. Bella, your only instinct was to protect your mate. I'm amazed that you even recognized Rose as your sister. Furthermore, it only took a few minutes for Charlotte to calm you down and get you to allow us to help. I've never heard of a newborn with more control. Ask Jasper, Peter or Char if you think I'm lying. I am SO proud of you, for holding your own against two male vampires until I got there. You did what any one of our kind would have done." He looked so serious that I knew he was telling the truth.

"But once we were back at the house?" I still didn't know why I was growling at Char and Kate and what made me feel the need to attack Alice.

"Bella, Peter and I can't even go up to the second floor if Emmett's there. He won't let anyone near Rosalie, especially if they're male. You're letting the girls in the room. It's our instinct to protect our mates, especially when they're hurt. The girls are trying not to push your instincts back into overdrive, but Alice didn't stop to listen to our instructions. The speed and
noise of the door slamming open, combined with her advancing on your very injured mate was really stupid on her part.” He quirked a slow smile at me, “Personally I’m shocked that you had the control not to rip her apart. Between your instinctual need to protect, and your newborn status, she should be in several pieces right now. Her mate will be having words with her over it, I’m sure.”

I smiled at that. Alice would soon learn what it was like to be mated and not just married. I still could barely contain myself though. I got up and started to pace.

“Bella?”

I turned to look at him just in time to see a large rock coming at me. I caught it and hurled it into a nearby pond. It cracked through the ice with a spectacular crash, water flying everywhere. I turned to see a log floating through the air. I punched that, and watched as splinters rained down around us. I walked over to a large half buried boulder and proceeded to turn it into sand in a matter of minutes. When I was done I felt more in control of myself.

“Feel better?” Garrett asked with a smirk.

He kissed my forehead when I nodded.

He had a great way of knowing what I needed. I was very lucky in the family that I had. I had never had a lot of strong male figures in my human life, and hadn’t known what I had been missing.

Garrett was the uncle that would let me cry or rage, keeping his distance until I was ready to talk and then calmly helping me to work things through in my head. Or give me something to destroy.

Peter was my overprotective, loving uncle that doubled as a father figure and wouldn’t let me get away with anything. Granted, I had locked him in a bubble once, but he really had been in the wrong that time.

Emmett was my fun, playful brother who would join me in a prank or pull one on me. He also had my back whenever I needed it.

Then there was Carlisle. My dad. He was the traditional father figure that I had longed for as a child. He was always there with a reassuring word or a useful piece of advice. His hugs could make me feel like everything would be okay, and that whatever I did, he would be proud of me.

“Thanks Garrett.” I hugged him around the waist as he kissed the top of my head.

“Shall we go and find something for Jasper?”

I nodded and we ran farther north.

An hour later found us back at the house. I leapt through the window and into our suite, leaving Garrett and Peter to deal with the two struggling caribou that we brought back. I quickly went to Jasper’s side.

‘Angel,’

‘I’m here, Jasper. I brought you back a couple of caribou. That should make the plasma more palatable.’ I ran my fingers though his hair slowly, enjoying the silky feel of it on my skin.

“Thanks Darlin’.”

His voice was stronger now that he wasn’t losing so much venom. He was still the same chalky pale and his eyes were still black, but I couldn’t feel as much pain coming from him now that his limbs were reattaching.

“Jasper,” I kissed him carefully, needing the closeness. “The blood should be ready in a minute, so whenever Dad is ready we can give you the plasma.”

There was a tap at the door and I opened it to find submissive Kate with a fresh pitcher. Carlisle was right behind her and he came in when she excused herself.

“We can give him the plasma now. It will help stop his wounds from seeping. Plasma contains a clotting agent that allows human wounds to stop bleeding. It works much the same for vampires.” He came into the room with four of the yellow liquid filled bags. “I have four for you and another four for Rosalie. I want you to have at least one today. I’ll leave two because of the spillage.”

By the tone in Carlisle’s voice, I knew that this would be some nasty tasting medicine. I grimaced. I looked at Jasper and he swallowed weakly. I knew that I would have to feed it to him the same as the blood. It was too valuable to waste.

“That won’t be necessary. I can make sure he gets every drop. Can it be warmed up?” I looked up at him and he looked a bit shocked.

“Yes it can, but Bella, he will spill it everywhere as he drinks.”
I smiled down at Jasper, his eyes meeting mine. "No, he won't."

Carlisle filled the empty pitcher with steaming hot water and laid the plasma bag in it to warm. I could see the scientific side of Carlisle's brain working. He opened his mouth to ask, but I held up my hand.

"You can stay for a couple of minutes to watch. I think it'll help Emmett with Rose, but I want you to stand over by the window and leave as soon as you see how it works. I'm having a hard time remembering you're my family." It was true. Seeing Carlisle touching Jasper in even the most clinical way, was making my instincts scream.

Thanks to Garrett's explanation, I was able to think around them but it was still difficult. And feeding Jasper this way was very intimate for the two of us; I knew I wouldn't be able to control my instincts for long once I started.

I poured the, now warm, plasma into a glass and took a sniff.

Jasper laughed weakly at my face. "That's not very encouraging."

I sat on the bed at his side. I took a sip and swallowed it shuddering. "I must really love you."

"That bad?" he asked.

"Worse than the wolf."

He chuckled weakly.

"I think it would be best to do this quickly, a mouthful of plasma and then a mouthful of blood." I poured a second glass of blood to have it ready.

I heard Carlisle chuckle and cocked an eyebrow at him, irritated at his intrusion.

He smiled "A spoonful of sugar,"

"helps the medicine go down," I finished.

I smiled softly down at Jasper. "Ready?"

"For you, always."

He chuckled when he felt my embarrassment. Now was not the time.

I took a large mouthful of the plasma and tried not to gag. I leaned over Jasper and let it run into his mouth. I felt his distaste but let the rest drain into him. I quickly took a mouthful of the blood and let it wash the taste of the plasma out of both of our mouths.

"God that's disgusting!" He spat out. "I think it's safe to say that I won't be going back to drinking humans anytime soon."

I turned to where Carlisle had been standing but he was already gone.

"Come on Angel, let's get this over with. Then I need to feel your beautiful body pressed against mine."

I smiled down at him. I loved this man.

A/N: Well I hope it was worth the wait. The next chapter is already written and is ready to be betaed so it shouldn't take as long this time. And the next chapter is a bit of a monster with some lemons thrown in to prove that the major is back to his yummy self.

All references to the God of War are the inspiration of IdreamofEddy and her famous story, Colliding Meteors. She has some amazing stories including a WIP that has to be read!

Thank you to everyone who voted for Insecurities in the Everything's Bigger in Texas Awards put on by the Jasper's Darlins. Insecurities won for Best AU Jasper fic and Best Original Story Line! I am totally shocked as there were some amazing stories in these categories. Thank you again to everyone who voted and to the Darlins for hosting such a great contest.

I really want to hear what you think of this chapter so reviews are appreciated. We are building up to the final battle and Insecurities is coming an end as all good things must, so if there is something that you would still like to see then review with your suggestions. You never know what's going to make it in.

Warm Brownies and Ice Cream for everyone! *waves the fairies to start serving. Dances off into the garden humming Lady GaGa's Bad Romance*
Bella lay with me for hours. We could hear Emmett's soft murmuring across the hall as he soothed Rosalie through her pain. Someone was washing dishes in the kitchen. Carlisle was in the study, we could hear him typing furiously. No doubt documenting our injuries and the effect that human plasma had in terms of our recovery. Perhaps even Bella's unique method of administering the medicine.

I could hear Alice and I presume her mate, talking softly in their room at the other end of the house. Esme was quietly putting away the few clothes she and Carlisle had brought with them. And someone was singing a children's nursery rhyme softly. Weird.

My body still hurt all over, but I was no longer consumed by the pain. I spent my time thinking about all of the things I could have done differently to avoid this situation. I could have saved Rose from ever being touched by those monsters. I hoped and prayed that they hadn't actually managed to rape her. My sister had already lived through that horror and I knew that the attack would bring it all back. My guilt pressed in on me like a physical weight. I am the fucking God of War, and I couldn't protect my own sister from two sadistic vampires.

'Enough Jas. It's not your fault. That vampire was gifted and he used it against you.'

I shouldn't be surprised that she clued into my mood and what I was thinking. She knew me better than anyone else, except maybe Peter.

'I failed Angel. I should have just knocked them all out and sorted it out after.' Regardless of what she said, I knew I had hesitated and it had cost me and my sister dearly.

'You're right Jas, you should have.' She stated. Her mental voice was calm and matter of fact.

I looked over at her surprised. I could have sworn that she would have argued with me.

'And now that you've made that mistake, you can analyze it and use it to make better decisions in the future.' She looked at me seriously. 'All men make mistakes, but only wise men learn from them.'

'Winston Churchill.' I knew the quote and respected the man. I never expected my 18 year old mate to quote him though.

She smiled. 'I would have thought of someone a bit older but I haven't had a lot of time to read lately.'

I chuckled. And just like that I felt better. I knew that I would always regret my actions, but I wouldn't be ruled by them. Yes, I should've knocked everyone out as soon as I could; but at the time it had seemed too risky. Who knows, Michael's freezing might have still worked while he was unconscious. In which case, if there had been more of them we would have died rather than been ripped apart.

"Carlisle says it's time for more plasma."

We both made a face and then laughed. Mine was cut short because of the pain, but it felt good to relieve some of the stress.

The second bag of plasma was just as bad as the first. Carlisle came in to check on me as Bella stood tense by my side. I couldn't believe how much control she had over her instincts. Female vampires were known to be viscous in defence of their mates. She had had her moments, but nothing like I had witnessed in the past.

I also knew that until she said it was ok, I would be stuck in this bed. The males of our species may be in charge of war and defence; but when it came to injuries and healing, we bowed to the women.

"You're healing unbelievably fast Jasper. You should be up and around by tomorrow I would think." He looked up at Bella as he said it.
She frowned and I could feel her disbelief.

"How did you come up with that method of giving him blood Bella?" Carlisle asked.

I half wished he hadn't. I was feeling better, and remembering the intimate nature of her feeding me blood from her own mouth, was arousing.

"It seemed like the easiest and most efficient way. Doing it that way, I'm able to control the direction and flow of the blood. You can't do that with a glass." She looked thoughtful for a minute but I could feel mischief coming from her. "I could have used a turkey baster I suppose, but I didn't think we had one."

Carlisle snorted as he tried to smother a laugh and I could hear several of our family members laughing throughout the house. I huffed at her. "Sure, make fun of the Major while he's down. Laugh while you can Darlin', I'll get you back."

"And when you can Jasper, I'll know you're well enough to be up and around." She crossed her arms and arched an eyebrow at me in challenge.

Carlisle eased out of the room still unsuccessfully trying to hold back his grin.

I patted the bed next to me and Bella eased onto the bed so as to not jostle me. I reached up with my good arm and pushed her hair behind her ear and cupped her face in my palm. 'Angel, I need to talk to Peter and Garrett. We need to plan.'

"No Jas. You aren't well enough."

'Angel, we can turn this into an advantage, but I need to talk to Peter and Garrett. Victoria and Maria will be coming sooner rather than later. We're running out of time.'

'I almost lost you just yesterday, and today you want to go off to war! No Jasper! You heard Carlisle, you won't be up until at least tomorrow, I'm sorry, but I'm having a hard enough time with that. You need to stay here and get better. I will not lose you because you are too stubborn to take medical advice!"

I let her vent. I could feel that she was terrified. Most vampires go a hundred years without facing the kind of violence that she has faced in her short six months of immortality. Cap that with seeing her mate in several pieces, and I knew she wouldn't be able to be rational about this right away. The fear was too fresh.

'I'm not talking about leaving the bedroom Darlin'. They can come up here and talk to me in here. I promise not to leave the bed.'

She stood up and walked to the window, clearly upset. She stood there for a long time. 'How long Jas?'

'Howlong what Angel?'

'Howlong do we have before the army is on our door step and we have to fight?'

'No more than a week. Probably less.' I wouldn't lie to her. It was to Maria's advantage to attack us while we were weak. I had an idea that might draw them out and even the playing field, but to put it into action I would need to talk to Peter and Garrett.

I also wanted to meet Alice's mate and take his measure. From the snatches of conversation that I had overheard, he was adamant that he was going to stay and fight with us. I couldn't have him around if he was going to be more of a hindrance than a help. Then there was the strange circumstances surrounding his sister. I needed answers; I needed to get Bella to agree to let the others in our bedroom. I couldn't plan anything until I talked to them.

She turned back to me with a determined look on her face. 'Fine. Peter and Garrett can come up. I'll go hunt while you guys talk. You have until I get back to discuss things. When I get back you are drinking another bag of plasma.' Her tone didn't leave any room for argument.

I wrinkled my nose. Carlisle said I didn't have to have any more until tomorrow morning because I was healing so well. I could tell from the look on her face, and the determined feel of her emotions, that the plasma she was forcing me to drink would not be made more palatable by taking it from her sweet lips. I was being punished for rushing my time in bed. I would have to drink it from a glass held in my own hands to prove that I was well enough to discuss strategy. My Angel was definitely not happy with me.

"Deal." I said glumly. I was the freaking God of War and yet this small woman could bring me low with a look. Now I know how Emmett felt most of the time. I wanted to look and make sure she hadn't confiscated my dick while I was out of it, but figured that I needed to retain some dignity.

I looked up at my unhappy mate. "Take someone hunting with you, Angel."

She rolled her eyes. Yeah, I guess she did know that already, but in this case I was just as worried about her as she was about me. She leaned over and kissed me far too quickly before leaving the room to find Peter and Garrett.
I could hear her lecturing them in the great room, and soon they were easing through my door with slightly terrified looks on their faces.

"Jeez Major, you didn't tell me you mated a General!" Peter said.

I chuckled. "You know what females are like when their mates are hurt; she's actually really controlled."

"I'd hate to see what would happen if she ever really lost it," grumbled Garrett.

"We better get down to business Major. She isn't going to be gone long and the minute we see her face we have to leave. I am not messing with my niece on this one. She had Char, Kate and Esme backing her up." Peter stood at the foot of my bed looking serious.

"Who went hunting with her?" I needed to know she would be safe while she was away from the house.

"Esme and Randall, Alice's mate," Garrett said.

I wasn't happy with only two others going with her, especially a male vampire that I hadn't yet met.

"Relax Major. Bella can take care of herself well enough to go hunting for an hour, and Randall's no threat to her," Peter said reading my concern on my face.

"Impressions of Randall?" I asked.

Peter looked thoughtful. "He's shorter than us. Maybe 5'10, wiry build. He looks capable but we haven't had a chance to discuss his background or history. I'm not even sure how old he is. I got the feeling we can trust him, but until I have more facts, I can't tell you my honest opinion." He crossed his arms over his chest and looked frustrated. "I've been running too many patrols to properly form any kind of opinion on him."

I looked at Garrett. He was quiet and was listening intently to everything Peter said. Garrett had spent most of his vampire life quietly avoiding others of our kind but he was keenly observant. "Garrett?"

He frowned, "I agree with Peter, but I've had the chance to spend more time in the house around him. He's fiercely protective of his sister. He came into our territory with Alice and wasn't in any way antagonistic, but at the same time I get the feeling that where Annie and Alice are concerned; all bets would be off if anyone was to make a move towards either of them. He was furious with Alice for putting herself in danger of a protective female defending her mate. I have the feeling that she would be sporting a bite mark of her own, if it weren't for the fact that they have only known each other a couple of days. There's a quiet intensity there that makes me wary of him without being threatened."

I nodded. I would have to meet this Randall sooner rather than later.

"SO Major, what's the plan?" Peter asked with a grin.

"The plan gentlemen, is to make Maria think that we're down two fighters. Hopefully she'll be overconfident and send fewer newborns with Victoria." I stated.

"Sun Tzu. Pretend inferiority and encourage his arrogance," Peter said with a small smile.

"Exactly."

Garrett had a calculating look on his face. "Which two fighters?"

"Myself and Emmett, I think."

"The God of War and the Cullen brawn. I like it. How do we let her know?" Garrett asked.

"Michael." Peter stated. "We'll tell him to make the call. If she's convinced, we'll kill him. If she isn't, we'll let him live."

Garrett laughed harshly. "I wouldn't call being an effective doorstop, living. He'll do it."

"Especially when Jasper's the one to offer the deal," Peter said with a smirk.

"And how is he supposed to do that? Bella didn't even want to let us up here to talk to him. There is no way that she is going to agree to him leaving the house to threaten the speed bump." Garrett was sceptical.

"I can't leave the house. Neither can Emmett. We have to make it look like we're out of action. I'll offer him the deal in the basement." I looked at Peter, "I assume that's where you put him?"

Peter nodded.

"Besides, after I drink the next bag of plasma I should be almost back to normal. That stuff might taste worse than human food, but it sure works miracles." I winced as I pulled back the sheet covering me to show them the shoulder that had the new scar where my arm had been torn completely off. It was angry and red but other than the constant ache, it was
completely healed.

"Holy Shit!" Garrett exclaimed.

"Garrett, language!" Kate yelled from somewhere in the house.

"Sorry, Katie," he mumbled, embarrassed at swearing where the ladies of the house could hear.

Peter and I chuckled at him.

"Wow Major, that plasma works better than real blood!" Peter had seen almost as many dismemberments as I had. They normally took at least a few days for the vampire to be mobile. Five days was the minimum for a full recovery, depending on the number of limbs lost and the amount of venom that needed to be replaced. Twice that if the vampire had to drink animal blood.

"Michael is going to be terrified when he sees you fully recovered standing in front of him. You know this will only increase your bass ass reputation," Peter whispered the last, so as not to insult the women with his language.

Maybe Charlotte had confiscated his balls too.

I nodded. "If we can convince Maria of my injuries, and that Emmett is in just as rough of shape, then she'll attack sooner thinking we're weak. She won't feel like she needs to send as many newborns with Victoria."

Garrett nodded with a smirk on his face. Peter had that shitty all-knowing look on his face.

"What?" I demanded.

He waved a hand at me. "Nothing."

I rolled my eyes "Seriously, Peter? I know what your gift is now; you don't have to do the cryptic thing anymore."

"Ah but I do! If I exposed all my thoughts, then there would be no mystery." He was wearing his shit eating grin that I hated so much.

I shook my head, half pissed off. There was no talking to him when he got like this. Garrett's head snapped to the window.

"Time to go."

He and Peter were out the door before Bella jumped in the window. I had felt her getting closer, but Peter was pissing me off. I had hoped to watch her throw him out.

"Plasma time." She walked into the bathroom and ran the hot water in the sink. At least she was willing to warm it up.

I choked it back as quickly as possible. That shit was REALLY nasty. My sweet Angel made me wait while she went down to the kitchen to get me a glass of blood to wash the taste out of my mouth. She was obviously still cranky about my insisting on talking to the family in the great room.

I had told her about it before I drank the plasma. Luckily I waited to say anything until after she had already warmed it, or I would have had to drink it cold. I shuddered at the thought as I tried to build up enough venom in my mouth to rinse the bad taste out.

If I thought that Bella had not been happy about leaving me to talk to Peter and Garrett in our bedroom; it was nothing to how angry she was about me making the journey downstairs. She wouldn't believe me when I said I was almost back to normal. The last bag of plasma had really helped. I was feeling achy in my joints but other than that I was almost back to full strength. I knew she was haunted by the sight of me in so many pieces and that's why she was being so difficult. Hell, if it had been her, I know I would have been a hundred times worse. But, we were under threat of attack. As it was her instinctual responsibility to help me heal, mine was to provide for her safety and wellbeing.

She came back in the room with a fresh pitcher of blood. I could feel her fear, worry, love and anger all simmering under her stern faced facade. I drank my blood without complaint and then used my new strength to pull her into bed with me.

'\textit{Thank you Angel}.'

She was hesitant at first but when she didn't feel any pain from me she snuggled into my chest. I could feel her emotions rising like a tidal wave. She started to sob softly. I didn't say anything, only held her firmly in my arms. She needed the security and reassurance of the strength in my body more than she needed my words. I kissed her temple and rubbed her back as she cried. I let her feel my love, and the gratitude I felt for having found such an extraordinary mate.

After awhile she calmed down and I could feel her start to feel more secure. She knew I was back and that I was ready to take charge of our future again.

"You and me, Jas?" her voice was so soft I could barely hear her.

I tilted her chin up so I could look in her eyes. They were too dark and I knew that her hunting trip had only been to bring me
back blood. She hadn't fed herself. I would have to rectify that. "You and me, Angel. Always and forever, you and me."

I pulled her into me and kissed her gently but deep. She willingly surrendered to my kiss, yielding her mouth to my invading tongue. I felt the urgent need to re-establish our bond after coming so close to losing everything. She had been fiercely protective, loving, devoted, forceful, and caring while I was incapacitated and defenceless.

I wasn't hurt anymore.

My fingers curled around the neckline of her shirt and with a quick tug it was stripped from her body, baring her beautiful breasts to my eager hands and mouth. I bit gently on her nipple as I roughly massaged her breasts with my hands. Her back arched pushing her deeper into my mouth and I used my tongue to lave at her nipple. I used my other hand to swiftly rid her of her pants. I flipped her onto her stomach as I put two pillows under her hips. I admired her beautiful kitty, spread open and soaking for me.

'So beautiful, my Angel.' She moaned as I pressed two fingers deep into her without warning. I rubbed her spot roughly as my thumb massaged her clit. I brought her close to the edge; the urge to claim her was strong. I held myself back, my instincts demanding her surrender before I could find my own satisfaction. Just as she was about to fall over the edge, I pulled my fingers out. I heard her protesting whimper with satisfaction. She still needed me.

'Taste yourself Angel, see how good you taste.'

She turned her head eagerly as I pushed my wet fingers deep into her mouth. My cock pulsated as she ran her tongue around my fingers, caressing them like she was sucking on my cock. I pulled her hips back, opening her further and ran my tongue the full length of her dripping slit, making her cry out. 'Mmmm...so much better than blood. I could live on the taste of you.'

I used my tongue to fuck her and rubbed her clit with my fingers until she was again on the verge of cumming. I stopped and she whined, breathing hard.

'Please Jasper.' Her lust was hot and heavy over me like a weight, the air thick with the scent of her arousal; her hands gripping the sheets.

'Please what Angel?' I leaned over top of her. My chest pressed into her back, my cock nestled in the crack of her beautiful ass as I traced her ear with my tongue, and used my hand to cup her breast.

She pushed her hips back into me, making me pulse in anticipation. 'Please, I need you. I need to be one with you. I need you inside me my mate. Make me yours.'

Her silent plea was my undoing. I thrust my rock hard length deep into her. Kneeling, I sat back on my feet and pulled her up against my body. I loved being sheathed so deep in her body, feeling every shiver of her walls tight around me; the feel of her skin against my chest. She dropped her head back on my shoulder, her eyes closed in ecstasy; her beautiful curls cascaded down my back in a waterfall of chocolate silk.

Her hands gripped my thighs as she started to gently rock herself on my cock. The motion was perfect. I stayed locked deep inside her, unwilling to leave her flesh for even the second it would take to stroke in and out. I could feel the head of my cock rubbing deep inside her, pressing against her cervix with an all consuming heat.

I wrapped my arms around her pressing my nose into her neck and breathing her scent deep into my lungs. As our pleasure built higher, each wave building on the next, our lust fuelling each other; I placed my mouth over her shoulder, my teeth over the scar that my dominant bite had left. She moaned deep in her throat; the feel of her skin against my chest. The vibration from her moan, and my purr of satisfaction, was all it took to send us over the edge together. I felt my release explode from me in a pulsing rush, releasing some of my tension but leaving me far from satisfied.

She shuddered in my arms and lay limp, draped across my body. I carefully shifted us so that we lay together on the bed; my length still buried deep inside her. Not taking my mouth from her shoulder, I sucked on it lightly, using my tongue to trace the smooth edge of her scar. She shuddered again and her walls clenched around my now hard cock. I anchored her to my body with one arm across her chest, the other pulling her hips into mine; needing to feel every inch of her against me. I stroked in and out of her, long slow and deep; building our pleasure slowly. Every time my tongue swept over the scar she cried out in pleasure.

'You're mine Angel. You're mine as I'm yours.' I could feel her getting closer to her peak. Her lust and love wrapped around me, pushing me closer to my own release.

'Ah God! Yes Jasper! I'm yours! Please, Jas. So close,'

'Cum for me my Angel. Now!' I gave one last hard thrust as my orgasm washed over me. I bit down on her shoulder a bit harder, still without breaking her skin, as she fell apart around me.

I kissed her softly over her scar making her purr in contentment. She turned in my arms and buried her face in my chest, kissing me tenderly.

'I love you, Jasper.'
'I love you, Bella.'

We lay there for a long time needing the comfort the other provided. My contented purr making her rub her face up against me, and wrap herself more tightly in my embrace; our bond making it easy to get lost in our shared emotions.

'Ve have to get up don't we?' She asked silently.

I heaved a mental sigh. I didn't want to get up and face the world. I wanted to stay right here, wrapped up in her arms and her love forever. But the world wouldn't leave us alone by my will alone. I kissed the top of her head and hugged her. 'Yes. *The sooner we do this, the sooner we can get on with the rest of our lives.*'

She sighed but pulled back. I could feel her acceptance. 'Okay, *but no more getting hurt okay? I can't go through that again Jasper. I can't...I just...I just can't okay?*'

Her beautiful lower lip trembled and it nearly broke my un-beating heart.

'I'll do my very best Darlin'. I wouldn't promise her, because I couldn't guarantee that I would never get hurt again. But, I would promise to be careful.

We reluctantly got out of bed and got dressed, sharing numerous casual touches as we went about our routine. I threw on a pair of jeans and a black long sleeve thermal shirt, pulling the arms up slightly. I turned to look at her and we chuckled, we matched. She had put on nearly the same thing, only her thermal was a deep burgundy.

I took her hand and led her downstairs to where most of our family was waiting for us. Only Emmett and Rose were missing. I settled Bella on my lap in the empty arm chair, unwilling to have her even so far away as sitting beside me.

Emmett carried Rose downstairs shortly after and sat on one of the couches with her in his lap. My sister looked so fragile, clinging to his shirt; her face turned into his chest. I knew that there was nothing wrong with her legs, as they hadn't been hurt, and her arms should be just as healed as mine. She was scared, anxious and feeling helpless. She was clinging to Emmett because of all the memories that had resurfaced because of the attack. For the first time she looked small against his hulking frame.

I looked at Esme, concerned that I had missed something; that they had actually managed to rape her before Bella had come to our defence. Esme shook her head infinitesimally, confirming that she hadn't been raped and I released a breath that I hadn't realized I had been holding. My poor sister just had to deal with her past demons, thankfully not new ones. Rose would recover from this with Emmett's help.

Bella and I were flanked by Peter and Charlotte. Kate and Garrett sat on the other couch beside Esme and Carlisle. Alice and her new family sat on the hearth.

Alice's mate was everything that Garrett and Peter had described. He had brown hair that curled in a similar style to mine, barely brushing his ears and the scruff of whiskers on his face, that women were calling sexy these days. He was solidly built and had the toughness that only hard work can bring. Whoever he had been in his human life, he had known how to do a man's labour; vampire venom only enhances what's already there.

As Garrett had said, he was very intense. I could feel his wary protectiveness, of not only his sister, but Alice as well. His emotions didn't change all that much as his eyes skimmed the room, until his gaze fell and lingered on Rose. I was surprised to feel Randall's emotions switch to rage, remorse and protectiveness. Then as he looked down at Alice I was hit with a wave of guilt, tenderness and love. Whoever this guy was, he had one hell of a story to tell.

Emmett had his head down and was purring quietly to try and soothe his mate. His arms were wrapped completely around her, and he had the fingers of one of his hands under the neckline of Rose's shirt; gently caressing the dominant bite that I knew she carried there.

Carlisle was the first to break the silence. "Alice, I think this would be a good time to properly introduce your guests to the family."

Alice nodded. "This is Randall and his sister Anna."

The small girl beside Alice giggled. "My name is Annie silly."

Alice smiled fondly at her. "I'm sorry sweetie. Her name is Annie."

Annie's emotions were surprising given our situation. She was excited, happy and I could feel the love she had for Randall, Alice and surprisingly Esme. Annie was almost as small as Alice, with white blonde hair that was styled in a gently curling bob reminiscent of the roaring 20's, and delicately beautiful features. She reminded me of the fragile china dolls that used to be sold a century ago. Annie was strangely active for a vampire, bouncing and swinging her legs like a human child; although she looked to be about seventeen. When she started to hum Twinkle Little Star, I realized she'd been the one that I had heard singing earlier.

Alice giggled again and covered her smile with her hands, her shoulders scrunched up. I thought Esme would burst with motherly love.
“Randall, Annie; this is my family.” Alice continued and started to introduce us as couples. “That’s my Father, Carlisle Cullen; and his wife and mate, my mother, Esme Cullen.”

Randall nodded respectfully, ”I’m honoured to meet you both.”

Alice looked at Bella and I, ”That’s my sister Bella Cullen and her bonded mate Jasper Whitlock.”

I felt Randall’s emotions change and realized that he knew I was Alice’s ex-husband. He nodded but his emotions were all over the place. Between the scars that were visible on my neck and exposed forearms, and my status as Alice’s ex; the poor guy was a well concealed wreck.

Alice looked over my head, ”That’s Bella’s uncle, Peter Whitlock; and his wife and mate Charlotte.”

Randall nodded again, ”Whitlock?” he questioned.

”Jasper and I are brothers by venom; we have the same creator, as does Charlotte,” Peter explained.

”And you’re, Bella’s uncle?” The poor guy was trying to sort it all out.

”Peter is my great uncle, through my human maternal grandmother. We found each other by lucky coincidence.” Bella looked up at Peter with a smile and he ruffled her hair playfully.

Alice gestured to Garrett and Kate. ”This is my cousin Kate Denali, from our Alaskan family; and her mate Garrett Smith.”

Kate smiled at Randall’s nod.

”And that is my brother Emmett McCarty Cullen and his wife and mate Rosalie McCarty Cullen,” Alice finished softly.

Emmett looked up briefly but only nodded before going back to comforting Rose.

”Is the pretty lady okay, Randall?” Annie asked her brother in a whisper, which was stupid in a room full of vampires. I watched as she took his hand and looked at him in complete innocence.

He looked down at her with a small smile, and I could feel sadness beneath his protectiveness. ”She met up with some really bad men that are trying to hurt Mary Alice and her family.”

I tensed as I watched the girl slip from her seat to go and kneel at Emmett’s feet.

”It’s okay Miss Rosalie, my brother Randall is here now and he’ll make the bad men go away. Randall can fix anything.” Her voice was soft and she sounded like a child.

Rose looked at Annie, acknowledging someone for the first time since she came into the room.

Who the hell was this woman...girl...whatever she was.

Esme stepped forward and held out her hand for Annie. ”Hey Sweet Pea; why don’t we go outside and see if we can see any bunnies?”

”Yay, I love bunnies!” She leapt up and was holding Esme’s hand in a flash.

Randall gave Esme a grateful smile as he waved at Annie. Once they were out the door he looked at all of us. ”I have to explain about Annie.” He ran a hand over his face and I could feel his frustration and what felt like exhaustion.

”I knew Mary Alice when she was human. I was an orderly at the mental hospital where she was committed. Annie was her cell mate.” Randall looked up at Carlisle. ”My creator, Samuel, was a lot like you. He was a doctor at the hospital working to try to help the patients there. He too, only drank from animals. He had been a priest in his human life, and lived his existence trying to atone for what we are. Samuel was the one who changed Mary Alice when the nomad, James, tracked her scent to the asylum.”

We all stiffened at the mention of James. Bella was a bit confused as her memories of the incident were fuzzy from the change.

Randall looked at me, ”Thank you for ending his miserable existence. I wish I had been the one to do it.”

”Believe me, it was my pleasure,” I drawled out.

Alice nudged Randall with her shoulder and when he looked down at her, she leaned up and kissed his cheek. They shared a moment where he visibly relaxed. He held out his hand and she took it without hesitation. He turned back to the room and continued.

”Annie and Alice were subjected to the most extreme treatments of the day.” He looked at Carlisle and they exchanged a frown. Obviously Carlisle knew what that entailed. ”The day that everything fell apart, Annie was given a frontal lobotomy. It was considered to be the cutting edge treatment for insanity back then.”
Bella and Kate both gasped but we were all shocked.

“You have to understand, that both Annie and Mary Alice were pretty much tortured daily by the doctors there, under the guise of medical treatments. Samuel and I were too distracted by James to intervene before Annie had her surgery. That night James had lured me away and then doubled back and found Annie and Mary Alice. When I got to the cell, Annie was already burning and Samuel and Mary Alice were gone. I tried to look for them but I only found Samuel's ashes. I thought Mary Alice was dead for the last 90 years.” He looked down at her and she hugged his arm. He shifted and took her into his arms kissing the top of her head.

“The vampire venom couldn't repair the damage to Annie's brain. She has the mental capacity of a five or six year old human child. She doesn't have the memory of a vampire and can never be left alone. She may look like a teenager, but she's as helpless as a human child; easily led and very innocent. Over the years we've run into nomads who've tried to take her from me, thinking that she's a fun toy to be corrupted. Thankfuly, I've been able to shield her from most of the violence in our world.”

Annie doesn't remember anything from her human life, and I try to keep her life as stress free as possible. She drinks blood from a glass and doesn't know what it is, or where it comes from. We go for a hike in the woods and play hide and seek. While she's counting, I hunt quickly and when she finds me, she gets her juice. She loves animals; you can't imagine the breakdown she had when I tried to teach her to hunt for the first time. When we're in public I remind her not to bite any humans, and for the most part, she's really good. We've had some close calls over the years, but thankfully she hasn't once tasted human blood, yet,” he finished.

We were all silent for a long time. Randall had to be one of the biggest hearted vampires I had ever met outside of the Cullens. He had sheltered and protected Annie all these years. I could tell from his emotions, that although he loved Annie, he had done it all because of Alice.

“She was your singer wasn’t she?” Peter asked nodding at Alice, as if plucking the thought from my head.

Alice gasped and looked up at Randall.

Randall nodded. “Samuel thought she would be a good test of my control because she smelled so good, even to him. He never counted on me falling in love with her the moment I saw her in that dark little cell, trying to comfort her catatonic cell mate. She was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen.” He ran his fingers down her cheek as Alice mouthed 'I love you too.'

"I am sure Alice told you about the danger that our family is in. Under the circumstances you would be perfectly justified if you decided to protect your family and leave,” Carlisle offered.

I knew if I had been in his situation, my instincts would have been telling me to do just that.

“No.” He looked up at Carlisle and I could feel his determination. "No, I wouldn't. You're Mary Alice's family. She's been seeing visions of all of you since she was human.”

We were all stunned again. How the hell had she had visions of a vampire family as a human? No wonder she had been committed.

“She would comfort Annie with stories of the Angel Doctor and his beautiful wife who would be their parents. No, Annie and I are right where Mary Alice always said we would be. I would be a fool to try and change our future now.”

He looked a bit angry when we all chuckled.

“Please, Randall, we do not mean to laugh at you. We have a saying in the family. Never bet against Alice. The fact that you know this already, means that you belong here as well,” Kate explained and Randall smiled.


She was still rather shy, but I knew she was dying to hear all about her sister's mate. I was glad she asked. I needed to know as much about this newcomer as possible so I could formulate the battle plans.

Randall smiled. "I was born James Randall, in Liberty Missouri, in 1838. I was ten when my father dragged my mother, brother and I, to San Francisco, when he heard there was gold there. For years we all worked the claim, until I got sick of breaking my back for my father's golden dreams. Our claim was dry. I had helped him for twelve years. I had heard in town that they were looking to recruit good riders to carry the mail overland to Missouri. I still had family there and decided that it was a good way to work my way back. So, I rode to the St. Georges hotel in Sacramento and signed up. April 3, 1860, I was the first Pony Express rider out of 'Frisco and carried the mail as far as Sacramento. I was so excited I mounted my horse from the wrong side."

We all chuckled at that.

"I rode as a Rider for seven months, before my mount broke a leg and I was thrown. My back was broken when the horse rolled over me. Samuel found me dying on the road. I'm not sure why he changed me considering his beliefs regarding
being a vampire, but I woke up three days later to this life. Samuel was a good man, he taught me about this life and his diet. He was always patient with me, even when I lost the battle with my thirst. He loved Annie and Mary Alice almost as much as I did. I think he would have eventually broken them out and changed them himself, if it hadn't been for James. The night I lost Mary Alice was the last time I used my given name. I couldn't stand having anything in common with the monster that took her from me." He kissed her forehead and seemed to shake himself.

"Annie and I travel around a lot. We live as humans for the most part but it's hard to support any kind of life style for long because I can't leave Annie alone to make money. I do paid research in libraries at night for the most part. Annie can come to the library and play quietly while I work and no one bothers us. We were in New York in the weeks leading up to fashion week, Annie likes to go to the parties to see the clothes and the people, when we saw Mary Alice. I thought I was hallucinating, she looks exactly like she did the last time I saw her." He looked back up at us.

My whole family was touched by Randall's story. He was an amazing individual.

"So what happens now?" Kate asked.

Everyone looked at me. Poor Randall looked a bit confused, but I didn't feel like delving into my past right now, we had plans to execute.

"Now Peter and I go down to the basement and offer Michael a better deal than he has ever offered anyone else. He's going to call Maria and tell her that he managed to do some serious damage to Emmett and I before the family came to our rescue. If he does it, I'll put him out of his misery. If he refuses,"

"He gets to live as my doorstop for the rest of eternity," Peter finished for me.

Carlisle looked disturbed and was about to protest when Peter cut him off.

"I'm sorry Carlisle, but Charlotte and I aren't part of your coven. We do things a bit differently in the South. This guy came after my brother and my niece, not to mention the torture he put us through in the army. He is pure evil, there is no way that he isn't going to pay for the things that he's done. I respect the sanctity that you have for life, but look at what he's done to your daughter," Peter nodded his head towards Rose. "Tell me there isn't a part of you that wants to see him pay."

Carlisle nodded. "I'm going to go and find Esme. You boys do what you feel is best to protect our family."

I felt bad for him, but if he had listened to me and not Edward last year about tracking down Victoria, then we wouldn't be in this position in the first place.

Randall looked at me and Peter with that same intensity, and I could feel that he had made some important realizations. Alice got his attention and when he looked down at her she gave him a long slow blink. She was confirming his suspicions. We all waited for him to make a decision. Fish or cut bait.

He took a deep breath in, "Well, I can't think of a better person to go to war with than the Legendary Major."

Garrett chuckled and we all let out the breath that we didn't realize we were holding.

I looked at Emmett. "Em, you and Rose are confined to the house for the time being. You and I need to stay out of sight of any spies that may be lurking around. Someone will hunt for us until this is over. I kept my voice soft and sent him some comfort, understanding and security.

They needed time to re-connect and to help Rose recover mentally. This was the perfect excuse, and I knew it when I suggested Emmett as the second victim in our charade.

Emmett looked at me and I could feel his gratitude. He looked down at his traumatized mate and kissed her hair softly. Without a word, he carried her back up to their rooms.

I kissed Bella's temple, "Time for the boys to go play war Darlin'."

She smiled and got up off my lap. 'Make him fear you Jas. Make him regret what he did to Rose.'

'Don't worry Angel. I will.'

I pulled her into my arms, pressing my face into her neck. Before I let her go, I pulled the neck of her shirt back slightly and kissed my scar on her shoulder. I felt her purr in contentment before I pulled away.

I gave her one last look and turned to make my way to the basement, Peter and Garrett hard on my heels. I could feel my eyes getting darker with every step I took as I went to confront the asshole who dared to fuck with my mate and my family. I would reintroduce him to the Major.

A/N: All credit for the title God of War goes to the amazing IdreamofEddy from her story Colliding Meteors. She has a new WIP that is amazing, The Orbiting Meteor. If you haven't read it you need to. She created Peter and he is too hot to be believed!
Quick history lesson! James Randall was in fact, the first Pony Express rider out of San Fran headed east! One of the newspapers did document the fact that he mounted his horse from the wrong side in his excitement. Only one pony express rider ever went missing during the short time that it operated, making it the most reliable way to send a letter at the time.

I hope you all liked this chapter. The next one is half done and rather graphic so I am warning you now that it will not be everyone’s cup of tea. As usual I will write my story the way I see it, so if you are not into that kind of thing than you may want to skip it. Just a heads up.

Reviews make my day and help me write faster!

Fairies, please pass out the apple crumble and vanilla ice cream. Happy Thursday everyone! *skips off into the garden softly singing the theme from Nightmare on Elm Street* One two, the Majors coming for you...Three four better lock your door...
Chapter 34 - Last time:

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As my booted feet hit the bottom stairs, I felt the mantle of the Major fall over my shoulders. It had been decades since I'd harnessed my powers this way, but like the day of Bella's birthday when I had knocked out Edward and Emmett, I knew that I would never forget how. As my power rolled out in front of me like a fog, I heard a fearful whining coming from the control room.

"Fuck, is this what it was like?" Garrett mumbled, barely audible to even my hearing.

"For over 100 years. It helps to remember that it's not you he's angry with," Peter replied in the same low voice. "Unless, of course, you are the one he's mad at. Then you should start grovelling; not that it'll save you."

Garrett was feeling the effects of the emotions that the Major had used to control armies of newborns for over a century. Peter had described it to me once as being a crushing weight of anger, subservience, fear, awe, and dread. All I knew is that it caused most newborns to hit their knees when I approached and to do my bidding without question. The ones that didn't were very publicly tortured and then set on fire as an example.

I opened the door to the control room and saw what remained of Maria's second in command. There was a pool of venom on the tarp underneath him and he looked like a withered piece of leather. His granite skin was sunken in and stretched over his bones making his face look more like a mummified corpse than a 'living' person. The stumps of his arms and legs were still oozing a small amount of venom and his eyes were dull and black.

"Wow, Garrett. You sure didn't leave me much to work with, did you?" I asked casually.

Garrett only crossed his arms over his chest and I could feel how much he wished that he had torn off a few more pieces when he had the chance. He was still really pissed.

When Michael's eyes found mine I felt the terror, disbelief, and rage rush out of him.

"It can't be," he rasped out, his voice sounding like dry brittle leaves blowing across pavement. "How...?"

I laughed, sending him another healthy dose of fear. "You underestimated me, Michael."

"NO...it's ...not possible! You...were in...pieces! I...did my job!" The pain and fear running through his body made it hard for him to speak.

"Maria sent you on a suicide mission. She knows what I'm capable of. She must not like you very much anymore, Michael." I knew my onyx black eyes were glittering with a kind of insane humour as I practically sang out the last bit.
"Not true...proved my loyalty...and my skills!" He protested.

"Your skills?" I asked, my voice heavy with insinuation. "How often does she let you fuck her, Michael? When was the last time she let you get between her milky thighs? Hmmm? Tasted her juices on your tongue as she let you bring her to an orgasm?"

Sadly, I had been there many times; more times than I cared to remember. She had loved to have me use my gift to make her orgasm as she bathed in the blood of our human slaves. In the beginning I had played her games, and thought her beautiful as she would tear into the tender flesh of the more beautiful slave girls. I would watch in fascination as the blood would spray from their bodies, raining down on my laughing mistress. She delighted in how hard I would get and the way it caused me to fuck her six ways to Sunday amongst the bodies of her victims. It wasn't until my gift started to develop further that I realized that was being affected by her enjoyment and lust, not my own.

"When was the last time she gave you a task that you haven't had to beg for?" I could see the doubt in his eyes and feel the desperation and denial bubbling up in him. "How long did it take you to convince her you could take me on?"

My questions had been a shot in the dark; but I knew Maria would have blamed him for my being allowed to escape, because we had been scouting territory together when Peter had found me. I had knocked him out as soon as I had smelled Peter and we had left together with little convincing from Peter. I had been Maria's favourite, her right hand, her Major, her chosen lover; she wouldn't have been pleased when I escaped.

"What does it matter Major? He's our toy now," Peter snarled out taking a menacing step forward and wearing a maniacal grin on his face. Only part of it was feigned. He wanted payback for the past as well as recent incidents. Michael had once tried to rape a newborn Charlotte to punish Peter; I had unknowingly stepped in to intervene, as I didn't allow fucking during training sessions. Almost a decade later, Peter had told me what I had prevented.

"Stand down, Captain; you'll get your chance," I said casually.

Peter huffed but took a step back.

When I stepped forward, I released a stronger wave of dread and fear and Michael visibly flinched. Slowly, I reached into my pocket and took out my favourite zippo lighter; flicking it open and closed casually.

"Tell me Michael, do you remember my favourite game?" His whimper told me that he did.

I flicked my zippo, lighting it, waving it back and forth in front of his face. Michael started to whimper his eyes fixated on the flickering flame. He cried out when I lowered my hand and burned the side of his ear.

"Now Michael, Garrett here hasn't played this game before, so you will excuse me while I tell him the way it works." I directed my words over my shoulder to Garrett as I explained. "Because he's lost so much venom, I don't have to worry about him flarin' up like a gasoline soaked rag. It's our venom that's so flammable; and without it I can light our toy Michael up, and let him slowly burn like a candle for days!" I heard the glee in my own voice and felt Michael's terror push higher at my words.

"Peter, remind me again what my record was,"

"I believe it was eight days Major. The last of the newborn's head turned to ash on the eighth day. I lost the pool," Peter deadpanned. "Of course with that one you had only removed his feet so there was plenty of body left to burn."

"How did you make sure that he couldn't put out the fire?" Garrett asked.

Peter chuckled. "The Major had two other newborns hold him down."

"Inventive," was Garrett's bored response, but I could feel his shock and revulsion.

I held the flame to Michael's head and he started to scream louder as the metal turned red.

The hunk of useless vampire in front of me started crying as the metal turned red.
"Now, now Michael. Is that any way for the second in command of the Texicano Army to behave? I would have thought, after listening to you brag for over a century about how tough you are, that you would be able to stand a bit more than this," I said shaking my head at him.

"It's ready, Major," Peter said happily behind me.

"Proceed."

Peter eagerly stepped forward and pressed the molten hot poker right into Michael's groin. Agonized screaming, and the smell of his burning clothing mixed with the sweet stench of smouldering vampire, filled the room; the cocktail of emotions from the four of us flooded into my body. I retreated to the numb, apathetic state that I had found after living in an empathic hell for over ten years after my change. It was the only way I knew how to keep my sanity.

I stood by dispassionately as Peter and Garrett took turns, covering almost every inch of Michael with blackened, smouldering burns as I doubled the pain he was feeling back into him. After about an hour of continuous torture, Michael was begging for death. Another fifteen minutes and he was offering to do anything to end the pain.

"Enough." I commanded. Peter and Garrett stepped back, Peter looking disappointed. "You're boring me Michael. All this begging and bargaining is useless, you don't have anything I want."

"Anything...I'll do anything...Just, please...finish it!" He choked out. Small tendrils of smoke drifted off his charred flesh, parts of him glowing as his granite skin slowly burned like wood coals in a fire.

"And why would I do you that favour? We were never friends. You came here and attacked me and my sister, tried to kill my mate and you're leading an army right to us; why would I want to kill you? Hell, once I get bored, I figure I'll let you go home with Peter and Charlotte. They would love to have you live with them." I could feel his desperation and knew we had him right where we wanted him.

"Victoria...Maria is giving her...three captains...twenty-five newborns...They...are supposed to kill your mate...your coven...bring you back..." He gasped out the information like it would help him.

I snorted, "Please Michael, my ex-wife can see the future. We know all this already."

"What do you Want? I'll...do anything!" He was sobbing now and I threw a bucket of water on him, putting out most of the smouldering wounds. The smell was starting to get thick down here. The women were going to kill us for stinking up the house.

"Hmmm...maybe..." I mused

"What? Please?" he begged.

"Well, it would all depend on how convincing you can be Michael." I offered, watching him try to think about what I could mean. "If you were to call Maria; could you convince her that you and Ramone had succeeded in your mission?"

"Yes. Yes, I can... do it," he sobbed out grasping at anything.

"Hmmm...I'm not so sure you can." I looked at him sceptically. I actually wasn't sure that he would be able to pull it off. He was in so much pain and physically he was practically 'dead' already.

"I can do it!" he insisted, knowing his life depended on convincing me. Although, in this case, he wanted to die rather than face the endless torture that we would inflict.

"Fine, Peter and Garrett will help you make the call. If they feel that you've followed their instructions, and that Maria believes your story, then we'll kill you quickly." He cried out in relief as I continued, "But Michael, you'll have to be convincing. Peter doesn't want you to die, so if he's not convinced, I won't be either. And if he's not satisfied then you get to go home with him," I promised him in a low voice making sure he felt how serious I was.

I tossed the last bag of plasma to Garrett. "Make him drink this, it will help him sound convincing on the phone. If he fails, break him up in to smaller pieces so he's easier for Charlotte to pack later."

I could hear his inane blubbering follow me up the stairs. I needed to get away from the emotional hurricane that was raging in that room, but I knew that I wouldn't be able to get far enough away since I couldn't leave the house. I didn't want to become the numb killing machine that I had worked so hard to leave behind; but the emotional climate in the house, and the things I was being forced to do to protect my mate and my family, were pushing me back into that mindset. With the stress of the approaching battle, I was afraid I was losing myself all over again; that I was becoming the Major who delighted in slaughter, desecration, and the creative torture of others for sport.

I fled to my and Bella's suite; stripping down and climbing into the shower before it was even hot. The pain, hatred, sorrow, helplessness, rage, satisfaction, and nameless other emotions breaking over me like waves on the shore; I was aching under the onslaught. I stood with my arms braced against the wall, my head hanging as I wished that the water would wash away my many sins, or that I could leave the house and run; run somewhere to find some peace. The hot water did nothing
to release the tension in my body or wash away the smell of torture from my skin and the blackness on my soul.

I knew that the emotions from the few people in the house were wreaking havoc on me. Rose and Emmett were only across the hall and they were working through an ocean of emotions on their own. Couple that with what was happening in the basement, and I felt like I was drowning. I didn't need to breathe to survive but the feeling of choking was undeniable.

I needed my Angel to bring me back from the precipice I was teetering on; to help me make sense of the feelings raging through my body. After escaping the wars, I had wandered alone for so long; a vessel that held the myriad emotions of everyone around me. I had found a way to lessen the guilt of feeding my body, but there was no purpose to my continued existence. No longer the instrument of destruction and hate that I had been created for; there seemed to be no reason for me to continue to walk the earth.

Until I found her, I found my other half. She was my anchor; the one that gave my existence purpose.

Suddenly all the emotions cut off entirely and I sagged against the wall in relief. My head turned to see my Angel sitting on the counter in front of the shower, a look of misery on her beautiful face. She had encased me in one of her shields; the only pain, remorse, and guilt that I felt now were my own. I breathed out a sigh of relief that sounded like a sob.

"Angel."

'Shhh...Jas, just relax. I won't let go until you feel more yourself.'

'I need you.' I held out my hand but she shook her head.

'No Jas. You need to center yourself for a bit.'

I was crushed and was sure it showed on my face. Had my actions in the basement been the thing that would finally cause her to run?

'Oh Jas, no! I Love You! I will love you forever and nothing can change that. But Jasper, if I come in there you'll have to feel me and you've had to deal with enough already today. Please Jas, just take an hour to relax. For me.' I could see she was horrified that I had thought she didn't want me and it made me feel better.

I knew that she was right. The lack of extra emotions was wonderful but I hated that she had to see me this way. I could see my face in the mirror and my eyes were still reflecting the black of the Major.

'You're tired Jas. I'll go and get us some blood and when I come back we can snuggle on the bed together okay?'

I nodded sadly, 'Anything for you, Angel.'

I turned off the shower and she manipulated her shield so that I could towel off and get dressed. She handed me a pair of flannel pyjama bottoms, I put them on and went to lie on our bed. I closed my eyes and revelled in the peace that her shimmering blue shield offered me.

A while later, our door opened and I cracked my eyes to see Bella walk in with a pitcher of blood.

'Feeling better?'

I sat up and nodded. 'I'm sorry.'

She cocked her head and looked at me with a puzzled expression, 'For what?'

I looked down at my lap, 'For losing myself, for torturing someone in the basement, for being the kind of monster that can torture a man in the basement, for not being the kind of man that you deserve, for... everything.'

My body lurched forward and the room echoed with the sound of her hand connecting hard with the back of my head; her anger hitting me just as hard when her shield dropped.

'JASPER WHITLOCK HALE CULLEN! She mentally yelled at me. 'Don't You EVER Talk About Yourself That Way Again!' She poked me in the chest hard.

'You are protecting me and protecting this family! A Monster wouldn't feel bad about the hard choices he has to make. A Monster would never have left that hellish environment the first chance he got. A Monster would enjoy feeding off the pain that he inflicts. Tell me Jasper; did you enjoy feeling the pain and suffering of that thing in the basement?' Her mental voice was much louder than if she had been actually screaming at me.

'No.' I replied, my head still reverberating with her mental tirade.

'Did you enjoy feeling the pain, fear, and suffering of all the newborns that you trained so many years ago?' She asked with her hands on her hips.

'No, but... '
'Did you enjoy feeling the fear of the humans that you've killed?'

'No but...'

'Do you feel bad about all the horrible things you've had to do in your past?'

'Yeah. But, Angel...'

'Don't you but Angel' me! You are exactly the man that I deserve! Exactly the man that I Need! Just like I am exactly the woman you deserve! Now, I don't want to hear another word of apology out of your mouth ever again, unless it is actually something that you should be sorry about. Is that clear?' She actually stomped her foot and I wanted to laugh at the childish action, but I was too intimidated by her at the moment.

'Yes Ma'am.'

'Good, now drink your blood. You can join me and the rest of the family downstairs when you've finished throwing your little pity party.' She shoved the pitcher at me and with a huff, she swept angrily out of the room; her frustration, annoyance, and love lingering like perfume in the room.

Well, I asked for an anchor; she brought me right back into the present right quick. I rubbed my head still feeling the sting. I took a swig of my blood and nearly choked. The little minx had mixed it half and half with plasma. Stuff still tasted like shit!

A couple of minutes later Garrett and surprisingly Randall, snuck in through the window.

"Did I hear that right? Did the Major just get the Rosie special?" Garrett asked with a lame attempt at hiding a smile.

Randall snickered as he looked down at the carpet trying to hide his smirk. "She even used his whole name."

"Shut up you two. Report," I ordered Garrett, trying to retain some of my dignity.

"Really? You want us to take you seriously when you just had your ass chewed out by your mate?" Randall drawled out.

"You heard that?" How could they have? Bella projected to me.

"The whole house heard that. Major," Emmett chuckled from across the hall.

Randall and Garrett were openly laughing now.

"Boys stop teasing your brother. He can't help but listen to Bella; she's a woman of extraordinary sense," Carlisle said from the other end of the house.

"With a really loud voice," snickered Randall who was holding up an openly laughing Garrett.

I hung my head, ready to turn in my man card, as all the men in the house laughed themselves silly. I think I even heard Rose snicker, which kind of made the whole humiliating experience worth it.

"Wait, where's Peter?" There was no way that the Captain would be missing out on this little roasting session.

"He and the girls went out in the forest to have a little Bar-B-Q." Garrett said, with an evil twinkle in his eye. "They should be back in a bit. Charlotte wanted to have a little fun first."

"Annie too?" I asked surprised.

"Nope, she Esme and Bella went to play hide and seek," Randall said. I could feel the relief and happiness radiating from him. He loved having so many people to help with Annie.

"You better be careful, Esme and Carlisle have a habit of taking in orphans and never letting them leave." I half warned him.

"Oh we let you guys leave eventually," Carlisle said walking in the door with a smile. "We just make sure that you know the way home first. Drink your blood Jasper," he said with a trace of humour mixed in his parental rebuke.

I rolled my eyes at the childish command but forced myself to drink anyway.

"I think the problem will be getting Annie to agree to leave. Esme is so good for her. I think she missed out not having a mother to look after her," Randall replied. I could feel his remorse.

"Hey," I said waiting until he looked at me "You didn't fail her. You did the best you could for all these years. You kept her safe and healthy, even honouring your maker's wishes by following his diet. No one could have done better by her."

"When all this is over and Annie feels comfortable, you and Alice might want to consider taking a vacation; just the two of you. I know I speak for Esme, when I say that we would love to have her stay with us. I think you could use the time to
connect properly with your new mate.” Carlisle offered and I could feel his sincerity and eagerness. He was as captivated with the childlike young woman as Esme was.

Randall looked shocked but I could feel hope trickling from him. “Thank you Carlisle, that’s a really generous offer. I’ll talk it over with Mary Alice, but I can’t think of anyone I would feel more comfortable leaving her with than you and your wife.”

The room was quiet for a minute as we all processed the events of the day. I knew Carlisle wasn’t entirely comfortable with everything that had gone on but thankfully he seemed to understand it.

I took an inventory of my body. After the events in the basement I had felt tired and achy, sure that I had in fact pushed myself too hard. Bella, probably knowing this, had forced me to drink yet another bag of plasma and I was back to feeling more like myself. Stronger actually; and it was much easier to filter and deal with the emotions in the house. Not to mention that everyone was a lot happier and Michael was gone.

“So, I know I’m the new guy,” Randall broke the silence first, “but I think we should do what we can to air out the house before the girls get back.”

Garrett and I had a collective ‘Oh Shit’ moment. I knew Bella had only let it slide because I had been so upset when she got back, and Rose was still not firing on all cylinders at the moment. Esme, Kate, Alice and Charlotte would not be so forgiving.

I shot out of bed and ran down the stairs with Garrett and Randall hot on my heels as Carlisle followed much more slowly, laughing. Ass, he wasn’t here so he couldn’t get in trouble for the lingering stench of burned vampire that had settled in every corner of the house.

I appreciated Randall helping us out though. Of course he was the one who had to put up with Alice now. Shit, Alice would be complaining about the smell in her clothes for years! I mentally rolled my eyes, as if she would even keep her clothes for longer than a season.

We opened all the doors and windows and Garrett carted the disgusting tarp out to the other side of the lake to burn it. The girls all came back with Peter a little over two hours later. They were not happy about the lingering smell but could see that we had made a concerted effort to get rid of it so they let it go. We all gathered in the great room and it was obvious that Bella and I would need to invest in some more furniture now that our family was so large.

Emmett came downstairs to join us when Esme took Annie upstairs to visit with Rosalie. I think that we were all hoping that Annie’s childlike enthusiasm would help bring Rose back to her regular self.

Once we were all settled, I looked at Peter.

“Michael gave a very convincing performance on the phone to Maria. He told her that he had been injured but that there were only six of us now that you and Emmett were out of the picture. He even managed to brag about how soft you had become in your years away from her. He called you domesticated.” Peter smirked at the last part and I knew it was because of the reaming that Bella had so kindly broadcasted to the rest of our family.

Fuck, I was going to be hearing about this until the end of time; or the end of Peter, whichever came first. Damn it! Char would kill me if I turned Peter into next year’s Yule log.

I looked over at Alice, choosing to ignore Peter. "Did it work?"

She smiled. "Yup! Now she’s sending twenty newborns and only one captain with Victoria. She wants to make sure that there are enough newborns in case your ‘parents’ show up."

I mentally patted myself on the back. Things were falling into place nicely. "So that makes it twenty-two to our ten."

Bella looked up at me in confusion. I answered her before she could ask the question. "Esme and Rose will be staying here with Annie."

Emmett was feeling conflicted at leaving his mate behind but he knew we needed him to fight with us. I was making the decision to have Rose stay behind for several reasons. One, I didn't want her fragile mental state to cause her to freeze up during the battle and force us to protect her. Two, she was a fierce fighter that would easily be able to defend Annie if a newborn or two managed to slip past us. Annie was so much like a child that I knew Rose's maternal instincts, although long unused, would ensure that she would defend Annie with all the ferocity of an angry grizzly. With Esme and Rose at the house, Annie would be well protected.

I could feel the relief and gratitude pouring off of Randall and he nodded at me. As if on cue, Annie's delighted giggles floated down from upstairs and I heard Rose's laugh join in. We all smiled and Emmett visibly relaxed. Carlisle looked over at me and winked. Rosalie would be just fine.

We talked battle plans and strategies for the next several hours. The girls were actually really helpful in coming up with ways for their skills as a unit to be used against Victoria and the newborns. With Bella’s shielding, it would greatly reduce the risk posed by their greater numbers. Char and Kate had an idea and dragged Bella to the basement to work on it. I watched them go and tried not to laugh as they all complained about the smell in the basement. Hey, we had done our
best to air the place out! Bella had told me not to apologize for doing what was necessary to protect our family and I was following her orders on this one.

Darkness was falling when I heard the front door open and close. Curious I turned around to see Edward coming in with a large duffel bag.

"What the HELL are you doing here?" I yelled as I surged to my feet, ready to fight if he so much as twitched.

"He’s here because I called him," Bella said calmly from behind me, coming up the stairs from the basement. She looked at him and smiled softly. "Hello Edward. Your room is ready for you."

He nodded and with a last wary look at me, silently made his way to his room. I heard the door close as I stared at my mate in confusion. "Our room. Now." I commanded, my voice hard and cold.

She nodded and calmly walked up the stairs in front of me.

A/N: Yup Edward is back. Strap in people things are gonna get intense!

*waves at the fairies to open the bar* I figure some of you might need a drink to get over that chapter. Since you are all over 18 *levels a few pointed looks at a few select readers, arching an eyebrow* I shouldn't have to worry about needing to card you all for alcohol. *coughs* Enjoy everyone!

*dances off into the garden*
Chapter 35

A/N: As usual Twilight and all its characters do not belong to me they belong to the talented Stephenie Meyer – thank you for allowing me to play in your world

~ As the M rating suggests - if you are under 18 you shouldn't be reading this fic. It contains dark themes and sexual material. ~

A/N: A huge thank you to Ms Mynxi for having the patience to deal with me through two re-writes! And thank you to everyone for so patiently waiting for this update. I have been having MASSIVE computer issues and am very grateful that I back-up my work to a flashdrive.

Jasper followed me up the stairs, his anger weighing on me like the heat of a Phoenix summer. My jaw clenched with the strength of my convictions. I would not feel bad about this. I had made the right decision.

I thought back to yesterday, Esme and Randall had come hunting with me, while Peter and Garrett talked to Jasper. Jasper had told me that we had less than a week before Victoria showed up, with God only knew how many others, to kill me and my family. Maria, that bitch who had made Jasper's existence hell, wanted him back. Over my cold ashes! I pulled out my phone and dialled a number that I had never used before.

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"Bella?"

"Hello Edward. How are you?" I asked, trying to remain calm.

"I should be asking you that. How are Jasper and Rose? Are they alright? Were you hurt? Did you..." he was frantically asking questions and there was no doubt in my mind that he was truly worried.

"Edward, Edward; one question at a time," I interrupted his stream of inquiries. "Jasper and Rose are healing and will be fine."

"Oh Thank God! I'm sorry Bella." I could practically hear him running his fingers through his hair over the phone. "It's just...no one will tell me anything. All I know is that Carlisle got a panicked call from some guy in New York, saying Alice said the family was being attacked and that Jasper and Rose were going to be killed. They threw some instructions at me and took off. I don't know if my brother and sister are alive or dead. I just..." he sounded like he was on the verge of crying.

"Look, I know I screwed up. I've been a horrible brother and son, and I've done things that...things that I can never take back, but this family is all that I have and now they're in trouble and no one will even answer my calls."

I decided to catch him up on the major points. "Jasper and Rose were attacked by two men while they were out hunting. Garrett and I ran out to help them, but I got there first. Jasper was being torn apart," my voice cracked at the memory but I swallowed hard and continued, "and another guy was trying to rape Rose. I managed to hold them off until Garrett and Emmett got there with Kate. Jasper lost both his legs, one arm and had the other arm almost torn off. He had had his throat ripped out and lost a lot of venom. Rose was missing both her arms."

"Did they...did he-?"

I shook my head automatically, "No, they didn't manage to rape her."

"Thank God!" He breathed out in a rush. "What about the rest of you? You said you fought them, are you alright? They didn't hurt you, did they?"

I smiled softly, he sounded so much like the old Edward that I had fallen for just then. "No, I'm fine. No one else got hurt. Emmett killed the one that attacked Rose, and Garrett dismembered the other. Peter will probably question him later. Jasper and Rose are still in a lot of pain but Carlisle brought some human plasma and it's really helping. Carlisle thinks that they'll be up and around by tomorrow but I'm sure they won't be doing cart wheels or anything."

"Human plasma. Huh, I would never have thought of that but it makes sense. How does it taste?"

I laughed, "Awful! Seriously Edward, if that's what comes out of a human; then I have no worries that I will ever want to switch to a more conventional diet. Bleck!"

He chuckled out that soft velvety chuckle that I remembered. "God, it's good to talk to someone again."

"Has no one called you at all?" I was a bit surprised by this, I mean I knew we were all mad at him but even I knew he would want to know what was going on.

"No. Esme called to tell me to drive the truck to Timmins and then fly back to Alaska; that they were staying with you and Jasper for the foreseeable future. Then I heard yelling in the background and she hung up on me. I tried to call back but everyone's phones just go to voicemail," he paused and I could hear the unspoken frustration and worry in the silence. "It's been killing me, not knowing what's going on. I want to help, but at the same time, I know that no one will trust me enough
to allow me to be there and rightfully so. But I just needed to know if everyone was okay."

"You hurt a lot of people with your behaviour Edward. You can't expect that to go away over night," I said softly.

"Believe me, I know. When we left your place after that morning and I got out of range of your influence, I could hear Carlisle and Esme’s thoughts again. I haven't heard one nice thing in their heads about me since. Hearing how disappointed and angry they both are for the last couple of months has been eye opening. The worst part is that they blame themselves. I'm the one who螺丝 up and yet they feel like they're the ones to blame."

"Why did you do it Edward? Why did you treat me like a pet? You had to know it was wrong," I asked him. I needed to know and this was the most candid that I have ever heard him be. Maybe I would get some answers.

"I don't know! I mean, I thought I knew everything! I’m the one who can hear every thought that passes through someone’s head. I never had to wonder what to do or how to act because it was right there for me to read in the brain of the person in front of me. For years, I managed to play the dutiful son just by playing out the actions that were expected of me. I could get away with anything just by reacting the way Carlisle and Esme wanted me to. It was so easy. Then Alice and Jasper showed up. There again it wasn’t very long before I managed to figure out a way around their gifts as well, just by what was going through their heads. I think it all became just one big game. Then I met you."

He paused and I could hear that he was clearly conflicted about how he felt then compared to how he felt now. I could practically see him pinching the bridge of his nose.

"After everything that happened over Christmas and the time that I've had to spend listening to Carlisle and Esme’s thoughts; it's made me think. They weren't angry a century ago, when I decided to hunt humans for almost a decade; they were disappointed but very understanding and welcomed me back with love and support. But now...now their thoughts are more painful to me than the change itself. I've had to take a long look at myself and I've come to realize that I'm no better than the very worst of the human monsters that I hunted almost a century ago. I don't like who I've become Bella." The last was said very softly and I could hear the shame in his voice.

"So change," I said simply.

"I don't know if I can. It's just too easy to respond to the things in people’s heads rather than what's right. Then when you had me mentally deaf at your house, I felt like I needed to know as much as possible, like I was missing something vitally important. It was almost as bad as the need for blood; the voices that I depended on, to tell me how to react, and go about my day were suddenly gone. How am I supposed to know what to do? I just don't know if I can do it," he finished lamely.

I thought for a long moment. "Tell you what. I'll make you a deal. You come here and help with the battle and I will help you remember how to be the Edward that Carlisle and Esme love so much."

"How is that helping you? I get to help save my family and try to regain a life that I can be proud of. What do you get out of it?" he asked incredulously.

"I get to use you as cannon fodder in the upcoming war. Having you here will increase the odds that my mate and the rest of my family survive," I stated plainly. I had loved him once and still would hate to have something bad happen to him; but if it came down to a choice between his life or Jasper's? Sorry Edward, I'll save a nice place on the mantle for your urn.

"You would do this for me?" Edward asked softly.

"No, I'm doing it for me. I don't really feel like helping you right now, but if having you here increases our odds then I'll do it. But, there will be rules Edward. You will ask me before you do anything. And I mean anything. I will not have a repeat of Christmas. No snooping, no manipulating, and definitely no trying to piss Jasper off because you're pouting! I would recommend you staying out of sight as much as possible and you will do anything Jasper or Peter tells you to when it comes time to fight. Do I make myself clear?" I laid out the rules as plainly as I could and I hoped that I hadn't missed anything.

"I understand. Thank you Bella," he said with complete sincerity.

"Don't thank me yet. Jasper's going to have kittens when you get here." I took a deep breath knowing the upcoming confrontation wouldn't be unpleasant.

I walked into our room and Jasper closed the door with a snap. I could hear our family mumbling downstairs, wondering why I would have called Edward.

I looked at Jasper and he was breathing heavily, his eyes darkening fast.
Shit. I sighed, "Are you going to let me explain or are you going to punish me and then kill him?" I asked my voice soft and sad.

I flinched when he let out a roar, throwing his hands up in the air. He started to pace, the fury and frustration I felt from him making me shake. I stayed silent waiting for him to say or do something that would give me an idea of how to calm him down.

Five minutes.

Fifteen minutes.

Twenty-eight minutes later he stopped pacing to stare at me. The black eyes of the Major piercing through to my very soul. "Explain to me, why you felt the need to call him back here?"

His voice was chilling and flat, barely containing his rage directed solely at me.

"Because we're going to be outnumbered twenty-two to ten and I wanted a mind reader to help balance the scales," I said calmly. I refused to be sorry for doing what I felt was necessary.

"It is my job to determine who and what is needed to win this war, not yours," he ground out, his teeth clamped firmly together.

"Jas, I just about lost you only two days ago." I closed my eyes against the wave of pain that swept over me at the memory of his dismembered body, and shuddered remembering the sight of the monster's teeth sunk deep into Jasper's shoulder preparing to finish the job. Forcing away the vivid images brought on by my now perfect recall, I opened my eyes staring down my enraged mate, "I will not stand by and watch that happen again, when Edward could be of some help. I will not lose you!"

Losing the battle with my fear, my hand went to my mouth as I started to cry, sinking to my knees. The thought of what we would be facing hitting me like a ton of bricks. I was scared that I would have to watch as one or more of my family members were ripped apart in front of me; terrified that I would be forced to face eternity without Jasper.

His arms wrapped around me from behind 'Shhh...Angel. That won't happen. I'm here.'

I clung to him as he pulled me into his lap and rocked me; his deep purr soothing me as his fingers slowly stroked his scar on my neck. When I had calmed down he tilted my chin up to look at him. 'I know you're scared Darlin', but I can't have him here disruptin' things and disobeyin' orders. His telepathy is not worth the trouble he can cause. I could lose you just because he throws a temper tantrum and our battle plans fall apart. I can't have him here.'

'He promised. I made him promise that he would follow orders if I let him come back and help.' I knew I wasn't making sense. I did the only thing that would help him understand; I projected most of the conversation that I had had with Edward.

'I know, but I think he's honestly not happy. His mother tore off his hand and mailed it to relatives for heaven's sake! That had to get through to him on some level. And now the family is in danger and no one would even tell him if everyone is okay. He needs this chance, Jasper. I want to give him a chance.' I looked at him silently begging him to understand.

"He's family, Jas."

Jasper slumped with an exasperated sigh, his arms falling away from me. 'Fine. But you're responsible for him while he's here. He had better be on his best behaviour Bella. I swear, if he causes trouble like he did last time I will tear him into pieces, box him up and store him in the crawl space for the next fifty years!'

I kissed his cheek. "Thank you."

He stepped away from me, "I mean it, Bella. I love you and there isn't anything I wouldn't do for you, but this is pushing it," he said sternly.

"I love you too."

He shook his head. "Go. Go tell him the news and explain the rules. And for God's sake keep him away from me."

I walked to the door but paused to look back at him. He was laying on our bed with the heels of his hands rubbing his eyes. He looked defeated.

"Jas,"

"Just go Bella," he said quietly.
My heart fell. He was still so angry.

I slowly walked downstairs, using the time to gather my thoughts. My family was standing in the great room looking, for the most part, confused and angry; but I simply held up my hand to forestall the barrage of questions that I was sure was coming.

I knocked quietly at Edward’s door and slid inside when I heard him ask me in. Leaning back against the door with my eyes closed, I banged my head against it a couple of times, wishing that things were different; wishing that I didn’t feel the need to fix things all the time. I mean, what did I care if Edward was unhappy? Why should I put in the massive effort that would be required to reintegrate Edward back into the family?

I sighed. Because it would make everyone happier in the long run; that’s why. Eternity was a long time to be mad at someone. And, we needed him. I needed him here to help guard the family.

“You had better be worth it Edward.”

“I’m trying, Bella,” he said quietly. “I’ll do anything I’m asked. You won’t regret this.”

I opened my eyes to see him wrapping the stump where his hand used to be. He had just changed the bandages and his brow was furrowed.

“Does it hurt?”

He looked up at me, “Yes, but not as much as the thought of not having a family anymore.” His words were barely audible and I could see the fear in his eyes. “They wouldn’t even look at me,”

I straightened up, pushing away from the door. “Don’t talk to anyone unless you have something nice or honestly helpful to say. You talk to me before you do anything. DO NOT piss off any of the men in this house! Jasper is only tolerating your presence here because of me. If you have a question or have the urge to do something incredibly stupid talk to me first. Keep to yourself as much as possible, and for heaven’s sake, try to stay out of trouble,” I fired off my expectations to avoid getting caught up in feeling bad for him.

He looked at me intently and nodded without protest. “How can I help?” was his only question.

I thought for a long minute. “You can do all the hunting for Rose and Emmett. Neither of them can leave the house right now. We managed to get a message to Maria that Jasper and Emmett are no longer a threat so they’re staying out of sight playing possum.”

“I can hunt for Jasper too,” he offered.

I bristled but realized he was trying to be helpful. “I hunt for Jasper,” I stated sternly, leaving no room for argument.

He nodded and I left the room feeling cautiously optimistic. Next, I went in to explain to my waiting family about the change in circumstances. They weren’t happy but they accepted my and Jasper’s decision.

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Over the next thirty-two hours Edward was rarely seen, and never heard from by the rest of the family. He would leave silently and return with live animals without needing to be asked and would only nod in response to thanks from whoever received the animals. He didn’t force himself on anyone and his only contact was with me, and surprisingly, Annie.

He was constantly asking me silent questions regarding the possible reasons for some of the things that one or more of the family would do. I would try to explain but for the most part I simply reminded him that he didn’t need to know and that people’s thoughts and actions were their own.

Edward had been out hunting when Kate had lost a bet to Charlotte, forfeiting a pair of her shoes and she had been rather put out about it. We all watched in amusement as Charlotte kept asking everyone what they thought of her new shoes while Kate seemed to get more and more angry.

I was impressed when Edward simply watched the two women interact without resorting to snooping. He asked me silently why they were acting so strangely and was surprised when I told him to ask Emmett what he missed. Emmett told him gleefully, forgetting that he was supposed to be mad at Edward. Slowly, Edward was making his way back to the family. Esme raised her eyebrow in my direction but smiled at my efforts.

Edward’s interactions with Annie were both the most concerning and the most surprising. She, being naturally curious, had sought him out even when she was told to stay away. After checking with me, Edward offered to teach her to play the piano, which I was sure had to be difficult with only one hand. He was endlessly patient and answered every question she had for him without getting frustrated over the endless ‘why’ questions of the childlike woman.

All in all, everyone seemed to be doing better. I, on the other hand, was heartsick. Jasper was still angry, and while he didn’t ignore me, he didn’t make the effort to spend time with me and wasn’t affectionate in any way. I didn’t push the issue. I craved him. I craved his touch, his scent, the feel of him inside me; the caress of his mind against mine, and the
feel of his unconditional love. I wanted to feel his arms around me, making me feel safe and whole. I wanted to be able to touch him without the fear of rejection.

Right now it felt like I was looking at him from opposite sides of the Grand Canyon; in sight but forever out of reach.

He had accepted what I had done calling in Edward, now it was up to him to forgive me. I still refused to think that I had made a mistake. If Edward's telepathy made any difference at all in the battle then it would all be worth it.

I became withdrawn from the family and retreated to our room several hours ago; unable to sit there and watch Jasper from across the room anymore as he strategized with Peter, Garrett, and Randall. When I had gotten up to leave, Randall had met my eyes. He had looked from me to Jasper and back again with a frown. When he opened his mouth to speak I shook my head and quickly left the room with one last longing glance at Jasper.

Now I was sitting in my favorite chair in our room looking out the window. I pulled my knees up to my chest and rested my chin on them, my fingers idly feeling the scar from Jasper's dominant bite. It didn't feel the same as when he did it. When his fingers touched the scar, it was like he was touching my heart; the feeling of pure love and security flooding my body making me feel like I was part of him. I shifted to put my forehead on my knees and felt my shield go up around me, I couldn't help it. I started to silently cry.

It was a strange and unfamiliar feeling to not regret your actions but to regret the consequences.

'Angel,'

My head shot up to see Jasper crouched in front of me, as close to me as he could get with my shield in the way. I hadn't heard him come in.

I sniffed reflexively, even without tears the familiar process of crying remained.

'I'm sorry, Bella. I never wanted to hurt you by being distant,' he said silently, his mental voice tired and full of remorse.

I had nothing to say to that. I wouldn't say I was sorry too, because I wasn't. He obviously knew his distance had hurt me, but I could understand his anger. There was nothing for me to say.

'Angel, please let me in?'

It took effort but I managed to push my shield down, my instincts fighting to try to protect me from harm, even the emotional kind.

He crawled to me and dropped his head on my feet, which were still supporting my curled body. 'I never wanted to hurt you. But part of me...I guess part of me questioned your real reason for asking Edward to come.'

'Why?'

'God Bella, as a human you loved him so much. I thought that maybe you remembered something that made you miss him. And I guess...I guess I worried that you calling him meant that a part of you still loved him.' His mental voice was rough with repressed emotion and it hurt me almost as much as the distance between us.

My breath caught. I reached out my hand and ran my fingers through the silk of his hair as it brushed across my feet. 'No, Jasper. Every part of me belongs to you. Heart, mind, body, and soul. I would sacrifice him a hundred times over if it meant I could keep you safe.'

I slid my hand under his chin to tilt his head up so I could look at him. "I want you and only you, forever. I remember most of the time I spent with Edward and the rest of you, but my memories aren't clear. It's like they happened to someone else. And they did Jas, because I'm not that same naive young girl. Edward was a crush, an infatuation. He was the first one to ever pay any attention to me and he was my first boyfriend. But Jasper, there was no equality, no partnership. No honest love. Not like there is with you."

I searched his face, desperate to make him believe, "You love me for who I am, not who you want me to be. And I love every part of you. I love the way you support me without being overbearing, the way you encourage me to make my own decisions, the way you put our me and our family first. I love your courage in overcoming your past, your strength of mind in controlling your darker side. Hell Jasper, I even love your darker side! Please, Jas never doubt my love for you."

He closed his eyes in a long, slow blink. When he opened them I could feel his relief, love, and wonder wash over me, 'I know that, now I'm sorry I ever doubted you, doubted us.'

I watched as he tentatively slid his hands up my calves and over my knees, gently coaxing them down. When my feet were on the floor his hands travelled up my thighs to my waist. I slid my hands over his well muscled shoulders, welcoming his touch and his body. His arms went around me and he buried his head in my lap, needing reassurance.

Some women would have felt empowered to have this powerful creature all but grovelling at her feet. I only felt sad that this
He looked up, 'I love you too, Isabella Cullen, so damn much.'

His hand slipped around the back of my neck and drew me down to him for a lingering kiss.

When we broke apart, our foreheads resting on each other, he smiled. 'Did you really tell Edward that you would use him for cannon fodder?'

"He told you that?" I said out loud, too shocked to think.

'Surprisingly, even without his telepathy, he managed to see what my problem was. He set me straight right quick and Randall backed him up. He was right, I was being stupid.'

His thumb brushed his scar on my neck and I hissed at the feeling that rushed through my body.

"Jasper," I said his name breathlessly.

"I'm yours, Angel."

"And I'm yours."

His mouth possessed me, his hands reclaimed my body as his as I melted into the feeling of his love running over and through me.

Hours later we lay naked in our bed, our limbs entwined as we tried to meld our bodies together closer than physically possible. Our bond was wide open and the images and emotions were flowing around us so completely that it was impossible to say whose they were.

Suddenly, Jasper tensed and a growl rippled out of his chest as there was a tentative knock at the door. I put my hand on his chest to calm him knowing it was Alice.

"I'm sorry you guys. Jasper, it's time. We have two hours." Her voice wasn't muffled at all with our hearing and we heard her go back downstairs.

I looked up at my mate with wide eyes. If I had thought that the anticipation of battle was bad, it was nothing to the feeling when the time came.

Jasper clutched me to him in a hug. "Everything will be fine, Angel. I promise."

"Please tell me you have a plan." I all but begged him.

He pulled away and I was confused at his grin, "How good are you girls and your 'mad ninja skills'?"

I couldn't help the evil grin that spread across my face.

A/N: As usual reviews are appreciated. I would like to know if everyone is still enjoying the story.

HUGE NEWS! - Insecurities is being translated into French! I had several requests and offers to do it and after numerous discussions Saw-v1 and I came to an agreement. She has taken on this monumental task and has just posted the first chapter. So, if French is your language of choice then you now have the option to read it on her profile.

http://www.fanfiction.net/s/6078419/1/Insecurities

"gestures to the fairies" Enjoy the ice cream and cookies everyone! *dances off into the garden humming Friends in Low Places*
I pulled on my black cargo pants and a black tank, and topped it with a durable heavy cotton button up. As I did up the buckle on my belt I looked over at my beautiful mate. She was pulling on a pair of black yoga pants to go with her green tank top.

I offered her my hand and she took it readily. No more sadness for my Angel. We would get through this day as quickly as possible and then we would be able to spend the rest of eternity together.

I was angry with myself for letting doubts creep into my mind when Bella had told me that she called Edward to join the fight. The Major in me knew that it made good strategic sense if he could be controlled, and I knew she was telling the truth when she said that she was worried about me and the safety of our family; but, there was that small nasty part of my brain that wondered ‘what if?’

What if she has been talking to him all along? What if my dominant side had scared her off? What if she remembered all the good times that she had had with him? Even I had to admit that in the midst of controlling her, he had made her happy. What if she missed him?

I had been monumentally stupid to doubt her. It was a mistake that I would never make again.

We walked downstairs to our already assembled family. My eyes scanned the room and lingered on Edward. Several of the family were still giving him dirty looks and I could feel their fury and distrust. I nodded to him and when Bella sat beside me on the couch, he moved to sit on the floor at her feet. He knew she was pretty much the only thing standing between certain members of the family and his destruction.

It occurred to me that he had placed himself at her feet, much like a faithful pet. I managed to choke back my laughter at the turn of situation. Bella gave me a funny look. Clearly she didn't know what I could possibly be finding funny at a time like this.

Garrett caught my eye and smothered a grin. He had caught it and found it just as ironic as I did.

"So what's the plan, Major?" Peter asked, drawing my attention to the matter at hand. He was all business.

I looked over at Alice. "Have you seen what they're planning?" I needed intel before I could settle on the right battle plan.

Alice pulled a dry erase marker out of her pocket and walked over to one of the large windows overlooking the lake. She began to draw out a sketch, "We need to meet them as they get to the large training field that you guys use. If we do, then Victoria will meet us just south of the middle. She'll have about half the newborns that she brought with her in the field. The rest will be farther south in the forest under the control of the captain. She plans to send them around to flank us once the fighting begins." As she spoke, she drew out a rough sketch showing the house in relation to the large training field about three miles south. She used 'N's to indicate approximately where each newborn would be as well as Victoria and the captain.

As the plan started to take shape in my head Alice started to bounce, "Ooooh! I have the perfect outfits for us to wear!"

"Mary-Alice, I'm not sure that we need to be worried about finding the perfect battle outfit at the moment," Randall said with a softly chiding tone.

"Yeah Ali, the newborns won't be stopped in their tracks by your incredible fashion sense!" Emmett laughed.

But in this case I had a pretty good idea where she was going with it and I approved whole heartily. "Maybe you should go and get them Alice." I smirked at her.

Alice threw the doubling Thomases in the room a triumphant look and sped off to her room.

"Major, what-?" Garrett started to ask.

Charlotte interrupted him, "Wait Garrett, I think I have an idea what they have planned and by the look on Bella's face, she does too."

Sure enough Bella looked almost excited and I could feel the confidence rolling off her and into me.
Alice came back downstairs with a huge box. "I had a vision of us wearing these but had no idea why. They should all fit though."

She opened the box and pulled out a small lightweight jacket in a hunters camouflage pattern that looked like dead sticks and white snow. The area around our house was slowly melting into an early spring so the snow was almost all melted off the trees but not entirely off the ground. The jacket would blend in seamlessly with the forest around the training field.

"I was so excited to find that they make them for ladies and kids now! I think they're so cute!" Alice pulled a matching pair of pants out and held them up to her body. "See, they even make them small enough for me!"

I walked back to the window and picked up the marker. "So the plan is this. Peter, Garrett, Randall, Emmett, Carlisle, and Edward; you guys will come with me to meet Victoria and her band of newbies in the field. Bella; you and your merry band of ninjas will split up and slowly pick off as many of the flanking newborns as possible." I looked at Bella, "Only take out the stragglers and do it as quickly and quietly as possible. You're to work in pairs, no takin' em' on one at a time, got it? I'll let you guys take care of who partners with whom. You'll have Charlotte, Alice, and Kate with you. Rose; I need you to stay here at the house with Esme and Annie."

Rose looked mutinous but I ignored her and looked back at Bella. "Angel, do not put yourselves in any more danger than is absolutely necessary. From what Alice says there will be approximately a dozen newborns hiding in those woods. I only want you to take out the newborns. All of you are to avoid the Captain; leave him to us."

She nodded and I could see her planning all the ways to surprise her opponents.

"Remember, the newborns are runnin' on their human blood. They're fast and they're strong. Don't let them get their arms around you or they'll crush your chest easily," I told the whole group.

I saw Edward look up at Bella. They seemed to be having a silent conversation and I tried to ignore the irritation and jealousy itching at me, causing my demon to growl.

"Peter, Garrett, Carlisle, Randall, and Em; you're with me meeting the main half head on. Edward!" I snapped out his name interrupting his little conversation with Bella. I waited until his attention refocused on me rather than on my mate, "You and I are gonna be up close and personal through this. You stay next to me and you take orders from me or Peter. You hear anything; I wanna know what it is as soon as the words can come out of your mouth. Got me?" I bit out the words, hating that I had to have him anywhere near me or Bella. But, she brought him here for this reason; and if he had to be somewhere, I would rather it be beside me than Bella. Sneaky little bastard. "Questions?"

"I think Esme is more than capable of taking care of Annie on her own. I respectfully request, that I be allowed to fight with my sisters?" Rosalie spoke through her teeth and I could feel the anger rolling off her. She knew she had been benched, but until now I didn't think she would be able to pull it off. Today was the first time since we were attacked and almost killed that she seemed like her old self.

"I'm deliberately makin' it look like I've left all the women at the house. We can't be sure that one or two won't get past us and make it to the house. I can't leave Esme here to protect Annie alone, Rose," I said.

"Are you doubting my skills, or Esme's; because from where I'm sitting you're leaving me here because you think I'm too weak to fight." She crossed her arms over her chest and gave me her best Rose, bitch-brow.

"Are you too weak to fight?" I asked her quietly. If she threw a fit then she would be staying here.

"No. Care to try me?" Her voice was low and dangerously quiet.

"No. You can join Bella." I watched as Emmett's face snapped to mine. I knew he wanted her to stay behind but I had felt her steely determination and anger. I hadn't felt one flicker of fear or insecurity. She wasn't her regular self, but she was well enough to be seriously dangerous to anyone who threatened her.

Garrett shifted his weight forward slightly, "I think I can take out the captain, Major. If you send me with the girls you'll have one more ninja and an even number of fighters."

I realized that by adding Rose back into the mix that one of the girls would have been fighting on their own. Garrett was just as quiet as Bella. I would have liked to talk to him more about his plan but I was distracted by Edward and Bella having another silent conversation.

"Fine," I snapped at Garrett.

Bella must have felt my irritation or heard it in my voice because her head turned to me and our eyes locked. She cocked an eyebrow at me as if to say, 'Really? Again?'

I opened my mouth ready to insert my foot but she saved me from embarrassing myself.

"After our phone call a few days ago, Edward took the initiative to do something that may help us." She looked down at him and nodded indicating that he should tell us what he had done.
His eyes widened slightly in surprise and he looked around nervously, but he locked eyes with me. "Bella was telling me how much the human plasma was helping you and Rose heal. I thought that if we all drank some that it might help us gain some strength that we wouldn't ordinarily get from animal blood."

"Where did you get it Edward?" Carlisle asked, obviously concerned.

"I went to a few hospitals and told them that I was doing research for the Cullen Foundation. In return a number of donations were made to the hospitals, as well as the Red Cross and Canadian Blood Services," he said looking down at his lap.

I could feel his honesty but at the same time I felt hesitation and reluctant anticipation. He had done exactly as he said, but he was nervous to admit it for fear of further rejection from the family.

"How many bags were you able to get Edward?" Bella asked softly.

I think she already knew but she wanted him to be the one to tell us.

"Twenty-four between six hospitals. I didn't want to strain any one place by depriving them of too many bags. They all assured me that they had enough on hand to be able to handle any emergency situations that might come up."

"That was very good thinking, Son," Carlisle said quietly and I could feel Edward's relief and hope.

I had to admit that I was impressed. He had taken an objective look at a volatile situation and come up with a plan to help. Not only that, but he had done it in such a way that not only would humans not be suspicious of the amounts that he had requested; they were also receiving badly needed funding.

"As much as I am not looking forward to it, Carlisle's right; that was a good idea, Edward," I admitted.

Bella nudged him with her knee and I knew she was telling him 'I told you so' silently. He nodded slightly and looked down at his lap.

"Let's get ready people," I ordered.

Minutes later we had all choked back a bag of plasma and were all assembled outside. I had to admit the girls looked really cute in their camo outfits. They were actually pretty hard to spot when they stood still. Garrett towered over them all and I gave him a serious look over their heads. He nodded his silent assurance; he would protect them the best he could.

Alice was spraying them all down with some kind of hunter's scent dampening spray. It actually worked fairly well. It wouldn't eliminate their natural scents completely but now any scent trails that the newborns did pick up would smell days old. I had to admit that Alice truly thought of everything.

Bella walked over to me and in my peripheral vision I saw that all the couples were pairing off for a few final words and touches before the battle. Esme and Annie were the exceptions since they would be in the house.

As I looked down into my Angel's eyes, I could feel her love as it wrapped around me like a blanket; her pride in me shining out of her golden eyes.

'No takin' chances Angel, please? Just take a few of them out and get the hell out of there. I love you.'

'I love you too, Jasper. Go, remind them who they're messing with. Reintroduce them to the Major they're all so scared of.' She reached up on her tip toes and kissed me sweetly. 'Remember that I love every part of you. Lover, Major, and Demon. They are all a part of the man I fell in love with and plan to spend every day of eternity with.'

I hugged her to me, hearing everything she was trying to tell me. She didn't care how ugly I may have to get. She wouldn't care if the demon broke his chain and a massacre happened; she would be there to bring me back and help me through the fallout.

Letting her go was the hardest thing I had ever done. I hated the fact that she was joining in the fight. I would rather that she had been at home with Annie. I wished all the women were.

When I was human, that's the way it was. The men went off to war and the women stayed home. Only I realized that just because women stayed home, didn't mean that they weren't still fighting. They were left to mind the children, tend the crops, and defend the home. At times it had been just as perilous as if they had been standing on the front lines.

Now, women went to war with the men. They demanded the right to stand beside the men rather than behind them. Some men took exception to this, taking it as a blow to their manhood. I just hated feeling helpless to defend them. They were more than capable of doing the job, but they were too valuable to lose to something as ugly and horrible as war. In my mind women were the heart of the family, the pillar of strength, the anchor. They were the sun around which all the planets rotated, shedding light, love, and guidance. Bella was my reason to exist. My life before her was adequate, even fun at times in the last few decades; now everyday was something to look forward to, simply because she was at my side.

Today there was a possibility that I could lose her.
As the women melted into the forest, Garrett looked at the men left behind. We all wore the exact same expressions on our faces. Even Carlisle was looking paler than usual as his daughters went off to war and Edward looked at Bella as if he had been abandoned to a pack of vengeful werewolves.

"I'll protect them the best I can. I'll make sure to take the captain for myself," Garrett said. "They've trained really hard for this. They're as deadly as any vampires I have ever seen. Have a little faith. They're fighting for their home and family; that makes them really dangerous."

With that he was gone; fading into the forest like a ghost.

"Let's get this over with. The sooner we send this bitch and her minions back to hell, the sooner we can get on with our lives," I said still staring at the forest. I turned to face them, "No mistakes this time. No one gets left alive to avenge a mate. This ends today. I don't want to be looking over my shoulder for the next hundred years."

Peter and Randall nodded. Emmett grunted with a small smirk on his face. Carlisle's eyebrow furrowed. I looked to Edward thinking that I would have to make sure that Carlisle would be alright during the fight. He abhorred any loss of life, preferring to try to talk through a conflict.

Bella had obviously lifted her shield because Edward nodded his agreement with my thoughts.

They all fell into step behind me as I headed to the large training field where Alice said the battle would be taking place.

Everything was still and silent. The field was covered in a few inches of snow; the trees still hanging on to small patches of it here and there. Everything was contrasting white and brown. Where previously the stillness felt like the anticipation of spring; now, it felt as if the forest itself was holding its breath for fear of drawing attention to itself, and drawing the ire of the two armies facing off.

I could hear faint sounds of things moving through the forest. Fallen branches snapping under a careless heel, the panting breath of someone stressed; a few of the newborns were whimpering like starving leashed dogs, needing to feed so badly that they saw anything as prey.

I sent a thought out to Bella, 'The newborns have been starved. They will be desperate and vicious, but infinitely more careless. Keep your head and remember your training.'

I knew she would broadcast this to everyone and saw Randall nod in my direction.

"Victoria separated her forces just like Alice said she would. She doesn't know I'm here and is thinking that this should be an easy victory," Edward said from my left shoulder.

He was doing exactly as I had instructed.

I decided to take Bella's advice and remind them of just who they were fucking with. I slowly stripped off my shirt and stood tall and bare chested; displaying my scars for all to see. To my left I saw Peter do the same and I felt the shock and instinctual fear from my family as they took in the horrific scarring that Peter and I both carried. Emmett had seen mine before but for them to see both Peter and I at the same time and feel the emotions of the Major, they were suitably cowed by the experience.

Before any of them could say anything Victoria walked on to the field; her flame red hair a warning beacon against the backdrop of white snow. A line of newborns appeared at her back but on seeing all of us lined up, and taking in Peter and I; they were tense and I could feel their instinctual need to run.

I smirked and let my power roll out in front of me as I watched them twitch in fear; one of the younger ones actually falling to his knees. I felt shock, fear, and disbelief from Victoria when she saw Emmett and I standing tall and uninjured. She covered it up quickly, her back straightening and her anger returning.

Peter chuckled beside me, "You haven't lost your touch."

I watched as Victoria snapped out an angry command and the fallen newborn quickly got up. She tossed her long hair and she smiled evilly. "All the little women stayed home knitting did they? No matter, we will get to them later. I will enjoy seeing the pain and fear on their faces when I tell them you're all dust!"

Edward murmured low, "She's surprised to see me and not happy that her newborns are scared but still confident. She's thinking about the force left behind and how shocked you're going to be when you see the smoke coming from the house after the women are killed. Your standing here is making her doubt her plan to split up her forces."

A snarl bubbled up from my throat. Several of the newborns took a step back.

"You should've brought braver soldiers with you Victoria. These ones won't last long," I said in a low but carrying voice. She sneered, "We outnumber you more than two to one. You don't stand a chance."

"This ends here, bitch. You could've brought double the numbers you did and you still wouldn't have a hope of beating us."

"You should've brought braver soldiers with you Victoria. These ones won't last long," I said in a low but carrying voice. She sneered, "We outnumber you more than two to one. You don't stand a chance."

"This ends here, bitch. You could've brought double the numbers you did and you still wouldn't have a hope of beating us."
Last chance, either you surrender to your fate now and die quickly, or I make it painful for you, before you die. Your choice.”

The flame haired whore fell right into my plans. I could see Alice’s visions playing in the back of my head and knew the timing would be perfect.

“You’re going to be the ones surrendering.” She smiled, “CARLOS!” She yelled looking over my shoulder.

I shook my head, “Did you really think that splitting your forces was wise? Your Carlos isn’t coming to back you up. And neither are his newborns.”

“CARLOS!” she called again. Her newborns were getting more and more nervous and I hadn’t even done anything yet.

“Are you looking for this?” Bella’s voice came from the edge of the forest on my right. I could see Edward’s smile as Bella stood there with what was obviously Carlos’s head in her hand.

She held it up and it blinked. We watched as the venom leaked out of it and poured down her arm. “I’m afraid he isn’t feeling up to helping you right now. Sorry.”

Victoria let out a scream of rage. “YOU!” she stopped and composed herself for a moment. “Better be careful playing in the woods little girl, you might get hurt.”

Bella laughed a low sexy chuckle. “I’m not the same scared little girl you remember. You don’t scare me anymore.”

A metallic tearing screech echoed through the forest. It was the sound of vampire teeth tearing through vampire flesh. Victoria’s eyes lit up mistakenly thinking that she was winning.

“Give up Vicky. We have you surrounded. That was the last of the fourteen newborns that you left behind to try to flank us. Face it, you’re Fucked,” Bella said with a confident smile.

I was struck dumb for a minute. I knew the girls were good, but fourteen in under fifteen minutes? And all we heard was one death? Pride burst out from me. This was my mate and my family and they were perfect. I wondered about the fourteen though. Alice had said twelve. I let that line of thinking fade as the girls materialized in separate spots around the field making it obvious that Victoria was indeed surrounded. The fear on the field went up a notch and then I felt it; fury.

Victoria lost all control and things went to hell really quick. The newborns attacked and suddenly we were locked in a fierce battle. I regretted taking my shirt off now, showing my scars meant that the newborns were more likely to attack the more seasoned fighters as a horde. Our scars drew their attention like an elk with a broken leg to a pack of starving wolves. Their instincts telling them to take out those that are the biggest threat; therefore, Peter, Charlotte, and I are now the prime targets.

Ignoring the pain from a deep bite on my arm, I started to dispatch newborns right and left, trying to make my way to where Victoria had been last. Suddenly I realized that I had killed several more newborns than I should have.

I heard Alice’s panicked, “I didn’t see them!” in my head.

Doing a mental count I had already taken out eight newborns and there were five more in front of me. A glance around told me that my family was fighting more of them all around me. Where the hell had all these newborns come from?

The girls had joined in the fight and Edward was at my back when I heard him say, “Oh my god! Jasper!”

Then I heard something that I had hoped to never hear again. Laughter. Maria’s laughter. What the fuck was she doing here?

All the fighting on the field stopped as I looked to the south and saw the petite raven haired vampire standing on a large boulder smiling. She was flanked by several large mature vampires, none of which I knew but that were obviously her guard.

“Ah my love! How I have missed you! There truly is nothing like a battle with your particular style. I love the smell of fear and unbridled rage that floats on the air when you are in the thick of things.” Her crimson eyes scanned the battlefield, lingering on Charlotte but fixating on Peter; the smile melting from her face, her gaze chilling. “Ah, Captain. I thought I might find you here.” Her eyes narrowed and I felt her fury at him as she realized that he had been the reason I had left. I knew then that Peter and Charlotte would be targeted for their part in my escape.

Edward nodded in my peripheral vision confirming my thought.

Maria seemed to snap out of her daze and went back to smiling beatifically, "But never mind that now. Come! I tire of the scenery here. We will go back to Mexico and the beauty of the desert.” She clapped her hands laughing in delight, no doubt expecting that I would just heel like a good dog.

My sire hadn't changed a bit. She was still plumb crazy. No two ways about it. She looked at me quizzically for a minute.

"Come my mate, your vacation is over. It's time to go home," she said holding out her hand.
I heard a snarl from my left and saw Bella crouched over what was left of a newborn. Her thoughts were a tangle of red and yellow rage with a stream of incoherent images and words all indicating the ways she was determined to kill Maria. Rose was at her side murmuring low, obviously trying to keep her calm.

"MINE!" was all she said. Her voice was low and guttural but carried the weight of a scream. She had venom dripping from her exposed teeth and a growl rippled out of her chest sounding vicious.

"Major, you know I don't allow you to keep pets," Maria said frowning as she looked at Bella as if she was nothing more than a stray dog.

Victoria walked up to Maria, "What are you waiting for? Kill them!"

Maria reached out and cupped Victoria's face gently in her palm. She pet her hair like a mother would her child. "Silly child. Did you really think that I was here to help you in your little vendetta? Hmmm? No, I came here to retrieve my mate. You are my welcome home present to him." And with that she dug her nails into Victoria's neck and decapitated her; tossing the head to one of her guards. "Have fun with the body then burn it."

I could feel the horror emanating from my family as two of the guards fell on what was left of Victoria's body and proceeded to rape it right there in front of everyone. When one was done it was simply passed to the next as Victoria's head was forced to watch while her body was defiled. It had been a familiar sight when Peter and I had served in her army. No matter how much we hated Victoria, no one in my family would have ever wished that on her.

Maria turned back to me with a smile, "Come home my love and I will allow your little friends to live. Together we will be unstoppable once again."

She couldn't see the disgust on my face and I could feel that she honestly thought that she had just given me a gift. She had done things like this numerous times before. In my early days as a vampire she had emotionally and physically tortured me in her attempt to break me to her will. I wasn't her puppet anymore.

I started to make decision after decision as Bella relayed each and every possible outcome from Alice's visions. This was handy but we were running out of time. I could feel that Bella was barely keeping it together. And then, time ran out. One of the newborns lost control and jumped Bella, breaking her concentration. I heard her scream of pain and rage and the world went to hell all over again. The demon broke his chain at Bella's scream and I surged toward my mate.

I heard Peter yell to our group, "STAY BEHIND HIM. KILL ANY THAT ARE IN HIS WAKE!"

"SEIZE HIM! KILL THE OTHERS!" My maker screamed over the roar of battle.

I watched as body after body fell at my feet but I couldn't see my mate. I could hear fighting happening around me but I was focused on finding my mate. Pain lanced through my back as a newborn managed to jump me from behind. I reached back and pulled it over my shoulder; roaring as I ripped it in half, the venom falling like a shower over my head, drenching my hair and body. And then I was hit from all sides; my maker's guard tackling me to the ground attempting to capture me. As I struggled in their grip on the ground there was a break in the fighting in front of me; I saw my mate circling my maker.

My beautiful mate's eyes were pitch black and she was covered in venom. I could see several bites on her arms and neck; and her leg was missing a chunk out of it causing her to limp. My mate was wounded from battle and she was facing a vampire two hundred years her senior. I watched as my maker leaped and took down my mate. My power burst from me as it never had before; my captors falling away from me screaming in pain before falling to the ground in convulsions.

I looked up to see my mate pinned underneath my maker, teeth at her throat. My roar shook the snow from the trees and my vision went red.

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A/N: No rotten fruit people for leaving you with a cliffie! The fairies are on full alert and ready for any attack you mount! I promised you action and that things would get rough.

Well Bella is bitching at me to tell her stories, so I will be in the garden listening carefully to what she tells me. In the meantime *gestures to the fairies* enjoy the strawberry shortcake and lemonade. I just love summer! *claps hands with a giggle and a bounce and then skips off into the garden humming 'Holding Out for a Hero' by Bonnie Tyler*
As the girls and I dressed in our redneck best, we discussed strategy. We had worked together for several months now and knew our strengths and weaknesses well. Garrett however, was an unknown quantity as he hadn't ever really trained with us while we were using all our powers. We decided to stick with our usual fighting partners, which meant that I would fight with Rose, while Kate and Char would team up; leaving Alice with Garrett. No sense in changing what worked.

Even I had to admit we looked pretty bad ass in our full camo suits. Alice had, of course, gotten the sizes and styles perfect and the heavier fabric didn't pull or make any noise. Apparently, humans spent millions of dollars every year on the research and development of fabrics that were quiet and blocked the scent of the hunter, enabling them to stalk animals better. Who knew it could actually be useful to a bunch of vampires.

It was really weird standing beside Rose and barely being able to smell her. Living with everyone meant that I could clearly identify their individual scents without ever having to see them. Even after a week I would be able to track anyone of my family through the forest and find them. But once Alice sprayed us down with that weird scent cancelling spray; I could stand right next to Rose and it smelled like a week old trail after a couple days of rain. I had to clamp down on my instincts that were starting to rebel against the unfamiliar circumstances.

We all stood in the yard and it was obvious that everyone was taking the precaution of saying goodbye to their mates. I knew it was a distinct possibility that things would get very ugly very quickly. I knew we were as prepared as we could be, but I also knew that at the first sign of honest to goodness aggression against me that Jasper would lose his cool. It was entirely likely that his demon would be making an appearance today and I didn't want him to get swallowed by his feelings afterwards.

He looked so incredible standing there in his black cargos and button up Dickies shirt. He was every inch the Major at the moment but still looked at me like I hung the moon. Could a girl ask for a more perfect man?

'No takin' chances Angel, please? Just take a few of them out and get the hell out of there. I love you.'

He was too flawless for words. He wasn't fussing at me for going into a dangerous situation. He wasn't manipulating the situation to keep me from getting hurt. He wasn't even asking me to stay home. No, he gave me the tools to defend myself and was giving me advice on how to win while telling me he loved me. He loves me for the person that I am; not for the person he wishes I was. God I love Him!

'I love you too, Jasper. Go, remind them who they're messing with. Reintroduce them to the Major they're all so scared of.' I reached up on my tip toes and kissed him softly. 'Remember that I love every part of you. Lover, Major, and Demon. They are all a part of the man I fell in love with and plan to spend every day of eternity with.'

I knew that leaving him to play my part in the battle would be hard, but until I took those first steps, I had no idea how hard it would be. As I made my way in to the forest I thought about how different my existence was now. Before, I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would trip and fall through life; thinking that that's the way it would be forever. Then I met Edward. I would tri
When I reached the tree line I stopped briefly and waited for my half of the troops to catch up. We all exchanged long looks
before grins spread over our faces. We broke into a silent jog and then scampered up into the trees like squirrels.

Jasper had said not to go for the obvious kill. I projected my idea to Alice and I heard her mental giggle in response. I
relayed her vision to the rest of my team.

When we reached the very outskirts of where the approaching army would be coming through, we spread out in a large
semi-circle. I was at the very limit of my mental range to Jasper. I knew I could contact him over a greater distance but it
only seemed to happen in a panic situation and couldn't be relied on. So now we waited, motionless and nearly invisible in
the trees five miles from the house.

Alice was in the middle and for the most part wouldn't be fighting. Her job was to relay all her visions to me. Because she
was watching all of the members of our family, there was a possibility that she might become distracted and get hurt.
Rose and I were sitting about fifteen feet apart, in side-by-side trees, roughly fifty yards to the right of Alice. Kate and Char
were similarly placed to her left. Garrett was higher up behind us keeping a watchful eye open for the army.

'Bella, we can't use our teeth. If we do then we'll be heard.' Alice said and then projected her vision of the consequences
of being heard. It wasn't pretty.

'Alright Amazons and Garrett; newgame rule. Brute force only; no teeth. Anyone breaking the cone of silence will be
sentenced to dating a human boy of my choosing for one month when we finally go back to school. That includes you
Garrett. I'll be nice and pick a very nice mid-twenties gay guy for you to love.' My head rang with mental laughter and
Garrett's grumbling about the bet. 'Hey you're the one that wanted to hunt with the girls. You play our game; you play by
our rules.'

'Heads up ladies! They'll be here in two minutes.' Alice warned.

'Can you see if it's the whole army or just our targets?' Charlotte asked.

'It's the whole army so stay quiet. They'll stop almost right under us to split up. Victoria will leave the flanking half here
to wait for her signal, so once we get the heads up from the Major, we can attack.' Alice replied.

Sure enough, right on time, we saw the first newborns being led cautiously through the forest by Victoria. She was flanked
by two males. One looked to be Hispanic and the other was pale even by vampire standards and looked almost albino.

Victoria stopped and turned to give her orders virtually right under our noses.

'It would be so easy to take her out right now,' Rose growled in my head.

'We follow our orders. The Major says to do it this way; we do it this way.' Charlotte snapped out.

'Besides, can you imagine the whining we would have to listen to if we took care of the problem ourselves? For the next
century it would be nothing but watching the men try to prove their masculinity. I say we let them have their half of the
newborns.' Kate pointed out.

'They are babies when they don't get their way,' Charlotte laughed.

'You guys do remember that I'm here, don't you?' Garrett drawled out.

'Oh darling, you know I wasn't talking about you; don't you? We were talking about the men.' Kate said with a placating
tone.

'I am a man!' he insisted.

Our banter was halted as Victoria began to issue her orders.

"Carlos you will stay here with fourteen of them. That will be more than enough to take them by surprise. When you hear
the first sound of fighting, circle around and flank them. Remember you are to capture only. No Killing. I want him to watch
as I tear the newest member of their family apart." Victoria snarled.

She jerked her head and then stalked off into the forest with her half of the newborns, leaving Carlos and our targets
behind.

Who the hell had she been talking about? Edward? Jasper?

Two of the newborns began to fight and Carlos broke them up with a snarl and a strong backhand. "Fucking maggots!
You're behaving like a bunch of humans! Spread out and be ready, and for fucks sake stop that infernal WHINING!"

"So thirsty," murmured one of the newborns and sniffed the air looking for the scent of blood.

"You'll feed after we finish our job here! You survive, and I'll let you feed all you want. Until then; SHUT UP!" Carlos roared.
'The newborns have been starved. They will be desperate and vicious, but infinitely more careless. Keep your head and remember your training.' I heard from Jasper and relayed it to the rest of the family as I rolled my eyes. Really, starved you say? No.

Yeah, so it probably wasn't the time for sarcasm; but really, it was obvious.

The newborns had spread out as they were told and one was in perfect position below Rose and me. Carlos seemed to be staring out where the other half of the battle would be and was distracted by listening for Victoria.

'It's time,'

That was the signal we were waiting for. At Alice's mental words we dropped silently out of the trees. Seamlessly Rose grabbed our target around the neck and held him as I twisted his neck from his shoulders with a quiet poof. It looked like rock being crushed and the body fell to the ground. We jumped on top of it camouflaging it. It wasn't long before another one came to investigate the motion and noise and he was dispatched as well.

We blurred behind a tree and with Alice's visions playing in our heads, used our skills to quickly dispatch most of the flanking force. The ones that we weren't actively fighting I encased in a really small bubbles, making them curl up into the foetal position on the ground. I managed to trap seven of them that way.

Soon, there was only Carlos and one other left.

The plan went to hell when the remaining newborn panicked and launched himself at Garrett as soon as I released the shields, while Carlos lunged at Charlotte.

Kate jumped in to assist her mate.

Char was half pinned under a very angry Hispanic male vampire; a place that we were all told never to be. As females we were physically weaker than males. It wasn't sexist; it was a fact. Char was in real danger.

I leaped at him and landed on his back. Using my momentum as I rolled over him, I twisted his head from his shoulders. Alice and Rose had hit him at the same time and torn off his legs.

We all got to our feet and looked around. Kate and Garrett were gone.

"The newborn took off running. Kate and Garrett went after it. They'll catch it and meet us at the training field right on time," Alice reassured us, as she helped Charlotte to her feet.

We quickly piled all the bodies and set them ablaze. Just as I was about to toss Carlos' head into the flames Alice stopped me.

"We have to go. Bring that. Vicky will want to see it," she said with an evil grin.

We all ran to the training field to see the other half of the fight.

As we approached we slowed to a walk and following Alice's vision I stepped out of the forest.

"CARLOS!" Victoria yelled.

"Are you looking for this?" I asked her holding up the head that I brought with me.

She looked shocked as I threw the head at her feet but soon covered it and let out a scream of rage. "YOU!" she stopped and composed herself for a moment. "Better be careful playing in the woods little girl, you might get hurt," she said with a sneer.

I chuckled. "I'm not the same scared little girl you remember. You don't scare me anymore."

And she didn't. Now she just pissed me off. If it weren't for her and her grudge over a fight that her mate started, we would all be enjoying our existence.

A metallic tearing screech echoed through the forest. It was the sound of vampire teeth tearing through vampire flesh. Victoria's eyes lit up mistakenly thinking that she was winning.

"Give up Vicky. We have you surrounded. That was the last of the fourteen newborns that you left behind to try to flank us. Face it, you're Fucked," I said smiling. Esme would be appalled at my language but I figured she wasn't here right now. I did see Carlisle frown though. Oops.

I felt a surge of pride from Jasper but didn't dare look at him. I knew he had his shirt off and if I looked I knew I would be dangerously distracted.

And then, as the girls took their positions surrounding the field, the first newborn lost control and attacked Randall. Edward's warning was barely relayed through me to Randall in time for him to defend himself. Alice jumped the newborn
between her and her mate, landing on its shoulders and doing a handspring off it, coming away with its head as it dropped to the ground.

I looked around the field needing to see Jasper. He was magnificent. As I watched he punched a hole right through the chest of a newborn without breaking stride in his charge to where Victoria had been standing. I watched as his muscles flexed throwing a newborn to the ground and ripping the arms from the torso. He threw his head back and roared, his eyes the black of the Major as he searched out his next target.

That was the last sight I managed to take note of before I was hit from the side. I rolled and came away with an arm; the newborn in front of me screaming in rage lunged at me again. Faster than a human blink; the newborn was at my feet. I bumped into something and spun to see Rose at my back. We fought as a team, efficiently taking out one after another when I heard laughter ringing out over the field. Everything stopped.

I looked up to see a beautiful small Hispanic woman backed by several HUGE male vampires. They were obviously her guard.

"Who the hell is that?" Rose murmured beside me.

I shook my head. I was just as mystified.

"Ah my love! How I have missed you! There truly is nothing like a battle with your particular style. I love the smell of fear and unbridled rage that floats on the air when you are in the thick of things," her voice ringing like bells over the battlefield.

She had better not be talking to my mate. I could feel my throat getting thick.

Her crimson eyes scanned the battlefield, lingering on Charlotte but fixating on Peter; the smile melting from her face, her gaze chilling. "Ah, Captain. I thought I might find you here."

Somewhere to my left I heard Charlotte's low growl and knew my sister was just as pissed as I was. Now I knew who this bitch was, and I was pissed.

Maria seemed to snap out of her daze and went back to smiling beatifically, "But never mind that now. Come! I tire of the scenery here. We will go back to Mexico and the beauty of the desert." She clapped her hands, laughing in delight and looking expectantly at my Jasper.

This woman was some kind of crazy if she thought I was just going to let her waltz in here and take my mate.

Maria looked at Jasper quizzically for a minute. "Come my mate, your vacation is over. It's time to go home," she said holding out her hand.

MATE? Oh I Don't Think So!

My vision went red and I could feel my throat and chest vibrating with the force of my growls. I could hear Rose talking to me, trying to calm me down but nothing was working. This woman came here for my mate. She wanted to take him from me.

"MINE!" It wasn't as loud as I wanted it to be but it got my point across. I could feel the venom running out of my mouth and down my chin. Rose was physically holding me back now.

"Major, you know I don't allow you to keep pets," Maria said frowning at me.

Every unnecessary breath increased my snarls. This woman just kept pushing my buttons. My control was held only by the barest thread and Rose's hold on me.

Victoria walked up to Maria, "What are you waiting for? Kill them!"

Maria reached out and cupped Victoria's face gently in her palm. She pet her hair like a mother would her child. "Silly child. Did you really think that I was here to help you in your little vendetta? Hmmm? No, I came here to retrieve my mate. You are my welcome home present to him." And with that she dug her nails into Victoria's neck and decapitated her; tossing the head to one of her guards. "Have fun with the body, then burn it."

The shock of seeing Victoria's body being so carelessly violated sent Rose and I reeling, snapping me out of my rage. My hand went over hers and we clung to each other in horror, momentarily forgetting the dangerous situation that our family was in. I may have wanted Victoria dead, but to see such a violent act was repulsive no matter who it was. I held on to my sister, who suffered the same way, hoping to give her strength.

Maria turned back to Jasper with a smile, as if she had just given him some kind of gift and now expected a hug, "Come home my love and I will allow your little friends to live. Together we will be unstoppable once again."

Jasper must have started to make decision after decision because Alice started to relay vision after vision to me. I opened my mind to relay them to Jasper knowing he needed the information to get us all out of this mess. How had Alice not seen Maria coming here?
I was hit hard from behind and my concentration broke as pain lanced through my shoulder. A newborn had snuck up and tried to decapitate me. Only my knees buckling in reflex had caused it to lose its grip and I was able to roll over it trapping it between my legs and rip off its head.

I heard Peter yell out, "STAY BEHIND HIM. KILL ANY THAT ARE IN HIS WAKE!"

"SEIZE HIM! KILL THE OTHERS!" The little Spanish home wrecker screamed.

I fought and killed two more before I was face to face with the bitch that tortured my mate for over a hundred years.

"Once you are gone, my querido will come back to me and we will once again rule the south," she snarled.

I limped forward having been bitten severely on the leg. She didn't have a mark on her, not a hair out of place.

"Sure you can handle me? You look more like the type that has everyone else fight their battle for them," I taunted her. Yeah, it wasn't my smartest move. She was at least two hundred years old and had fought in countless wars.

"Ah bebé, you are no match for me. Once I taunt the demon into battle, he will happily destroy you himself; saving me the trouble. Then he will gladly return to my side. My mate always comes back to me," she said condescendingly.

Then she was on me. She was so much faster than I had thought she would be and her teeth were right at my throat.

I heard the demon roar and knew that Maria had pushed my mate into losing control. I felt his rage build and explode outwards like the fallout from a bomb. Maria was forced from me as my instincts took over, my shield rushed out with more force than it ever had, and knocked her on her back.

Unfortunately she was trapped inside my shield as it closed around the two of us. She got up and looked around confused for a minute. I put my hand to my throat knowing that she had torn a huge gash in it when she had been thrown back. I felt the wetness of my top as the venom flowed from me and down my front between my breasts, soaking into my pants.

Jasper was outside my shield fighting off the last of Maria’s guard, while the rest were in several pieces at his feet. I staggered a little, pain flooding through my body and making me feel weak. I knew I had only seconds before I collapsed.

Maria took advantage of my weakness, as I knew she would, and walked to stand in front of me. I saw her draw back her hand to strike me. I watched, as if in slow motion, as it came towards my throat to finish the job of tearing my head from my shoulders. I stepped back and grabbed her wrist, deflecting it and allowing it to follow through. I drew back and punched her arm at the elbow forcing it the wrong way and breaking it off.

She fell to her knees in front of me shocked and I leaned down to whisper in her ear, "Jasper is my mate, Bitch." before using my teeth to rip her head off.

As I staggered backwards I felt my shield drop. I fell to my knees, my body in too much pain to support me as my Mate gathered me into his arms. The last thing I saw was his demon black eyes, the venom running out of his mouth as crouched protectively over me. The inhuman roar erupting from his throat as he tried to protect me, sounding agonized.

A/N: Well my dearies, we are nearing the end. It had to happen sooner or later. Only a couple of chapters left. I hope you liked this chapter as much as I did. I had thought the action was over but Bella had her own thoughts on things. Let me know what you think!

Triple chocolate cheesecake for all! *waves for the fairies to pass out the dessert* There’s iced tea and lemonade as well. *dances off into the garden humming ‘Everything I Do’ by Bryan Adams*
Jasper’s rage washed over me, bringing me to my knees. I had never felt anything like it. Even in the last stages of the change, I had not experienced such a crushing pressure in my chest. The fiery depths of his rage making my heart feel like it was being melted from the inside and the blackness of fear crushing my brain, making me grasp at my skull. I looked up in time to watch in horror as Bella’s throat was torn open when Maria was thrown off her as her shield expanded; protecting Maria from Jasper’s assault.

Like my brother, I struggled to my feet and tried to get through the masses of newborns that stood between her and me in time to save her. But I was too far away and Jasper, though closer, was still fighting the last remaining members of Maria’s guard. Bella was only months old, she wouldn’t stand a chance against a vampire as old and as experienced as Maria.

Like so many times before, I underestimated her. I watched as Bella dodged Maria’s killing blow and ripped off her arm all in one swift move.

Maria fell to her knees, shocked that a newborn had managed to harm her. Bella leaned down to whisper in her ear, “Jasper is my mate, Bitch,” before viciously sinking her teeth into Maria’s neck and ripping her head off.

She stood victorious for a moment; her long mahogany hair blowing slightly in the breeze. She embodied every description of a beautiful warrior woman that I had ever read about. Valkyrie, Amazon, Queen Cordelia, Atalanta, Joan of Arc – at that moment, Bella embodied them all. Her thoughts were open to me for the first time since I met her and they were consumed with thoughts of Jasper and avenging his past. Her love for him overrode all other concerns including her own injuries.

She wavered on her feet and I took in her actual appearance. How was she still standing? Her thigh was ripped open almost to the bone, she had several bites up and down her arms and Maria’s teeth had all but torn her throat out. Her clothes were soaked with her venom and she was paler than I had ever seen anyone, human or vampire.

Jasper’s agonized roar shook the trees around us as we watched Bella fall. He dispatched the last of Maria’s guard as though they were mere tissue paper. He took Bella in his arms and hunched over her clearly taking a defensive posture.

One would think that with the fall of Victoria and Maria that the battle would be over but there were still over a dozen feral newborns caught up in bloodlust. I scanned the thoughts around me and realized that three of them were tracking our scents back to the house. Esme and Annie were still there. Esme could take care of herself for the most part but sweet little Annie should never be exposed to any violence.

“Randall! The house!” I screamed to Alice’s mate.

The two of us quickly headed them off and were able to take them out just as they reached the backyard.

I could hear Annie’s terrified thoughts from inside as Esme hid her in the basement and stood guard.

“We took care of them Esme!” I called and turned to look at Randall.

“Annie?” he asked, his head echoing his fear for his little sister.

“She's fine, just a little scared. Esme has her. Come on, we have to get back."

We ran back to see our family had retreated to the very edges of the training field. Jasper was standing protectively over Bella and was surrounded by the bodies of unconscious newborn vampires. His eyes were blacker than I had ever seen anyone, human or vampire.

He was a terrifying sight for even the most seasoned vampire. His bare chest and arms had several new bites running with venom. He was breathing as if he had just run a marathon in deep heaving breaths to fuel the snarls and growls that continuously spilled from his throat; his teeth bared and his mouth dripping with venom, he searched for a new source of danger to his downed mate. And this was the man that I foolishly tried to provoke in December. I owed Bella my life for protecting me from my own senselessness.

I eased up to Peter, "What are we waiting for? Carlisle needs to help Bella."

He snorted, "You wanna be the one to mosey on up there and try to approach his injured mate?" His gaze flicked to me
and I could both see and hear his derision. "Right now I'm more worried about getting all of us out of here alive. If we run he may hunt us, his instinct is telling him that we're part of the force that attacked his mate. If we stay, he may kill us anyway."

Peter looked down at me, "What's he thinking?"

I looked back at Jasper and focused. After listening for a moment I spoke, "I'm not getting much. His instincts have fully taken over. He is confused that we aren't attacking and we aren't retreating."

Charlotte sidled up to her mate, flanked by Garrett.

"Suggestions?" Peter asked.

"Submission. Complete and utter submission," Garrett said.

Charlotte nodded, "It might be enough to save us. Carlisle, call Esme and tell her to take Annie and run. If he takes Bella to the house they'll be in danger."

Charlotte hadn't finished speaking before Carlisle had whipped out his phone and was whispering rapid-fire instructions.

I stole a quick look around at my family to judge the damage. Everyone was a bit battered. Emmett, Peter, and Charlotte seemed to have taken the worst of it.

Charlotte was cradling one arm to her body carefully and I could see that it was almost torn off at the elbow. Peter would have a horrific new scar over and through his left eye and I wondered if he would ever regain the use of it as there was a six inch long gash running vertically through it and down to his cheek bone. They were standing shoulder to shoulder, and I could hear the concern they had for each other echoing through their thoughts, yet they were focused on Jasper and the threat he now represented to all of us.

Rose was running her hands over Emmett and holding his right arm at the shoulder to help it fuse where someone had attempted to bite it off. He had several large bites that were oozing venom and long gashes across his chest from a newborn's claw-like fingers. He stood quietly looking down at her, flinching periodically; his thoughts consumed with the image of her face. She was surprisingly almost entirely uninjured, sporting only three bites that I could see.

Alice was tending to the bites on her new mate the best she could as he held her to his chest. I wasn't surprised to see that she was unmarked.

Carlisle stood next to me, and Esme would be horrified to see her doctor husband now. His shirt was in tatters and he was limping from a severe bite to his right thigh. There were four long gashes down his back where a newborn's fingers had deeply clawed him. He was healing but his focus was entirely on Jasper and Bella.

A mental moan of pain drew my attention to Kate. Where previously I thought her uninjured, now I noticed she was cradling her left hand carefully behind her back to avoid drawing attention to the fact that it had been torn off. I watched as she bit her lower lip to stifle her whimper of pain. Her whole left arm looked as if it had been gnawed on.

"Garrett," I murmured and flicked my eyes to Kate when he looked at me.

"Shit, Baby!" He lunged to catch her as she stumbled. He took her in his arms and stroked her hair back from her face.

In that instant, Jasper's thoughts focused. On us.

I had only a moment to make a decision and hoped that it might save my family. "Guys, stop looking at him and start tending to your mates. NOW!" I whispered urgently.

Peter tenderly took Charlotte into his arms and lowered them to the ground so that she was in his lap.

Emmett gave into his desires and wrapped his good arm around Rose lowering his mouth to her neck and licking the dominant bite he had put there so many years ago.

Garrett and Kate were in a similar position. Her eyes were closed, her head buried in his chest as he rocked her; purring to try to comfort her.

"Edward? What should we do?" Carlisle asked me.

I scanned Jasper's mind for a clue but his thoughts were too jumbled and chaotic. "For now I think we should take Garrett's original advice."

I slowly sank to my knees and tilted my head to expose my throat, making sure to keep my eyes on the ground. I heard Carlisle do the same. Jasper's thoughts flared for an instant and it took everything I had to keep from stiffening.

Out of the corner of my eye I watched him cautiously back up a step towards Bella. His gaze continually darting around, he bent and tenderly picked up her pain wracked body. Through the confusing jumble of his thoughts I could piece together his indecision. We were directly in between him and the house.
"He's going to move her to the house. I would suggest ignoring him completely. Focus entirely on your mates; nothing but concern and love," I muttered quickly.

He passed the mated pairs without so much as a flicker of interest but hesitated when he got close to Carlisle and I. 'Bella? If you can hear me, Carlisle and I need your help. Jasper is out of his mind and about to attack us.'

I sent the mental plea, praying that she could hear me through her pain. If Jasper attacked Carlisle he would never forgive himself later. Me? Well I deserved whatever I got.

"Jas-per," Bella moaned in his arms her voice fragmented and barely understandable. The venom from her throat wound making it almost impossible for her to speak as it bubbled up in her mouth and at the gaping hole in her neck.

With that single word, his focus on us was broken. He looked down at the woman in his arms and gently ran his nose up her cheek, a gentle sub-vocal purr emanating from his chest.

Without another look in our direction he ran for the house.

Carlisle let out a long breath. "Alice? Can you see what happens if we return to the house? We need to get everyone patched up."

I saw the options in her head as Alice flicked through all the possibilities. She looked at me and I nodded agreeing with her silently.

"If we go in through yours and Esme's window, and stay away from their wing of the house, we should be alright. Esme put several bags of plasma and blood in their room before she escaped with Annie. The rest of it is in your room," Alice answered.

"Carlisle," Garrett said, his voice tormented as he looked down at Kate.

"We'll get her fixed up Garrett. I'll help you. Alright everyone, let's do this quickly and silently," Carlisle urged us.

Everyone got to their feet and helped their mates towards the house. I hesitated looking at the field of un-burned bodies. If we didn't get them piled and lit soon they would start trying to reassemble themselves. I took a step towards them but was stopped by Carlisle's hand on my arm.

"Alice and Randall can come back and do that once we get everyone to the house. We need you at the house to monitor the situation with Jasper and Bella." His voice was kind and sounded so much like it did before I messed everything up. "Come on son, let's go."

I nodded and wordlessly took his arm to help him to the house.

We came in upwind and as quietly as we could. Garrett took Kate right to Carlisle's ensuite and placed her gently in the tub. Following Carlisle's instructions he used the hand sprayer to gently bathe the foreign venom from her body lessening the burning.

Peter and Charlotte retreated silently to their rooms to care for each other in private. I heard in their heads that unfortunately, this was nothing new for the two of them and it gave me a new appreciation for the ease of my life.

I had been unbelievably lucky in my existence with Carlisle and the rest of the family, and I had very nearly thrown it all away in a terrific display of anachronistic and infantile behaviour. Shame washed over me in a new way. I had experienced many new emotions in the past months, especially since Christmas, but it had not hit home quite this hard before.

"Edward?"

My pity party was interrupted by Alice. "Is Bella alright? Can you tell?"

We could all hear the sounds of pain from several places in the house, but Bella's was by far the worst. Every time someone would say or do something too loud, or cry out in pain; Jasper's snarls would echo through the house to remind us that we were only here at his forbearance.

I focused my thoughts to the other end of the house. Bella's thoughts were a haze of pain, fear, and need. It was odd being able to hear her at all, but right now I got the impression that she wanted nothing more than to crawl inside Jasper's chest and stay there.

Jasper had taken her to their large soaker tub in their suite and barricaded the bathroom door in his instinctual need to protect her. He was tenderly licking the bite on her neck as she whimpered in pain.

I did something that I normally hated to do, as it was a HUGE violation of privacy, but we needed to know the extent of Bella's injuries and that Jasper was taking care of her properly. Though what we would do if he wasn't was a mystery to me.
Concentrating, I immersed myself in his brain; effectively becoming one with his thoughts, seeing her as though I was him.

My mate whimpering in my arms, her fragile body shivering in pain. An answering whine escaped me; I hate to see her like this. Fury; there was no one left to destroy. The ones that had hurt her this way are dead; my fierce little mate took out several of them herself. Confusion; the ones that remained hadn't left, hadn't attacked; their emotions showing no hostility. Later.

The room I brought her to smelled strongly of the two of us and had no clear windows. Protectiveness. I lowered my mate into a smooth depression in the floor, piling cloth around her to create a comfortable den where she could heal. She would be easy to defend here. I could hear the sounds of others some distance away, stiffening defensively over her; I let out a loud warning growl. Anger, resentment, fury; they are too close to our den.

My Mate! Determination. I would keep her safe. Worry. She's injured. She's the only thing that matters. The emotions from the others told me that they were injured as well and I felt a spike of fear from them at my warning. Satisfaction. I would deal with them eventually.

I removed her clothes as gently as I could; her every moan of pain a lash against my dead heart. Grief. Pain. Sadness. Looking over her injuries, the ones on her neck and leg were the worst.

I gently pressed the wound on her neck closed and began to bathe the ragged edges with my tongue, erasing the offensive foreign venom from her skin and sealing the edges. Running my tongue soothingly over her skin, I let her feel my purr; knowing it comforts her even as she whimpers in pain. Irritation. I hate that she smells so strongly of others. I would take care of that later; right now her wounds were the most important.

I sniffed the air and smelled food. Reaching over I recognized a metal container reeking strongly of blood. Smelling it carefully I opened my mouth, panting to take in the full scent. I took a long drink and held it in my mouth letting it mix with my venom. The blood was bitter but she needed to feed and my venom would help her. Lowering my mouth to my mate's, I pressed my lips to hers and fed her a bit. Satisfaction. Fulfillment. Once she swallowed several mouthfuls I turned my attention again, to cleaning her thoroughly.

Starting at her feet, I began to lick all traces of the venom from her. Soon she would smell of nothing but me; everyone would know that she is mine. Possessiveness. Concern. The wound on her thigh needed the same attention that I had given her neck, and I relished the taste of her on my tongue.

A female's loud cry of pain had me alert and defensive over top of my mate. Roaring my anger, I was ready to attack. My mate drew my attention back to her when she started to cry softly, her head rolling back and forth. Fear, abandonment, pain, longing, concern; her emotions pulled me back down to her and I nuzzled her neck carefully, purring to reassure her that I was still near.

I pushed comfort, love, and lethargy at her trying to keep her comfortable. I drew her pain into myself, savouring the burning and stabbing feeling; knowing that it was pain she was no longer feeling. I would take all her pain if I could. I felt her begin to quietly purr in answer to my comforting touch; the pain that I felt radiating from her lessening and allowing her to relax under my touch as I resumed cleaning her.

Moving higher up her thigh, I breathed in my mate's unique scent deeply. It was stronger the closer I got to her core. Spreading her legs gently, I dragged my tongue across her inner thigh laving away venom that had smeared there from her wound. Going higher-

I pulled back out of his thoughts with a jolt. Jasper's head was a confusing place to be right now and it was getting much too personal; I had found out what I needed to.

Looking up I saw not only Alice, but Randall and Carlisle as well. "She's hurt but Jasper is taking really good care of her. A little primitive perhaps but he is cleaning her wounds and making sure she gets the blood she needs. He's aware of us in the house but right now she is his sole focus. I get the feeling that every time he gets aggressive and gets ready to defend her against us, she distracts him somehow. He's on a hair trigger but as long as we don't disturb them and we try to be as quiet as possible, we should be fine."

They all seemed to relax a bit at the news.

"Hopefully Bella will be well enough to bring him back to himself soon," Carlisle said. At a whimper of pain from Peter and Charlotte's room, he left to check on them.

"We should go back and start cleaning up. Those bodies will start reassembling themselves before long," I said taking a step towards the window to do exactly that when Alice stopped me.

"Randall and I can do that. You should let Carlisle look at your bites, and you should feed."

I looked down at the woman who was once my closest sister, "He needs to see to everyone else first. Have him look at Randall, I'll get looked at later. Besides, if something sets Jasper off again you two are the best defense we have at the moment."
Before she could argue I ran out of the house and back to the battlefield. When I got there several of the bodies were twitching and jerking. A couple of them had managed to piece together enough that there were torsos dragging themselves through the dirt looking for legs.

It was truly gruesome. At this point they weren't even cognizant; the bodies were running on autopilot. Once they reassembled, the brain patterns would reengage and they would be on the hunt for blood to speed their healing. It was important to not only my family, but the human population south of us that every single piece be destroyed. I had seen through Garrett's thoughts what a blood crazed newborn looked like when they were trying to heal themselves. It wasn't pretty.

After a couple of pain filled hours all the bodies were burning in several different piles. It was over.

In addition to the expected two dozen that Victoria had brought, Maria had attacked us with forty-two newborns and five captains. It was amazing that none of us had died. If it hadn't been for Jasper, we would have. One more mistake to add to the hundreds I had already made. I should have listened to Jasper when he told us to hunt down Victoria and Laurent after the incident with James. Victoria's need for revenge brought Maria right to our door step. How would I ever make amends?

My wounds were really nagging at me now, the pain radiating through my body and I knew I needed to feed. Running into the forest I tracked down several coyotes that were forming a pack due to the abundance of animal carcasses left behind from my family's hunting practices. The wolf packs as well were starting to explode, and before long we would have to turn our attentions to them to stop from endangering the humans in the area. The blood didn't really help me but it would have to do.

I stalked down a large caribou knowing that blood in the house would be in short supply with so many injured. Dragging it back to the house, I released it live into the newly rebuilt garage; thankful that none of Rosalie's tools were in there yet and that all the vehicles were parked outside. She would have danced around my ashes if I had turned a live, scared, caribou loose around one of her precious toys.

I stood in the yard for a long minute contemplating the capture of more animals when I heard Rose behind me.

"You need to let Carlisle look at that," she said nodding to my arm.

I had been bitten several times on the arm without a hand. Fighting one handed had been challenging and had Bella still been keeping me mentally deaf, I would have been killed. I only hoped that I had made a difference to the fight.

I shrugged, immediately regretting it when pain slid up my arm like a knife. "I'll be fine. How is everyone?"

Her thoughts flickered quickly answering my question silently. Everyone was resting, healing from their injuries and taking solace in their mates; Jasper's occasional snarls and growls reminding everyone to stay quiet and keeping them on edge. Carlisle was assisting Garrett with Kate. Her arm was being bandaged, but Garrett's own instincts wouldn't let anyone touch his mate so Carlisle was instructing from a distance.

"You should go to Emmett, he's worried about you," I told her.

She lifted a beautifully sculpted eyebrow. "He knows where I am. You need to come inside."

I took a step towards her and stumbled.

"Edward!" She rushed forward and caught me.

"I'm okay,"

"No you're not! Your pants are drenched! Randall!" She called for our newest brother to help her get me inside.

"What the hell happened?" he exclaimed looking at me in shock. "You went to burn bodies; did one of them manage to get you?"

Jasper let out a roar of anger and his thoughts clearly indicated that he was losing patience with us. Just as his thoughts shifted from caring for his mate, to the patterns of hunting; Bella sobbed out in pain and started to cry.

I shook my head. "Keep your voices down! Jasper is ready to risk leaving Bella and start hunting us!"

I leaned on Randall gratefully. Obviously my leg was worse than I thought. It had been during the battle; Jasper had been fighting several of Maria's guard and even his gift had been overwhelmed. There had been just too many of them. I jumped in to cover his back and one of them had bitten me deeply on the leg. I hadn't been able to hear his thoughts and avoid him. He had to have some kind of gift which may explain why Alice and I hadn't seen Maria coming.

With the black of my pants and the numerous tears in the fabric, the bite hadn't looked all that bad. Otherwise, my gift had made it so that it was my only real injury other than the bites on my arm, which were superficial. I had tried to close the thigh wound up the best I could but I couldn't really see properly. Everyone else was injured so much more, or had needed to tend to their mates; I just hadn't been a priority.
Randall tore the leg from my pants and swore, "Jesus! His femoral artery is severed. Carlisle!"

Randall's shout caused Jasper roar in anger and begin hunting again. This time he made it to the bathroom door before Bella could distract him enough to halt his offensive. Her cries were now mental as well as audible and he paced for a long moment as she cried out for him. I could hear in his head that he was clearly torn between caring for Bella and ridding the world of our existence. His conflicted snarling was upsetting Bella further and she started to sob, the action increasing her pain.

We were all frozen as we waited for him to make up his mind. Alice's visions flickered through my head as she tried to figure out what he would do; his instinctual drives making it almost impossible. Carlisle and Peter were contemplating trying to come up with a way to separate them if Jasper didn't settle down and care for her.

I mentally snorted. I had been in his head. They were dreaming if they thought there would be any way we could get near that room, never mind separating them. Jasper would kill us all.

Finally his instinct to stay with his mate won out and we heard him go back to her side to soothe her.

We all silently relaxed and I gave Randall a dirty look. Rose hit him up the back of the head and turned to help me. They picked me up and carried me into Carlisle's suite, the pain radiating through my body.

They put me in the now vacant bathtub and I looked up to see Esme, her face a mask of worry and grief.

"I'm so sorry Mom," I had messed up so badly and caused my family so much pain.

"Shhh...my sweet boy. I know you are. I'm sorry too. Now you lay there and let me take care of that leg alright?" Her voice was choked up but her hands were sure as they washed away the venom and tended to my bite; her thoughts consumed with worry for all of us.

I didn't deserve her concern. I would spend the rest of my existence trying to make up for the pain I had caused.

I bit my lip trying to stop a yelp of pain. I had to stay quiet. Jasper was still lost. I wouldn't be the one to cause him to lose what little control he was still managing.

I turned my attention to the other side of the house and immersed myself in the selfless love being shared between Bella and Jasper. It helped to distract from my pain and I wished so much that I hadn't been such an ass for so long. Maybe someday I will get my own mate and get to experience first-hand what I could only eavesdrop on now. Even in Jasper's demon, the pure love between the two of them was beautiful.

A/N: I hope you all enjoyed Edward's POV. Unexpected I know but he had some things he needed to get off his chest. Drop me a note and let me know what you thought, I know this came out of left field.

*motions to the fairies to pass out fresh out of the oven chocolate chip cookies with vanilla ice creme melting on top* My fav dessert for the best readers in the world! Enjoy everyone! *dances off into the garden singing Someone Like You by the Kings of Leon*
**Chapter 39**: Chapter 39

A/N: As usual Twilight and all its characters do not belong to me they belong to the talented Stephenie Meyer – thank you for allowing me to play in your world

~ As the M rating suggests - if you are under 18 you shouldn't be reading this fic. It contains dark themes and sexual material. ~

A/N: A huge thanks to Ms. Mynxi for beta-ing this for me quick time. This chapter was unexpected so that means that we have put off the inevitable for yet another chapter. I hope you like this one, I have been assured that it's good but it's not one of my fav's. Enjoy none the less!

I felt like my whole body was on fire. It hurt almost as much as the change itself and I wanted it to stop. I needed to get back to Jasper. I heard the demon roar when I collapsed, he would be on the rampage and I didn't want the family to get caught in the crossfire.

Jasper.

I could hear the battle still going on all around me. There were so many newborns. Too many.

Jasper.


Something dripped on my face and I managed to open my eyes long enough to see my mate on all fours crouched over me, looking like a vengeful god; venom pouring out of his mouth and running down his chest. Every time he spun to defend me the venom would spray out with the momentum. Even when Edward had provoked him he hadn't looked this bad.

Flames burning higher, consuming my flesh.

I closed my eyes and tried to hold back the screams as the pain took me down into the red haze, my mind filled with fear for Jasper and our family.

Jasper.

A feeling of safety and security enveloped me, pushing back some of my pain as I felt Jasper take me into his arms, but underneath it I could feel the naked rage and fear. I knew he had protected me, but what had been the cost? Would we both wake up to find out that he had killed our family? The knowledge would destroy him. Nothing I could do would ever make that better.

Fear, trepidation. I was moving, every vibration a lance of fire flaying me mercilessly.

Jasper.

‘*Bella? If you can hear me, Carlisle and I need your help. Jasper is out of his mind and about to attack us.*’ That cool velvet voice that I used to love so much slid through my mind like silk over skin. Edward really did have the nicest voice; I used to love listening to that voice.

Jasper.

Agony.

Darkness, fog.

I could hear and feel Jasper's growls increasing, the vibration making pain flare through my body and bringing me back to the present.

PAIN.

Jasper.

Dad, Edward.

Knives, acid, electricity; sliding under my skin, stabbing my body.

Jasper.

Normally I would have tried to keep the pained noise to myself but I needed to get Jasper's attention. I tried to say his name but the venom bubbled up my ruined throat and I choked on it. I felt it well up in my mouth and run out over my lips.

My mate’s purr was the last thing I heard and felt as the pain brought more blackness.
Jasper.
Comfort.
Pain.
Love.
Torment.
Protection.
Agony.

Blood flowed over my lips and down my torn throat easing the burn. It was bitter but sweet at the same time. I felt relief as it flowed warm and soothing from my mate's mouth.

Jasper.

I could feel him over me; strong, lethal, loving. I was safe. He was safe. I felt an answering purr stutter to life in response to his touch. Jasper.

PAIN.
Disconnected.

Anger, frustration, rage.

JASPER!

Where was Jasper? I started to panic. My body was on fire again. I could hear his snarling but couldn't feel him. I needed him to hold me. I wanted him to pull me into his chest and never let me go. Where was he? My unnecessary panicked breathing was making the pain jolt through me with every breath.

Jasper! I started to cry, needing him; the pain making me cry all the harder. He left me!

'Jasper!' My need for him overwhelmed me and my mental screams reverberating through my head.

His furious roars echoed in my head and filled my ears.

Rage, protection, possession, fear, determination.

His emotions were like saltwater or lemon juice on an open wound. Every fibre of my being cried out for him but he wasn't coming. He could be in danger. I had to go to him!

I struggled to make my body obey my commands but I was so weak. Every movement made the acid eating at my skin spread more. Pain lanced through my every joint, my every muscle.

"JASPER!" My scream was fuelled by the heat scorching across and through my body.

Jasper. My sobs were coming hard and fast at both the pain and the frustration and fear that I couldn't go to my mate. He needed me. I need him.

Jasper!

And then he was there. I forced my eyes open, needing to see him; to know that he was really there.

He was kneeling over me, his arms a secure and loving cage as he gently licked my face and neck; the purr coming from his chest ringing in my ears, reaching into my very soul; reassuring me of his presence and comforting my terror. His teeth grazed a spot on my neck and I felt his love and devotion, along with the possession I craved, radiate through my body easing the ache.

The pain faded and I surrendered to the blackness wrapped up in his care and adoration.

vVVv


I opened my eyes to see Jasper's demon black eyes staring at me. The racking pain had faded to a bruising ache. My whole body felt like I had been hit with a truck but at least I could think. How long had it been?

I reached up with my good arm to trace the darkness around Jasper's eyes. How long had it been since he had fed? Where were we?
I looked around as Jasper nuzzled my face; his emotion a hurricane of fear, love, rage, frustration and insecurity. I stroked his head in an effort to reassure him. He was so much worse than last time.

I looked around to see that we were in our ensuite and Jasper had made us a bed in the huge soaker tub. Why were we in here? Where was everyone else?

Oh God! Was everyone okay? Did we win? I remembered Edward's voice and his plea for help. Had Jasper hurt them? Where was everyone?

I knew I wouldn't be getting any answers out of Jasper.

I heard someone start to sing softly and then get hushed. Annie.

Jasper stiffened above me, braced on the edges of the tub as he caged me under him. His whole body was quivering with the need to attack.

Oh god, had he been like this the whole time? For how long?

I tried to sit up but cried out as my body protested against the abrupt movement. Jasper's attention snapped back to me and he lowered me gently back down. A whimper escaped my throat and he started to purr. My eyes closed as his love filled me when he slowly started licking my face and neck. At any other time I might have been laughing and been getting incredibly turned on but I knew that in this state that Jasper was taking care of me the only way his demon knew how.

I remembered hearing Edward so he must have made it.

I mentally reached out, 'Edward?'

'Bella!' even his mental voice came out in a relieved rush. 'Are you alright?'

'Yes, Jasper is taking care of me. He's really out of it though. Is everyone okay? Are you okay? What happened? Where is Maria?' I couldn't help the rush of questions. I was terrified that I might have lost someone I loved.

Jasper could feel my fear and responded with more purring. He took a long drink from a familiar thermos and lowered his mouth to mine. I took his offering of blood gratefully, greedily drinking back everything he gave; my tongue desperately seeking out more when it was gone.

I felt Edward's mental wince at the accidental visual. 'Sorry Edward.'

'It's alright. To answer your questions; everyone is fine. There were a few injuries but Carlisle fixed them up and they are well on their way to fully healed. We've all been more worried about you. Esme and Carlisle especially.'

'How long has it been?' I couldn't for the life of me get a grasp on time.

'Two days. From what I can tell Jasper has been keeping you sedated as he absorbs your pain,' Edward explained.

Well that explained the strain written on Jasper's face. I could see bites still open and running on his arms and chest. They hadn't healed at all. My concern flared. Two days and they still hadn't healed. He had been taking my pain on top of his and not even feeding enough to fuel his own healing.

'Edward, I need blood and plasma NOW! Jasper's bites still haven't healed. He looks terrible,' I finished softly. I sent Edward a visual of Jasper and heard his mental exclamation of worry.

I knew that Edward was talking to Carlisle and realized that the singing had started again. Annie. She was so sweet. Her little voice was softly singing 'The Sun'll Come Out Tomorrow', of all things. I smiled at the irony. Not only did it fit her, but it fit the situation to a 'T'.

Then I realized that the singing wasn't disturbing Jasper in the least. In fact I could feel a tiny bit of his tension releasing at our mutual enjoyment.

'Bella?'

'Dad! Are you okay?' I was so relieved to hear his voice.

His mental chuckle made me feel so much better. 'Typical, you are the one still injured and you ask me if I'm alright. I'm fine, so is your mother. We are trying to figure out how to get you more blood and plasma. Jasper hasn't been exactly accommodating. While I understand his actions, if he doesn't come around soon we will have to consider separating you two so I can help you.'

Edward's mental eye roll matched mine. Fat chance they would have of getting Jasper away from me. Someone would get killed and it wouldn't be Jasper. I thought for a minute and absorbed all the feelings that were swirling between Jasper and I.
Someone realized that Annie was singing again and shushed her. Jasper snarled and the house fell silent. I stroked his arm until I felt his irritation subside. He didn't go back to the same content mindset though.

'Edward. I think Jasper likes Annie's singing. He seems calmer,' I thought.

'Do I get to make the cliché joke about music soothing the savage beast?' he said wryly.

'No. I'm serious Edward. I don't think he would hurt Annie. He only seems to get agitated when someone tells her to be quiet,'

I could hear someone moving around quietly at the other end of the house. They sounded like they were limping.

'Edward, are you okay? You sound like you're limping,' I asked, concerned.

'It's nothing. Watch Jasper carefully. I'm going to get Annie to sing,' he said, obviously changing the subject.

I heard Annie start to sing. I couldn't help at the amusement I felt. Edward had got her to sing 'Beauty and the Beast'.

'Very funny Edward,' I deadpanned.

I heard his mental chuckle, 'What? It's her favourite movie.'

'Uh-huh.'

Jasper's eyes closed and I felt him relax a bit.

'It's working. I think that she could bring us blood if she keeps singing. I don't think he sees her as a threat.'

After much mental arguing and a few growls from Jasper at verbal outbursts, it was decided that Annie would bring us some blood. I would be ready to encase Jasper in a blink if he should threaten her at all but I didn't think it would come to that.

Randall was edgy but Alice assured him that everything would be fine. He didn't know her well enough yet to know that when Jasper was this feral that she couldn't see him in her visions clearly because he was operating purely on instinct.

"Remember Annie, when you take the juice to Auntie Bella keep singing. Uncle Jasper isn't really in a good mood and you make him feel better with your singing okay?" Esme whispered to Annie.

Annie giggled. "What should I sing for him Eddie?"

I clapped my hand over my mouth to stop from laughing. No one called him Eddie.

"Why don't you sing the new song I taught you?" he suggested.

I heard her make her way through the house singing sweetly. 'The Lion Sleeps Tonight'

'Seriously Edward?' I rolled my eyes at his new found sense of humour and could hear several attempts by different members of our family to smother their chuckles.

'What?' Was his oh so innocent response.

I watched as Jasper cocked his head obviously listening to her progress through the house as she got closer, but he didn't seem to mind. His eyes got more watchful the closer she got to the bedroom. I knew Charlotte, Peter, and Emmett had snuck into the yard below our windows; ready to jump in in-case things got out of hand.

Annie was in our bedroom now and Jasper's eyes narrowed on the door when the knob to our ensuite started to turn. I made sure to feel nothing but the enjoyment from Annie's song and really it wasn't hard, the song was too ridiculous and she was obviously having a blast singing it. I concentrated on the feelings of security and comfort that I felt with Jasper caring for me.

Annie slowly entered the room. Not because she was nervous but because, like a human child, she was balancing a huge pitcher of 'juice' and didn't want to spill. As she was told, she was still singing softly. She did exactly as she was instructed to and put it carefully on the bathroom counter just inside the door. When she had done it successfully she turned to us with a huge relieved grin.

"Good job, Sweetie. Thank you. If you go see Eddie, I bet he will show you a new song on the piano," I said quietly, my voice unexpectedly rough. I couldn't help but love that sweet little girl. She may have been changed under difficult circumstances but she clearly hadn't suffered a day since her change.

"You're welcome Auntie Bella. I hope you feel better soon." She looked at Jasper and grinned, "I hope my singing made you less mad, Uncle Jazz." Her little hands covered her giggle and she skipped out of the room calling for her 'Eddie'.

Jasper's face had a puzzled look on it but no irritation. We were going to be just fine.
'It worked! He didn't even frown at her,' I told everyone mentally and could practically feel the tension in the house melt away.

Jasper cautiously retrieved the pitcher and brought it back to me. It took some convincing but I managed to convince him to split it with me. I could taste the heavy dose of plasma and, as nasty as it was, I started to feel better immediately and Jasper's bites started to heal right in front of my eyes.

Over the next several hours Annie brought us six more pitchers and I had managed to move Jasper and I out of the ensuite and into our bedroom. I was feeling so much better that now it was only a matter of getting him to snap out of his demon mode.

I decided to take him hunting. Or rather I decided to let him take me hunting. Looking over at him I started to think of all the things I loved best about hunting; the thrill of running, the way our senses sharpened as we scented for our prey, the brief chase and then the satisfaction of the blood warm and pursing fresh from the animal.

I watched as Jasper's posture changed minutely and I had only enough time to let Peter know where we were going before he swept me into his arms and out the window. I snuggled into his chest content, as he carried me into the forest to hunt for me.

A/N: Please review and let me know what you think.

A HUGE thank you to whoever nominated me for The Glove Awards! Voting is now open and Insecurities is up for Best Jasper Fic.

http://thegloveawards.dotwebs.dotcom/vote.dothtm

There are some amazing stories up for awards so please go and cast your votes for your favorites!

Ben and Jerry's for everyone! My personal fav is Half Baked but please ask the fairies for your favorite and they will be happy to get it for you. *dances off into the garden singing 'The Lion Sleeps Tonight'*
Exquisite agony.

Heat.

Pleasure.

Lust.

Love.

Bella.

My Angel was lying between my legs and I cried out, arching my back from the feeling of her tongue rubbing circles on the underside of my cock; the attention and suction pushing me to the edge. She pushed down farther onto me and I felt myself hit the back of her throat. I nearly came when she swallowed deeply, making me feel like she was massaging every inch of my cock, which was now harder than I had ever experienced before.

I looked down into her golden, lust filled eyes and she released me with a pop. Her full and pouting, luscious lips slowly spread into a wickedly beautiful smile. She ran her nails down the 'V' in my hips, making me twitch and jump involuntarily.

"Welcome back, Cowboy," she said, her voice low, husky, rough, and filled with desire.

She flicked her tongue out to lick the tip of my cock and I swear I almost lost it.

"Mmmm…Yummy," she whispered.

With a growl I wrapped her hair in my fist and pulled her up to me, devouring her mouth as I rolled her underneath me. Pulling her leg up over my hip, I plunged deep into her folds and my growl of pleasure drowned out her gasp.

I let my eyes wander her face, grateful that she was here, with me, whole. The last clear memory I had was her circling Maria in the middle of the war with the newborns. I absorbed all of her lust, desire, and love, letting it fill me; soothe me. She was safe. She was with me and we were both safe. The rest could wait.

I felt her muscles contracting around my cock as she reached her peak and it pushed me over the edge. In that moment, I released our combined pleasure in a rush, surrounding and filling us. Bella screamed out and I felt her shudder violently in my arms. The moment seemed to last forever, as I roared my satisfaction, her name a brand on my soul. The exquisite torture bouncing and echoing between us, drawing out our orgasms until we finally collapsed.

I wrapped her up in my arms, loathe to have her anywhere but skin on skin. I buried my face in her hair and breathed in her scent deeply, revelling in the feelings of contentment and security she was giving off. There was something niggling at the back of my mind; my instincts telling me to look her over.

I pulled back to look at her face. My first thought was how beautiful she looked. Beautiful and well fed. Her eyes were almost glowing a brilliant topaz. There were none of the bruise-like shadows that our kind regularly had under their eyes. Her skin, while still pale, actually looked rosy?

Her hand reached up to trace my face and I closed my eyes in bliss. Nothing could compare to the touch of my Angel.

"Jasper," her voice broke on my name and her hand went to her throat, her eyes lowered and lips pursed; her embarrassment washing over me, banishing the contentment that she had been basking in only a moment ago.

I opened my eyes and frowned slightly. Her voice. She didn't sound like herself. I had thought it was the lust.

I let my eyes wander to her throat where the scars from the battle could be seen. While they would be almost invisible to human eyes, I could clearly see where Maria had viciously ripped her throat out. I traced the scars with a finger, horrified at how close I had come to losing her.

Worry, hesitation, shame, embarrassment; her emotions eased over me and pricked my skin. My Angel should never feel these things.
"Angel," my voice broke and I felt like the biggest failure. I had failed to protect my mate. My Angel was permanently scarred and broken because I hadn't protected her.

I leaned down and pressed the softest of kisses over the worst of the scarring on her throat. I flooded her with my love, comfort, and awe at her beauty and bravery. Slowly, I trailed kisses over her entire body, lingering over the many new scars I found there. My Angel had been savaged horribly.

Dropping my head into her stomach, I fought for control. I could feel the demon inside clawing at its cage, fighting to be set free, to avenge the damage done to our mate, roaring at our failure.

'Shhh...Jas, stay with me. I'm here. I'm safe. You saved me,' she crooned silently to me, as she ran her fingers through my hair, rocking me ever so slightly. 'It's not your fault. You saved me.'

The fear, rage, and panic threatened to consume me. I couldn't stop my hands from roaming over her body, needing to reassure all the parts of me that she was safe and still with me.

'EASY Jasper, I'm alright. I'm here, safe with you. I love you my mate; my love.'

Over an hour later, I managed to let her touch and mental reassurances calm me. At the same time they only added to my pain. I knew she was avoiding speaking out loud for fear of sending me over the edge again.

"What happened?" I asked softly, half afraid of the answer. What if I had killed our family? I knew I had been out of control again, that I had lost myself to the demon and his rage. Who else had paid the price for my bloodlust? How bad had it been that I hadn't gotten to her in time?

'Everyone is fine. You didn't hurt anyone in our family. They're all safe and sound at home.' Her mental voice was just as I had always heard it, and it, along with her words, drained the tension from my body.

'I don't remember everything because I was out of it for a while, but several of our family showed me what they saw.' She mentally replayed everything she remembered for me.

It was no different than any other time that this had happened, but even I was struck by the ferocity of my defence of Bella. As Maria's teeth had wrapped around Bella's throat I had unleashed my gift in an unprecedented showing of power. The eight vampires that had been trying to subdue me dropped instantly as the raw emotions washed over them. Bella had tried to throw up her shield to protect herself and it had thrown Maria off her, tearing her throat out in the process otherwise she would have been decapitated and I would have lost her.

Newborns were dropping left and right; I dismembered them with ruthless efficiency, sometimes using nothing more than brute strength in my fight to get to Bella's side. I saw brief flashes of the looks of awe and fear on the faces of our family.

I wasn't sure whose memories I was watching but, I watched as Edward leaped in front of a newborn who had managed to avoid my gift due to the sheer number of newborns. He saved me from very likely being decapitated and received a brutal bite to his inner thigh for his trouble. He fought just as ferociously as the most seasoned fighters in our family and he did it all while missing a hand. Maybe Edward had learned his lesson.

Regardless of the fact that their leaders had fallen, the remaining newborns had put up one hell of a fight. Without our gifts, and the loyalty and love that we shared for one another, our family would have been slaughtered. From all appearances my demon had stood over Bella's body and killed almost two dozen newborns. I may have failed in my defense of her from Maria, but I had done everything in my power to protect her from the rest of the army.

Like the last time, my demon cared for her, I was awed and comforted by the devotion and love that he showed her. As much as I wished that Carlisle had been able to assess Bella's injuries, I knew she had been safe and that I had cared for her to the best of my ability, despite my state of mind. I knew that the location and nature of the wound, coupled with the foreign venom and scarring, were the reason that Bella's voice would never be the same. Nothing Carlisle could have done would have changed that.

When Bella got to the blood delivery by Annie, I chuckled. I was amazed at Annie's seeming immunity to the fury of my inner demon. She was so precious. Our whole family was obviously wrapped around her little finger and she would be doted on by all of us, for the rest of eternity.

"How long have I been out of it, Angel?"

She smiled and leaned up to kiss me. 'A little over two weeks.'

I froze. Two weeks? My demon had been running loose for more than two weeks?

Bella ran her finger gently down the bridge of my nose. 'Hey.'

I looked down at her, concern written all over my face. I looked around, for the first time taking in the fact that we were out in the middle of nowhere surrounded by sparse trees and tundra.

'Hey,' she insisted.
I looked back at Bella confused, disoriented; and if I admitted it to myself, a bit scared.

‘You didn’t hurt anyone. We’ve been on an extended hunting trip, that’s all. You’ve loved me, fed me, cared for me, and protected me, while we frolicked in the Canadian North. Stop worrying. Nothing bad happened.’ She smiled and leaned up to give me a long lick from my collarbone to the base of my ear where she stopped to nibble on my ear lobe. ‘I for one thoroughly enjoyed our little vacation.’

My eyes closed in bliss as tremors of desire radiated out from the place where her mouth was focused.

"Angel, stop." I reluctantly pulled away carefully but pressed a kiss against her lips to soften the request. "First, where are we?"

‘Somewhere in Nunavut, I believe.’

"Does the family know where we are?” They would be worried sick if we had been gone all this time with no word from either of us.

‘I assume so. Garrett came to find us about a week ago with Kate. He managed to sneak in close enough to contact me mentally but not close enough for you to catch wind of him. He would have told the family that we’re fine. He was worried but only because you haven’t been out of it for this long before. He only wanted to check on things.’

I looked at her, relieved that at least they knew nothing had happened to us. My thought would have been that a few newborns had escaped the battle and come after us. But then I guess a newborn would have to be crazy to come after my mate with me in that condition.

Bella closed her eyes and seemed to be concentrating. When she opened them she had a brilliant smile on her face. ‘There. I dropped my mental shield and decided that I should call Alice and let her know that you’re back to your normal self. I’m pretty sure that she will be on the lookout for any visions of us, so by now the family will all know that we’re fine.’

I stroked her cheek with my finger and kissed the end of her nose. "You're brilliant, you know that?"

She shrugged and gave me an impish grin. ‘I do what I can.’

My smile faded a bit as I wondered if she would ever speak again. My beautiful, Angel; my mate. I knew that living with our family had been hard for her as a human, surrounded as she had been by inhumanly beautiful vampires. Now she is finally one of us and her voice is damaged. I didn't care one bit what she sounded like. Hell, if she never spoke again, I wouldn't bat an eye. I loved her for who she was, not what she looked or sounded like. I hoped that the love that I felt for her would be enough to overpower any insecurity she had about the sound of her voice.

I looked at her and realized she was rather dirty. Her clothes were in shreds beside us and she was wearing what used to be my shirt. I looked down at myself and realized I was actually in worse shape. Was I really still wearing the same pants? The black cargos were crusted with dried venom and blood and ripped in several places.

I wrinkled my nose and looked up at her, "How about we go home, Angel?"

She silently chuckled. 'Gone soft on me, Major? The life of a nomad too rough for you?'

I growled and slung her over my shoulder, starting the long trek back home. "Nope, I just didn't want to come right out and tell you that you smell."

She laughed through her shriek of mock outrage and beat on my back. ‘Me? You’re the one who’s covered in newborn goop.’

We laughed and bantered back and forth all the way home.

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Two days later, the house came into view and I hesitated by my rock at the side of the lake. I had come here so many times to think, but there would be no answers here for me today. I had to face my family after they had seen the legendary ‘God of War’ in action, and I was nervous.

Bella’s small hand slid into mine and I looked down at the woman who fulfilled every hole in my life; the woman who completed me in every way. She didn’t rush me but wound her arms around one of mine and leaned her head on my shoulder. We stood there for a long time just enjoying each other and the solitude of the early evening.

I felt someone coming off to our left and turned to see Carlisle and Esme step out of the trees. They were hand in hand and looked like they were just getting back from a romantic evening stroll.

"Ah lovely, you made it back safely. How was hunting in Nunavut?” Carlisle asked, as if we had merely been hunting for the last two weeks rather than caging the beast that prowled within me.
Bella must have answered him because he smiled and nodded. "Yes, Arctic fox is one of my favourites as well."

He opened his mouth to ask another question but Esme interrupted, "Carlisle save your questions for later. They just got back and I'm sure that they would like to get cleaned up before they tell us about their trip." She turned to look at us. "I'm so happy your home my darlings, we missed you. Come and find us once you've settled in."

She smiled warmly and I felt her love and joy at our return wash over me in a soothing wave.

They smiled at us and then each other, as if sharing a private joke and they wandered back to the house.

I looked down at Bella in confusion.

'Oh Jas, did you really expect that they would hate or fear you? They're our parents; they love us no matter what we do.' She smiled and looked at the house before tugging my arm gently. 'Come on Cowboy, I need a bath. I'm feeling dirty.' She wiggled her eyebrows when she said 'dirty' and took off running for the house.

One hour and a very steamy shower later, we were getting dressed in our room when we heard footsteps running down the hall.

Our bedroom door opened and a very excited Annie bounced in. "Uncle Jazz! Auntie Bella! You're home! I missed you both so much!" She flung her elfin body at the two of us and wrapped us in a huge hug. Her pure emotions were a refreshing change to the chaotic mess that I had felt in the lead up to and during the battle. I knew now why my demon would never be able to hurt her. She was a balm to my soul and almost as soothing as my mate.

I picked her up and held her in my arms like a child. "You did?" At her nod I hugged her briefly and took Bella by the hand leading her downstairs as I carried Annie. "What did you do while we were gone?"

She started chattering away about the forts that she had been building around the house, as she camped out in various rooms, piano lessons with 'Eddie', playing dolls with Alice, tea parties with Emmett, and fixing the cars with Rosalie. Surprisingly, Rose seemed to be the central figure in most of her stories.

"Oh! And I learned a new song! Wanna hear?" she giggled, bouncing lightly on the couch beside me. Before I could nod she started to sing.

>You let me violate you
>You let me desecrate you
>You let me penetrate you
>You let me complicate you

Help me I broke apart my insides
Help me I've got no soul to sell
Help me the only thing that works for me
Help me get away from myself

I wanna fu –

"Anne Lillian Randall!" Rose appeared at the bottom of the steps with her hands on her hips radiating anger, frustration, and annoyance. "What did I tell you about singing that song?"

Bella and I were struggling to balance the amusement and shock that we were feeling at hearing the child-like Annie singing Closer by Nine Inch Nails.

Annie hung her head and played with the fingers on her hands. "Not to sing it anymore."

Rose was actually tapping her toe. "And?"

"And that I should forget that I ever learned it."

"And?" Rose insisted.

"And that I should never listen to anything Uncle Emmy says ever again. I'm sorry Auntie Rosie." Annie looked up and her chin quivered as she tried not to cry under Rosalie's disapproval.

"Now you quit that Miss Annie, that fake crying thing doesn't work on me and you know it. You've been told three times today not to sing that wretched song and you were told what would happen if you did. Now, you march your pouting little tush off to your room for a time out!" Rose pointed down the hall to the downstairs bedrooms, where I guessed she had been given the last available room next to Edward's.

Annie cast a pleading glance around the room at the various family members that had congregated, lingering on Esme who shook her head. "Sorry young lady, you were warned what would happen. Off you go."

Annie literally looked like she was walking to the gallows as she scuffed her feet on the hardwood floors and made her
way to her room. When we finally heard her door close behind her we all cracked and grins broke out everywhere, and I started to laugh from the amusement that filled the room.

Randall was shaking his head. "Where did I go wrong?" he chuckled.

"WE, went wrong when WE let my chuckle head of a husband spend time unsupervised with someone as young as Annie," Rose said, still exasperated.

"Wait, where is Emmett?" I asked, looking around.

Esme got serious for a minute and looked truly angry as she thought about what her son had been teaching Annie while all their backs were turned. "Emmett," she paused to shake her head and control her anger, "Has been sent to Alaska for teaching Annie that horrid song. He's bringing back Edward's hand."

"THAT'S WHERE HE WENT?" Edward looked aghast. "You didn't tell me you were having him bring back my hand!"

"Oh Fudge! It was supposed to be a surprise!" Esme looked irritated with herself. She looked up to see Edward's horror. "What?"

The rest of the family was in stitches, grasping at each other trying to hold one another up from laughing.

Peter gasped out, "Can you imagine.... what he's going to be doing... with Edward's hand on the way back?"

Esme's hand flew to her mouth. "Surely he wouldn't?"

Bella had her face buried in my chest shaking with her own laughter.

Garrett and Peter were now trying to hold each other up at Esme's hopeless protestation.

"Alice, tell me you saw something?" Edward asked, looking at Alice pleadingly.

She was holding back a smile and looked apologetic. "Really it's not that bad and by the time I saw it, it was too late. I'm sorry Edward."

Her concentration must have slipped because Edward looked horrified and Bella snorted with laughter at whatever it was that they read in Alice's mind.

"What? What is he doing? Come on?" Randall chuckled.

Bella just shook her head, unwilling to speak and Edward sat down on the couch, dropping his head in his hands.

"Well," Alice began, but started to laugh cutting off the explanation.

Kate and Char walked over to Alice. "Spill it, Oracle," Char said, poking Alice in the stomach.

"He's doing what he is calling 'The Adventures of Eddie'. He's taking pictures of Edward's hand posed in different places and doing different things between here and Alaska."

It was such an Emmett thing to do and really, for Emmett, rather harmless. If we could have cried, we would have. The only ones not laughing were Edward and Esme.

"Oh Edward, I'm so sorry. I didn't think," Esme tried to console him. "I just wanted you to have your hand back and," her voice faded.

"Really Edward, it could be worse," Alice stuttered out.

Edward looked up. "Really, Alice! Really, it could be worse? Really? Worse than the Downtown Hotel?"

"Hotel?" Kate asked puzzled, but then her face cleared and she chuckled. "Not the one in Dawson City?"

Alice nodded and Esme groaned.

I could feel confusion coming from Bella and I explained. "There's a hotel in Dawson City that serves a drink called the Sour Toe Cocktail. It's Yukon Whiskey with someone's dead frostbitten toe dropped in it."

Anyone who didn't know what it was, was now laughing with everyone else. Emmett's humour would get a kick out of a vampire's hand hanging out with a human's dead toe. It was pretty funny.

Edward looked miserable though and I kind of felt bad for him.

'Edward,' I called him silently and waited until he looked up. 'I'll call him for you.'

Really it was something small I could do for him. He had helped me save my mate after all. And he had obviously done some growing up. It would be a long time before I fully got over some of the things that he had done in the last year, but if
he kept it up, we would get there.

He read everything in my mind and nodded. I felt gratitude and resolution telling me that he fully intended to stay on the path he was on. Good for him.

I was amazed as we all just sat around and talked for hours. Annie was brought back in and she distracted Edward by getting him to give her another piano lesson. Nothing was said about my loss of control or the two weeks it took to regain my sanity. We talked about the hunting in Northern Canada and touched on the battle a bit but everyone seemed to have moved on.

It was actually a relief. Life was finally normal.

Two months.

Two months and I was just now able to let her out of my sight. We found out early on that my instincts went nuts if she was farther away than my reach. At least now I wasn't so territorial.

For a while none of the males in the house could stand closer than 6 feet away. Apparently all the males in the house had gone through it to varying degrees but had been over it by the time Bella and I got back. Peter and Garrett had been the worst and they had stayed locked in their respective suites with their mates, almost the entire time Bella and I had been gone.

Carlisle said that it was an instinctual response to the danger that our mates had been in. In my case; almost losing Bella. Being that I lived so long on my instincts alone and spent over one hundred years living in a war zone, my instinctual responses would be stronger than those of a vampire that had lived a more peaceful lifestyle. Lucky me.

My Angel was very understanding and said simply, "You put up with my crazy instincts for far longer than two months. I'm happy to stand at your side for as long as you need to feel secure. I'm not going anywhere, not without you."

Now we were preparing to say goodbye.

Kate felt it was time to go home for a spell. Garrett of course, was going with her. Kate wanted to see Carmen and Eleazar and get a few things before she and Garrett went off to spend time alone together. They were going to go to New York, like Kate had planned through her Christmas gifts, and Garrett was looking forward to taking her down the coast to the Carolinas.

Alice and Randall would be joining them in New York to test being away from Annie for the first time. No one, including Alice, foresaw any problems; Annie and Rosalie were almost inseparable.

Both Emmett and Rose fell in love with Annie and she flourished under their attention. After the initial incident with the inappropriate song, Emmett shaped up into somewhat of a parental figure to Annie. Sure he was still the fun, prank pulling, goofy guy he had always been, but now there was a seriousness to him; a sense of responsibility that tempered the boyishness that he was known for. He and Annie could be found often taking long walks in the forest looking for bunnies and baby birds or playing video games in front of the TV.

Rosalie fell into the mothering roll as if she had born Annie herself. The two looked more like sisters due to Annie's physical age but Annie could often be found curled up in Rosalie's lap, twirling Rose's long blonde hair around and around her fingers as Rose rocked her and sang sweetly. Annie may have been sixteen when she was changed but seeing her tiny body curled up against Rose, no one would mistake her for a child over ten.

Everyone just sort of fell into their roles naturally.

Plans were being made for Carlisle and Esme to build their own house on another lake only an hours run from our own house. Alice and Randall would have a suite of rooms there to use, in between their travels. Rose and Emmett had accepted our invitation to live with us and would be moving to the large suite in the other wing, once Carlisle and Esme's house was finished. Annie would have a room in each so she could float back and forth, although I had the feeling that she would be at our house more often than not.

Edward had sat Bella and I down one evening and asked if he could stay with us. He wanted Bella to continue to shield everyone's thoughts from him so that he could learn to function without it. He and Annie were also close and I got the feeling that he learned as much from her as she did from him. Edward said he didn't ever want to return to the person that he had been before and he was worried that too much time with his gift would cause him to lose the progress that he had made and that he would fall back into bad habits.

Bella, I could tell, wanted him there and I couldn't ever say no to her. I grudgingly allowed it but stipulated that he still spend time at Carlisle and Esme's house regularly.

I didn't want him underfoot all the time. I hadn't quite forgiven him that far.

My musings were interrupted when Garrett knocked on the door of our suite.

"Come in Garrett," I murmured, recognizing his scent.
Bella looked up with a smile; she was snuggled into her favourite overstuffed chair where she had been reading a book. I could feel her happiness upon seeing him, along with a touch of wistfulness that I knew was due to his and Kate’s departure tomorrow.


That was the only thing that had really changed since the battle. All the males in the house, barring Carlisle, had taken to calling me Major. It didn't bother me, but it was sure different.

I could feel uncharacteristic nervousness rolling off Garrett and he looked from me, to Bella, and back again.

"Major, can I talk to you for a minute?" he asked.

I took an involuntary breath in and looked over at Bella. He wanted to talk to me alone. Without Bella.

My instincts started roiling in protest even though my head knew that everything would be fine. As usual, my Angel came to my rescue.

I watched as she got up gracefully from her chair and glided over to me on the couch. I closed my eyes when she put her hands on my cheeks and bent down to kiss my forehead, my nose, and then my lips. "I'm going to take my iPod and go and take a long relaxing soak in the tub." She pulled back long enough to look in my eyes. 'Think you'll be okay with that? There's only one way in and one way out of the bathroom.'

The concern on her face reflected her deep love for me and her willingness to help me tame my instincts since she had been hurt.

I reached up and held one of her hands to my cheek, turning my head to press a kiss to her palm. "Sounds good, Angel. Thank you."

She smiled at me and gave me a deep but sweet kiss before gathering her iPod and book and disappearing into the bathroom with a smile for Garrett. It wasn't long before we could hear the water running into the tub and the faint sounds of music from her earbuds.

Garrett gave the door a sad smile. "She's still not talking out loud," he stated.

I shook my head. "Only whispers come out clearly. Anything approaching the normal level of a speaking voice is rather raspy and she's self-conscious about it." I couldn't take my eyes off the door. This was the farthest I had been from her in a month and my instincts were making me jittery. Still, it was progress right?

"Have you guys made any plans on what you're going to do, now that the danger is past?" he asked.

I thought back to the conversation that Bella and I had had only a few nights before. "We're staying here for the foreseeable future. We may take a trip here and there but Bella is looking forward to being settled in one place for the first time in a very long time." I managed to tear my eyes from the door and rejoiced in such a small victory.

"Bella's human mother is a bit of a nomad and although they stayed in the same general area in Phoenix, they moved around quite a bit. Then she moved to Forks and was only there for about a year before her change. She wants to put down roots; so do I. We both love this house and have some plans for the property to make it more our own." He nodded and I could feel his turmoil over leaving.

Really this was the first place that Garrett had been able to call home in over two hundred years and the thought of leaving it was hard.

I watched him carefully knowing he was working up to ask me something. "What do you know about the Denalis? I mean wasn't Eleazar part of the Volturi once?"

I sent him some understanding. Garrett had spent most of his existence avoiding our kind and now, in the span of a few months, he was being thrown in with two large covens. "Yes he was, but really he's very different from them. Carmen is a lot like Esme and you'll really like her. Irina can be quite a bitch, especially now that she's lost someone that she considered her mate. In fact she may hate you because you're a part of our family and she blames us. And then you'll have to watch out for Tanya."

He looked up at me exasperated. "You're not making me feel any better about this, Major."

I chuckled. "Sorry. Honestly Tanya's harmless as long as you remember that she's the reason for the succubus legends. Well, so is Irina, but you'll have to watch your back with her for a whole other reason. Really, between the three sisters, you definitely got the pick of the litter." He cocked an eyebrow at that but I went on to try to reassure him, "Eleazar and Carmen won't let anything happen under their roof. Eleazar is much stricter than Carlisle. Not to mention Kate will seriously maim any sister that dares look sideways at you."

He smiled but it didn't reach his eyes.
"Hey," I said getting his attention. "She loves you. And no matter what happens there, this is your home. Your suite next door will be waiting for you two when you get back," I said, nodding towards the wall that Bella and I shared with him and Kate.

He smiled. A real one this time and I felt the joy and comfort well up in him. "I never knew what it meant to have a family until now. I don't know how I existed without it."

Just when things were getting too sappy we heard Bella forget herself and try to sing along to whatever she was listening to on her iPod. Even with the difference in her voice, it was a real, 'Pretty Woman' moment, as she was apparently listening to Kiss by Prince and we couldn't help but chuckle.

We must have laughed a bit too loud, because all of a sudden I got a wave of embarrassment and her singing cut off making us laugh all the harder.

Morning came all too soon and we were all on the front porch. It hit me hard that this would be the first of several goodbyes to come. Alice and Randall would be leaving in a month to meet Kate and Garrett in New York.

I knew Peter and Charlotte would be leaving to spend some time at their home in Wyoming. Plus I knew Charlotte would be anxious to use her time on Isle Esme, having never had the opportunity to bask in the noonday sun without the worry of exposure to humans. I would need to see about conditioning Bella to humans so that we could join them eventually.

I watched as my Angel went forward to embrace Kate and share a few last thoughts. They both laughed and I knew that Bella would miss Kate's humour. She stepped back and patiently waited for Garrett to make the rounds of goodbyes, leaving her for last.

She stepped up to him and he leaned down to press his forehead to hers. I watched without jealousy as they closed their eyes, sharing a private conversation. I didn't need to know what was said, nor did I feel threatened at all by their closeness.

It struck me that their relationship was hard to define. Part uncle, sometimes brotherly; family wise they were cousins through his relationship with Kate. Most of all they were friends. My Bella, my Angel had brought us all together and made us stronger. Her sweet smile and selfless nature made us all strive to be better people and brought us closer because of it.

I looked over at Edward in time to see him smile at me and nod, seemingly in agreement with my thoughts even if he wasn't able to read my mind.

Annie was bouncing on her toes and looking impishly between Edward, Emmett, and the departing Garrett and Kate. Something was going on as Edward was projecting feelings of false innocence and I knew he had to do with retribution for the photos Emmett had taken of Edward's hand, which were funny as hell.

Not only had Emmett gotten the hand to hold the shot glass with the dead toe but there had been pictures of Edward's hand groping the ass of a midget stripper, honking the nose of a very strange looking clown, being carried around by a small dog, groping the breasts of the naked statues in someone's garden, and posing in a garden with some garden gnomes.

We all waved goodbye to Kate and Garrett and went back in the house.

A couple of hours later, Alice's face went blank as she had a vision. When she came out of it she immediately suggested that she and Randall run south to pick up the paint for Annie's room. Sky blue with silver clouds. Alice's suppressed amusement meant that something was going on, something other than redecorating Annie's room. Something she may have had a hand in but didn't want to get blamed for.

Charlotte and Peter were playing with the video camera, as Carlisle and Esme chatted on the couch.

The peaceful feelings I was having at the sight of our family so contented, were broken by twin feelings of mischief. Bella came up to me and was trying to hide her smile.

"What's going on?" I asked her, she clearly knew something about what was going on.

'Just watch.'

"Uncle Emmy! I want to play my new video game!" Annie sang out.

"Alright Sweet Pea, what'cha got?" He scooped her up and they sat down in front of the TV to look in the game box.

Emmett's look of anticipation turned to panic as he started frantically digging through the box. "Where are all my games? Halo, Call of Duty, Madden NFL, Final Fantasy, Mafia II…..they're not in here!"

"I got us new games Emmy, look!" She started pulling out her games to show him. "Alice in Wonderland, All Star Cheer Squad, Alvin and the Chipmunks the Squeakquel, America's Next Top Model, Let's Ride: Silver Buckle Stables, Bratz for Real, Go Diego Go!, Build a Bear: Welcome to Hugsville, Dreamer: Horse Trainer, Barbie Fashion Show...What's the
matter Uncle Emmy? Don't you like my games?” She looked up at him with wide eyes and I think I saw her chin quiver when she saw his look of horror.

Emmett looked faintly ill. "Sweet Pea? Where are all of Uncle Emmett's games?” He looked like he was afraid of the answer.

"I thought that Uncle Garrett might not be so homesick if he had them, so I hid them in his trunk. Do you think it will make him feel better?” She scrunched up her shoulders hopefully.

"I...sure it...will, Sweet Pea,” Emmett choked out.

'Are his games really in Garrett's trunk?’ I asked Bella silently.

She nodded between giggles. 'Alice was the one to distract Emmett so that Edward and Annie could sneak them out of the house. Now he has to wait to get them all back because if he replaces them he'll lose all his high scores.'

That made me want to laugh all the harder. Now I knew why Alice had made herself scarce. Edward might just give Emmett a run for his money in the prank department.

Everyone was trying really hard not to laugh while Emmett looked like he might cry. Edward was wearing a contented smirk but there was still too much anticipation oozing from him. The joke wasn't over yet.

He nodded at Charlotte and she grinned. Peter was using the video camera to capture all of this on tape.

"Kate left us a DVD home movie. She thought that Carlisle and Esme might like to see some of the things they missed while they were in Forks." Char got up and grabbed the remote. No one seemed to think that it was odd that the movie was already loaded and ready to play or that Peter was still filming.

The first thing that came up on the screen was Emmett and Bella skipping around the great room singing about getting to surprise Alice for Christmas. I don't think Emmett thought about how girlie the skipping was. Bella had looked cute; someone Emmett's size skipping made him look ridiculous.

Then there was the ambush and taunting of Bella during their first fight and the stakes of the bet. Esme was cheering at how quickly Bella was able to take him down. And Emmett looked disgruntled at the reminder that his baby sister beat him, not to mention the fact that he had to eat her share of wolves for the rest of eternity.

The wrestling match was next and Esme and Carlisle were let in on the reason for Emmett's angel costume. Kate had edited the parts with Emmett dressed as a giant angel. She had slowed down sections of it and added, Lionel Ritchie's – Ballerina Girl, as background music while Emmett pirouetted around the room in that unbelievable get up. He looked like a high class Christmas drag queen.

Annie sat there beaming and clapping her hands. "Oh Uncle Emmy, you look so pretty! You'll be great at Barbie Fashion Show," she added dramatically. "Wait! We can play dress up!” She ran out of the room and in a flash was back with an armful of clothes. She dug excitedly through the pile and came up with a giant sized, blue satin ballgown complete with lace ruffles and seed pearls. "Aunt Mary Alice got these for me. You can wear this one and we can have a tea party!"

Emmett's phone rang and he eagerly answered it hoping to avoid the whole situation. Unfortunately for Emmett it was Carmen.

"Oh Emmett! We just got Edward's e-mail. The link to your video on youtube is amazing! We laughed and laughed! You're such a good sport mi pequeña bailarina!"

We could hear the clip being played again on the other end of the phone and Eleazar laughing loudly with Tanya's giggles interspersed between.

"EDWARD!” Emmett growled out, looking to where Edward had been standing.

I could hear Edward's laughter as he ran out of the house and into the forest, Emmett hot on his heels.

The family was falling about the place laughing. Yes, life was better than normal and with my Angel by my side, I couldn't be happier.

A/N: So that is it kiddies. The end of a VERY long journey for me. Writing this story has been a blast but it would never have gotten written if it hadn't been for a great group of supporters.

NCChris and Mynxi are the greatest, most supportive betas ever. They were always there to bounce ideas off of, correct my many grammar mistakes, supporting me through the BiteGate that was Chapter 27, and talk me off of whatever ledge I was ready to jump from. Thank you, thank you ladies; from the bottom of my heart.

IdreamofEddy – Thank you for daring to write one of the first non cannon Jasper/Bella stories and coining the title 'God of War' that has inspired so many of us to write. Your stories are legend and have me captivated chapter after chapter.
LadyBlueKnight – Thank you for the most beautiful banner EVER! You looked into my imagination and brought it to life. You have no idea what that means.

Saw-v1 deserves a medal for asking to tackle the HUGE job of translating this to French. 6 chapters in and 188 reviews!

There were several blogs that were responsible for spreading the word about Insecurities. I still can't believe that writers I have SO much respect and admiration for read and liked the stuff that spilled out of my brain.

Jasper's Darlings – Clurrabella, Cullen818, Jasper's Dark Angel, Jasper's Izzy, Kitty Cullen, Maitresse Saint, and NCChris; I have so much respect of the writing ability you all have. I eagerly read anything and everything you all write and getting recognition from you was one of my first embarrassing fangirl moments. You guys were huge in helping to spread the word about Insecurities. I would never have reached the readers I did if it hadn't been for you guys pimping me and my story around the fandom. Thank you!

Altered Lions and Sacrificial Lambs – IdreamofEddy, JaspersBella, JaspersDestiny, Maelyn, MerinaGreen, MissMaj and catonspeed; getting a group rec from you guys was beyond exciting. I damn near got an ulcer waiting to see what you thought and then had to breathe into a paper bag to control my breathing when it came out. The fangirl squee is still ringing in my hubby's ears. You guys were instrumental in spreading the word about Insecurities both through your blog and on Twitter and I cannot thank you enough.

Thank you to The British Bitch and American Whore at FanFicersAnonymous for reviewing my chapters. I hung on every word.

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To my H00rs (you know who you are); thank you for adopting me into your circle of insanity. You guys brighten my day and make me laugh constantly.

So here it is, my last serving of dessert for the wrap up party. Fairies please lay out the dessert buffet, chill the beverages and cue the music. Let the fun begin! *dances off into the sunset surrounded by drunken fairies and singing Friends in Low Places*